

Appendix B – Legal background of the Greek reparation claims

In the Paris Reparations Agreement of 1946 the German war crimes against Greece were billed at 7.1 billion US dollars. A few years later, under the threat of the oncoming Cold War, Germany was already needed by the Allies in the struggle against communism. For this reason, it was agreed in the London Agreement of 1953 that the recognised reparation demands against Germany should be postponed – until a final settlement in a later peace treaty. Greece, which was not among the victorious powers, had no say in this.

However, the Federal Republic of Germany made so-called global agreements with the West European countries in the 1960s, with which lump-sum compensation payments were made. A corresponding treaty was concluded with Greece for the sum of 115 million DM – a mere fraction of the actual debts. However, the victims of the armed forces crimes, forced labour or resistance fighters, for example, were explicitly omitted from these payments, and individual claims in the treaty expressly excepted. The Greek government has always maintained that no final settlement was reached with this global agreement – and even officials in the Federal Finance Ministry have conceded in writing that the Greek reparation claims were not fulfilled by this global agreement.

After the German reunification, the time had come to negotiate a final “Peace Treaty”, as mentioned in the 1953 London Agreement. But this was deliberately avoided and a so-called “2+4 Agreement” was concluded, which admittedly settled the renunciation of reparation claims, but only with the four “Great Powers” among the former Allies. Greece and several other countries were given no share in the solution of the agreement. They were unable therefore to make claims – or even to renounce them.

Almost all legal experts now agree that with this “2+4 Agreement” the London Agreement became invalid. In consequence, there is now the possibility for states and, if need be, individuals to validate the old claims – those claims that had been deferred since 1953 because of the London Agreement. This also applies to Greece and to Greek citizens.