

Call for papers

International Conference:

France and the German Question, 1945-1990

Paris, 7-9 February, 2013

Conveners :

Programme de recherche de la Sorbonne sur la Guerre froide/ Sorbonne Cold War History Project

in partnership with

Deutsches Historisches Institut/ The German Historical Institute, Paris

Presentation

Few would dispute the fact that the German question was definitively closed on October 3rd, 1990 when Germany once again became a unified and fully sovereign country. For forty-five years, the German question was both a nexus of intricate issues relating to the much postponed settlement of Germany's defeat in World War II and a fundamental interrogation on the desirable future(s) of Germany—or the two Germanys—in Europe and in the international system as a whole. It was, arguably, the most central issue throughout the Cold War, at least in Europe: “The German problem,” General Charles de Gaulle famously declared in 1965, “*is* the European problem.”

As such, the German question was central for all European powers, including of course the two superpowers, whose antagonistic relationship determined the fate of the divided country throughout the Cold War. Yet one country stands out as perhaps the most concerned of all: France. The factors explaining that country's particular interest in—and influence over—the German question in that period are multiple. History, of course, is key: over the course of three quarters of a century, the Franco-German conflict had been responsible for three wars, including the two world wars. Solving the German question, from 1945 onward, could not be achieved without overcoming this conflict; conversely, Franco-German reconciliation, in and of itself, was central to solving the German question.

Another major factor behind the importance of the German question for France—and of France's policies for Germany—had to do with the politics of European construction: to a large extent as a result of the foregoing, France and Germany, since 1950, have been the leading forces shaping the European community. The two countries thus created one of the most important preconditions for solving the German question and allowing for Germany's unification peacefully. (Two other important preconditions, or sets of preconditions, were of course, respectively, the existence of NATO and the role of the United States, and European détente and the role of the Soviet Union.)

To be sure, France's role in the German question has been the subject of considerable research, especially in the past twenty years. Yet systematic explorations of this matter both in its thematic breadth and chronological depth are scarce. The time has come for such an exploration. To a large extent, archival sources are now accessible for most of the period in most countries, including in France. Franco-German relations are no longer determined by this once vital consideration, thus allowing for a more detached treatment of this issue. In addition and even more importantly, the historiography has entered a phase of renewal. France's policies with regard to the German question in that period are being reevaluated, especially in the early decade (1945-1955) and in the final one (1981-1991). Relying on new archival material and/or new interpretations, historians have recently shown that these policies were far more significant and constructive than was previously believed, both in terms of accepting West Germany's resurgence in the immediate post war period and in terms of eventually accepting German unification.

Topics to be addressed

The objective of the conference is to explore new evidence, new insights and new questions regarding the various aspects of this matter throughout the period. While papers should focus on France and the German question, it goes without saying that this can be done from non-French perspectives, not least German ones (i.e. German perceptions on France's attitude vis-à-vis the German question) or from any other relevant perspectives. Finally, while the topic at hand is primarily diplomatic in nature, other types of approaches (in particular economic or cultural) are of course welcome.

We invite contributions **in English** dealing among others with any of the following topics over specific periods or the whole duration of the Cold War (please note that **the conference will take place exclusively in English**):

- French perceptions/approaches of Germany and the German problem/question, including the role of memories of the pre-1945 period.
- France and the division/unification of Germany;
- Franco-German relations and the German question;
- France, third parties (e.g. the U.S., the UK, Italy, etc.) and the German question;
- France, European construction and the German question;
- France, East-West relations and the German question;
- France, the Atlantic Alliance and the German question;
- France and the German question as seen from Germany;
- France and the German question as seen by third parties, including from a comparative perspective.

The organizers would, of course, be happy to consider additional proposals which potential contributors believe would fit in the overall intellectual framework of the conference.

Scientific Committee: Frédéric Bozo (Sorbonne Nouvelle – Université Paris III), Marie-Pierre Rey (Université Panthéon Sorbonne – Paris I), Stefan Martens (Deutsches Historisches Institut), N. Piers Ludlow (London School of Economics), Hélène Miard-Delacroix (Université Paris Sorbonne – Paris IV), Mary Sarotte (University of Southern California), Christian Wenkel (Ludwigs-Maximilians-Universität München), Andreas Wilkens (Université de Lorraine)

Procedure

The **deadline for proposals is May 8, 2012**. Proposals should include a title, a one page outline and a one page CV of the author with a list of major books and articles. Following the acceptance of the proposals by the scientific committee (before June 15, 2012), authors will receive editorial guidelines (e.g. format of the papers). In order for the papers to be available to conference participants beforehand, authors will be asked to submit their draft contributions by January 15, 2013.

The conference organizers intend to publish a selection of the papers as an edited volume and/or in scholarly journals. In view of a swift editorial process, the deadline for the submission of final drafts of the selected papers will be May 15, 2013

Proposals should be emailed to Prof. Frédéric Bozo: frederic.bozo@univ-paris3.fr and Prof. Marie-Pierre Rey: marie-pierre.rey@univ-paris1.fr

Participants will receive reimbursement for their transportation on the basis of economy fare as well as accommodation during their stay in Paris for up to three nights.