

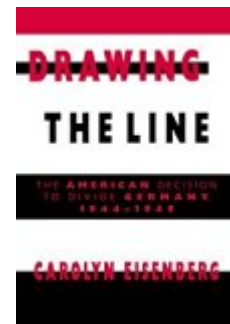
H-Net Reviews

in the Humanities & Social Sciences



Carolyn Woods Eisenberg. *Drawing the Line: The American Decision to Divide Germany, 1944-1949*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996. pp.p 493. \$59.95 (cloth), ISBN 978-0-521-39212-9.

Reviewed by Steven P. Remy (Ohio University)
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Carolyn Eisenberg's *Drawing the Line* is the most comprehensive study now available of U.S. policy toward Germany in the critical 1944-1949 period. Based on extensive research in U.S. and British sources, the book argues that Germany's division into two separate states was "fundamentally an American decision." Determined to harness the resources of the western occupation zones for Western Europe's recovery, American (and British) officials chose to disregard the provisions of the Yalta and Potsdam conferences as well as Moscow's consistent and moderate proposals on reparations, a new German government, and other crucial matters. In addition, this push to rehabilitate western Germany along conservative, capitalist, and anti-communist lines short-circuited a more thorough denazification process, limited the decartelization of German industry, and prevented substantial reform of organized labor. The result was not only a divided Germany, but a divided Berlin—the latter a situation particularly susceptible to direct superpower confrontation. Had Washington been more accommodating, Eisenberg concludes, Germany, Berlin, and Europe itself might not have been divided and the Cold War as we now know it would not have taken the course that it did.

Not that "Washington" or "U.S. officials" were of one mind on how to treat postwar Germany. A signal contribution here is the detailed illustration (based on the vast and largely untapped records of OMGUS, the American Military Government in Germany) of the disagreements between policy-makers in Washington, and between Washington and OMGUS. As early as 1944, anti-communist conservatives in the War and State Departments such as John McCloy, Charles Bohlen, George F. Kennan, George C. Marshall, and Walter Bedell Smith began to edge out "New Deal liberals" such as President

Roosevelt's Treasury Secretary, Henry Morgenthau. The latter wanted harsh treatment for Germany along with serious socio-economic reform, all to be executed in cooperation with the Soviets. Roosevelt protected the "liberal New Dealers" while alive, but with his death in April 1945, "the American government became increasingly committed to the rehabilitation of the German economy" (p. 71), and though Washington's desire to cooperate with Moscow remained strong in the summer, disagreements erupted over reparations. The Potsdam conference "kept the quadripartite experiment alive" with a reparations agreement cobbled together by Secretary of State James Byrnes, but avoided dealing head-on with other key questions regarding Germany's future.

On the ground in the American occupation zone, meanwhile, attempts at political and economic reform began badly thanks to a new President amenable to conservative and anti-Soviet policies, "a virulent anticommunism that flowed through many of the veins of Military Government," and "the affinity of American businessmen for Germany's old economic elite" (pp. 122, 165). Likewise, the four-power administration of Germany via an Allied Control Council (ACC) envisioned by the Allies at Potsdam ran into immediate trouble. Given apparent Soviet willingness to place practical cooperation over ideology and a willingness on the part of many OMGUS officials to work with the Russians, Eisenberg (echoing the arguments of the late John Gimbel) concludes that it was the French, and not the Soviets, who shouldered most of the blame for preventing four-power cooperation on the Council. Though Moscow was becoming less cooperative by early 1946, U.S. Deputy Military Governor Lucius D. Clay still believed firmly that unity among the victors would roll back the surging tide

of repression in the Soviet occupation zone and still desired a peaceful postwar Germany secured by unification and democracy.

But OMGUS's recommendations in early 1946 were read in Washington "against an international backdrop of mounting crisis" in Europe and the Near East (p. 222). In this atmosphere, none of the four occupying powers seemed prepared to compromise during the first round of the Council of Foreign Ministers (CFM) in Paris. Instead, as food and coal supplies in the western zones dwindled and the Soviets introduced seemingly moderate proposals on Germany's future, Washington and London accelerated the march toward division by merging their two occupation zones. True to their conservative, pro-business outlook, U.S. officials hoped the zonal merger would not only speed economic recovery in Germany—and hence Western Europe—but also provide a way to forestall distasteful British socialization schemes for the Ruhr.

Disagreements over reparations, the status of the Ruhr, and a new German government came to a head at the Conference of Foreign Ministers in Moscow in March and April 1947. Unlike previous CFMs, the Moscow meeting's primary purpose was to settle outstanding issues over Germany and Austria. Eisenberg argues that the American delegation—now led by the new Secretary of State George C. Marshall—went to Moscow "unwilling to compromise" (p. 278). Not surprisingly, then, the conference made no substantial progress on any important German problems. Again the blame lies with the United States (and the British) as neither delegation seriously addressed Molotov's moderate and promising proposals. As the Soviets seemed "eager for a deal" (p. 314), the conference represented a lost opportunity to reform and unify postwar Germany and resuscitate four-power cooperation.

The Moscow CFM was a turning point. From the spring and summer of 1947, Washington marched with intensified resolve toward formal division, and U.S. policy makers would not waste much time negotiating with Moscow over Germany's future. The American delegation arrived at the London CFM in late 1947 "determined to have a split" (p. 355). Despite disagreements among the Western allies over the revitalization of German industry, the status of the Ruhr, and other matters, London and Washington quickly drew up the formal blueprint for a separate West German state. When the green light was given to currency reform in western zones, Moscow responded with a blockade of western Berlin. This move

only hastened the march to division. As usual, U.S. policy makers were not interested in negotiated solutions or international arbitration (via the United Nations) to defuse the confrontation. "Ahead," the author laments, "were forty years of Cold War...an exceptionally dangerous and tragic period of international relations" (p. 485).

Eisenberg's analysis tells but half the story. "To understand why the Great Powers failed to establish a durable peace," she says, "it is necessary to focus on the choices that were made, the reasons for their adoption, and the identity of their choosers. Though this is no longer the fashion, the search for Cold War origins must entail the exploration of responsibility" (p. 7). Yet without a consideration of the available evidence from Soviet and former East German archives, the task is not possible. For Eisenberg, the Soviets simply reacted to U.S. aggression or obstinacy, and when Moscow undertook aggressive measures—most notably the blockade of Berlin—it was due to Western provocation. The reader is thus left with a very one-sided picture on the division of Germany. The clearly emerging picture of Stalin's mistrust and hostility toward the West makes it doubtful that Western concessions, even major ones, could have mollified him. Also clear now is the hope of Stalin and his German communist clients in 1945 for a unified, socialist postwar Germany—an aim which could have been attained neither by force nor by the ballot box. The Kremlin's unwillingness to tolerate political diversity together with the depredations of the Red Army, the NVD/NKVD, and the Soviet Military Administration in Germany—which the author downplays with an unnerving consistency—destroyed whatever popular sympathy existed in eastern Germany for communist-dominated socialism. As communists were by no means popular among most Germans in the western zones, Stalin and Molotov appealed to German nationalism and talked of a unified and democratic German state under a Weimar-era type constitution. But given Moscow's record of repression—well-known to Western officials at the time—it is hardly surprising that U.S. and British policy makers did not take such offers very seriously.

U.S. actions must be seen in light of these factors. If the Kremlin was unwilling to respect genuine democratic practices in their occupation zone, should U.S. policy makers (and historians, for that matter) be faulted for not believing they would do so in the rest of Germany? Eisenberg's case that key U.S. officials pushed a conservative and capitalist agenda which emphasized the contribution western Germany could make to Western Europe's economic recovery is a strong one. But new ev-

idence from the other side suggests that they did so in the face of a genuine threat to such recovery—and to democracy itself—posed by Moscow and the German communists.

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