

countries in Europe. It would also encourage the Russians to hazard adventures in Vienna, Turkey or elsewhere. On the other hand, if we stand fast in Berlin we shall undoubtedly rally German opinion and gain the time which is so necessary to pursue the advantages we possess in the West.

6. We must however be clear in our minds that to stay in Berlin is a means to an end rather than an end in itself. In consequence it would be a mistake to buy a settlement in Berlin by concessions to the Russians which would give them influence in Eastern Germany and above all in the Ruhr. For their part the Russians are unlikely to make any concessions in Berlin unless they expect to obtain important advantages in Germany as a whole. We can therefore expect a progressive worsening of the position in Berlin as the winter approaches. It will indeed be difficult for us to meet all the Berliners' requirements from airborne attacks, but our policy should be to continue the air supply route to its maximum capacity. This may result in the Berliners going hungry and a complete standstill in industry resulting in unrest. The Russians are unlikely to agree to take on the responsibility of feeding the population of the Western sectors unless under conditions which are unacceptable to us. We should continue, however, to build up our airlink to the maximum and maintain our garrison until the only alternative for the Soviet is to eject us by force. Meanwhile efforts should be made through the diplomatic channel to ascertain whether the Russians are prepared to negotiate a settlement on tolerable terms.

3.10 Willy Brandt on the Berlin Blockade, 1948

Future West German Social Democrat chancellor Willy Brandt, who returned to Germany in 1946 from exile in Scandinavia, experienced the Berlin Blockade as an assistant to the mayor of West Berlin, Ernest Reuter. In this excerpt Brandt describes what life was like in the besieged city during the crisis.

The Soviets proclaimed the blockade of Berlin on the pretext that the streets were temporarily impassable and that near Magdeburg a bridge had to be repaired. Railway traffic, autobahn, highways, and waterways to and from the West were blocked. Only the three air corridors, each thirty kilometres wide, remained open (...) Even the supply of medicine for sick persons and milk for little babies was stopped. Two million West Berliners were to be starved into capitulation.

The efficiency of the airlift surpassed the highest expectations (...) The transport capacity increased from week to week. One had counted on a minimum requirement of 3,400–4,500 tons; in September, on a single day, approximately

7,000 tons were flown into Berlin. And on the 15th of April of the following year 1,400 planes landed in Berlin's airports—an aeroplane every sixty-three seconds. They transported 5,300 tons of coal, 1,850 tons of foodstuffs, 1,000 tons of raw material of different kinds—i.e., on a single day 8,000 tons of freight. That was the same quantity which prior to the blockade was brought to Berlin on all highways and waterways (...)

When the blockade was lifted by the Russians on May 12th, 1949, it had lasted exactly 322 days. In these eleven months more than two million tons had been flown into Berlin—a gigantic achievement which revolutionised all ideas regarding air transport, prevalent up to that time.

Over these figures, these miracles of technique, organisation and machines, we must not forget the victims. Thirty-nine Englishmen, thirty-one Americans, and nine Germans lost their lives on the front of the blockade (...)

At the beginning of the blockade the supplies in the west sectors were enough to guarantee the barely sufficient rations for approximately four weeks at maximum. In the first months just enough food was brought in by air to secure the further issue of the rations and to save the Berliners from starving to death—but hunger they could not be spared.

The stock of coal was supposed to last for thirty days but it was impossible to replenish it to the same extent as the urgently needed food. Apartments and the greater part of offices—even the administration buildings—could no longer be heated. Every family got for the whole winter an allotment of twenty-five pounds of coal and three boxes of wood. Some fuel was smuggled in by black-marketeers. Most of the families were glad when they could keep one room of their apartment moderately warm for a few hours of the day. Fortunately, the winter was not particularly severe.

Cooking in Berlin was done ninety per cent by gas. During the first five months of the blockade consumers were limited to half their previous gas consumption.

Electric current was only available for four hours daily, usually in two periods of two hours each. These periods came at different times of day in different sections of the city, and people had to rise at odd hours in order to take advantage of the available current. The preparation of a cup of hot 'Ersatz' coffee or of a bowl of soup gave the housewife a nearly insoluble problem (...)

One factory after the other had to shut down. Small businesses that required electric current for their operations had no choice but to operate when this was available, even at four o'clock in the morning. Most often their employees had to get to work on foot. The subway operated only from six o'clock in the morning to six o'clock in the evening; the street-car service was greatly curtailed; the buses ran only at rare intervals because of limited petrol stocks. Although 25,000 unemployed were occupied with the removal of the ruins, the figure of people out of work increased to more than 150,000.

In the meantime the Communists had changed their tactics. After threats and intimidations they suddenly made a tempting offer to the West Berliners. They asserted that the Soviet government had brought large quantities of foodstuffs into the east sector. All the West Berliners had to do if they wanted to get that food was to register with ration offices in the east sector. The answer was very impressive. The ration office in Treptow had sent out invitations to 285,000 persons. At first, only twenty persons from the west sectors registered. Sixteen persons registered in Prenzlauer Berg, and nineteen in Pankow. By the end of the year, out of two million Berliners 85,000 had accepted the Communist offer—four per cent of the population. And most of them were people who lived in the west sector, but who worked in the east sector and continued to buy their rations there as they had always done.

The Berliners did not waver, though in addition to hunger and cold—particularly in the first months of the blockade—they were subjected to a vicious fear propaganda. The Soviets had declared that all of Berlin was theirs, and their newspapers in German language didn't cease to foretell the realisation of that claim. They spread rumours of different kinds, they didn't spare threats and intimidations. Thus, here and there, doubts arose as to whether one would be able to resist the Russian pressure in the long run. The retaliation and vengeance in case of a defeat would be terrible.

In spite of Reuter's arousing appeals and in spite of General Clay's assurances, one couldn't close one's mind to the plain fact that, from the military point of view, Berlin's situation was hopeless. The United States had 3,000 troops in the city, the British 2,000, and the French 1,500, while the Soviets had 18,000 soldiers in East Berlin and a further 300,000 in the east zone. They could at any time overrun Berlin. And what would happen then? Would the Western democracies risk a world war in the interest of a few million Berliners?

The secret doubts were continually nourished by means of a sometimes skilful Communist propaganda. Their press and their radio brought up every day new 'revelations' regarding the imminent withdrawal of the Western Powers; the SED swamped West Berlin with pamphlets; at the borders of the sectors propaganda cars were placed, their loudspeakers announced the hopelessness of any further resistance. The 'front-town politicians' asked the Berliners to sacrifice their savings in favour of the Westmark, the workers were asked to leave the Communist Trade Union Federation, and thus lose their relief contributions, hunger and unemployment were their certain fate—and all for what? For the defence of a system the collapse of which was only a matter of weeks.

The Communists didn't limit themselves to mere propaganda by word and writing. The sessions of the Municipal Council were broken up by a Communist mob, Social Democratic city councillors and members of the Municipal Council were assaulted when they were leaving the hall, policemen who tried to come to their aid were arrested (...)

The cases of kidnapping and arbitrary arrests increased from month to month. Russian soldiers repeatedly invaded the American sector. Once they kidnapped five policemen, and confiscated their police car. That same day a city councillor was arrested in his office by the east sector police. The next day Soviet military police assaulted two Berliner policemen in the American sector. When they tried to resist the arrest they were knocked down, stabbed, and dragged into the Russian sector.

The blockade became tighter from week to week. Throughout the summer West Berliners were able to obtain a limited quantity of food and other supplies from the Soviet zone. Trucks drove out daily into the surrounding countryside and brought back vegetables; individuals went on 'hoarding expeditions' to the east zone and returned by boat, train, subway, or bicycle with wood, coal, briquettes, potatoes.

In the autumn the Soviets sealed these holes. German travellers were forbidden to bring food and supplies from the surrounding countryside into the west sectors. Controls were extended to the subway lines running between West and East Berlin. The Communist police not only confiscated food and other goods, but extended their searches to pocket-books and wallets and confiscated Westmarks. Even the possession of a West Berlin newspaper made a person suspect—the police took his name down, he was a marked man.

The Berliners lived in a besieged fortress. To hunger and cold was added the paralysing feeling of complete isolation from the outside world.

On May 12th the 'traffic restrictions'—as the Soviets called their blockade—were lifted. As Reuter said, the Berliners could celebrate 'the most beautiful May since 1945' (...) Berlin was, as Reuter said, the shield behind which the consolidation in the free part of Germany could take place.

3.11 Andrei Gromyko on the Establishment of the Federal Republic, September 1949

In this note Soviet deputy foreign minister Andrei Gromyko comments on the establishment of the Federal Republic of Germany on 20 September 1949. The German Democratic Republic (GDR) was formed soon afterwards.

On September 20, 1949, a separate government was formed [in Bonn] for the western zones of Germany. In connection with this new step by the governments of the U.S.A., Great Britain and France, designed to deepen the division of Germany, we ought to react to these divisive actions by sending the appropriate notes to the governments of the three powers.

Sending notes to the governments of the U.S.A., Great Britain, and France is