

Teaching notes

This resource is one of a sequence of eight resources, originally planned for OCR's Unit 2 Option: Democracy and Dictatorships in Germany 1919-1963 (Y221). The sequence focuses on the key topic 'The impact of war and defeat on Germany 1939-49'. Although the content of the resources is drawn from this particular specification, there is no reason why they couldn't be used to support the teaching of other similar courses, perhaps with some adaptation of the suggested activities.

The eight resources in the sequence are:

1. The war economy and Total War (search '25206' to find it on [Teachit History](#))
2. The impact of bombing (search '25207')
3. Racial policies and the Final Solution (search '25208')
4. Morale (search '25209')
5. Opposition and resistance (search '25210')
6. Consequences of the Second World War (search '25211')
7. **The Cold War and Potsdam (this resource)**
8. Bizonia and the Berlin Blockade (search '25213')

Each resource contains a section of reading followed by some suggested tasks. These could be completed in class or as independent homework tasks.

Background

Following the Nazi invasion of the USSR in June 1941, the Soviet Union and Britain, later followed by the USA, were forced into an unlikely alliance. By 1945 following several wartime meetings, the cooperation between the British and Americans on one side, and the Soviet Union on the other, was rapidly fading. The final conference took place in Potsdam, after the defeat of Nazi Germany, but before the war in Asia had come to an end. Among the many subjects that were discussed by Stalin, Truman and Churchill (replaced during the conference by the newly elected Clement Attlee) was the future of Germany itself. However, as tensions between east and west increased and trust declined, it became increasingly difficult to create a political solution based on long term cooperation. Despite these difficulties, however, the former allies agreed on several important decisions that had a long term impact on Germany. At the Yalta conference earlier in 1945 it had been agreed that Germany would be divided into four zones of occupation, British, American, Soviet and French. Stalin believed that a reunified Germany would become a renewed threat to the Soviet Union and had no intention of allowing this to happen.

The Four D's

Germany was to be:

Democratised

The western allies had a different view about what constituted democracy than the Soviets. They allowed the development of a wide range of democratic political parties in their zones, and when the West German zones were merged in 1949, free elections returned Konrad Adenauer's Christian Democrat Party to power.

Decentralised

The allies believed that one of the main reasons for Nazi tyranny was the over centralisation of the German state. The German state parliaments, the *lander*, had been abolished by Hitler and replaced by *gauleiters* (regional governors). The western zones of the new divided Germany would see government and bureaucracy decentralised and power returned to the regions.

Demilitarised

The German Army was disbanded and only when West and East Germany developed as separate states were they re-armed by their cold war allies. Until 1945 militarism had been a key part of German national identity and culture, and after the war the allied powers attempted to remove (with limited success) this culture from German society.

De-Nazified

In the western zones, the British, French and Americans had pledged to remove Nazi ideas, education, culture and politics from their sectors of Germany. This proved to be a difficult task and one that all powers gradually abandoned. The Americans pursued de-Nazification with the greatest effort, but by 1948 they had realised how difficult it was to change people's beliefs and attitudes, especially forcibly. The allies all realised that policies which banned former Nazis from public life were unworkable. Major figures in the regime and war criminals were easy to identify and prosecute, but millions of ordinary Germans had been party members and had participated to some degree in the politics of Nazi Germany. Without these men and women Germany could not function, and therefore, to some extent, the occupying powers had to turn a blind eye to the pasts of millions of former Nazis.

Territorial losses

Germany lost territory in the east and the west. The provinces of Alsace and Lorraine that had been annexed by Germany were returned to France in 1945, but in the east, a far greater territorial shift took place. The Soviet Union had taken territory in eastern Poland at the end of the war and to compensate the Poles, their western border was shifted deep into eastern Germany, which lost a quarter of its territory. The new border with the Poles was drawn at the Oder-Neisse line, meaning that Germany lost some prime agricultural and coal mining territory.

Reparations

Stalin was keen to enforce reparations on Germany, the Soviet Union had lost 27 million civilians and soldiers in the war and the country had been devastated. The British and American negotiators at Potsdam found it hard to argue with the Soviets, who they felt were entirely justified in their desire for compensation. The massive losses of Soviet soldiers in taking Berlin had enabled the western powers to limit their own casualties and Stalin was able to use this sacrifice to pressurise Britain and America. The Americans had mooted equally radical plans at the start of 1945 on the future of Germany. The Morgenthau Plan, drawn up by Henry Morgenthau the US Secretary of the Treasury, proposed that Germany be de-industrialised and turned into an agricultural economy, forever economically weakened. In the context of such far reaching plans, the Soviet demands did not quite seem so extreme.

Not only was the USSR able to ship 85 percent of the Soviet Sector of Berlin's industry (over 100 major firms) to Russia, but ten percent of the industrial capacity of the western zones that was considered non-essential to the workings of those zones was also transferred to the USSR. In practice, this meant that the Soviets dismantled entire factories and industries and shipped them eastwards by train.

The French were not invited to Potsdam, a snub that the new free French Government found hard to tolerate. The Americans and British were both suspicious of French objectives and goals in Germany; French negotiators wanted the industrial heartland of Germany, the Ruhr, to be detached from the rest of the country and given to France to rule effectively as a colony. The Ruhr had abundant supplies of coal and was an attractive prize for the French, whose economy had suffered as a result of German occupation. The British foreign secretary, Ernest Bevin believed that if France were allowed to have her own way in Germany, the Soviets would have a far greater bargaining position to also demand parts of the Ruhr or other industrial regions of Germany.

East/West tensions over Germany

Germany was split into four zones on 5 June 1945, less than a month after the formal end of the Second World War in Europe. Each zone was occupied by one of the four allied powers, the Americans, British, French and Soviets. Berlin, in the centre of the Soviet zone, was also divided into four sectors, each occupied by one of the victorious powers. By the summer of 1945, however, the cooperation between the western powers and the Soviet Union had all but ceased. The zones were not divided with the German civilian economy in mind. Industries were separated between zones, in the example of the camera industry (a technology pioneered by Germany), cameras were made in the US zone but camera shutters were manufactured in the French zone and optical glass was made in the Soviet zone. This fragmenting of German industry and trade meant that the German economy was dependent on allied cooperation. The British and the Americans were content to work closely together but the French and the Russians wanted to rule their zones with no interference from other powers. Senior military officers of all sides met every ten days at the Allied Control Council, where issues that related to all zones were discussed.



German occupation zones map

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A Tale of Two Zones: The Soviets and the Americans

The Soviet Zone

The Soviet Zone was formally created on 9 June 1945 and it included a quarter of Germany's industry and an equal percentage of Germany's population. Stalin did not initially seek to provoke the western allies and so discouraged any direct Communist takeover in the Russian zone right away. He did not want to provoke a revolt against Russian occupation in the zone either and so encouraged Communists to cooperate with other parties and to talk about 'democracy' instead of socialism or Communism. However, even though Stalin advised caution, by September 1945 leading German Communists, including the later leader of the German Democratic Republic, Walter Ulbricht, pressed ahead with Stalinist policies.

The German Communist Party pledged to break up noble estates and give the land to the peasants, and the German nobility that had survived Hitler were attacked and killed by the Red Army – by the end of 1945 just 15% of the Germany Junker (noble) class survived. The Soviets struggled to find non Nazis to fill administrative and political roles. They promoted German Communists and surviving Jews to positions of authority, knowing they were not tainted by Nazism, and they also appointed ordinary German citizens to the roles of mayor or other major civic jobs, even if the new responsibilities were unwanted or unwelcome. Some former Nazis managed to hide their pasts from the Soviet authorities and take up new positions with the occupying regime, whereas others, such as former Gestapo men, were actively courted by the Soviets. They were presented with the choice of a train to a bleak future in Siberia or resuming a career as a secret policeman for the Communist authorities. The Nazi concentration camp system was kept largely intact for political prisoners to be sent to, and the Hitler Youth was re-branded the FDJ (Freie Deutsche Jugend), a Communist version of the Nazi organisation.

Rebuilding

Despite the terrible reputation of the Red Army in Germany, due to their war crimes against German civilians in the last months of the war, they did begin the process of rebuilding. Ordinary Germans were press ganged into clearing the rubble in the Soviet zone, but within nine months the Soviets had restored 200,000 houses to habitable use. They re-opened factories, rebuilt roads, trams, rail links, parks and theatres. Despite this, the Soviet occupiers did not revive the civilian economy and there were continual shortages of food, fuel and consumer goods.

The American Zone

Despite the plans put forward by Henry Morgenthau to return Germany to an agricultural economy, the American deputy Commander in Chief in Germany, General Lucius B. Clay, attempted to rebuild German industry. Clay was motivated to help the German economy because it would present democracy and capitalism in a positive light. If Clay could do this, then it would also show the failings of Communism in the eastern zone. Clay also believed that an economically weak Germany would be unable to pay its reparations and would also be forced to call on America for economic aid. A strong Germany would be able to trade and to become a market for American goods.

US soldiers in the American zone were better paid than their British, French and especially Soviet counterparts and had a far better standard of living than the ordinary German population. The Americans tended not to mingle with ordinary Germans and lived in compounds and bases removed from the civilian population and troops were initially encouraged not to fraternise with the civilian population. As the Cold War developed, however and the USSR became the main enemy of the Americans and the British, American soldiers were encouraged to have friendlier relations with the German people. The fear of a shift towards Communism or a resurgence of Nazism led the Americans to impose their own political values on their zone of occupation. They encouraged the development of the Christian Social Union in 1946, a party that appealed to both German Protestants and Catholics.

Tasks:

Debate: Should Potsdam be seen as an unfair punishment of the German people? Did the regime manage to evade punishment?

Form groups of four and divide in to teams of two. One side will argue that the German people were treated unfairly by the occupying powers. The other team will argue that, if anything, Germany was treated too leniently. You will need to read this resource and use the internet to do your research.

You might want to make notes under the following headings:

1. German territorial losses
2. Reparations
3. Demilitarisation
4. German war crimes

The table below will give you a rough outline of how the debate should be conducted. You must set out your argument and then listen to the other side's argument. Following this you then need to present the evidence that shows why you are correct. Then the other team will have an opportunity to ask questions or query your ideas. Once both sides have had a chance to present their evidence and answer questions, you can conclude the debate.

Team	Present arguments	Present evidence	Take questions	Conclusion
Too Harsh	5 mins	10 mins	5 mins	2 mins
Too Lenient	5 mins	10 mins	5 mins	2 mins