

2. According to the Cominform, how did Yugoslav Marxism differ from orthodox Marxism?
3. What did the Cominform want Yugoslav Communists to do in order to resolve the situation?
4. Why did Stalin want to get rid of Tito? Why was Tito able to survive Stalin's efforts to get rid of him?

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The Berlin Blockade, 1948–1949

THE FIRST MAJOR MILITARY CRISIS of the Cold War began in June 1948. The Western allies had responded to the Communist coup in Czechoslovakia with the Treaty of Brussels and a decision to create an independent West German state. This threatened the Soviet objective of a permanently crippled Germany, and when the West announced the creation of a common West German currency called the deutsche mark, Moscow moved to seal off West Berlin and force the Western powers to remove their troops from the divided city.

Like Germany as a whole, Berlin had been divided into occupation zones at the end of World War II, with the Soviets in the east and the Americans, British, and French in the west. Since the city sat in the midst of Soviet-occupied East Germany, Stalin assumed that he could drive the others out simply by cutting off the roads and railways that linked it with the West. Since few believed that the West could remain in Berlin if the Soviets moved against it, Stalin surely thought his actions involved minimal risk.

The American response, however, caught him by surprise. President Truman announced that the United States would stay in Berlin, and he ordered a military airlift to supply West Berliners with food, fuel, and supplies. Secretary of State Marshall subsequently sent a protest note to the Soviet government, demanding that the blockade be lifted and categorically asserting US rights, responsibilities, and determination to remain in Berlin. The Berlin Blockade lasted eleven months, but the airlift proved effective, and the crisis ended in May 1949 when the Soviets quietly lifted their blockade.

NOTE FROM SECRETARY OF STATE MARSHALL TO THE SOVIET AMBASSADOR, 6 JULY 1948

EXCELLENCY: The United States Government wishes to call to the attention of the Soviet Government the extremely serious international situation which has been brought about by the actions of the Soviet Government in imposing restrictive measures on transport which amount now to a blockade against the sectors in Berlin occupied by the United States, United Kingdom and France. The United States Government regards these measures of blockade as a clear violation of existing agreements concerning the administration of Berlin by the four occupying powers.

The rights of the United States as a joint occupying power in Berlin derive from the total defeat and unconditional surrender of Germany. The international agreements undertaken in connection therewith by the Governments of the United States, United Kingdom, France and the Soviet Union defined the zones in Germany and the sectors in Berlin which are occupied by these powers. They established the quadripartite control of Berlin on a basis of friendly cooperation which the Government of the United States earnestly desires to continue to pursue.

These agreements implied the right of free access to Berlin. This right has long been confirmed by usage. It was directly specified in a message sent by President Truman to Premier Stalin on June 14, 1945, which agreed to the withdrawal of United States forces to the zonal boundaries provided satisfactory arrangements could be entered into between the military commanders, which would give access by rail, road and air to United States forces in Berlin. Premier Stalin replied on June 16 suggesting a change in date but no other alteration in the plan proposed by the President. Premier Stalin then gave assurances that all necessary measures would be taken in accordance with the plan. Correspondence in a similar sense took place between Premier Stalin and Mr. Churchill. In accordance with this understanding, the United States, whose armies had penetrated deep into Saxony and Thuringia, parts of the Soviet zone, withdrew its forces to its own area of occupation in Germany and took up its position in its own sector in Berlin. Thereupon the agreements in regard to the occupation of Germany and Berlin went into effect. The United States would not have so withdrawn its troops from a large area now occupied by the Soviet Union had there been any doubt whatsoever about the observance of its agreed right of free access to its sector of Berlin. The right of the United States to its position in Berlin thus stems from precisely the same source as the right of the Soviet Union. It is impossible to assert the latter and deny the former.

It clearly results from these undertakings that Berlin is not a part of the Soviet zone, but is an international zone of occupation. Commitments entered into in good faith by the zone commanders, and subsequently confirmed by the Allied Control Authority, as well as practices sanctioned by usage, guarantee the United States together with other powers, free access to Berlin for the purpose of fulfilling its responsibilities as an occupying power. The facts are plain. Their meaning is clear. Any other interpretation would offend all the rules of comity and reason.

In order that there should be no misunderstanding whatsoever on this point, the United States Government categorically asserts that it is in occupation of its sector in Berlin with free access thereto as a matter of established right deriving from the defeat and surrender of Germany and confirmed by formal agreements among the principal Allies. It further declares that it will not be induced by threats, pressures or other actions to abandon these rights. It is hoped that the Soviet Government entertains no doubts whatsoever on this point.

This Government now shares with the Governments of France and the United Kingdom the responsibility initially undertaken at Soviet request on July 7, 1945, for the physical well-being of 2,400,000 persons in the western sectors of Berlin. Restrictions recently imposed by the Soviet authorities in Berlin have operated to prevent this Government and the Governments of the United Kingdom and of France from fulfilling that responsibility in an adequate manner.

The responsibility which this Government bears for the physical well-being and the safety of the German population in its sector of Berlin is outstandingly humanitarian in character. This population includes hundreds of thousands of women and children, whose health and safety are dependent on the continued use of adequate facilities for moving food, medical supplies and other items indispensable to the maintenance of human life in the western sectors of Berlin. The most elemental of these human rights which both our Governments are solemnly pledged to protect are thus placed in jeopardy by these restrictions. It is intolerable that any one of the occupying authorities should attempt to impose a blockade upon the people of Berlin.

The United States Government is therefore obliged to insist that in accordance with existing agreements the arrangements for the movement of freight and passenger traffic between the western zones and Berlin be fully restored. There can be no question of delay in the restoration of these essential services, since the needs of the civilian population in the Berlin area are imperative. . . .

Discussion Questions

1. What might Stalin have hoped to accomplish by cutting off Western access to Berlin?
2. Why did the Americans decide to stay in Berlin, despite the Soviet blockade? What were the advantages and disadvantages of an airlift as a means of supplying the city?
3. According to Marshall, what were the legal and moral foundations of the American presence in West Berlin?
4. On what basis did Marshall insist that the Soviets had no right to restrict Western access to the city?
5. What were the implications of Marshall's assertion that the United States would "not be induced by threats, pressures or other actions" to abandon Berlin?

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The NATO Alliance, 1949

THROUGHOUT ITS EXISTENCE, the United States had been reluctant to commit itself to "entangling alliances" with other nations in peacetime. One of the principal reasons for its struggle for independence from Great Britain had been the desire to keep clear of Europe's quarrels. But Soviet actions in Czechoslovakia and Berlin in 1948 convinced Washington to modify its position and conclude a military alliance with eleven other nations in Europe and North America. This alliance, known as NATO (the North Atlantic Treaty Organization), testified to America's assumption that the Cold War would last indefinitely.

The NATO alliance was constructed upon the foundations laid by the Treaty of Brussels (Document 14). The consultative council created at Brussels had organized a standing military committee, which spent much of 1948 discussing the potential threat of a Soviet invasion of Western Europe. The Berlin Blockade helped convince skeptics that this was a real danger. In such an environment, nations that only four years earlier had been allied with the Soviet Union in a desperate struggle against Nazi Germany now gave notice