

# The berlin blockade

War



For many historians, the Berlin Blockade effectively started the Cold War era. This is because it happened to be the first major issue which took place between the United States and her allies, on one hand, and the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR), on the other hand, after which years of tension between the two camps ensued (Byrnes). Essentially, The Berlin Blockade took place when the USSR cut off all access to Berlin in an attempt to force the United States, Britain, and France to the negotiating table for the purpose of discussing the future as well as the division of Germany (Wilde).

**Historical Background** When the Second World War ended in 1945, the victorious allied forces which consisted of the United States, Great Britain, France, and the USSR occupied Germany and divided the country into four zones and its capital (Berlin) into four sectors. Berlin, however, was located well inside the zone which was occupied by the Soviets. In other words, before the three other occupiers could gain access to their Berlin sectors, they had to pass through the Soviet-occupied zone.

Under their arrangement, although the country was already divided into four zones, it would still be considered as one economic entity to be controlled by the "Allied Control Council (ACC)" (Russian History Encyclopedia). Based in Berlin, the ACC was also known as the Allied Control Authority or the Alliiertes Kontrollrat in German. It was essentially a "military occupation governing body of Germany" composed of the representatives of the United States, Great Britain, and the USSR. A later addition was France whose representative was granted with the power to vote but did not have any duties.

The ACC was formally constituted on August 30, 1945. Its initial members were General Dwight Eisenhower of the United States, Field Marshal Bernard Montgomery of Great Britain, Marshal Georgy Zhukov of the USSR, and General Jean Joseph-Marie Gabriel Lattre de Tassigny of France (Spiritus-Temporis. com). Unfortunately, the relations between the USSR and the three other occupiers of Germany did not last that long because their self-appointed task of administering the occupied Germany under the provisions of the ACC agreement did not go as envisioned.

For one, the Soviets insisted on collecting huge reparations from its controlled eastern zone while the United States, Great Britain, and France, instead of demanding for reparations, wanted to revitalize the economy of their occupied zones in order to improve the living conditions of the residents (BBC Bitesize). Their disagreement was sparked by the January 1, 1947 decision of the British and the Americans to merge their zones and form the Bizone. Then the two countries spent the rest of 1947 and the early part of 1948 in the preparation of a currency reform that would ultimately introduce the Deutschmark.

This currency reform was only the first step towards the establishment of a separate West German state. This move was opposed by the Russians because, according to them, it showed that the Americans and the British were no longer interested in taking part in the “ four-power control of Germany. ” The Russians further argued that the American and the British move would ultimately result to the death of the ACC (Spiritus-Temporis. com). By January 1948, the Soviets were already starting to severely criticize

the intents and methods which the Americans and the British were employing in dealing with the economic problems of West Germany.

Their disagreements remained unresolved until finally, in March of the same year, the Soviet delegation to the ACC staged a walkout. That Soviet act effectively dissolved the council because no further meetings had been conducted after their walkout (Russian History Encyclopedia). In spite of their disagreements, all four victorious countries were wary of the rebirth of a unified Germany. They all agreed that allowing Germany to regain its economic and military strength would be a very risky proposition because the country might again represent a threat to world peace.

However, they differed in their methods and intentions regarding the future of the country. First, the USSR wanted to convert the eastern territory into a communist state. Then it feared that if the zones controlled by the United States, Great Britain, and France would be totally integrated into the capitalist West, its control over its own Russian zone would be threatened, considering that the three Berlin sectors controlled by the three occupiers were located deep inside the Soviet-occupied zone.

Stalin, in particular, who was known to have been consumed by paranoia, suspected that the western occupied sector in Berlin would first attempt to alienate the eastern sector from Russian influence and later serve as a staging point of a destabilization campaign against the Soviet Union itself, including the entire Eastern European communist bloc. For this reason alone, Stalin could not allow the emergence of a unified and rejuvenated West Germany inside the Russian zone. The other three occupiers, on the other

hand, were bent on working together towards their common objective of rejuvenating their occupied territories.

Their intention was to unify their three zones into a capitalist West Germany and integrate the same into their economic and defense organizations. Their purpose was to exercise complete control over West Germany while providing all the necessary assistance it needed in order to become a self supporting state (Wilde). In all indications, the disagreement over the Berlin question was already the start of the Cold War era. Both the western bloc and the Soviet Union were already considering their positions in the new world political order.

So that when the Soviet delegation walked out of the ACC meeting, the United States and Great Britain became really convinced of the urgency of the establishment of a West German state. It could not be denied that they, themselves, did not want to give the Soviet Union the opportunity to consolidate its hold over all of Europe. For this purpose, a " Six Power Conference" was convened. Delegates from the United States, Great Britain, France, the Netherlands, Luxembourg, and Belgium sat down and discussed the issue.