

How did the USA react to Soviet expansion?

Not surprisingly, Truman was extremely concerned at the growth of Soviet influence in eastern Europe, but as most of the countries involved had been liberated by the Soviet Union and there were still Soviet troops in the area, there was little he could do.

In February 1947, however, Truman was informed by the British that they could no longer afford to station troops in Greece and Turkey. He knew that the withdrawal of British troops would almost certainly lead to the Soviet Union taking control of these two countries. He therefore paid for British troops to stay in the area and gave financial support to the two governments. This was the beginning of the American policy of 'containment' – preventing the further spread of communism. The policy was officially announced in a speech made by Truman on 12 March 1947. The views put forward in the speech have since become known as the 'Truman Doctrine' (Source I). In this speech, Truman let it be known that the USA was prepared to give help to any country under threat from communism.

The Marshall Plan

Truman did not intend to send soldiers to Europe to fight communism. Instead he would attack it at its roots. As he said in his 12 March speech, he believed that communism flourished where there was 'misery and want'. He was well aware that post-war Europe had plenty of misery and want. Governments were struggling to cope with the damage caused by the war and there was still rationing and shortages in many countries. On top of this, the USA was still owed almost \$12 billion by European countries.

Truman therefore decided that the USA should use its wealth to provide economic aid to Europe. Restored economies in Europe would be less susceptible to communism and also provide greater trading opportunities for American companies. The plan was announced in a speech made by the American secretary of state, General George Marshall, in June 1947. He claimed that the American policy was not aimed at any country, but just at ending hunger and poverty. The Soviet Union was not fooled – at a conference of Cominform in September 1947, one delegate described the Marshall Plan as 'an American plan to enslave Europe'.

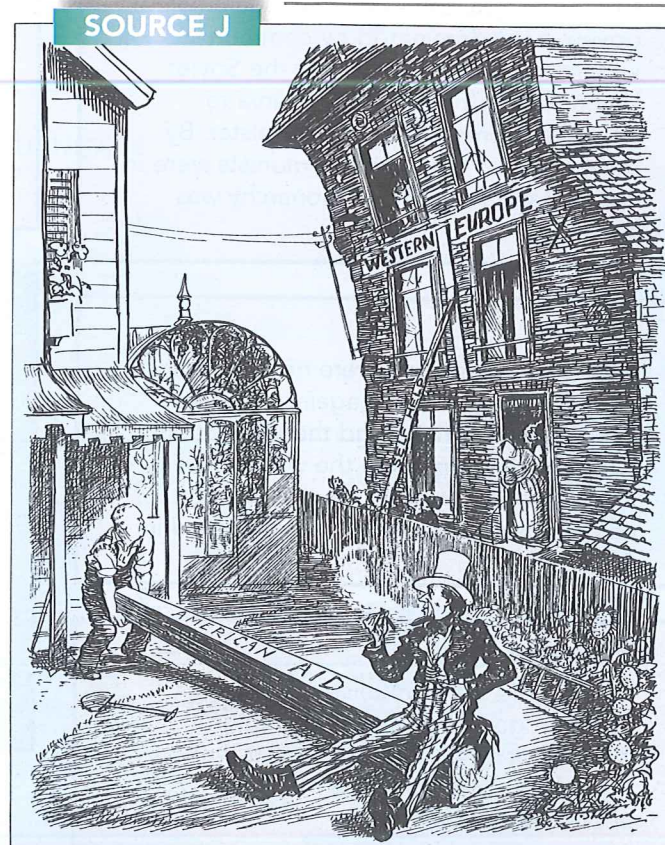
SOURCE I

The free peoples of the world look to us for support in maintaining their freedoms.

I believe that it must be the policy of the United States to support people who are resisting attempted subjugation by armed minorities or by any outside pressures. I believe that we must help free peoples to work out their own destiny in their own way.

Extracts from President Truman's speech on 12 March 1947.

A cartoonist's view of the Marshall Plan, drawn in 1947.



NEIGHBOURS
"Come on, Sam! It's up to us again."

The countries of Europe, however, were keen to be enslaved, and between 1948 and 1952 the USA provided \$13 billion to sixteen western countries. President Truman would have been perfectly happy to provide aid for east European countries too, and Poland and Czechoslovakia were keen to apply. But Stalin realised that with the money would come a commitment to 'western' ideas. He forbade any communist countries from receiving aid under the Marshall Plan.

In September 1947 the Soviet Union formed the Communist Information Bureau (Cominform) to strengthen ties between communist countries. The communist parties in western Europe (those in Italy and France were particularly strong) were ordered to try to wreck their countries' use of American aid by strikes, but they were unsuccessful. In January 1949, Stalin announced the formation of the Council for Mutual Economic Aid (Comecon) to rival the Marshall Plan. The communist countries, however, did not have surplus funds to provide financial assistance to each other.

What were the causes of the Berlin blockade?

Stalin's refusal to allow communist countries to apply for Marshall Aid had a significant effect on events in Germany. After the Second World War, Germany's economy was in ruins. The western

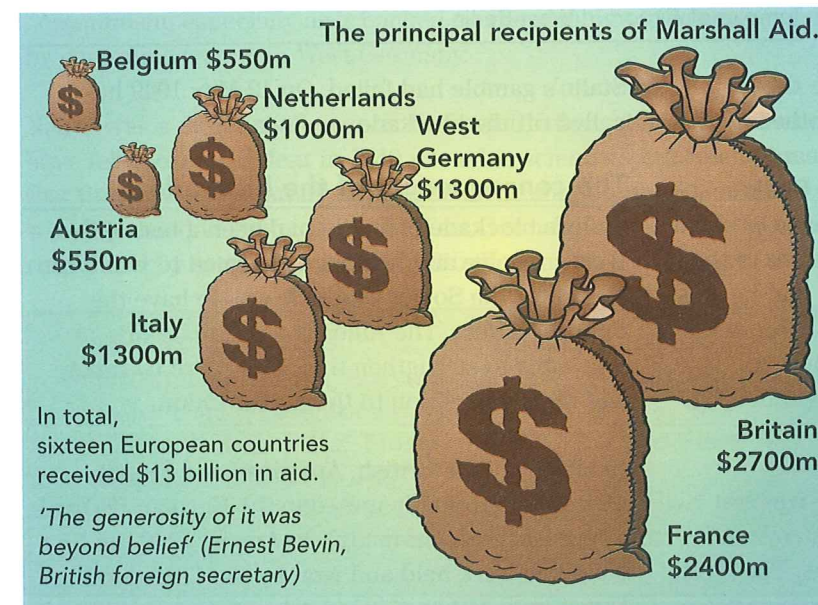
SOURCE K

The Marshall Plan was seen in the Soviet Union as the Americans wanting to impose their influence over the countries to which they gave Marshall Aid. It was seen as an aggressive act on behalf of the Americans. This is why it was never accepted by our country.

Dimitri Sukhanov, a senior Soviet politician in 1947, commenting in 1988 on the Marshall Plan.

powers did not want to restore Germany's military power, but the only way to end poverty and suffering in the country was to rebuild its industries and restore the economy. Therefore the western part of Germany was included in the Marshall Plan. Not surprisingly, Stalin refused to allow the Soviet zone to receive aid.

In 1947 the British and American zones of Germany had been combined to form 'Bizonia'. Britain and the USA then decided to introduce a new currency, the Deutschmark. Stalin was worried that a prosperous western Germany would be a threat to the Soviet Union's security. He wanted all the occupied zones to remain undeveloped. He was also concerned at the prospect of a wealthy western Germany beside a poor, Soviet-controlled eastern Germany.



QUESTIONS

- 1 What was the purpose of
a the Truman Doctrine
b the Marshall Plan?
- 2 How were such plans viewed in the Soviet Union?
- 3 'There would not have been a Cold War if the USA had not introduced the Truman Doctrine and the Marshall Plan.' Do you agree?

Stalin decided to try to stop the economic development of western Germany, by taking steps against West Berlin. Berlin was divided in the same way as Germany was, which meant that 2 million Germans in the British, American and French zones lived in the middle of the Soviet zone, but not under Soviet rule. On 24 June 1948, Stalin decided to blockade West Berlin by cutting off road and rail links. To break the blockade, the Allies would have to send tanks to smash through the road and rail blocks. Such action would be an act of war and Stalin doubted that the western powers would go that far. He thought that they were much more likely to abandon their zones and leave the whole of Berlin in Soviet hands.

But the British, French and Americans saw West Berlin as a test case. If they backed down, then Stalin would be encouraged to make other demands, elsewhere. So they decided to send supplies to West Berlin to keep it going. These would not be sent by road or rail, but would be flown from air bases in western Germany into three bases in West Berlin. This was a considerable task as it would require almost non-stop flights to move the enormous quantities of food, fuel and other necessities into West Berlin. What it meant, however, was that the ball was back in Stalin's court. To stop the supplies, he would have to shoot down planes that carried no military threat to the Soviet Union. This would show clearly that he was the aggressor. To further encourage him not to do so, the Americans stationed B-29 bombers in Britain, thus putting the Soviet Union within range of atomic bombs if war broke out.

Over the next eleven months, the three western allies made 275,000 trips to West Berlin and delivered over 2 million tons of supplies. The West had shown its commitment to West Berlin and



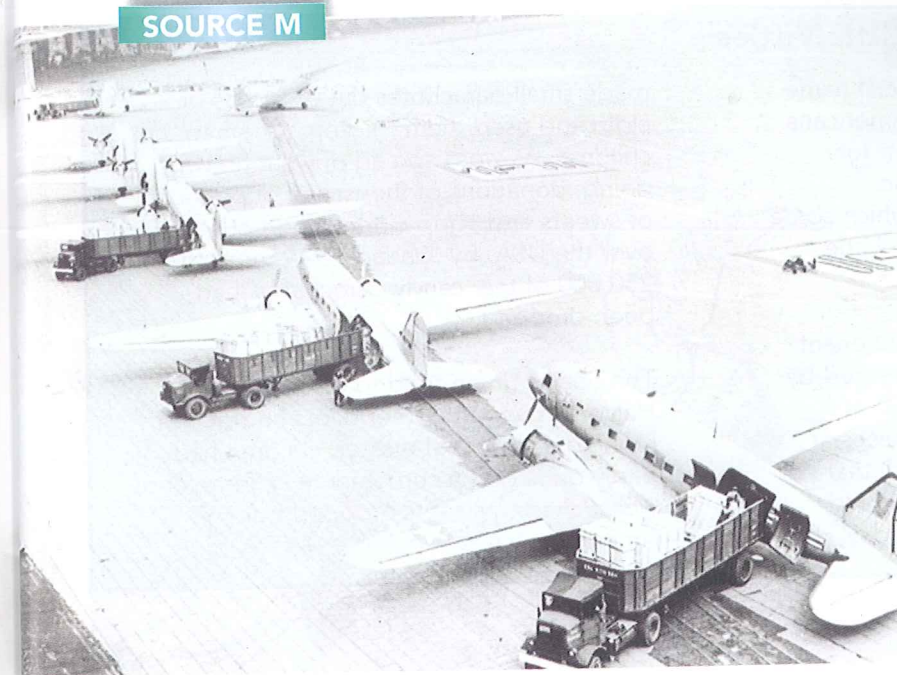
A painting by an American artist showing US planes landing supplies at Templehof Airport in West Berlin.

Stalin's gamble had failed. On 12 May 1949 he called off the blockade.

The consequences of the blockade

Stalin's blockade of Berlin had been a test of the West's resolve and had been designed to win West Berlin for the Soviet Union. It was to have the opposite effect. The Allies stood firm, taking measures to strengthen their control of Germany and their opposition to the Soviet Union.

In May 1949 the British, American and French zones were formally united in the German Federal Republic (West Germany). In August 1949 the first elections were held and won by the Christian Democrats, led by Konrad Adenauer, a committed



Aid being unloaded from American planes at Templehof Airport in June 1948.

opponent of communism. Part of this new country was West Berlin, where the three Allied zones also combined to form a West German oasis in the middle of East Germany, as the Soviet zone was renamed in October 1949.

Perhaps even more worrying for Stalin was the formation of the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (NATO). This was a military alliance of the European powers plus Canada and the USA. It was a defensive alliance in which the members agreed to offer help if any of them was attacked. It was the first time the USA had signed a military alliance in peacetime and showed its commitment to containing communism, especially as it backed up the signing of the agreement by stationing troops in West Germany.

NATO was a direct challenge to the Soviet Union, although Stalin may have felt more confident in 1949 when his scientists informed him that they had successfully developed an atomic bomb. When NATO was expanded in 1955 to include West Germany, the Soviet Union responded by setting up its own military alliance, the Warsaw Pact.

The two alliances

- **NATO:** USA, Britain, Belgium, Canada, Denmark, France, Iceland, Italy, Luxembourg, Netherlands, Norway and Portugal. Greece and Turkey joined in 1952 and West Germany in 1955.
- **The Warsaw Pact:** Soviet Union, Albania (expelled 1968), Bulgaria, Czechoslovakia, East Germany, Hungary, Poland and Romania.

SOURCE N

Planes were taking off every thirty seconds, soldiers were loading trucks, the maintenance shops were a beehive of activity, and the mess halls and clubs were open. It was a 24-hour operation. The commanding officer stood in the control tower with his stop watch, checking the timing of the planes. To most people it seemed an impossible task to meet the needs of two million people by airlift. But except for water, Berlin was supplied with everything by air.

An American stationed at a base in the American zone of Germany describes the frenzied activity of the Berlin airlift.

The Story of 'Operation Little Vittles'

'Operation Vittles' was the unofficial name given to the Berlin airlift by the Americans. ('Vittles' is an American slang term for food.) There was also, however, an operation within the main airlift which some American pilots called 'Operation Little Vittles'.

This operation was the idea of Lieutenant Gail S. Halvorsen. He was so impressed by the friendliness of German children at Templehof airdrome (one of the bases at which American aid planes landed) that he made a promise to them that he would drop sweets for them on the next day. He

made small parachutes out of scraps of cloth and used them to drop sweets to the children. As word spread of what he was doing, donations of thousands of pounds of sweets and scrap cloth came from all over the USA. By January 1949 more than 250,000 of the 'candy parachutes' had been dropped.

The Soviet Union tried to discredit what Halvorsen and the other pilots had done by running a story that excited children had badly damaged a cemetery near Templehof whilst chasing sweets dropped from American planes.

Who was more to blame for the start of the Cold War – the USA or the Soviet Union?

By 1955 Europe was divided between the communist countries behind the Iron Curtain and under Soviet control, and the capitalist countries of the West. Germany was also divided into two separate countries, and the two superpowers and their allies were arranged into separate military alliances, each of which had the option of turning any conflict into nuclear warfare. The Cold War was firmly under way and was to dominate world politics for the next 30 years.

Which of the two sides was most to blame is a question that would be answered differently in Moscow and Washington. The Soviet Union would claim that it had been invaded twice in the twentieth century and that the West had a history of anti-communism that made it vital for the Soviets to set up a pro-Soviet buffer zone in eastern Europe. The Americans would argue that the communists wanted world domination and that the only way to prevent western Europe (and ultimately the USA) coming under a system that they despised was to act in Europe to contain communism. The Berlin blockade showed what the Soviet Union would do if it were not checked.

Regardless of who was more to blame, there is no doubt that the major cause of the Cold War was that each 'side' was convinced of the correctness of its actions and fiercely distrustful of the other side. This was to be seen even more clearly in events outside Europe in Cuba and Vietnam.

QUESTIONS

- 1 Why did Stalin decide to blockade West Berlin?
- 2 a What options were open to the western allies to break the blockade?
b Why did they choose an airlift?
- 3 'Operation Little Vittles shows that the Americans were operating in the interests of the people of West Berlin and the Soviets were not.' Do you agree?
- 4 What were the consequences of the Berlin blockade?

Paper 1-type assessment: Causes of the Cold War

SOURCE A



THE BIRD WATCHER

A cartoon published in July 1948. The birds are carrying supplies into Berlin.

QUESTIONS

Section A Questions

- 1a Study Source A. Do you think this cartoon was published in Western Europe or in Eastern Europe? Support your answer by referring to details of the cartoon and your own knowledge. (6)
- b Explain why the Soviet Union decided to gain control of Eastern Europe after the Second World War. (9)

Section B Questions

- 2a What was agreed at the Potsdam Conference in July 1945? (4)
- b Explain why the Soviet Union was unhappy at the outcome of the Potsdam Conference. (6)
- c 'The most important cause of the Cold War was the Soviet Union's fear of the West'. Do you agree with this statement? Explain your answer. (10)