# The Berlin blockade, 1948-1949

By the end of this spread you should be able to:

1 explain the reasons for a the breakdown of
co-operation in Germany between the Western
Allies and the USSR b the Soviet blockade of Berlin
2 describe the Western response to the blockade

#### Democracy

- The USSR
- 1 gave political authority in its zone to the minority Communists.
- 2 tried to force the Socialist majority elected to run Berlin city council to merge with the Communists. Socialists refused with Western support.
- 3 blocked Western attempts to create democracy throughout Germany.

#### Reconstruction

- 1 The war left Germany devastated. Food and fuel were scarce. Thousands were homeless.
- 2 The USA and Britain wanted to help Germany recover its prosperity as quickly as possible.
- 3 The USSR
- a objected because it wanted a weak Germany
- **b** refused to allow its zone to trade with the other three.
- 1 Between 1945 and 1947, what factors contributed to the rise in tension in Germany between the Western Allies and the USSR?
- 2 Look at the actions taken by the Western Allies and the USSR between January and 24 June 1948. In each case
- a Why would one side have objected?
- **b** How would the other have justified its action?
- **3** Why did Berlin become the focus of the dispute between the USSR and the Western Allies in 1948?

## From co-operation to conflict

### Allied agreements, 1945

- 1 Divide Germany into four zones of occupation (fig. 1). Run it through a Joint Allied Control Commission.
- **2** Divide Berlin into four zones. Run it jointly (although it was in the Soviet zone. Fig. 1).
- 3 Keep Germany as one country:
- a remove the Nazis
- b hold free elections
- c sign a peace treaty with the new government.

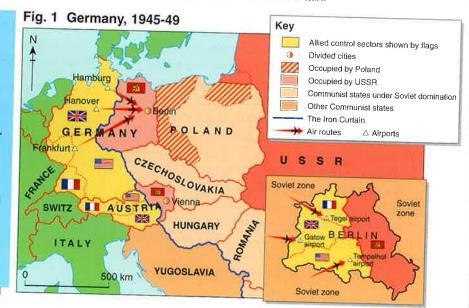
# Points of conflict, 1945-1947

#### Reparations

In 1946 the Western Allies stopped giving the USSR reparations from their zones (page 51).

#### Berlin

- 1 Within the Soviet zone (fig.1). Soviet troops able to control all access.
- 2 Western Allies allowed access to their sectors by road, rail, canal, and air 'corridors'.
- **3** The USSR believed the Western Allies had no right to be in Berlin. It saw their presence as a threat because
- a they had a base inside the Soviet zone
- **b** the Capitalist way of life was on show there.
- 4 Western Allies wanted to be there
- a to prevent the USSR controlling the capital
- b to observe Soviet activity behind the Iron Curtain.



#### Towards a crisis, 1948 Western Allies USSR **Attitudes Attitudes** 1 Frustrated by the Soviet refusal to co-operate Fears that towards 1 a strong, democratic, united Germany will be hostile a economic revival, including a much-needed new 2 any new 'Western' currency will spread into the currency Soviet zone and undermine Soviet control of economic b setting up of democracy. 2 Decide to develop these in their own zones. **Actions** Actions January Merge US and British zones into one March Representative walks out of the Allied economic unit (the Bizone) Control Commission complaining that Western attitudes make it unworkable April 1 include Western zones in OEEC and Marshall April Troops begin to hold up and search road and Plan (page 55) rail traffic entering Berlin from the Western zones. June 1 Announce plans (with France) to create a June 23 Introduces its own new currency into West German state Soviet zone including Berlin June 18 Introduce new currency into Western zones June 24 Accuses West of interference in its zone. June 23 Introduce new currency into Western Cuts off all road, rail, and canal traffic into Western

#### Blockade and airlift, 1948-1949

#### Soviet aims

sectors of Berlin

To force the Western Allies

- 1 to pull out of their sectors by starving West Berlin into surrender
- 2 to abandon their plans for the separate development of their German zones.

#### Western options

- 1 Abandon Berlin. The Americans and British agreed they could not do this because it meant:
- a handing two million West Berliners over to Communist rule
- b losing their only base behind the Iron Curtain
- **c** opening the way for Soviet domination of Western Germany.
- **2** Send troops to force the routes open again. This might mean war with the USSR.
- **3** try to supply West Berlin by air. The USSR could stop this only if it shot down the planes.

#### The airlift

sectors of Berlin.

- 1 The Americans and British organized a roundthe-clock airlift of essential supplies such as food, fuel, medicines.
- **2** In 11 months a total of 275,000 flights delivered an average of 4000 tonnes of supplies per day.
- **3** As a warning to the USSR, the USA stationed B-29 aircraft capable of carrying atomic bombs
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  4 Despite shortages and hardship. West Parling.
- 4 Despite shortages and hardship, West Berliners supported the Western Allies and rejected Soviet pressure to become part of one city under a Communist council.
- **5** On 12 May 1949 the USSR reopened the land routes to Berlin.