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In a Cold Crater
Cultural and Intellectual Life in Berlin, 1945–1948

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CHAPTER ONE

The Prize

Beneath the blanket bombings of its wars, the twentieth century has witnessed whole cities disappear. Their names have become metaphors of obliteration, standing for the techniques of destruction of the time and a readiness to employ those techniques against civilian targets. Guernica, lying on the periphery of Europe and at the perimeter of World War II, was the prelude. The bombardment of April 1937 transformed this previously unknown provincial Spanish city into a worldwide symbol of terror. In May 1940 Rotterdam became the first large well-known European city to find its name imbued with new meaning through its destruction. With the bombing of Coventry—and the German term derived from it, *coventrisieren*, "to coventrise"—a new technology of annihilation had developed to the point where the many cities wiped out in its wake remained nameless. Not until the end of the war, with the fall of the cultural center Dresden, did a city name with symbolic significance once again emerge. Dresden became the metaphor for the most advanced "conventional" techniques of destruction, as this military practice would henceforth be termed. It seems almost inevitable that atomic technology claimed as its first victim a place as obscure as Guernica had been in its time. Only in its destruction did Hiroshima assume international stature.

And as for Berlin? The capital of the German Reich absorbed more bombs and shells in World War II than any other metropolis. Of the scale of the wreckage, of that mass of resulting rubble, there are but
rough estimates, fluctuating between 55 and 100 million cubic meters. Assuming an average figure of 80 million cubic meters, and given a post-war population of 3 million, there were 26 cubic meters of debris for each Berliner. The title of a study published three decades later made clear the consequences this had on the city’s appearance: The Anthropogenically Conditioned Transformation of the Cityscape through Deposition of Debris in Berlin (West).

Though at the forefront of the European inferno, Berlin was never seen as a victim of bombing. The fact that surface bombings, having already become a matter of routine and deadening habit, reached their real peak in the years 1943-45 provides some explanation for this. Significant as well was the psychological fact that the capital of a state waging war is always considered apart from its cities of art, industry, and trade. In the first half of the twentieth century the adversaries were in full agreement with the idea that a capital city was less a civilian construct than the symbol of a nation’s power.

They were equally united in the conclusion that the enemy whose defeat had in the past been symbolized by the seizure of his capital could now be crushed through the flattening of his capital. At the beginning of World War I, the destruction of London and Berlin by zeppelin bombardments was a fantasy equally and mutually popular in Great Britain and Germany. As the behavior of London’s inhabitants demonstrated during the German air raids of 1940-41, this attitude was evident even in those directly affected: they reacted as soldiers in a warlike bulwark, not as defenseless victims. One could interpret Brecht’s aphorism—“Berlin: an etching of Churchill’s according to an idea of Hitler’s”—as the destruction of the capital in order to make an example of it. Or as the British Director of Bomber Operations put it on the eve of the last great wave of attacks on Berlin: “The complete devastation of the center of such an enormously large city as Berlin would lay before the entire world an irrefutable proof of the power of a modern military force armed with bombers. . . . Were Allied troops able to occupy Berlin, or were the city held by a neutral party, it would witness a lasting monument to the efficacy which strategic bombardment has made possible in this war and can, at any given time, repeat.”

The site of this efficacy became a principal stop on the grand tour that led Allied politicians and journalists to Germany in the years right after the war. However, the impression anticipated by the Allied bomber command did not fully materialize. The power of destruction that had here performed its work proved less stirring than the sight itself of what had been destroyed. For the visitor passing through the still largely intact outlying districts and approaching the formerly pulsing city center between the Tiergarten and Alexanderplatz, it was, as Churchill’s niece Clarissa wrote, “as if . . . reaching a different climatic zone, a mountain top where no living thing can survive and the vegetation gradually thins out and ceases.” From the plane carrying him from Nuremberg to Berlin in July 1947, Albert Speer, who at Hitler’s request had planned and in part begun a massive reconstruction of this area, saw the edifice of the New Chancellery below. “It was still there, although damaged by several direct hits,” he noted after his arrival at the prison in Spandau.

Others saw it differently, among them the English poet Stephen Spender, who the year before had visited what remained of the government quarter:

The Reichstag and the Chancellery are already sights for sightseers, as they might well be in another five hundred years. They are scenes of a collapse so complete that it already has the remoteness of all final disasters which make a dramatic and ghostly impression whilst at the same time withdrawing their secrets and leaving everything to the imagination. The last days of Berlin are as much matters for speculation as the last days of an empire in some remote epoch: one goes to the ruins with the same sense of wonder, the same strangling of the imagination, as one goes to the Colosseum at Rome.

What Speer had attempted at the height of his architectural career was strangely subverted by what Stephen Spender and other visitors to Berlin saw. For Speer’s “ruins theory” (at least as he explained it afterward in his memoirs) was nothing other than an architecture that anticipated its continuation in decay. Assuming that modern industrial materials and techniques would not produce buildings like those of the Ancients, which decayed in dignity, Speer chose the same heroic materials, such as granite and porphyry. (“By using special materials and by applying certain principles of statics, we should be able to build structures which even in the state of decay, after hundreds or [such was our reckoning] thousands of years would more or less resemble Roman models. To illustrate my ideas I had a romantic drawing prepared. It showed what the reviewing stand on the Zeppelin Field would look like after generations of neglect, overgrown by ivy, its columns fallen, the walls crumbling here and there, but the outlines still clearly recognizable.”)
The condition of the New Chancellery in 1945 revealed Speer’s ruins theory as too traditional in its exclusive focus on a decay caused by time to account for a decay now accelerated by bombardment and artillery fire. On the other hand, statements like Spender’s verify that it was possible to see the modern form of war ruins in a classical manner: as an image of fallen power, of shattered greatness and humbled arrogance, the image that had fascinated historians from Herodotus to Gibbon. However, not everyone saw Berlin’s expanse of ruins in such neatly historical terms as Spender. For the American journalist William Shirer, who had last witnessed Berlin at the height of Nazi power, it possessed neither greatness nor tragedy. It was nothing more than a residue, in which the “indecent” of defeated power showed itself for a final time. “How can one find words to convey truthfully and accurately the picture of a great capital destroyed almost beyond recognition; of a once almighty nation that ceased to exist; of a conquering people who were so brutally arrogant and so blindly sure of their mission as the master race when I departed from here five years ago, and whom you now see poking about their ruins, broken, dazed, shivering, hungry human beings without will or purpose or direction?”

In visual terms, Berlin’s fields of ruins offered a different sight than cities in the west of Germany that had experienced a similar devastation. The city was, as Isaac Deutscher said, “not ‘levied,’ it stands upright in front of the observer to a truly astonishing degree.” It is inviting to see the image of the capital, confronting the observer almost defiantly even in its destruction, as a projection of the Reich. And yet there lay in the construction materials and techniques a real explanation for Berlin’s uprightness. Because of their medieval—that is, largely wooden—structures, historic city centers in the west and south of Germany burned down to enormous heaps of ashes, leaving behind empty expanses. Berlin, however, was a product of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, erected in large part by a method of construction using steel frames; even the conventionally built buildings from the baroque through Wilhelminian Germany were of such massiveness that, though burned out, they remained standing. Because of its technical modernity the capital of the Reich was never thought to have the historic, monumental, or aesthetic qualities of cities like Dresden, Munich, Cologne, and Nuremberg. To adherents of traditional artistic and architectural urban ideals, Berlin seemed ever less a city and increasingly an urban machine. Wilhelm Hausenstein in 1932 called it “baseless,” “groundless,” “a vacuum”—not because of any lack of architectonic substance (“Old Berlin, the Berlin of the palace area, has verdigris roofs as good as those of baroque Dresden”), but because its essence, its identity rested in something different. Berlin was a new kind of city; its technological modernity did not function as a superficial addition to what already existed but was the capital’s very essence and substance. In the 1920s, any representative of Neue Sachlichkeit would have agreed with the traditionalist Hausenstein in calling Berlin “a nothingness elevated to quintessence,” saying of it that “automobiles, traffic, and light bulbs in Berlin constitute a disproportionate and almost romantic addition . . . because the vacuum of Berlin is so large.” Berlin, the most technological, modern, and “American” metropolis in Europe of the 1920s, was also more “modern” in its destruction than the historical cities in western and southern Germany. That it was not seen as a victim like Dresden is attributable to the fact that here, so to speak, the most modern technologies of production and destruction collided, in a kind of self-destruction of technology, a duel it carried out with itself. In his first visit to the destroyed city, Alfred Doblin, who in Berlin Alexanderplatz described Franz Biberkopf’s struggle against this urban machine, saw its ruins as the result of a struggle that the city and fleets of bombers had fought out with each other. “Images of a terrible devastation, of immeasurable boundless destruction,” he noted. “It almost no longer has the character of reality. It is an improbable nightmare in broad daylight. The city must have gotten itself into a horrible struggle in the darkness.”

A struggle against Berlin, a struggle in Berlin, a struggle for Berlin: as a real warrior in this theater, and entering the fray at about the same time as the fictitious Franz Biberkopf, Joseph Goebbels also deserves mention. His book about the buildup of the Nazi organization in the city was titled Ein Kampf um Berlin (a struggle for Berlin). He remained personally bound to this city—to the very city considered the least Nazi of all German cities—until his death. He had a love-hate relationship with Berlin and learned to heed its lessons. “Till then [the mid-1920s] the city of Berlin,” he wrote in Ein Kampf um Berlin, was for me a sealed book in terms of its politics and its population. I knew it only from occasional visits, and it always appeared as a dark, mysterious secret to me, as an urban monster of stone and asphalt that for the most part I would have preferred to leave rather than enter. You get to know Berlin only after living there for several years. Then that dark mysterious quality of
this sphinxlike city suddenly unfolds... I came from the provinces and was still fully trapped in provincial thinking. The multitude was for me merely a dark monster, and I myself was not possessed of the will to conquer and master it. Without that one cannot last long in Berlin... Whoever wants to become something here must speak the language the crowd understands... Of necessity I developed an entirely new style of political speech under these rash impressions... It was the same for all the agitators of the Berlin movement... A new inflammatory language was spoken here that no longer had anything to do with antiquated, so-called völkisch forms of expression. The National Socialist agitation was tailored to the masses. The modern outlook of the party sought and found here a new style capable of sweeping people away.11

The irony of history: Was it this city, the most modern and technological, the least National Socialist city in Germany, which in every fiber embodied the "asphalt civilization" whose destruction was the goal of the Nazi party—was it this very city that modernized the party, thereby making possible its success and victory? Goebbels's book was called Ein Kampf um Berlin not only in reference to Hitler's Mein Kampf. The struggle, in Goebbels's terminology, for the submission of the "urban monster" Berlin and its transformation into a party-run machine was also intended. For the Nazis, Berlin was battlefield, enemy, prize, and booty in one. For a nation in civil war the capital city always represents this; yet Berlin in the twentieth century was more than just the capital of a nation in civil war. If the more recent view that the two world wars begun by Germany were a single worldwide civil war is to be heeded, then Berlin was its capital, its enemy, the prize, and the spoils, within the compass not merely of a ration but of the entire world. The Allies' degree of concern over the capital of the Reich was manifest in their plans for its conquest and occupation.

The victor's entry into the capital, though not generally the closing act to the wars of the past, has always been considered the true consumption of victory. This question becomes more complex when a coalition, not a single victor, is concerned. Because coalitions often fall apart in less time than it takes their common enemy to collapse, each member tries—even as the final battle is being fought—to secure its booty, whether unilaterally or in new alliances, as changing circumstances dictate. None of the war alliances of the last two centuries resulted in the joint occupation and rule of an enemy capital. Even Paris, occupied in 1814-15 by English, Prussian, Austrian, and Russian troops, offered no exception: this was a short-term, strictly military occupation, without the assumption of administrative or governmental functions. No thought was given to partitioning the city into sectors for the allied powers.

Jerusalem in the twelfth century stands as a more distant example of such a partitioning. Collectively conquered by the first Crusade coalition and declared the seat of the Latin Kingdom, it was without a doubt an "internationally" occupied and ruled city. However, there was no modern administration tidily divided into sectors according to nation; there arose instead a new ruling class composed of a disorderly mixture of medieval entourages living next to and with each other.

A third example of an international occupation is offered by the International Zone of Shanghai formed by France, Great Britain, and the United States in the nineteenth century. It was to this situation, in fact, that the one in Berlin has been often compared since 1945. But unjustly so, for the International Zone represented only a small part of Shanghai, being in essence nothing other than a European enclave, and in no way the result of a previous conquest.

The conquest, occupation, partition, and divided joint rule of Berlin by the Allies was historically unique, not comparable to any of these precedents, yet uniting essential elements of each. Like Paris in 1814-15, Berlin was the capital of the defeated world enemy. Like the International Zone in Shanghai, it was ruled internationally over an extended period of time. And like Jerusalem for the High Middle Ages, Berlin was of almost mythological significance for the twentieth century's idea of a world revolution and its real world wars. To have Berlin, and consequently Germany, was—according to the horizon of expectations opened with the October Revolution—to have Europe. The Russian Revolution was only an initial spark, a prelude to the real world revolution emanating out of—and unthinkable without—Berlin. In the years between 1917 and 1923, this idée fixe occupied so firm a position in the minds of the revolutionary generation that it most likely never fully disappeared until 1945. Stalin's salute to the German Communist Party (KPD) in 1923 was of course propaganda ("The victory of the German proletariat will undoubtedly transfer the center of the world revolution from Moscow to Berlin"), but like all effective propaganda, it played upon a reality of the most fanciful ideas. The polarization of the world after 1945 stripped Berlin of both its position and its aura. This downfall, taking place in the three years of Allied postwar occupation, has the closed and self-referential quality of great drama. Berlin furnished the unities of time, place, and action.
The decision to occupy and rule Berlin jointly was made in London in the fall of 1944 by the Allied European Advisory Commission responsible for postwar planning. It was also decided that the city, partitioned into sectors, would lie in the middle of the future Russian zone of occupation, as would the American enclave of Bremen within the British zone. This arrangement, which at first glance appeared unnecessarily complicated, was the result of a careful weighing of Germany’s economic, demographic, and geographical resources. Because the greatest concentration of population and economic power lay in the west, the Russian zone received a disproportionately large surface area. But this did not mean that Berlin would have to lie in the middle of this eastern zone. It was possible to draw a border that made the Reich’s capital the border city of these zones. Roosevelt must have conceived of such a solution when he first studied the problem on the way to the Tehran Conference in 1943. He drew a borderline between the American and Russian zones running from Stettin (Szczecin) through Berlin to Leipzig, leaving no doubt that Berlin was to lie on the westward side of this line. (“We should go as far as Berlin. The Soviets could then take the territory to the east thereof. The United States should have Berlin.”) A similar suggestion was still under discussion in the deliberations of the European Advisory Commission. It came from James W. Riddleberger of the American State Department. According to this plan, Berlin was supposed to lie at the point of intersection of the three Allied zones (a French zone had not yet been thought of), at approximately the center of the German pie cut into three segments. Proceeding from Potsdamer Platz, the American, Russian, and British sectors of Berlin would have expanded outward in a funnel- or wedge-shaped manner, continuing into the hinterland of their respective zones. However, the cartographically clear and geometrically elegant solution had no chance of realization. Given the traditional administrative borders and economic and commercial spheres, it was utopian.

Whatever the details of the plans for partition, the fact that Berlin commanded the Allies’ collective attention despite so many adverse circumstances showed that for them the capital of the Reich was a place that no one power was willing to relinquish entirely to any other. Berlin was clearly the trophy of World War II, and plans for its divided joint rule were an attempt to establish a balance of the victorious powers resulting from the suppression of the common enemy. Like heirs coming together in the house of the deceased warily to oversee the division of goods, the victorious powers planned to convene in the capital, Germany’s former center—and now vacuum—of power.

When these decisions were made in the fall of 1944, the end of the war was in sight, though it was not clear exactly how and when that would occur. As the circle tightened around Germany, the Allies were able to calculate their gains and losses for the last phase of the struggle. For the British and Americans in the west and the Russians in the east, there were two options. Either their own armies conquered all (or the greatest part) of Germany, with no consideration of casualties. Or, conversely, their allied counterparts would be given precedence.

In the latter case casualties (but likewise profits) in Germany would be minimized. The European Advisory Commission’s plan for division represented a compromise. In the event that the Red Army reached the Rhine—considered probable in American military circles six months before the end of the war—the Western powers were guaranteed their portion of Germany and Berlin. And in the case of an advance of the Western powers toward the east—which in fact happened in the spring of 1945—the Russians were given the corresponding guarantee. Drawing borders was a measure of reciprocal security against extreme shifts of balance arising from the incalculable fortunes of war. It arose from the same sober weighing of interests and avoidance of unwageable risks, from the same conservative global politics with which the two world powers would assure and control each other during the decades of the Cold War. For forty-five years Berlin would serve as the needle on the scale of this balance. But in the spring of 1945, the city was briefly at the center of a calculation aimed at the imbalance of one side. This happened in the weeks of the unexpectedly rapid advance of the British and Americans and the still unexplained two-month standstill of the Red Army at the Oder. Suddenly what Roosevelt had hoped for two years before—the conquest of Germany up to the Oder and the occupation of Berlin by the Western powers—seemed palpably near. Churchill pressed Roosevelt to seize the opportunity. The decisive lines in the two telegrams he sent to Washington on March 31 and April 1 of 1945 read: “Why should we not cross the Elbe and advance as far eastward as possible? This has an important political bearing, as the Russian armies of the South seem certain to enter Vienna and overrun Austria. If we deliberately leave Berlin to them, even if it should be in our grasp, the double event may strengthen their conviction, already apparent, that they have done everything” (March 31, 1945). And, resuming
and intensifying his argument the next day: "If they [the Russians] . . . take Berlin, will not their impression that they have been the overwhelming contributor to our common victory be unduly imprinted in their minds, and may this not lead them into a mood which will raise grave and formidable difficulties in the future? I therefore consider that from a political standpoint we should march as far east into Germany as possible, and that should Berlin be in our grasp we should certainly take it."14 Roosevelt, for whom Berlin was meanwhile no longer a political but a purely military goal, left the decision to General Eisenhower. The latter's refusal to conquer the capital of the Reich was characterized by Robert Murphy, an American diplomat later serving in Berlin, as "a decision of such international significance that no Army chief should have been required to make it."15

The global political consequences of Eisenhower's decision, however much they might invite speculation, can hardly be grasped. The consequences for Berlin, however, were clear: the Russians were the conquerors and sole masters of the city for two decisive months. They made the personnel and political decisions about the structuring of the administration, the admission of parties and unions, the arrangement of educational and judiciary systems, about the restimulation or dismantling of industry, the repair of transportation systems—in brief, about everything that started the urban machine going again. When the Allies entered Berlin after this two-month lapse to take possession of their sectors, their situation was that of guests received by the master of the house. To be sure, they had legal claims and a contractual assurance of quarters. The American advance unit that entered Berlin on July 1, 1945, found out how little that meant in practical terms, though. Its commander later offered a description of this arrival:

With no billets to go to, we wound up in the Grunewald, that great forest park in the southwestern area of the city. We had to set up pup tents in the mud and rain, and crawl into them for the night . . . I had managed to avoid pup tents throughout World War II, yet here I was, with the war over and making a triumphal entry into Berlin, established in that dreaded form of shelter under most dreary and uncomfortable conditions. This was undoubtedly history's most unimpressive entry into the capital of a defeated nation by a conquering power.16

For the subsequent forces of the Western Allies the situation was no longer so extreme; yet soon they too noticed, and in a more far-reaching way, what it meant to move into a house appointed without their collaboration.

The Prize

The house set up by the Russians also contained a floor for art and intellectual life. As in the other rooms, here too the accommodations consisted of what was available—that is, of what remained after the war and the collapse, and, going back even further, of what remained after the Nazi Gleichschaltung (razing or leveling) of culture. The question, then, is how much of the artistic and intellectual life of Berlin before 1933 had survived to the spring of 1945.

1930: YEAR OF CRISIS

The image of Berlin's physical destruction in 1945 is typically associated with the cultural destruction of the twelve previous years: what had begun with book burnings, prescriptions, banishment, imprisonment, and murder found its horrifying conclusion in the massive collective devastation of the city. According to this view, artistic and intellectual life was in full bloom when it was destroyed on January 30, 1933, as though by a sudden frost. In the theaters, Brecht, Piscator, Jessner, Fehling, and Gründgens had set the tone; in the concert halls, the avant-garde was represented by Schoenberg, Hindemith, Alban Berg, Kurt Weill, and Hanns Eisler, and classicism by Bruno Walter and Wilhelm Furtwängler. In the feuilleton sections of newspapers, Walter Benjamin, Siegfried Kracauer, Herbert Ihering, and other critics dissected cultural activity with razor-sharp precision; analysis of political events issued from the pens of Carl von Ossietzky, Leopold Schwarzschild, and Theodor Wolff. In Berlin's "red" district of Wedding, Ernst Busch blared poetic-proletarian battle songs in the streets. In Dahlem, Albert Einstein expanded the borders of modern physics. In their studios, Walter Gropius, Mies van der Rohe, Erich Mendelssohn, the Taut brothers, and others designed houses and housing developments that were soon to enter the textbooks of modern architecture and urban planning. Berlin was the laboratory of modernity, a city in which (according to a Brechtian poem) intellectuals eulogized oil tanks while writing sarcastic sonnets about intellectuals worshiping oil tanks.

Recently cultural historians have expressed doubt about the idea that this blooming culture perished—that is, was destroyed by the Nazis—instantaneously, as though submerged under a sudden deluge. The Gleichschaltung of the culture of the Weimar period was, of course, violent and sudden. Yet the scene that ended so abruptly in 1933 was no longer what it had been at the end of the 1920s. Truly modern intellectual life in Berlin, so open to experiment, and in art and spirit so radical, had
already changed in the years before 1933. The “international experimental downturn” (H. D. Schäfer)\(^{17}\) that became visible in the crisis year of 1930 meant for Berlin revising the revolution of 1918–19. That same year Herbert Ihering described the change, which he called a “cultural reaction,” as a fait accompli: “The turn occurred gradually. The omens altered imperceptibly. Invisibly ideas were rearranged. It was nothing other than a slow and cautious change of climate. A new season with all its seductive transitions was announced. It seeped pleasantly into every pore. Resistance grew weaker and weaker. A tepid warmth, an intellectual Capua.”\(^{18}\) Of course, not everyone partook in the new mood of 1930. The situation was like that of half a century later when another postmodern shift to “the new lethargy, the new sentimentality, the new reaction” (Ihering) would also lead to polarization, antagonism, and partisanship where before consent had ruled. Intellectual encampments, which were to find their continuation in the real camps built after 1933, had been set up by 1930.

This development was not restricted to Berlin, but it was here that it took its most decisive form. As, for example, in the writers’ national association Schutzverband Deutscher Schriftsteller, whose local Berlin chapter was the largest in the Reich. Even before 1930, a majority had formed here anxious to see in the Schutzverband not merely a forum for professional representation but an organization vigorously engaged in politics (though not party politics). It thereby stood in opposition to the Schutzverband’s national board of directors, also residing in Berlin, which insisted on strict political abstinence. Disputes, confrontations, and the expulsion of several members by the board resulted. In 1931, when the majority of the Berlin members declared solidarity with those expelled, the board dissolved the Berlin chapter. It was a coup d'etat that had its political counterpart in the deposition of the Prussian state government in 1932 by Papen’s national government. Openly supported by all liberal colleagues of note, the Berlin group could ignore its dissolution and continue on as though nothing had happened. Consequently, the board of directors established a rival organization in Berlin. Up until the general Gleichschaltung in 1933, there were two national writers’ associations in Berlin. The first cultural fissure had occurred. The second, between the liberal-democratic and conservative-national members of the Literature Division of the Prussian Academy of the Arts, transpired almost at the same time. Here the conservatives, who found themselves in the minority, simply quit the field: they left the academy. As is well known, the leftist-bourgeois group under the leadership of Heinrich Mann and Alfred Döblin did not last for long.

Such institutional polarizations were carried out more visibly than those in works of art. Writers personally in support of politicizing their association or the academy embraced Ihering’s so-called change of climate in their work. If in the 1920s they had been fascinated by the metropolis, asphalt, oil tanks, and the soul in the age of its technical manipulability, they were now more interested in the past than in the present, more in myth than in technology. “Instead of ‘scientists,’ ‘engineers,’ or ‘agitators,’ writers now understood themselves as . . . ‘prophet,’ ‘priest,’ ‘guide,’ or ‘adviser’” (H. D. Schäfer).\(^{19}\)

The intellectual life in Berlin that passed into the Nazis’ hands in 1933 was no longer the laboratory of modernity but merely the burned-out husk of the period 1918–29. One might imagine how Berlin of the Weimar period, without the violent disruption of the Nazis, might have entered cultural history.\(^{6}\) Once exhausted, periods of cultural flowering in urban centers usually find a peaceful end. Like Paris and Petersburg in the nineteenth century or Paris, New York, and London in the decades after 1945, they quietly return to normality. Without the thunderclap of 1933, cultural life in Berlin, much of which had already withered, would have likewise undramatically faded away. But with it, that culture was transfixed as the dramatic image of the fall of an intellectual Pompeii. Since then, Berlin of the Weimar period (as American cultural history has it) has been the familiar metaphor for the culture of modernity poised, like Damocles, beneath the sword of reaction and barbarism. In this romanticizing and mythologizing of culture one might detect a variant of Speer’s theory of ruins: ruined (despised, forbidden, banished, murdered) by the Nazis, the Berlin intelligentsia of 1933 continues to live on in intellectual mythology as the unique generation of intellectuals who were granted a duel with real power, and romantic defeat. This myth became international as Berlin’s culture spread with the

\(^{6}\) In addition to intellectual change of climate, there were signs around 1930 that Berlin’s creative limits had also been reached. Several great artists and minds had left the city and the country for a longer period or for good, seeing more promise elsewhere. After 1924 Albert Einstein spent more time abroad than in Berlin, and in 1932 he accepted an invitation from the Institute for Advanced Study at Princeton. Hollywood lured away the top names in German film: Murnau, Lubitsch, Marlene Dietrich, Elisabeth Bergner. A small colony of Berlin intellectuals arose in Paris; its most prominent members included Tucholsky, Benjamin, and Rudolf Leonhard. George Grosz left Berlin in January 1933. It was not a general migration, but a noticeable trickle, as is often to be observed before the floodgates are lifted.
banishment from its native soil. Einstein, Gross, Hindemith, Gropius, Schoenberg, Lang—all ceased to be names confined to Berlin or even Germany. They became international images, and with them Berlin became the global metaphor for modern high culture at the gates of barbarism.

That, however, was a later development. In the Berlin of 1945 there was no sense for such considerations. Berliners had as little historical distance from the period that had preceded the Third Reich as they had taste for their destroyed city as an antique field of ruins. The time before 1933 belonged indisputably to a past world, yet at the same time it also represented, as the last stop before the descent into barbarism, the only possible orientation for rebuilding. Progress had continued in New York and other places spared from fascism and Stalinism, and what had been modern at the beginning of the 1930s had meanwhile acquired a patina and given way to its replacement; but in the Berlin of 1945 any recourse to the period before 1933 meant opening a time capsule left untouched all those years. Nowhere was this more apparent than in the reconstruction of the city itself. For the architects and urban planners who in 1933 had had to shelve their plans for a modernized Berlin, the time had come.

“A MECHANICAL DECONGESTANT”

Destroyed, Berlin presented itself to the observer in two forms. One, as Isaac Deutscher noted, was vertical: the ruins projecting upward. But there was the horizontal, too: the open plain, the field, or, as was occasionally said after 1945, the steppe that had resulted from the destruction. “That steppe in the middle of Berlin” (Manuel Gasser) was the center, approximately Potsdamer Platz, in which buildings and traffic had been at their most congested before the war and where now grass grew and wild rabbits lived. “On the sidewalks, nettles as tall as men, and where sleek lines of traffic used to move along, grass is secretly gathered at night for whatever livestock is hidden away at home,” wrote the poet Gottfried Benn, calling the city “a Mongolian border town provisionally still called Berlin.”

Urban planners saw it differently. They saw in the reversion of the metropolis into an open field not a relapse into barbarism but the successful creation of an open construction site they had long hoped for in vain. For representatives of modernity in the 1920s, the great obstacle to the architectonic and structural modernization of Berlin was the existing city. In their eyes, clear and orderly plans had repeatedly been frustrated by the enormous, disorderly, unhealthy, and senseless urban heap. Thus the destruction of World War II could provoke a few dutiful tears for the ruined gems of architectural history, such as the Schloss and several Schinkel buildings. But beyond that, a feeling of liberation described more precisely the reaction of modern-minded architects and urban planners after 1945. Whether they had emigrated or remained in Germany, they were united on this point. “Berlin is no more! A decayed corpse!” noted Walter Gropius during his first visit in August 1947, and recommended that the American military government construct a new capital in Frankfurt am Main. Martin Wagner at Harvard, who was not to revisit his former sphere of influence until the 1950s, suggested that Berlin's mounds of rubble not be rebuilt but that an entirely new city by this name, if possible in another place, be erected: “The very idea seems monstrous, even barbaric... to rebuild on German rubble what made it rubble: obsoleteness, outlived purpose, and an architecture of spent respect.”

From the 1920s until his banishment in 1933, Martin Wagner had been the head of planning on Berlin's Board of Works, initiator of, among other things, the redesign of Alexanderplatz and a pioneer of modern housing developments. A disciple of the technological utopia, he made it his life goal to organize residential and urban construction as Henry Ford had the manufacture of automobiles. Houses were no longer to be built of stone, and if possible also no longer in a cubic form, but produced, like the Model T, a million times over from light, cheap, nondurable materials. The city Wagner envisioned was no longer a historically and culturally groomed structure, but a machine that would break down with age, and whose breakdown informed its very conception. The lifetime of the houses planned by Wagner was twenty-five years, the period of amortization for the capital required for their production. Architectonic and urban planning vision went hand in hand with technological and economic calculation. His concept of the housing development was meant to initiate “a city-country culture in which urban dwellers close to the country and a rural population close to the city might join hands in a common ascent toward a better way of life.”

Wagner's ideal of a city close to the country, embedded in nature and abundantly verdant, was shared by the entire modern urban-planning movement. And in Wagner's Berlin of the 1920s, that ideal had been approximated more closely than anywhere else. Not in the center, to be
That same year Wagner's colleague in the Berlin Magistrat (city administration), commissioner of transportation Ernst Reuter, announced as the objective of his department: "With all our resources, we hope to encourage the fusion of metropolis and countryside, the development of the metropolis into a green city out in the open, a city between lakes and forests."23

For those colleagues of Gropius and Wagner who had stayed in Berlin, the city in 1945 was the unexpected realization of this vision. The destruction, which they euphemistically called a “mechanical decongestant” (Hans Scharoun), had transformed what had once been a city back into nature, or, in Alfred Döblin's words, into "a scrap of earth through which the Spree flows." Here, all former impediments now swept away, their ideal garden metropolis of the future could be erected. In addition to the de-densification of the center, modern planners found further cause for gratification. Those outer districts of Berlin, in whose construction they had taken part and which they regarded with pride and satisfaction as the first actualization of modern urban planning, had remained essentially undestroyed. Like a "wreath of outlying municipalities [around] the extinguished crater" (Theodor Plivier), these districts stood ranged about the annihilated center, signaling in the sheer fact of their survival that they were more suitable to the modernity of the twentieth century than had been the historic center.

It was logical that plans for Berlin's reconstruction—or new construction—should proceed from the crater's periphery. Of the three most important designs, two bore the names of outlying districts: the Zehlendorf plan and the Hermsdorf plan. The third, the so-called Collective Plan developed by the Magistrat's planning group under the direction of Hans Scharoun, detailed most fully what the other two also attempted: the transformation of Greater Berlin into a diffuse and verdant garden city according to the principles of modern urban planning set down in the Athens Charter by the International Congress of Modern Architecture in 1933. "What the mechanical decongestant of bombings and the final battle have left behind," said Scharoun in 1946, "gives us the chance to create an 'urban countryside.' . . . This will make it possible to organize all that is incomprehensible and immeasurable into comprehensible and measurable elements and to coordinate these elements in the way that forest, field, mountain, and lake come together in a beautiful countryside."26 According to the Collective Plan, Berlin's urban countryside was supposed to stretch to the east and west, abandoning historical indices to follow more closely natural features, above all the valley of the Spree and Havel as carved out by receding glaciers many thousands of years before.

The Collective Plan remained as hypothetical as the Zehlendorf and Hermsdorf plans. In the end, the historic structure once again prevailed, modified by the political east-west division. Nevertheless, as a kind of monument of modern urbanism, the plan was significant because it could in fact have been realized. No other urban-planning utopia designed for a European metropolis in the twentieth century, not even Le Corbusier's visions of Paris, had anticipated the urban demolition or destruction necessary for so complete a reconstruction.

Berlin in 1945 came close to the realization of the modern ideal of urbanism not only in its theoretical planning but also, if in a somewhat uncanny way, as the city that it in fact was. The residential areas situated in the verdure of the periphery ceased to be purely residential areas and became autonomous municipal entities. In the summer of 1945, reference was made to the "independent republics" of which the formerly unified Greater Berlin now consisted. The old district offices were no longer subordinate to the central administration as dependent administrative units. They emerged as decentralized and autonomous organizations, like the free cities of the middle ages, in the way that utopian urban planners had always imagined ideal communal living. Cultural life, which had formerly played out in the center, now flourished throughout the garden city republics. The ensembles of bombed-out theaters, opera houses, and concert halls played in makeshift halls or, weather permitting, in gardens and parks. Everything that constituted life at the capital in its traditional center was now to be found at the periphery. There had never before been a Council for the Arts in Zehlendorf. In the summer of 1945, this newly created office numbered among Berlin's most important cultural institutions. The picture was completed by the new masters of the city, the Allies, ruling the city from their headquarters in the residential streets of American Dahlem, Russian Karlishorst, British Grunewald, and French Frohnau. In the summer of 1945, the ruined center seemed like a modern version of fourteenth-century Florence struck by the plague and abandoned by its residents; and, like the
party of the Decameron that had fled to the countryside, some of the residents in the outlying districts sensed the contrast between their comfortable normality and the world that began only a few miles away.

In July of 1945, the German émigré and British press officer Peter de Mendelssohn described how Berlin appeared from the perspective of the Allied officers' club in Zehlendorf:

Berlin is boiling in sweltering heat, and the stench and odour that arises from the canals and river arms of the inner city, still packed with thousands of rotting human bodies, that sweetish, nauseating odour that pervades everything, begins to make one really sick. For now it comes not only from the still waters—vast mosquito-breeding grounds and sources of pest and pollution—but also from the dead ruins where the heat of the sun has by now penetrated through the mountains and mounds of rubble and reawakens to foul life what is buried underneath. In a few days this town is going to be a cesspool. . . . Out here in lovely Zehlendorf, of course, the air is pure and clean and life is pleasant enough. A heavy golden summer heat has been hanging all afternoon over the large wild garden that stretches behind the house and over which I look from my desk. The big chestnut and slender lovely birch trees in the summer heat, slightly ruffled every once in a while by a breeze—they are the image of peaceful comfortable life in a large, well-appointed country mansion. The chairs and sofas are comfortable, the large French windows out to the terrace are open, there are drinks and coffee on the low table, American cigarettes, and the radiogramme playing the Mendelssohn violin concerto with Ibsenini. The officers lounge around in deep chairs, smoking, chatting in low voices, it is getting slowly dark, the fee on the low table, American cigarettes, and the radiogramme playing the Mendelssohn violin concerto with Toscanini. The officers lounge around in deep chairs, smoking, chatting in low voices, it is getting slowly dark, the mosquitos are beginning to come in, at the back of the room, along the walls are books by the hundred, a good and interesting library. Someone turns the light on, the records are changecl—it is a perfect summer evening, hot, lazy, comfortable and a little drowsy.27

“DREAMLAND”

Dreams like that last but an instant, like the dream of that moment when the Americans and the Russians shook hands at the Elbe and every exhausted soul seemed to heave a deep sigh of release: So be it!  

Ernst von Salomon, Der Fragebogen

There were two different, in fact contradictory images of Berlin’s destruction and its ruins after 1945. To the historical-romantic gaze, it appeared as a field of wreckage of antique greatness, timeless like the Forum Romanum. Viewed in a modern-surrealistic way, on the other hand, one could see in the image of shattered houses and ruined streets not eternal witnesses of transience, but the slain victims of a destruction still recent and reeking. In the summer of 1945, the writer Johannes R. Becher called such houses, their rooms proffered to the observer like naturalistic stage scenery, “slaughtered and eviscerated.” They were ruins of uncanny life.

A room cut in half sways at a height above the abyss of a courtyard filled with rubble; hopelessly isolated in the wasteland of rubble of an executed quarter, with a table, piano, sofa, chairs, and both walls hung with pictures: unaware that only a slight gust of wind would sweep it from its dizzying height into nothingness—ghostlike: from behind the curtains of this burned-out and deserted world, a woman emerges from an invisible backdoor on to the stage, holding a can in front of her, moving gropingly along the table; a balcony, too, above this empire of rubble, as though borne aloft for a moment, and then tilting downward again in its suspension.28

Such scenery became a topos in the literature about postwar Germany. A contributor to Sartre’s magazine Les temps modernes called it the “poésie du cauchemar”—the poetry of nightmares—and tried to picture for her Parisian readers the surreal reality of Berlin: “The surrealist sewing machine placed at the base of the statue of Frederick the Great on Unter den Linden would surprise no one.”29

The people of Berlin who lived with and in the ruins and who had experienced the destruction of the city from 1943 to 1945 gave an impression of psychic ruins to outsiders. The American journalist William L. Shirer saw “broken, dazed, shivering, hungry human beings without will or purpose or direction.”

“Two months after the capitulation, Berliners still seemed stupefied,” stated the American special ambassador Robert Murphy.30 A few weeks after his return from Moscow, Johannes R. Becher, a hybrid of observer and victim, described the situation in the first person plural: “Haven’t we grown ghostlike, too, aren’t we all wandering about, shadows and phantoms . . . ?”31 Ernst Jünger compared the condition of the Germans after the collapse with that of Charlie Chaplin “when he has received a strong blow on his head and reels.”32 Jünger, who had fought in World War I, knew what he was talking about. Chaplin’s condition of reeling, stupefaction, confusion, and loss of orientation and reality was that of thousands of soldiers on the front lines: in psychopathological terms, war neurosis or traumatic neurosis. The diagnosis of traumatically neurotic was made of those who, without bodily injury, were psychically overwhelmed by a particularly violent event of
war (such as a grenade explosion, burial in rubble, or battle charge). If the suffering in World War I was restricted to the soldiers on the front, with the effacement of the distinction between the home and battle fronts in the total phase of World War II the suffering became universal. The traumatized soldiers returning home in 1918 had in 1945 turned into a traumatized general population.

Berlin, the theater of both German collapses, provokes the comparison between 1918 and 1945: just as the Spartacan Rebellion in January 1919 became a prelude to German civil war and finally to the east-west division of Germany and Europe, so did the battle line running through the center of Berlin and dividing the bourgeois west from the proletarian east anticipate, with astonishingly little error, the later line of demarcation between the Western sectors and the Eastern sector. Count Harry Kessler had a sense of epochal change, like Goethe at Valmy, when at the outbreak of this rebellion he noted in his diary on January 6, 1919: “All of Berlin is a bubbling cauldron whirling together violence and ideas. In fact world history is being made today . . . a decision between east and west, war and peace, ecstatic utopia and dull everyday life. Not since the great days of the French Revolution has there been so much at stake for mankind in a city’s street battles.”33

The battles of the winter 1918–19 took place in a physically intact Berlin, within an urban machine that, as Kessler and others noticed with astonishment, continued running as if nothing unusual were going on. “Little impact of the revolution on big-city life,” Kessler noted on January 17, 1919. “Life here is so primary that even a historic revolution like this causes no fundamental disturbance. Only with the revolution have I realized how Babylonian, immeasurably deep, chaotic, and violent Berlin is, seeing how this colossal motion has caused only small, local disturbances in the even more colossal to-and-fro of Berlin.”34 Even small, local disturbances seemed strangely unreal, as Kessler observed with reference to a scene of street battle: “Up on the viaduct, a train moves right through the fiery battle.”35 The philosopher Ernst Troeltsch offered another example of this surreal simultaneity: “The theaters continue to operate and attract their audiences, which hustle past gunfire in the usual numbers, and above all, wherever possible, there’s dancing [emphasis in original].”36

The difference, indeed the exact inversion, of the scenes in 1918 and 1945 is obvious. In 1945 the destruction of the urban machine was as fundamental as had been its continued functioning, despite all revolutionary turbulence, in 1918. And just as scenes of violence and destruction looked surreal in the intact city of 1918, so did the intact islands and niches that appeared in the ruined city of 1945. Whoever unexpectedly caught sight of an undestroyed house or house-lined street among the scenery of rubble found it, like the Berlin critic Karla Höcker, “almost comic: like scenery from the wrong play,”37 or unreal, like Johannes R. Becher: “Everything is still here. Everything is still in the same spot, everything still seems as it always was. But there is something artificial about such preservation amid the general devastation, like something put together for an exhibition.”38 However fundamentally different, even contradictory, the realities from which they arose, the features of Berlin’s appearance in 1918 and 1945 shared a common unreal, dreamlike, ghostlike quality and a common prerequisite: the defeat and collapse of the old system of power. But there comparisons end. The year 1918 had witnessed an active self-liberation through revolution and 1945 only a passively experienced defeat by a foe from the outside. It was from this essential difference that everything followed, from the intellectual and artistic flowering after 1918 to the barren expanses of the years after 1945. Recall the image of Charlie Chaplin knocked on the head; the scene that has him dizzily swaying and reeling is but one version. In others equally frequent in Chaplin films, such a blow puts him into a trance in which he lithely executes dances until a second blow brings him back to reality. Ernst Troeltsch, laying such great weight on the fact that in the Berlin of 1918 “above all . . . there’s dancing,” called the weeks and months following the signing of the armistice in November 1918 the “dreamland of the armistice period.”39 This referred to the state of mind of the Germans, who had not yet grasped the full extent of the defeat. The collective “I” was in a state of suspension; everything dreamed seemed possible, and everything real seemed dreamlike and unreal. Ideas like revolution and socialism proved stirring across classes and special-interest groups. Thirty-six years after Troeltsch’s dreamland metaphor, Klemens von Klemperer commented, “In those few months of euphoria even the conservatives turned revolutionary.”40

A similar state of suspension reigned at the end of World War II. In New York, Moscow, London, and Paris, the atmosphere was unchecked, enthusiastic, carnivalesque. Berlin was stricken, stupefied, dizzy—a “dreamland” under nightmare conditions, but undoubtedly a dreamland as after all great historical upheavals. If in 1945 the word liberation did not have the rousing effect in Germany that had issued from revolution in 1918, it was still more than merely an Allied propagandist
slogan. The liberation in collapse was experienced as a redemption, if not by the entire population, then certainly by the greater part of the German intelligentsia. The difference between 1918 and 1945 is perhaps best elucidated with an image that Georg Lukács used in another context. In 1918–19, Berlin’s intelligentsia was able to pursue, ponder, and fashion the collapse from the distance and safety of an intact “Hotel Abyss.” Now the hotel itself was destroyed, metaphorically and in the most concrete of senses. Intellectuals found themselves in the abyss, without distance from or defense against its reality. They felt it so directly and forcefully that words failed them, or—to borrow Karl Kraus’s phrase—they had nothing to add to it.

So, at least, did it seem in retrospect. Yet whoever experienced Berlin in the summer of 1945 must have marveled at the speed with which the cultural life of a city that had been struck so mightily found its voice again. Only a few weeks, even days, after the capitulation, theaters and opera houses recommenced rehearsals. Orchestras played. Hundreds of the sunburnt ruins and depressing deadness.”41 Other observers also felt the most concrete of senses. Intellectuals found themselves in the abyss, without distance from or defense against its reality. They felt it so directly and forcefully that words failed them, or—to borrow Karl Kraus’s phrase—they had nothing to add to it.

The Prize

The Prize

The Prize

The Prize
first and most enthusiastic partisans of the artistic vanguard today fill
the ranks of the Philistines. The Germans have the aesthetic ideals of
old women.”49 Herbert Ihering compared the cultural *niveau* after the
collapse with the period after the Thirty Years’ War, demanding, like
Lessing, a new beginning.50

This is not to say that critics were of one mind as to what a new and
contemporary culture meant. Belonging to camps of different orienta-
tions, they had already stood irreconcilably opposed to each other in
the 1920s. Furtwängler, Langgässer, and Suhrkamp sadly felt the ab-
sence of the great achievements of traditional high culture after 1945;
Ihering, Kortner, and Kästner missed everything modern and experi-
mental with which they had identified in the 1920s. But in their con-
tempt for the postwar cultural fluff they were of the same opinion.
What escaped them is that such activity, if understood as a culture try-
ing to catch up, was not so entirely empty and unproductive. What fi-
nally prevailed and defined the culture of the postwar period into the
1950s was not the attempt to resuscitate the 1920s, but the reception of
what had taken place abroad during the twelve years of cultural iso-
lation. German postwar culture eagerly soaked up the works of Sartre,
This new cultural system, its coordinates formed by Paris, London, and
New York, held no place for Berlin, a fact demonstrated by the failed
attempt, as quick as it was pitiful, to artificially achieve such a position
by conjuring up the 1920s. It must have been obvious to everyone in
1945 that, in intellectual and artistic terms, Berlin no longer represented
anything.

After the collapse, intellectuals pondered what this really meant for
Berlin. And they came to conclusions that, even if merely sketched and
never implemented, once again assigned to the city a metacultural or
existential importance. These were in part the same intellectuals who
disdained Berlin’s cultural bustle as hot air. During visits to western
Germany Peter Suhrkamp discerned “a certain innocuous unawareness” as
the reigning attitude there: “It was clear that they had not faced the
demons in the final act like everyone here in Berlin.”51 For Gottfried
Benn, Berlin had lost through its destruction its formal unequivocal-
ity: “Its sobriety shows strains. Traces of the chaotic enter into its for-
mer clarity. Some waverings quality is introduced, an ambivalence out of
which centaurs and amazons are born.”52 Likewise for Herbert Ihering:
“The only thing missing in this bright, matter-of-fact city has now been
etched in: tragic features. To its characteristic reason and infallible judg-
ment was added a capacity for suffering and endurance its enemies would
never have believed the city capable of.”53 Contemporaries found this
transformation visually imprinted in the ruined state buildings, formerly
seen as ostentatious, brutal, and ugly. “One can see,” writes an English
observer, “how the ruins of these colossal piles—the Schloss, Kaiser
Wilhelm Gedächtniskirche, the Air Ministry, the Kroll Opera House,
or the War Ministry can have a certain pathetic sense of wasted effort
and mutability about them.”54 A Janus-faced Berlin emerged from the
contradictory statements of its defenders and detractors. As though he
had never compared the postwar culture of this city to the wasteland
after the Thirty Years’ War, Ihering wrote to Brecht: “Berlin still has
the potential of a true theater town. Precisely because so much has been
destroyed and so much of the old cleared away.”55 As though all mirth
had not left him in Berlin’s theaters, Kortner wrote: “Slowly old Ber-
lin’s great talent crawled out of the ruins.”56 Friedrich Wolf, who held
the Germans to be “hopelessly conceited and irremediable,” believed
in the “great potential of Berlin again becoming an artistic and cultural
center of the first rank.”57 Fleeting moods and tactical considerat-
ions (e.g., how an emigré might best be enticed back to Berlin) surely fig-
ured in this ambiguity. But what remained was the contradictory char-
acter of the city as the sowing ground of future cultural productivity.
The suggestive link between all of these statements led the philosopher
Gert H. Theunissen in 1947 to define Berlin’s intellectual stature not in
terms of

the works and achievements that musicians, poets, painters or directors, sci-
entists and intellectuals, writers, politicians, or economists have produced.
The word *statute* is merely aimed at the condition under which works and
achievements can arise at all. . . . Berlin’s intellectual status exceeds the in-
tellectual situation of every other city in Germany in the possibilities of in-
tellectual experience and knowledge, though it is altogether a different mat-
ter as to whether these unquestionable possibilities are actually perceived
here, whether, in other words, Berlin is proliferating de facto with the many
pounds that have been conferred upon it, not by its merit, but from develop-
ments in global politics after the collapse.58

Understood as such, the most important element of Berlin’s intel-
lectual status was that though the city had ceased to be the capital of
the German Reich, it remained so in a different form: as the seat of rule
of the Allied victors and present masters of Germany. Through this
internationalization, Berlin became, for a brief period and in a manner far removed from the Nazis’ visions of world power, a kind of world capital more than ever before. Like a permanent Viennese Congress or a Vatican council stretching over years, it continued to draw global attention to itself. There were more foreign journalists covering Berlin in the three years after the war than there were in any other European metropolis. *The New York Times*, which had three correspondents in London, two in Paris, and one in Rome, engaged four in Berlin. In the years 1945–48, arriving in Berlin’s Tempelhof airport from London, Paris, Rome, or Frankfurt seemed like landing on a chessboard of global politics. Only after 1948, with the conclusive East-West confrontation—and the division of the world, Europe, Germany, and Berlin—did the city lose this aura and become the marginal exclave it continued to be until 1989.

One might object that Berlin’s role as an international capital was as removed from the sphere of its inhabitants’ everyday world as the governor’s palace of a colonial power from the colonized population. Initially the Allied capital of Berlin was without doubt a control room for the victors, hermetically closed off from the Berlin of a defeated people. To the extent, however, that conflicts within this control room emerged and signs of disintegration began to appear, Berliners, at first merely looking on, became participants. Isaac Deutscher wrote in October 1946 that from Berlin

Germany’s political recovery has begun. It is a very strange type of recovery—almost exclusively the result of the rivalry between east and west. Berliners instinctively sense that their greatest opportunity lies in this rivalry. After Napoleon’s fall, France had her Talleyrand who understood how to exploit the differences within the victorious coalition, raising himself from mouthpiece for the defeated to arbiter of the victors. There was no Talleyrand in Germany after the fall of the Nazis. But somehow the multitude of Berliners seemed to play the role of a collective Talleyrand.

Talleyrand’s policy of independence was possible in a France defeated but not partitioned among its victors. Berlin’s “independence” was possible as long as the city remained the undivided object of the victorious powers and the goal of their “open” competition. When that division finally occurred in the fall of 1948, those who had played the collective Talleyrand in politics and culture lost their sphere of action. They ceased to act independently, and little remained for them but to identify with the powers for whom they now became functionaries and mouthpieces.

CULTURAL COMMANDO

The circumstances of the conquest, military occupation, and rule of Berlin after 1945 had an archaic quality. During the battles and their aftermath there were rapes and plundering, and when life went back to normal, it followed the oldest bylaws of victory and defeat. The Allies’ quarters in the elegant parts of town were as isolated from the rest of the city as the European districts of Saigon, Algiers, New Delhi, and Léopoldville were from the native centers. Nonfraternization regulations governed dealings with the civilian population. Private relations were forbidden. During unavoidable official contact, it was verboten to shake hands with Germans. At the same time the fruits of victory were enjoyed, both material and symbolic, and often in undifferentiated combination. In the office of the head of American Information Control, a flag with the swastika was draped over the sofa, and a luxury edition in folio of *Mein Kampf* served as the guest book (the guests entered their names on the margins and empty spaces). The theater critic Hilde Spiel mentioned another form of delighting in the trophy: “The ladies of the Allied occupation, apparently at ease and without noticeable consternation at the moral compromise entailed, now lay claim to the amenities—the hairstylists, manicurists, pedicurists, seamstresses, furriers, and servants—of the ‘high ladies’ of the Nazi elite who disappeared along with their executed or incarcerated husbands.” More than forty years later, Spiel in her memoirs showed no great consternation at having laid claim to such services herself. From her hairdresser (“Madame Sibylle”) she heard “many a secret of the ruling class under Hitler.” To the dependents of the victorious powers, the occupation period was a dream period of a singular kind—especially if they had American dollars at their disposal: “At that time there were parties you read about only in novels. There were enormous quantities of Manhattan and martinis, creme de menthe and old French cognac, Scotch whisky and the best French champagne. There was the best Russian caviar, there were oysters, there were enormous steaks. And for some fifty guests, with three servants engaged especially for the evening, and a bartender—the cook and maid were already there—all of this cost about ten dollars, that is, cigarettes in the amount of ten dollars. At that time in Berlin, with dollars, you could live as though it were not a mound of rubble, not a defeated city, but a paradise” (Curt Riess). Not everyone shared in the good life of these “satraps” (Spiel) with equal lack of worry and consternation. Some found the behavior of the
“occupational establishment,” as George F. Kennan called it, to be morally objectionable. Kennan said of it:

This was an establishment for which I had an almost neurotic distaste. I had been twice in Germany since the termination of hostilities. Each time I had come away with a sense of sheer horror at the spectacle of this horde of my compatriots and their dependents camping in luxury amid the ruins of a shattered national community, ignorant of the past, oblivious to the abundant evidences of present tragedy all around them, inhabiting the very same sequestered villas that the Gestapo and SS had just abandoned, and enjoying all the same privileges. . . . a disparity in privilege and comfort between themselves and their German neighbors no smaller than that those that had once divided lord and peasant in that feudal Germany which it had been our declared purpose in two world wars to destroy.64

In addition to their material well-being, intellectuals in the cultural departments of the military administration had another reason to consider the occupation period in Berlin the “richest, most varied, and exciting” (Spiel) of their lives. Young men (less frequently women) at the beginning of their professional careers who might never have never gotten beyond a midlevel position now found themselves in positions of power that Balzac's young heroes could only dream of. They became founders of newspapers instead of toiling away as editors, issued publishing licenses in lieu of merely reading manuscripts. Twenty-five-year-olds with no more experience in the theater than Wilhelm Meister or Felix Krull decided whether the famous director Jürgen Fehling was to receive a theater license. Berlin's cultural industry seemed to them a giant toy, or a new version of the Roman saturnalia. The old hierarchy was suspended. It was the cultural zero hour in which all seemed possible, including the phenomenon of a nameless young musician from Florida, now the cultural officer responsible for music, directing the Berlin Philharmonic and deciding whether Wilhelm Furtwängler would ever be allowed to lead it again.

So much for the archaism—or, more correctly, the archaic appearance—of the cultural occupation of Berlin. For what appeared as a recourse to antique and colonial practices of handling the defeated was in reality something new. In the past, military occupation of defeated nations had limited itself to physical control. The thought and culture of the occupied people were left untouched. Censorship measures ensued only to protect the military and political interests of the occupying power. In contrast, Allied policies for reeducating the defeated after World War II sought to complete the foe’s external subjugation through an inner one. Out of the psychological-warfare techniques developed during the war to demoralize the enemy emerged a postwar strategy of remoralization toward the ethical and political values of the victor.

Like everything new, this had its predecessors as well. The most immediate were Germany’s cultural policies in occupied Paris from 1940 to 1944, which for their part drew upon the experiences of the German occupation of Belgium from 1914 to 1918. The Central Press Office of the Political Division of the General Government in Belgium, established in Brussels in 1915, might be called the first information control department of modern military history. Its sphere was partly traditional—censorship—and partly modern—propaganda. It did, however, fall short of the direct intervention into native cultural institutions and the media that occurred in Germany after 1945. The Brussels department’s importance showed in the choice of its personnel. Wilhelm Hausenstein, Rudolf Alexander Schröder, and Otto Flake—all respected poets and writers in prewar Germany—were engaged as cultural officers in Brussels.65 Germany’s cultural policies in Paris after 1940 continued these first leanings toward propagandistic cultivation of the occupied country’s intelligentsia. The most important tool, founded for this purpose, was the German Institute. What its leader, Karl Epting, said in December 1940 about the institute’s objectives shows that a distinction between propaganda and reeducation was still discernible, though evaporating more and more. “French intellectuals must renounce their ideal of universalism. They must no longer speak in the name of general principles and should no longer try to spread these principles beyond France’s borders.”66 These precepts could be interpreted loosely. Nazi ideologues in Berlin like Goebbels and Rosenberg attempted a Nazi reeducation of the French intelligentsia. More moderate circles were satisfied with the idea that the French intelligentsia were simply being denied the further export of their views. In German-occupied Paris there was in fact no noteworthy attempt at Nazi reeducation, because those who would have had to carry it out were not disposed to do so. The German cultural officers were in the main Francophiles of the educated middle class, characterized by what one of them (Gerhard Heller) once confessed: “For us, Paris was a second intellectual fatherland, the most complete embodiment of everything we sought to preserve of the culture of the past.”67 Distance was not the only factor permitting in Paris what was culturally unthinkable in Berlin in the years 1940–44. The cautious maneuvering of the cultural officers played an important part...
as well. The comment of a German to Paul Léautaud—"In Paris we allow ourselves a liberalism completely unknown to us in the Reich"—shows that events like the debut of Sartre's Les mouches and the publication of Camus's L'étranger in 1943, the year of Stalingrad, were not purely accidental.

The French, moving into their assigned sector of Berlin in the late summer of 1945, found it difficult to play the role of victor convincingly. The trauma of the defeat in 1940 and subsequent occupation and collaboration was still fresh, and their self-assurance was undercut by the memory that the Germans, now to be ruled and overseen, had less than a year before been the rulers in their own land. How little France counted in the circle of victorious powers had been made clear when the areas of occupation were first laid out. No thought had been given to a French zone. The fact that the French zone in western Germany and the French sector in Berlin were taken from the area originally intended for the British must have been seen in Paris as the granting of crumbs from the table of the mighty. And in the end, for the nation that for centuries had considered itself the cultural leader of Europe and the entire world, it was sheer humiliation to be assigned a sector in Berlin composed of two districts that were a cultural wasteland. In Reinickendorf and Wedding there was to be found no theater, no opera house, no museum, no publisher of note, no university, and, beyond a few public-library branches, no library worthy of the name. In view of these circumstances it is not surprising that the tone of the French occupation was subdued and full of resentment. The American correspondent Delbert Clark, himself anything but warmly disposed toward Germans, considered French occupation politics paranoid and petty, emanating from an "atmosphere of diseased pragmatism"—"like the behaviour of a squirrel on a treadmill: so long as he keeps it revolving he fancies he is going somewhere." The behavior of her countrymen in Berlin reminded Simone de Beauvoir of the Germans in Paris during the occupation period. ("I felt we were as hateful as they had been ... and you feel worse if you are on the occupying [sic] side.")

The lack of cultural infrastructure in the French sector made it impossible for the French to institute cultural policies as the other Allies were doing. Restriction to cinemas, schools, and public libraries did not satisfy French claims on culture; and the only voice that carried beyond their sector, the daily newspaper Der Kurier, was also regarded as inadequate. A solution was sought in the Mission Culturelle, a creation of the foreign ministry in Paris, possibly inspired by the model of the German Institute of the years 1940-44. Its task was in any case a similar one: contact with the local intelligentsia; organization of visits and speeches by prominent figures from France (e.g., Sartre and Vercors); liaison with other Allied cultural administrations. Established in the fall of 1946, the Mission Culturelle was the first organization of its type in which the Allies presented themselves to the Germans not as victors but as bearers of culture. Its leader, Félix Lusset, maintained more cordial relations with Alexander Dymschitz, the chief cultural officer in the Soviet Military Administration in Germany (SMAD), than he did with his Western colleagues. When at the end of 1947 the Americans and English banned the organization Kulturbund zur demokratischen Erneuerung Deutschlands (Cultural League for the Democratic Revival of Germany), the French did not join them because, as Lusset's superior in the foreign ministry had said a year before, they saw in institutions like the Kulturbund the greatest possibility "for developing our influence in Berlin on cultural directives." In his memoirs, Lusset reports discussions with Dymschitz about the possibilities and prospects of a cultural axis involving Paris, Berlin, and Leningrad.

The English moved into their sector under completely different conditions. Their self-assurance as victors was unbroken. They belonged to the Big Three of the war conferences from Tehran and Casablanca to Yalta and Potsdam. And of all four Allies, they were the most experienced in the control of foreign peoples. Two centuries of empire had produced a colonial know-how and a well-trained administrative bureaucracy regarded with envy by their allies and respect by the Germans. Reeducation meant for the English something different than it did for the Americans. They were not guided by thoughts of an idealistic moral mission but by the conviction, confirmed through long experience, "that by educating the elite of their subject peoples into British ways, from cricket to the rule of law, they were able to maintain their rule by indirect control rather than by the more costly and troublesome overtly military-administrative direct methods of control." The English historian Nicholas Pronay, author of this insight, finds evidence that the reeducation of South Africans by the English after the Boer War "contained practically all the basic ideas and techniques planned for the re-education of Germany." English cultural policy in Berlin proceeded carefully and with reservation. They included an understanding that winning over the intelligentsia of a European country required different methods than those applied in Africa and India. The emphasis of English cultural policy fell less on artistic and intellectual production
than on the establishment of a culture of common sense in a country whose cultural elite (at least in English opinion) had let itself be too easily led astray by extremes.

The missionary zeal and moral rigor of American reeducation policies, like the behavior of the Red Army during the conquest of Berlin, belong to the commonplacesth of German postwar history. They are correct, but upon careful examination they thwart certain common assumptions. Thus in Europe it has been little noted that the American treatment of postwar Germany presented in essential points a repetition of what eighty years previously the victorious Union had conferred upon the defeated South after the Civil War. What took place in Germany in the years after 1945 had taken place once before in postbellum America, from the idea of unconditional surrender to the military occupation, the installation of a military government, and the attempt to reeducate morally to improve the subject population.76 Instead of slavery and racism, the ideas now to be rooted out were militarism and nationalism. The methods in both campaigns were alike insofar as the population to be reeducated was not believed capable of the strength required for self-purification. Salvation had to be forced upon it.

Not altogether absent were critical voices within the American military administration, like that of the Harvard political scientist Carl J. Friedrich, who stated retrospectively: “Indifferent to or unaware of the strength of anti-Nazism inside Germany, American policy makers imposed on the Germans a totalitarian regime, more benevolent, to be sure, than that of the Nazis but giving little consideration to the best in German tradition and to the legitimate wishes of those men and women who had not accepted totalitarian methods.”77 The head of the military government, General Lucius D. Clay, felt similarly: “I do not deem it necessary for a Ministry of Propaganda to be established for such controls,” he informed his head of Information Control, General Robert McClure, who held a fundamentally different view of the Germans. (“The basic difference between General Clay and myself is . . . [my] disagreement with him that there are lots of good Germans just around the corner waiting for a chance to prove their democratic attitude.”)78 Perhaps it was not entirely coincidental that Clay was a southerner and McClure came from the North.

Given the difference of opinions at the highest level of American military government, it was significant that among the specialists em-
spoke fluent German and were frequently better acquainted with German literature and art than their German counterparts. Berlin memoirs are replete with anecdotes like that of a Russian officer shaming his German listeners with long citations from Heine's *Winterreise* and the *Nibelungenlied*.81

The question asked by Western Allies and Germans in 1945, and ever since by students of postwar history, is, of course: Why should the same power that under Stalin had visited upon its own country a *Gleichschaltung* of art and intellect so rigorous and without consideration of losses confer such generous treatment upon a subdued foe? Is there still no satisfactory answer to this. Given the poor state of provisions, did the Russians, as has been supposed, resort to the old motto 'there is still no satisfactory answer to this. Given the poor state of provisions, did the Russians, as has been supposed, resort to the old motto 'there is still no satisfactory answer to this. Given the poor state of provisions, did the Russians, as has been supposed, resort to the old motto 'there is still no satisfactory answer to this. Given the poor state of provisions, did the Russians, as has been supposed, resort to the old motto 'there is still no satisfactory answer to this. Given the poor state of provisions, did the Russians, as has been supposed, resort to the old motto 'there is still no satisfactory answer to this. Given the poor state of provisions, did the Russians, as has been supposed, resort to the old motto 'there is still no satisfactory answer to this. Given the poor state of provisions, did the Russians, as has been supposed, resort to the old motto 'there is still no satisfactory answer to this. Given the poor state of provisions, did the Russians, as has been supposed, resort to the old motto 'there is still no satisfactory answer to this. Given the poor state of provisions, did the Russians, as has been supposed, resort to the old motto 'there is still no satisfactory answer to this. Given the poor state of provisions, did the Russians, as has been supposed, resort to the old motto 'there is still no satisfactory answer to this. Given the poor state of provisions, did the Russians, as has been supposed, resort to the old motto 'there is still no satisfactory answer to this. Given the poor state of provisions, did the Russians, as has been supposed, resort to the old motto 'there is still no satisfactory answer to this. Given the poor state of provisions, did the Russians, as has been supposed, resort to the old motto 'there is still no satisfactory answer to this. Given the poor state of provisions, did the Russians, as has been supposed, resort to the old motto 'there is still no satisfactory answer to this. Given the poor state of provisions, did the Russians, as has been supposed, resort to the old motto 'there is still no satisfactory answer to this. Given the poor state of provisions, did the Russians, as has been supposed, resort to the old motto 'there is still no satisfactory answer to this. Given the poor state of provisions, did the Russians, as has been supposed, resort to the old motto 'there is still no satisfactory answer to this. Given the poor state of provisions, did the Russians, as has been supposed, resort to the old motto 'there is still no satisfactory answer to this. Given the poor state of provisions, did the Russians, as has been supposed, resort to the old motto 'there is still no satisfactory answer to this. Given the poor state of provisions, did the Russians, as has been supposed, resort to the old motto 'there is still no satisfactory answer to this. Given the poor state of provisions, did the Russians, as has been supposed, resort to the old motto 'there is still no satisfactory answer to this. Given the poor state of provisions, did the Russians, as has been supposed, resort to the old motto 'there is still no satisfactory answer to this. Given the poor state of provisions, did the Russians, as has been supposed, resort to the old motto 'there is still no satisfactory answer to this. Given the poor state of provisions, did the Russians, as has been supposed, resort to the old motto.82

The Prize
Contrary to the view that the bourgeois Russian intelligentsia under Stalin suffered a fate similar to that of the kulaks and the clergy, Fitzpatrick finds evidence that “the old intelligentsia came out of the Cultural Revolution in better shape than its members had probably expected or than Western historians have generally recognized.”86 What the Stalinist cultural revolution of the years 1928–32 destroyed was not the bourgeois cultural elite, but merely its self-confidence as an independent mandarin class, which after the upheaval of the revolution had been largely restored in the New Economic Policy period. The cultural revolution brought about the intelligentsia’s great humiliation, a demonstration of its marginality by the all-powerful party and state. As the reward offered by Stalin after the flogging, the old privileges were restored without demanding any express political, ideological, or revolutionary avowal. Thus, in the same move in which the party castrated the intelligentsia, it established the very values and forms of bourgeois culture in the place of revolutionary ideology. The political-cultural complex *Kulturkampf*—freely translated as “culture-full lifestyle”—arose and would define late- and post-Stalinist society of the Soviet Union and its satellites. Neoclassicism in architecture, Stanislavsky on the stage, Tolstoy in literature—these were the new cultural dogmas that replaced the old proletarian-revolutionary ones. Given Fitzpatrick’s interpretation, the behavior of Russian cultural officers in Berlin after 1945 no longer seems wayward, but follows precisely this line. The culture put forward—Thomas Mann, Gerhart Hauptmann, Wilhelm Furtwängler—was bourgeois and traditional like the Russian models of Tolstoy and Stanislavsky. For the experimental and avant-garde there was neither understanding nor support.

Fitzpatrick’s interpretation of Stalinist cultural history also helps to explain the high intellectual level of Russian cultural officers so surprising to many observers. They were not the sons of peasants and workers, trained as “engineers of the soul,” but children of the educated middle class. The typical SMAD cultural officer was of Jewish descent, was born between 1900 and 1910 in Petersburg, and had experienced the revolution as a boy and the NEP years as a young man. He had studied at one of Petersburg’s old schools patronized by Lunatscharski. And at the end of the 1920s, he was about to enter cultural life when the cultural revolution changed everything. Alexander Dymschitz, the leader of SMAD’s cultural division, and his childhood friend Grigori Weispapier, editor of the *Tägliche Rundschau* in 1945, were pure incar-
blacklisted in America.\textsuperscript{88} And when the Deutsches Theater presented a production of an anti-American Russian propaganda play in the spring of 1947, director Wolfgang Langhoff let Frank know in confidence that he and the Russian cultural officers were acting only by force of higher orders and personally would welcome an official American protest.\textsuperscript{89} The late Wolfgang Harich has remarked that in their dealings, beyond political-ideological officialdom, Dymschitz and Frank got along well: "They had to dutifully discharge their class hatreds, but otherwise they spoke the same language."\textsuperscript{90}

The conquest of Berlin lasted approximately ten days. Trams were still running in Charlottenburg when the Red Army seized the first outlying districts. Restaurants on the Kurfürstendamm were still serving lunch, and in the Café Schilling, as a Swiss businessman recalled, there was "very good cake with a layer of brown crème the thickness of your finger."\textsuperscript{1} Now and again grenades fell and there were casualties. Within a few days, this situation witnessed a complete inversion. As the battle raged in the center, above all in the government quarter, the outlying districts already enjoyed peacetime conditions. Individuals or groups of Germans appointed (or at least tolerated) by the Russian commanders saw to it that life continued. It was the great period of the so-called Antifa groups, which assumed control of the abandoned administration or stripped it from the hands of the old system's remaining representatives. "An atmosphere prevailed that I had always associated with meetings during the October Revolution and civil war in Russia, and in fact had always wanted party meetings to have," Wolfgang Leonhard, who returned to Berlin with the Ulbricht Group,\textsuperscript{*} wrote in his memoirs. "Clear, brief suggestions issued from all sides, were then discussed, sometimes elaborated on by counter-suggestions, and decided upon."\textsuperscript{2}

\textsuperscript{*The top brass of the German Communist Party flown into Berlin from Moscow in late April 1945 to take over the administration of Berlin.}
Notes

CHAPTER 1. THE PRIZE

8. Isaac Deutscher, Reportagen aus Nachkriegsdeutschland (Hamburg, 1980), 114. Deutscher offers, as an interesting variant of the “ancient ruin” analogy, the image of an excavated metropolis of ruins: “When the buildings lose their deceptive solid appearance, Berlin gives the impression of a strangely well-preserved ruin of the ancient world—like Pompeii or Ostia—of enormous dimension. This similarity to an excavated city is strengthened by the emptiness of many streets.”
10. Alfred Döblin, Autobiographische Schriften und letzte Aufzeichnungen (Olten and Freiburg, 1980), 397.
12. Rote Fahne, October 10, 1923.
Berlin and Rilke, 476 (originally published in Aufbau, no. 1 [Septem-
ber 1945]).

Isaacs,'Walter Gropius: Der Mensch und sein Werk, vol. 2 (West
Berlin, 1984), 364. 

Schäfer in Literaturmagazin, 103.


Walter Gropius to Ise Gropius, August 5, 1947, as cited in Reginald R.
Isaacs, Walter Gropius: Der Mensch und sein Werk, vol. 2 (West Berlin, 1984),
953.

Martin Wagner in Die Neue Zeitung, April 18, 1947.

Martin Wagner, “Wenn ich Bauemeister von Deutschland wäre,” Aufbau,
o. 3 (1946), 876.

In Das neue Berlin (Berlin, 1929), 28-29.

Ibid., 216.

As cited in Geist und Kürvers, Das Berliner Mietsbaus, 286.

Peter de Mendelssohn to Hilde Spiel, July 15, 1945, Peter de Mendel-
sohn Archive, file “Briefe und Unterlagen, July/Sept.-Nov. 1945.”

Johannes R. Becher, “Deutsches Bekenntnis,” in Publizistik, vol. 2 (East
Berlin and Weimar, 1978), 476 (originally published in Aufbau, no. 1 [Septem-
ber 1945]).

Claudine Chonet, “Souverain de Berlin,” Les temps modernes, January
1948, 1287. Curt Riess offers another good example of the surreal scenery in
the description of a tea party in Grunewald:

“We climbed up a stairway standing out in the open to the upper floor. And then we
entered a room furnished as though it were in an intact house, as though there had
never been a war, as though the Russians had never marched in, as though there had
never been a 20th century at all. It was a beautiful room, all in Biedermeier style,
every chair and every table was a delicacy. The walls were covered in damask and
full of valuable etchings. There were ten or twelve people sitting in the room, ladies
and gentlemen, a few American officers, a British lieutenant, two French women. All
of them, with the exception of the host, were wearing coats, because it was bitter
cold. But they all acted as if they didn’t notice. They made conversation, and drank

Shirer and Murphy as cited in Brewster S. Chamberlin, Kultur auf
Trimmern (Stuttgart, 1979), 9-10.


Ernst Junger, quoted in Manfred George, “The German Literary Scene,”

Harry Graf Kessler, Tagebücher, 1918-1937 (Frankfurt am Main, 1982),
94.

Ibid., 108.

Ibid., 97.

Ernst Troeltsch, Spektatorbriefe (1923; reprint 1966), 30.
in his diary: “The people are more cosmopolitan, sophisticated and better dressed than elsewhere in Germany,” Robert McClure, diary, p. 11, Robert A. McClure Archive, Chico, Calif. In his account of Berlin’s postwar politics, Harold Hurwitz says: “The cosmopolitan character of the city had changed, not been lost.” Harold Hurwitz, "Die politische Kultur der Bevölkerung und der Neubeginn konservativer Politik" (Cologne, 1983), 94. Hurwitz cites the disproportionately low presence of Nazis (due to desertion) and high presence of non-Nazis and anti-Nazis as reasons. He argues that in Berlin, the capital of the resistance, the attitude of opposition, resistance, and combativefulness was greater than elsewhere. Ibid., 47, 53. In connection with the description of the tea party in a half-destroyed villa in Grunewald cited in note 29 above, Curt Riess describes a scene evoking this atmosphere:

Our host had been an official in the old, pre-Hitler foreign ministry and remained under Hitler, but belonged to those who had nothing but scorn for the foreign minister Ribbentrop. We talked for a while about the blunders Ribbentrop had committed as though we were speaking of the foreign minister of a country at the other end of the world, with the slightly weary irony of people whom it does not concern at all, and about the blunders of General Clay and Attlee now, and above all about the French, who apparently could do nothing right, at least not in the eyes of the guests at this tea party. I looked at them, one after the other. They were men and women who might have met like this in Paris, London, or Washington, who surely had met before somewhere, perhaps in Cairo, Rome, or Hong Kong. There were no victors and losers for these people, and the fact that our host wasn’t even in position to buy a pound of butter, not to mention travel to New York or only to Paris, didn’t matter a bit. In this room they knew that this would change too, they were too deep in politics for a few months or a few years to matter.

Riess, Berlin Berlin, 67.

61. The description of the sofa is from an undated and untitled newspaper clipping in Robert McClure’s estate; the guest book is part of McClure’s estate. In a letter to his wife, Fritz Kortner mentions a trophy experience of a particular kind. He reports a party in the confiscated house of a “Nazi bigwig”: “If first noticed a beautiful fireplace, which looked very un-Berlin. The Nazi had removed it from an apartment in Paris, as the current resident, a Jew, explained to me. Almost everything in the apartment came from another country. I sat there on a stolen Nazi chair, and it is hardly bearable how present the past still is.” Letter of January 4, 1948, as cited in Klaus Volker, Fritz Kortner (West Berlin, 1987), 178.


63. Riess, Berlin Berlin, 64.


65. Cf. the essay collection The Ideological Crisis of Expressionism: The Literary and Artistic German War Colony in Belgium, 1914–18 (Columbia, S.C., 1990). The magazine Belfried, distributed in both Belgium and Germany, published by Insel and edited by Flake and Schröder in Brussels, and printed in Belgium, was a cultural propaganda mouthpiece that appealed to the intellectual elite of Flemish Belgium.
83. For example, Rüdiger Bernhardt and Gerd Dietrich. The latter wrote of the SMAD cultural officers: "They are now trying, beyond the reach of Soviet laws, in strange territory and as occupiers, to develop a prudent, generous, tolerant, and democratic cultural policy." Gerd Dietrich, Politik und Kultur in der SBZ, 1945-49 (Bern, 1993), 14.

84. For Anna Hartmann and Jürgen Eggeling, interpretations like Bernhardt's and Dietrich's are "idealized evaluations" of a soberer reality: "Practically every decision, authorization, or ban came from Moscow; that is, decisions made on German soil always issued from the structures and forces of the Soviet system." Anna Hartmann and Jürgen Eggeling in Text und Kritik, no. 108 (October 1990), 28.


87. All information is from the unpublished memoirs of Grigori Weiss (who shortened his name from Weisapper in 1949 because of the anti-Semitic campaign in the Soviet Union) in the Archiv des Instituts für die Geschichte der Arbeiterbewegung, Berlin (EA 1838).

88. "A very unfortunate instability would be thrown in the program if certain material were to be thrown out every time an author is charged by the Committee," Frank wrote to his superior on October 26, 1947. OMGUS 5/268-3/9.


CHAPTER 2. KULTURKAMMER


2. Wolfgang Leonhard, Die Revolution entlässt ihre Kinder (Cologne, 1990), 432.

3. Communicated to the author by Alexander Peter Eismann and Wolfgang Harich.

4. W. B. Staudinger to Dr. Stehr (adjutant to state commissioner Hans Hinkel), October 25, 1933, Bundesarchiv, Berlin Document Center, RKK Holdings, box 0095, file 19.

5. Protocol of the inaugural meeting of the Kammer der Kunstschaffenden, June 6, 1945, Landesarchiv Berlin/Stadtarchiv, rep. 120, no. 1399, p. 9.

