



After the Reich: The Brutal History of the Allied Occupation

Giles MacDonogh

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When Hitler's government collapsed in 1945, Germany was immediately divided up under the control of the Allied Powers and the Soviets. A nation in tatters, in many places literally flattened by bombs, was suddenly subjected to brutal occupation by vengeful victors. According to recent estimates, as many as two million German women were raped by Soviet occupiers. General Eisenhower denied the Germans access to any foreign aid, meaning that German civilians were forced to subsist on about 1,200 calories a day. (American officials privately acknowledged at the time that the death rate amongst adults had risen to four times the pre-war levels; child mortality had increased tenfold). With the authorization of President Franklin Delano Roosevelt, over four million Germans were impressed into forced labor. General George S. Patton was so disgusted by American policy in post-war Germany that he commented in his diary, "It is amusing to recall that we fought the revolution in defense of the rights of man and the civil war to abolish slavery and have now gone back on both principles"

Although an astonishing 2.5 million ordinary Germans were killed in the post-Reich era, few know of this traumatic history. There has been an unspoken understanding amongst historians that the Germans effectively got what they deserved as perpetrators of the Holocaust. First ashamed of their national humiliation at the hands of the Allies and Soviets, and later ashamed of the horrors of the Holocaust, Germans too have remained largely silent – a silence W.G. Sebald movingly described in his controversial book *On the Natural History of Destruction*.

In *After the Reich*, Giles MacDonogh has written a comprehensive history of Germany and Austria in the postwar period, drawing on a vast array of contemporary first-person accounts of the period. In doing so, he has finally given a voice the millions of who, lucky to survive the war, found themselves struggling to survive a hellish "peace."

A startling account of a massive and brutal military occupation, *After the Reich* is a major work of history of history with obvious relevance today.

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