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The second edition of this popular title starts by examining the crucial events of 1944-47, which led to the breakdown of the Second World War alliance between the 'Big Three' and the onset of the Cold War. It shows how the Cold War shaped post-war Europe through the creation of two great military and economic blocs. Key events are covered such as the Berlin blockade of 1948-49, the Hungarian revolt of 1956, the second Berlin crisis of 1958-61 and the collapse of Communism from 1989-91. In this new edition additional material on détente has been added.

Throughout the book, key dates, terms and issues are highlighted, and historical interpretations of key debates are outlined. Summary diagrams are included to consolidate knowledge and understanding of the period, and exam-style questions and tips for each examination board provide the opportunity to develop exam skills.

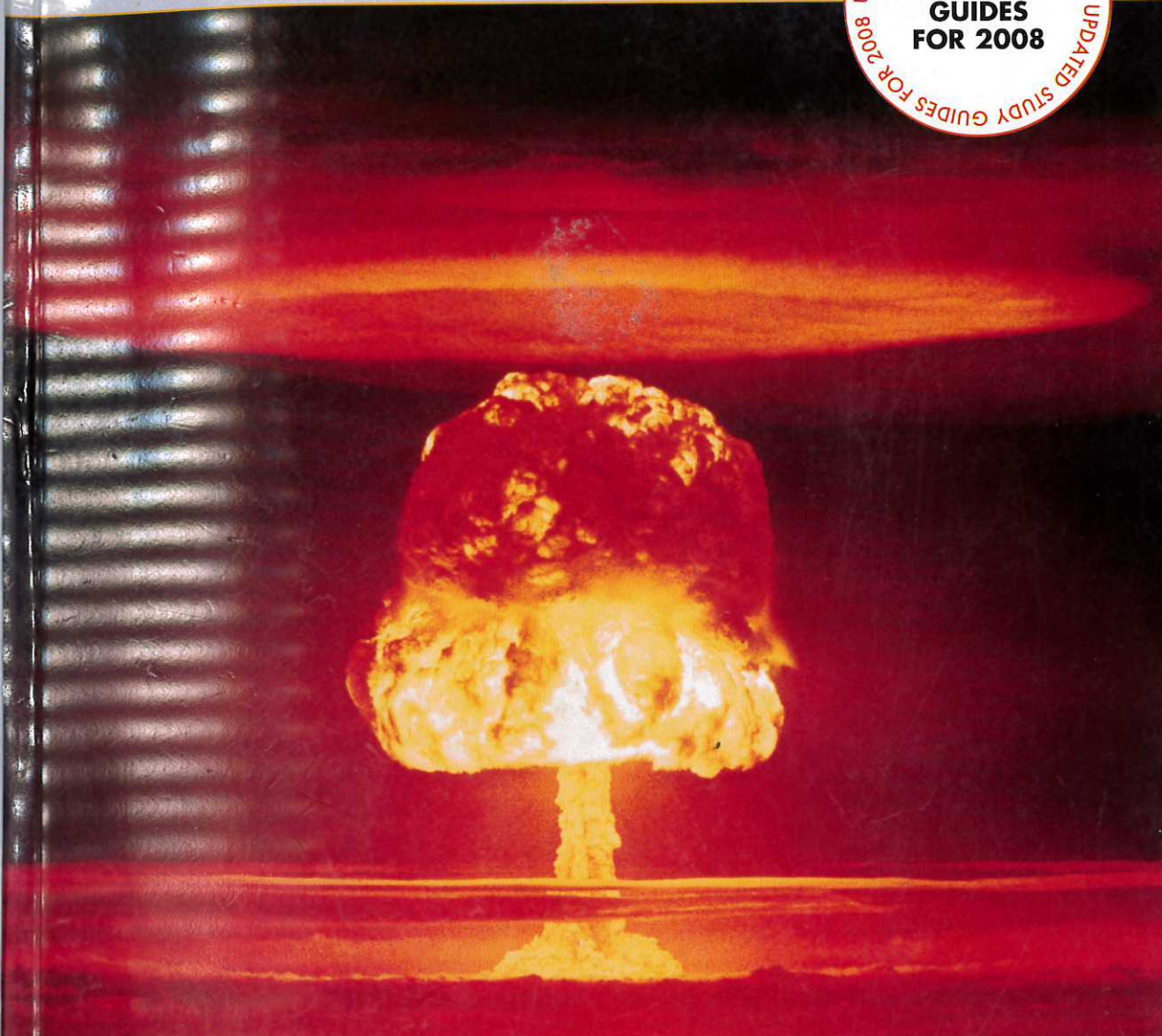
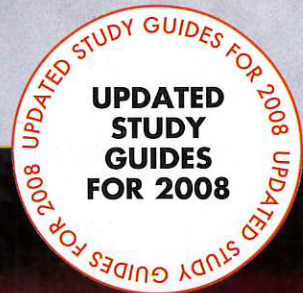
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HODDER EDUCATION www.hoddereducation.co.uk

ISBN 978-0-340-90700-9

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EUROPE AND THE COLD WAR 1945-91 SECOND EDITION Williamson

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# 1

## The Cold War: An Introduction

### POINTS TO CONSIDER

The point of this introductory chapter is to help you to understand the overall pattern of events before studying the various phases of the Cold War in Europe in greater detail. It introduces you to the main events and themes of the Cold War:

- How and why it started
- How it developed and changed between 1945 and 1989
- How historians have interpreted it

### Key dates

1917	October	Russian Revolution
1918	April	Wilson's Fourteen Points
1945		End of the Second World War
1947	March	Truman Doctrine
	June	Marshall Plan
1948-9		Berlin Blockade
1949	April	Formation of NATO
1950	June	Start of the Korean War
1953	March 5	Death of Stalin
	July	Korean Armistice signed
1958		Second Berlin Crisis
1961	August 13	Construction of the Berlin Wall
1962		Cuban Missile Crisis
1968	August	Invasion of Czechoslovakia by Warsaw Pact forces
1971	September	Four Power Agreement on Berlin
1975		Helsinki Final Act
1979	December	USSR invaded Afghanistan
1983		Pershing and Cruise missiles installed in Western Europe
1989	November 9	Berlin Wall breached
1990	October	Germany reunited

## 1 | What Was the Cold War?

The term 'cold war' had been used before 1945 to describe periods of extreme tension between states stopping just short of war. In 1893 the German **socialist**, Eduard Bernstein, described the **arms race** between Germany and its neighbours as a kind of 'cold war' where 'there is no shooting but ... bleeding'. In May 1945 when the USA and the USSR faced each other eyeball to eyeball in Germany this term rapidly came back into use. The British writer George Orwell, commenting on the significance of the dropping of the atom bomb, foresaw 'a peace that is no peace', in which the USA and USSR would be both 'unconquerable and in a permanent state of cold war' with each other. The Cold War was, however, more than just an arms race. It was also, as the historian, John Mason, has pointed out, 'a fundamental clash of ideologies and interests'. Essentially the USSR followed Lenin's and Marx's teaching that conflict between Communism (see page 3) and **capitalism** was unavoidable, while the USA and its allies for much of the time saw the USSR, in the words of President Reagan in 1983, as an 'evil empire', intent on the destruction of democracy and civil rights.

A US historian, Anders Stephanson, has defined the essence of the Cold War as follows:

- Both sides denied each other's legitimacy as a regime and attempted to attack each other by every means short of war.
- Increasingly this conflict became bipolar. There was an intense build up of both nuclear and conventional military weapons and a prolonged arms race between the USA and the USSR.
- Each side suppressed its internal dissidents.

Most historians would more or less accept this definition, although there is less agreement on the time-scale of the Cold War. The British historian, David Reynolds, whose chronology is for the most part followed in this book, argues that there were three cold wars:

- 1948–53
- 1958–63
- 1979–85.

These were 'punctured by periods of *détente*'. Two Russian historians, Vladislav Zubok and Constantine Pleshakov, however, provide a slightly different model: they define the Cold War as lasting from 1948 to the Cuban Crisis of 1962 and the subsequent 27 years as no more than a 'prolonged armistice' rather than actual peace. The problem with this interpretation is that it ignores the outbreak of the 'Third Cold War' in 1979.

While the chronology of the Cold War is open to debate, and the beginning of the 'Second Cold War' could as easily be dated from October 1956 as from November 1958, it is important to grasp that the years 1945–89 formed a 'Cold War era', in which

### Key question

What were the main characteristics of the Cold War and how many cold wars were there?

Germany was defeated and occupied by the USA, Britain and the USSR: May 1945

The war with Japan ended after the dropping of atom bombs on Hiroshima and Nagasaki: August 1945

### Socialist

A believer in socialism: the belief that the community as a whole, rather than individuals, should control the means of production, the exchange of goods and banking.

### Arms race

A competition or race between nations to arm themselves with the most deadly and effective weapons available.

### Capitalism

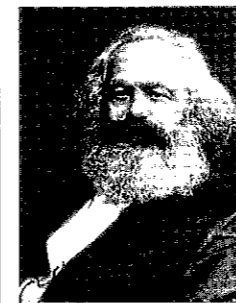
An economic system in which the production of goods and their distribution depend on the investment of private capital.

### Détente

A state of lessened tension or growing relaxation between two states.

Key dates

Key terms



### Profile: Karl Marx 1818–83

- 1818 – Born in Trier, Germany  
 1835–41 – Studied in Bonn and Berlin  
 1848 – Published the *Communist Manifesto*. Took part in the 1848 revolutions in Cologne  
 1849 – Fled to London when charged with high treason  
 1849–83 – Lived in London and formulated his theories of the class struggle and the economic laws determining the eventual collapse of capitalism and rise of Communism

Marx was a German philosopher of Jewish extraction, and the theoretical and philosophical system he constructed was the intellectual basis of Marxism–Leninism, the ideology of the USSR. Marx was convinced that capitalism would inevitably be overthrown by the workers or 'proletariat' in a revolution where they would seize control of the factories and banks. Initially they would create a 'dictatorship of the proletariat' in order to defend the revolution, but once the revolution was safe the new proletariat state would simply begin to 'wither away' and be replaced by a Communist society where economic production would be subordinated to human needs, or, as Marx put it: 'from each according to his ability, to each according to his need'.

Marx idealistically believed that once this stage was achieved, crime, envy and rivalry would become things of the past. Vladimir Ilych Lenin (1870–1924) both applied and adapted these ideas in Russia after the Revolution of 1917.

years of intense hostility alternated with periods of *détente*, but, even then, the arms race and ideological competition between the two sides continued. The US historian, John Gaddis, argues that the Cold War lasted for so long because of the nuclear balance. Soviet military, particularly nuclear, strength disguised the essential economic weakness of the USSR, which eventually caused its collapse (see page 144).

### Key question

Did the Cold War pre-date the end of the Second World War?

## 2 | The Origins of the Cold War 1917–45

The simultaneous expansion of Russia and the USA until they dominated the world had been foreseen as early as 1835 by the French historian Alexis de Tocqueville, who observed:

There are now two great nations in the world, which, starting from different points, seem to be advancing toward the same goal: the Russians and the Anglo-Americans. ... [E]ach seems called by some secret design of Providence one day to hold in its hands the destinies of half the world.

It was, however, the First World War that brought these great states more closely into contact with each other. When the USA entered the war against Germany, they were briefly allies, but this changed dramatically once the **Bolsheviks** seized power in October 1917 and made peace with Germany.

### The Russian Revolution and Allied intervention

One historian, Howard Roffmann, argued that the Cold War 'proceeded from the very moment the Bolsheviks triumphed in Russia in 1917'. There was certainly immediate hostility between Soviet Russia and the Western states, which initially tried to strangle Bolshevism at birth by intervening in the Russian civil war and backing its opponents. Ideologically, too, there was a clash between the ideas of the US President, Woodrow Wilson, and Lenin. Wilson, in his Fourteen Points of April 1918, presented an ambitious global programme for self-determination, free trade and collective security through a League of Nations, while Lenin preached world revolution and Communism.

The year 1917 was pivotal in the First World War. In Russia, a revolution broke out in February and in April the USA declared war on Germany. Then, in October, the Bolsheviks under Lenin's leadership seized power.

### The USSR and the West 1924–45

The events of 1917–18 certainly marked the ideological origins of the Cold War, but if the meaning of a Cold War is interpreted along the lines of Stephanson's definition (see page 2), then there was not a proper Cold War during the 1920s and 1930s.

In 1920 the USA withdrew into **isolation**, and in the 1930s the USSR under Stalin increasingly concentrated on building up its military and industrial strength. This did not stop Moscow from attempting to undermine capitalism and the British and French colonial empires through the **Comintern**. In the late 1920s relations between Britain and the USSR were so poor that they have been described as the first Anglo-Soviet Cold War. Yet there was no bipolar line-up.

In the 1930s, for most of the time, the USSR and the USA were on the sidelines, while the growing divide was between the Axis powers, Germany and Italy, and the Western democracies, Britain and France. Shortly before war broke out in 1939, the USSR secured its neutrality on highly favourable conditions through the Nazi-Soviet Pact. Thus by the end of 1939 de Tocqueville's prophecy still seemed to be, as John Gaddis has put it, 'a wild improbability'.

It was Hitler who created the context for the Cold War, when he invaded Russia in June 1941 and then, just after the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor in December, declared war on the USA. The subsequent defeat and occupation of Germany by the USSR and the Western Allies in 1945 at last brought the two superpowers, the USSR and the USA, face to face. A few days before he committed suicide in April 1945 Hitler predicted that:

The Russian Revolution: October 1917  
The Fourteen Points: April 1918

Key dates

**Bolsheviks**  
Russian Communists. The term, which means majority, was originally given to Lenin's group within the Russian Social Democrat Party in 1903.

Key term

**Key question**  
How did relations develop between the USSR and the main Western states, 1924–45?

**Isolation**  
A situation in which a state has no alliances or contacts with other friendly states.

Key terms

**Comintern**  
The Communist International was formed in 1919. Theoretically, in the words of its chairman, Zinoviev, it was 'a single foreign Communist Party with sections in different countries', but in reality it was controlled from Moscow.

**Key date**  
War in Europe ended: 8 May 1945

With the defeat of the *Reich* [Germany] and pending the emergence of the Asiatic, the African, and perhaps the South American nationalisms, there will remain in the world only two Great Powers capable of confronting each other – the United States and Soviet Russia. The laws of history and geography will compel these two Powers to a trial of strength either military or in the fields of economics and ideology.

**Key question**  
When did the Cold War start? Which of the two superpowers was more responsible for starting it?

### 3 | The Beginnings of the Cold War in Europe 1945–8

The years 1945–8 saw the beginning of the Cold War in Europe, but historians cannot agree on who started it or on whether it could have been avoided. Most, however, do not dispute that it was a consequence of Hitler's defeat. This created a vacuum not only in Germany but in most of continental Europe, which was filled by the armies of the wartime allies. The Soviets occupied the whole of Eastern Europe up to the river Elbe, while the Americans, British and French dominated Western Europe, Greece and the Mediterranean. Inevitably the interests of the Great Powers, particularly of the USA and USSR, collided with each other in this vacuum. Some historians see this as the key explanation of the Cold War. Louis Halle, for instance, has likened the Cold War to placing a 'scorpion and a tarantula together in a bottle'. The British historian S.R. Ashton calls this 'the centrist view', as it emphasises fundamental differences rather than stressing that the Cold War was the fault of one side or the other.

**Key question**  
What are the interpretations of traditionalist historians of the Cold War?

#### Traditionalist interpretations

**Traditionalist** Western historians, such as Herbert Feiss, writing in the 1950s, and, more recently in 1995, R.C. Raack, firmly put the blame for starting the Cold War on Stalin. They argued that Stalin ignored promises given at the Yalta Conference in February 1945 (see pages 28–30), to support democratically elected governments. Instead, he proceeded over the next three years to put his own Communist stooges in power in the Eastern European states. Once it was clear that Britain and France were too weak to defend Western Europe, the Americans intervened and made the following key decisions, which in effect marked the beginning of the Cold War:

Key terms

**Traditionalist**  
In the sense of historians, someone who has a traditional view of historical events.

**Bizonia**  
In 1945, war-defeated Germany was divided into four zones occupied by the Americans, British, French and Soviets. In January 1947 the British and American zones were amalgamated and called Bizonia.

- Rather than let Greece and Turkey go Communist, Truman offered them, in the spring of 1947, military and financial help to defend themselves from attack from Communist forces. This policy became known as the Truman Doctrine.
- The Marshall Plan, announced in mid-1947, helped to revive the Western economies through the injection of large sums of money and so block the spread of Communism.
- In Germany, the USA, in the absence of any agreement with the USSR, merged its zone of occupation with the British in January 1947, thereby creating **Bizonia**. In June 1948 the

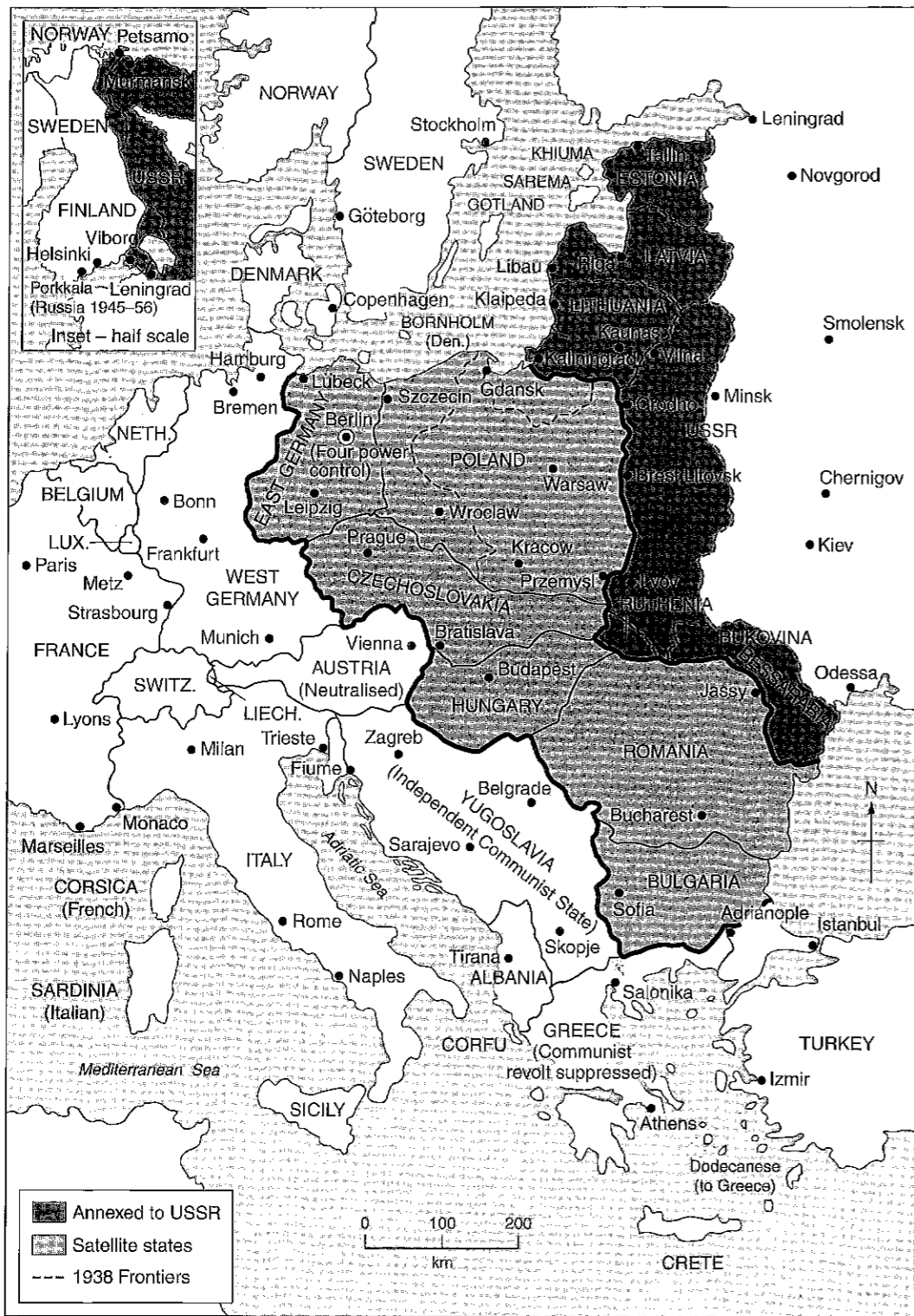


Figure 1.1: Central Europe in 1955.

**Key term**  
**Paranoia**  
 Literally a mental condition characterised by an exaggerated fear of persecution. Here it means obsessive distrust.

**Key question**  
 What are the main arguments of the revisionist historians?

**Key term**  
**Revisionist**  
 In the sense of historians, someone who revises the traditional or orthodox interpretation of events and often contradicts it.

**Key question**  
 How accurate is it to describe the early years of the Cold War as bipolar?

**Key date**  
 The Berlin Wall was built to stop East Germans fleeing to the West through the open frontier between East and West Berlin: 13 August 1961

**Key question**  
 Why did a Third World War not break out between 1948 and 1953?

Western Allies introduced a new currency into their zones and made the crucial decision to set up a separate West German state. This interpretation of the start of the Cold War showed the USA responding defensively to aggressive Soviet moves. In the 1990s the historian John Gaddis gave a new slant to this interpretation by arguing that the Cold War was an unavoidable consequence of Stalin's **paranoia**, and was an extension of the way he dealt with opposition within the USSR.

**Revisionist historians**  
**Revisionist** historians writing in the 1960s and 1970s, however, argued that the USA and, to a lesser extent, Britain, pursued policies that caused the Cold War in Europe. For instance, William Appleman Williams, writing as early as 1959, claimed that Washington was aiming to force the USSR to join the global economy and open its frontiers to both US imports and political ideas, which would almost certainly have undermined the Stalinist regime. Ten years later another historian, Gabriel Kolko, summed up US policy as aiming 'to restructure the world, so that American business could trade, operate, and profit without restrictions everywhere'.

**The role of other European countries in influencing the course of the Cold War**  
 Given the bipolar nature of the Cold War, historians initially concentrated on the USSR and the USA, yet in the early stages of the Cold War both Britain and France were still influential, although declining powers. Recent research has shown how Britain played a major role in the division of Germany and in turning the offer of Marshall Aid into a practical economic recovery plan. The Cold War ultimately divided Europe into two great blocs, yet within Western Europe, as we shall see, the individual states were, to quote Reynolds, not just 'blank slates on which America could write a new history'. Similarly, in Eastern Europe historians are beginning to discover that local Communist politicians were at times also able to influence events, as was seen particularly in the events leading up to the building of the Berlin Wall.

**4 | The 'First Cold War' 1948-53**  
 The years 1948-53 were a period of prolonged confrontation in Europe between the USA and the USSR. From 1948, at the latest, it became clear that the Cold War in Europe essentially revolved around the German question.

**The Berlin Blockade**  
 The Soviets were determined to stop the Americans and their Allies from building up a new and powerful state in West Germany. They therefore blockaded West Berlin, which was occupied by the three Western Allies, from June 1948 to May

1949, in the hope that they could force Washington to reverse this policy. They were thwarted because of the Anglo-American airlift, which managed to keep West Berlin supplied with food, clothing and raw materials right through the winter of 1948–9.

The Berlin Crisis was the first major confrontation between the Americans and Soviets. It reinforced the division of Germany and Europe and speeded up the arms race. In April 1949 the creation of **NATO** marked the foundation of a new Western alliance, while in July the Russians exploded their first atom bomb. The Federal Republic of Germany (FRG) was set up in September to be followed a month later by the Soviets establishing the German Democratic Republic (GDR).

### The Korean War and its consequences

The outbreak of the Korean War led to demands for arming West Germany when a North Korean army invaded South Korea. The situation in Korea had disturbing parallels with divided Germany. Since 1945, when the Americans and Russians liberated Korea from the Japanese, North Korea had been within the Soviet sphere of influence, while South Korea had come under US control. There was considerable fear in Europe that the Korean situation might be the prelude to a similar attack on Germany. Military demands for West German rearmament and French fears of revived German power were reconciled through the Pleven Plan of October 1950, which proposed that West German soldiers should be integrated into the European Defence Community (**EDC**).

One of the consequences of the Korean War was that the former enemy states, Italy and (West) Germany, under US pressure, were gradually integrated both politically and economically into Western Europe. This was exactly what Stalin had hoped to avoid. In 1952 in an attempt to stop West German rearmament, Stalin proposed setting up a free neutral Germany with its own army, but he failed to overcome the suspicions of either the Western powers or the West Germans. During these years tension between the USSR and the Western powers was dangerously high. Why then did war not break out? Was it nuclear weapons that kept the peace or was Stalin in reality a cautious politician who was only too aware of the terrible losses the USSR had suffered in the Second World War?

### 5 | The 'Thaw' 1953–7

The death of Stalin marked a turning point in the Cold War in Europe. The Soviet leadership, absorbed in an internal power struggle, wanted to ease tension with the Western powers. It withdrew Soviet troops from Austria, but elsewhere the **Iron Curtain** remained firmly in place. When West Germany joined NATO in May 1955, the Russians responded by creating the Warsaw Pact, a military alliance composed of the USSR and the Eastern European satellite states.

The Berlin Blockade:  
1948–9

Formation of NATO:  
April 1949

Start of Korean War:  
1950

Key dates

#### NATO

The North Atlantic Treaty Organisation was a military alliance which linked the USA and Canada to Western Europe. It became the cornerstone of the defence of Western Europe against Soviet threats.

#### EDC

The European Defence Community, the aim of which was to set up a Western European army jointly controlled by the Western European states.

#### Iron Curtain

A term used by Churchill to describe how Stalin had separated Eastern Europe from the West.

Key terms

#### Key question

Why can it be argued that 1953 was the end of the 'First Cold War'?

Key date

Death of Stalin:  
5 March 1953

#### Key question

Why do some historians call this period the 'Second Cold War'?

Key dates

Second Berlin Crisis:  
1958–61

Cuban Missile Crisis:  
1962

Key terms

#### Thaw

A period of improved relations between East and West: a 'thaw' in the 'Cold War'.

#### Four power control

In 1945 it was agreed that Berlin should be divided into four zones and be administered jointly by the four occupying powers.

#### Free city

A city that enjoys self-government and is not part of a state.

The **thaw** confronted the Soviet leadership with a dilemma that it never solved. If it went too far down the line of destalinisation and liberalisation, it risked losing control of its satellites. Khrushchev's appeal for different 'national roads to Socialism' in 1956 fuelled demands for greater independence in both Poland and Hungary. In Poland these demands were partly satisfied, but in Hungary threats to withdraw from the Warsaw Pact and to end the domination of the Communist Party led to Soviet military intervention in 1956. The defeat of the Hungarian revolt showed both the limits to destalinisation, and that the Western Allies would not intervene in what was regarded as a Soviet sphere of interest.

### 6 | The 'Second Cold War' 1958–62

#### Second Berlin Crisis 1958–61

Although Europe's division was a reality by 1958, the balance of power in Germany was still precarious. The government of the GDR was hated by its population and only kept in place by Soviet bayonets. The FRG, on the other hand, was rapidly becoming a major European power, and its growing prosperity exercised a magnet-like pull on the population of the GDR. Berlin was still under **four power control**. As it was possible to cross unhindered from the Soviet to the Western sectors of the city, between 1949 and 1958 well over 2.1 million East Germans out of a population of 17 million had escaped this way to the West. Inevitably this was a serious threat to the economic and social stability of the GDR.

The key to the dramatic increase in tension between 1958 and 1962 was Khrushchev's determination to use the impressive advances the USSR had made in missile technology to frighten the Western powers into making concessions in Germany. The Berlin Crisis began in November 1958, when Khrushchev demanded that West Berlin should become a '**free city**' and that all Western troops should withdraw from it. He threatened further that, if there was no agreement within six months, the USSR would sign a peace treaty with the GDR that would enable it to control the access routes to West Berlin. Khrushchev failed to carry out this threat, but he did allow the GDR to seal off East Berlin from the Western sectors on 13 August 1961 by the construction of what became known as the Berlin Wall.

#### The Cuban Missile Crisis 1962

Building the wall effectively ended the crisis, although global tension reached a new peak in October 1962 when Khrushchev installed nuclear missiles in Cuba in a bid to stop US attempts to overthrow the Communist regime of Fidel Castro. Only when he agreed to withdraw these, after the most dangerous confrontation between the USA and USSR in the whole of the Cold War, was a way open for *détente* between the superpowers in Europe.

### 7 | The Period of *Détente* 1963–79

In the 1960s both the USSR and USA wanted a relaxation of tension in Europe. The USA was distracted by the Vietnam War, while the USSR faced serious economic problems and a growing challenge from China. This resulted in the **Test Ban Treaty** of 1963 and the **Non-Proliferation Treaty** for nuclear weapons in 1969. The construction of the Berlin Wall had forced the FRG to rethink its relations with the GDR, as it now seemed that the latter would survive for the foreseeable future.

Despite the invasion of Czechoslovakia in August 1968 by Warsaw Pact forces to crush the 'Prague Spring', Willy Brandt, the new West German Social Democratic Chancellor, launched his Eastern Policy or *Ostpolitik* in October 1969. The FRG now recognised the GDR as a legal state and accepted the postwar frontiers of Poland and Czechoslovakia. Parallel to these negotiations the four victorious powers of 1945 negotiated an agreement guaranteeing West Berlin's links with the FRG.

Although these treaties, together with the agreement negotiated at Helsinki in 1975, the Helsinki Final Act, which recognised the division of Europe and the desirability of a peaceful settlement of disputes (see pages 146–7), did much to stabilise the situation in central and eastern Europe, Europe remained divided into two armed and potentially hostile blocs. By this date contemporaries believed that the division of Europe and the Cold War would last for an eternity, but in reality the strength of the USSR was less formidable than it seemed.

### 8 | The 'Third Cold War' and the Collapse of Communism 1979–91

What can be called a 'third' or the 'New Cold War' was started by the USSR's decision to deploy a second generation of medium-range nuclear missiles in Europe and to intervene in Afghanistan. The USA and the Western powers responded vigorously by deploying Cruise missiles in Western Europe. In 1983 President Reagan escalated the arms race in a dramatic way by announcing the Strategic Defence Initiative (SDI), which was a plan to enable the USA to destroy Soviet missiles launched into the atmosphere. Faced with this new and vastly expensive challenge, military defeat in Afghanistan, the flare-up of ethnic conflicts at home and national bankruptcy, Mikhail Gorbachev, who came to power in the USSR in 1985, had little option but to end the Cold War and seek Western loans to modernise the Soviet economy. Once it became clear in 1989 that the USSR would no longer prop up the satellite regimes in Eastern Europe, they collapsed. They failed to survive because they were kept in place by Soviet bayonets, were therefore by necessity police states and were unable to match Western Europe's prosperity.

**Key question**  
To what extent had the Cold War in Europe changed its character by 1973?

**Test Ban Treaty**  
This prohibited the testing of nuclear weapons in the atmosphere, outer space and under water, but allowed them to be tested underground.

**Non-Proliferation Treaty**  
Britain, the USA and the USSR pledged not to equip other countries with nuclear weapons.

Key terms

**Key question**  
Why did the Cold War end?

Invasion of Czechoslovakia by Warsaw Pact forces: August 1968

Four Power Agreement on Berlin: September 1971

Helsinki Final Act: 1975

Soviet forces sent into Afghanistan to save a weak left-wing regime. They were unsuccessful and were pulled out in 1988: December 1979

Deployment of Pershing and Cruise missiles in West Germany and Britain: 1983

Key dates

### 9 | The Nuclear Background

What prevented the Cold War from becoming a 'hot war' was the balance of terror created by nuclear weapons. When the USA dropped nuclear bombs on the Japanese cities of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, it was clear that, to quote the US historian John Gaddis, a 'quantum jump' in destructive weapons had been reached. Stalin responded by speeding up work on developing a Soviet atom bomb, which was tested on 20 August 1949.

Both powers then went on to develop **hydrogen bombs**, and to design long-range bombers that could carry them. Over the next decade bombers were replaced by rockets. With the assistance of German scientists, captured at the end of the Second World War, the Soviets successfully fired the world's first **intercontinental ballistic missile** (ICBM) in August 1957. Horrified by the apparent evidence of a missile gap, the USA first of all produced Thor and Jupiter missiles (see page 126), and then went on to develop a whole new generation of rockets, which included the Polaris missiles that could be fired from submarines. Steadily over the next 25 years these lethal systems were expanded and improved. In sheer quantity of missiles the USSR caught up with the USA by the early 1970s. Computerised guidance systems could now accurately guide ICBMs to their targets and the development of **MIRVs** meant that multiple missiles could be fired at the same time on different targets. In any nuclear conflict it was inconceivable that there could be a winner. In 1980 what President Dwight Eisenhower had told the South Korean leader, Syngman Rhee, in 1953 was even more relevant:

There will be millions of people dead. War today is unthinkable with the weapons which we have at our command. If the Kremlin and Washington ever lock up in a war, the results are too horrible to contemplate.

Only in 1983 was this doctrine of Mutual Assured Destruction (or MAD) challenged when the US-pioneered Strategic Defence Initiative (SDI) achieved a revolutionary breakthrough. SDI or 'Star Wars' envisaged setting up a protective shield of lasers and particle-beam weapons in space aimed against ballistic missiles, and it seemed that the USA might eventually become safe from Soviet missile attacks. Whether this would really have been effective in the 1980s we do not know, but it certainly scared the Soviets into seeking a new *détente* and ultimately into ending the Cold War.

**Key question**  
What role did nuclear weapons play in the Cold War?

Key terms

**Hydrogen bombs**  
Thermonuclear devices, which explode at a very high temperature. Each one is capable of devastating 150 square miles by the blast and 800 square miles with radioactive fallout.

**Intercontinental ballistic missile**  
A long-range missile that is powered initially, but falls on its target as a result of gravity and which can, for example, reach the USA from the USSR.

**MIRVs**  
Multiple independently targeted re-entry vehicles. These were rockets that could fire well over 12 nuclear missiles on different targets.

Key dates

Berlin Wall breached: 9–10 November 1989

Germany reunited: October 1990

## 3

# The Break-up of the Grand Alliance 1945-7

## POINTS TO CONSIDER

This chapter considers two interlocking questions:

- The reasons for the break-up of the Grand Alliance between 1945 and 1947
- The consequences of this for Germany and Europe as a whole

It is important not only to understand the impact of Stalin's policies on Eastern Europe and of British, US and French policies on Western Europe, but also how they interacted and increasingly began to tear Europe apart.

This chapter examines these issues through the following sections:

- Early postwar tensions between the Great Powers, April-August 1945
- The peace treaties with Italy and the minor Axis powers
- Germany, June 1945-April 1947
- The Truman Doctrine of Containment
- The Marshall Plan
- The European states, June 1945-December 1947

## Key dates

1945	July-August	Potsdam Conference
1946	March 5	Churchill's Iron Curtain speech
	April 21	Social Unity Party (SED) formed
	April-July	Paris Conference of Foreign Ministers
	May 3	General Clay halted reparation payments from Soviet zone
1947	January 1	Anglo-American Bizonia formed
	February 10	Peace treaties signed with Italy, Romania, Bulgaria, Finland and Hungary
	March 12	Truman Doctrine announced
	March 10-	Council of Foreign Ministers' Meeting in Moscow
	April 24	
	May	Communists excluded from government in France and Italy
	June 5	Marshall Aid Programme announced
	October 5	Cominform founded

## Key question

What initial impact did Truman have on US policy towards the USSR?

## Key term

### Lend-lease aid programme

In March 1941 Roosevelt approved the Lend-Lease Act which enabled any country, whose defences were judged to be vital for the USA, to obtain war supplies. These would, however, have to be paid for later on. By 1945 over \$50 billion had been spent on this scheme.

## 1 | Early Postwar Tensions between the Great Powers, April-August 1945

### The impact of Harry Truman

All three Great Powers wished to continue the wartime alliance, yet for an alliance to survive there needs to be either a common danger or agreement between its members on key principles. In postwar Europe this was no longer the case. Roosevelt had privately recognised that the West had little option but to accept Soviet control over Eastern Europe, but on his death in April 1945 he was replaced by Harry Truman, who was at first determined not to write this area off as a Soviet sphere of interest and to pursue a much tougher policy towards the USSR. Not only did he strongly criticise Soviet policy in Poland, but in May he abruptly ended the **lend-lease aid programme**, which had made available food and armaments to the USSR during the war.



'Christmas Card' 1945 by the Egyptian-born cartoonist Kem (Kimon Evan Marengo). It shows Truman (as the Statue of Liberty) with Stalin, Attlee, de Gaulle and Chiang Kai-shek.



**Profile: Harry S. Truman 1884–1972**

1884	–	Born in Lamar, Missouri
1917–18	–	Served in the US army in France
1922	–	Joined the Democratic Party
1934	–	Elected to the Senate to represent the state of Missouri
1944	–	Became Vice-President
1945	April 12	– Became President of the USA on Roosevelt's death
1947	March 12	– Announced the Truman Doctrine
1948	–	Elected President for a second term
1950	–	Committed US forces to defend South Korea
1951	–	Refused to extend the war to China
1952	–	Retired
1972	–	Died



Truman was a key character in the Cold War since, as a result of Roosevelt's sudden death, he was catapulted into power. Revisionist historians regard his unsympathetic handling of the USSR as one of the causes of the Cold War. Daniel Yergin, for instance, observed that:

Truman could not believe that Russia's quest for security had a rationality. When he was finally confronted with foreign policy questions, all he had as a background was a storybook view of history and a rousing Fourth of July patriotism. He tended to see clearly defined contests between right and wrong, black and white. Neither his personality nor his experience gave him the patience for subtleties and uncertainties.

On the other hand, John Gaddis argues that Roosevelt's death did not fundamentally change the course of history, as the Cold War was principally fuelled by Stalin's distrust of the West, which long pre-dated Roosevelt's death.

**The Potsdam Conference**

The interlinked questions of Germany and Poland dominated the agenda of the Conference. Stalin was determined to move Poland's frontiers westwards at the expense of Germany to compensate Poland for the loss of the Polish territory he was seizing in the east for the USSR. Failure was only avoided by ambiguous compromises on all the most difficult issues. While Britain, the USA and USSR could agree on the necessary measures for German demilitarisation, denazification and the punishment of war criminals, they were only able to draw up the following minimal political and economic guidelines for the future of Germany:

**Key question**

To what extent did the Potsdam Conference reveal fundamental disagreements between the wartime allies?

Potsdam Conference:  
July–August 1945

Key date

Key terms

**Reparations**

Materials, equipment or money taken from a defeated power to make good the damage of war.

**Oder–Neisse line**

The line formed by the Oder and Neisse rivers. The Neisse had both a western and an eastern branch.

- As there was no central German government, an Allied Control Council (ACC) was set up on which the commanders-in-chief of the armies of the four occupying powers would sit. To avoid being outvoted by the three Western powers, the Russians insisted that each commander should have complete responsibility for his own zone. This decision effectively stopped the ACC from exercising any real power in Germany.
- A limited number of central German offices dealing with finance, transport, trade and industry, which were to deal with Germany as a whole, were to be formed at some point in the future.
- There was no agreement on how much **reparations** the USSR should be paid. The Soviets had already begun to strip their zone of industrial plant and raw materials, but the British and Americans were convinced that the German economy must be left sufficiently strong to pay for imported food and raw materials, and were not ready to subsidise the Soviet zone. The British were particularly concerned because they had the highest population density within their zone, which would starve unless food was imported. A compromise was negotiated whereby both the USSR and the Western powers would take reparations from their own zones. In addition to this, the British and Americans would grant 10 per cent of these to the Soviets and a further 15 per cent in exchange for the supply of food and raw materials from the Soviet zone. The lack of a common reparation policy was a major step in the later partition of Germany, as it made agreement on a joint four power economic policy much more difficult to achieve.

The USSR had already handed to Poland all of Lower Silesia up to the western **Oder–Neisse line**. At first London and Washington insisted that the Polish border lay along the eastern Neisse, but then on second thoughts they decided to recognise the western Neisse line in the unrealistic hope that this concession would persuade Stalin to adopt a more liberal policy in Poland (see map on page 42).

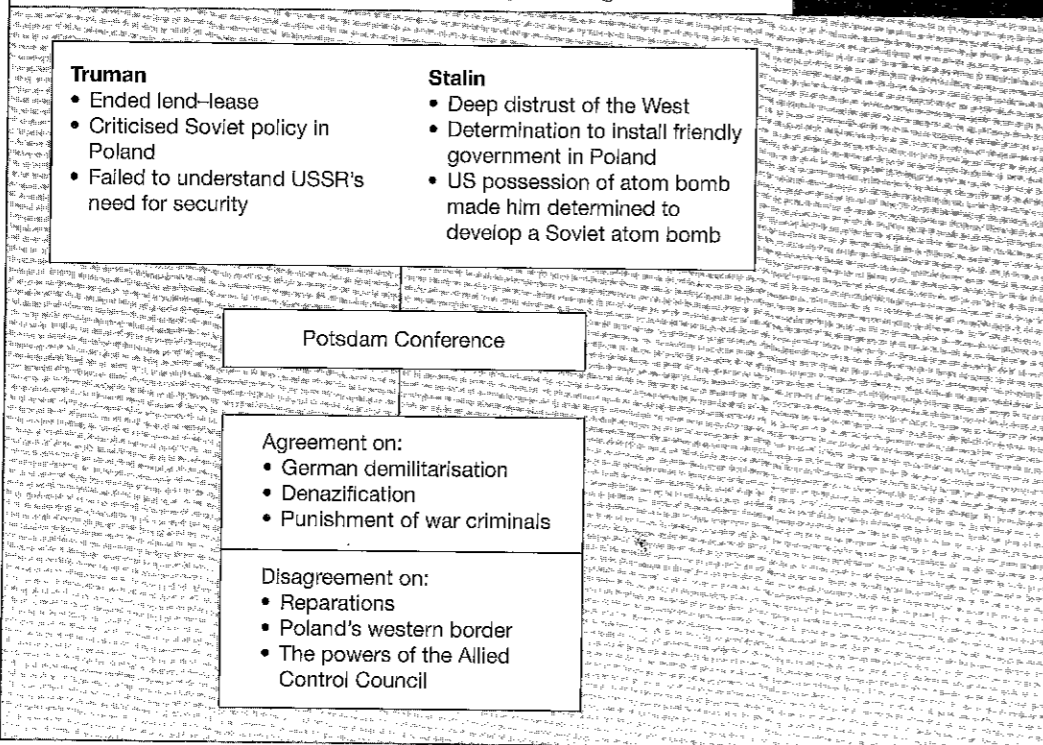
**The impact of the atom bomb**

Churchill had hoped that the Big Three would meet as soon as possible after the end of the war in Europe, but it was not until 16 July that the Potsdam Conference opened. It was delayed because Truman wished to wait until the atom bomb had been tested at Alamogordo in New Mexico. When this took place successfully on 16 July, he was told that the bomb had a much greater destructive potential than was expected and was ready for immediate use against Japan. The news produced some dramatic changes in US policy. The Americans no longer wanted the USSR to join in the war against Japan, as now, it seemed likely that they would quickly defeat Japan by themselves. US officials also thought that the possession of

the bomb would enable the USA to force Stalin to make concessions in Eastern Europe.

Arguably, the two atom bombs, which were dropped on Hiroshima and Nagasaki in early August, were primarily intended to impress the USSR. Thanks to the teams of highly skilled codebreakers at Bletchley Park in Britain and elsewhere, who cracked the secret Axis codes with the help of the world's first programmable computer, Colossus, the Allies already knew that Japan was ready to surrender. Stalin, however, refused to be intimidated. On the contrary, the news about the bomb made him both more suspicious of the USA and determined to make the USSR a nuclear power as soon as possible.

**Summary diagram: Early postwar tensions between the Great Powers, April–August 1945**



**2 | The Peace Treaties with Italy and the Minor Axis Powers**

At Potsdam it had been agreed that the **Council of Foreign Ministers** would draw up the peace treaties with Germany's allies. Arguments broke out almost immediately at the first session of the Council in September 1945. The Soviets pressed for a harsh peace with Italy, while the British and Americans argued that Italy, having broken with Germany in September 1944, deserved

**Key question**  
Why, despite worsening relations between the USSR and Britain and the USA, was it possible to negotiate the peace treaties with Italy and the minor Axis powers?

more lenient treatment. The USSR also insisted that its armistice agreements with Bulgaria, Finland, Hungary and Romania should form the basis of the subsequent peace treaties.

To save the negotiations from a complete breakdown, James Byrnes, the US **Secretary of State**, went to Moscow, where after some hard bargaining a compromise was reached whereby the Eastern European and the Italian peace treaties would be negotiated simultaneously. Negotiations dragged on for over a year and were frequently threatened by the escalating tension between the USSR and the West. Nevertheless in the final analysis both sides wanted the peace treaties concluded, and were able to make compromises. As a concession to the USSR, the treaty with Italy was harsh; it lost both Trieste, which became a self-governing 'free territory', and its colonies, as well as having to pay reparations. In Eastern Europe the USSR gained what it wanted, particularly in the question of keeping troops in Romania to guard its lines of communication with Austria.

The peace treaties with Italy and the minor Axis states were signed on 10 February 1947, but disagreements about the value of former German property to be handed over to the USSR delayed the Austrian treaty until 1955 (see page 100), and no treaty could be signed with Germany until an independent central German government had been restored.

**Key date**  
Peace treaties signed with Italy, Romania, Bulgaria, Finland and Hungary: 10 February 1947

**Key question**  
Why did the four occupying powers fail to work out a joint programme for Germany's future?

**3 | Germany, June 1945–April 1947**

Germany's position in the middle of Europe and its potential wealth and military and economic strength ensured that neither the USSR nor the Western Allies could allow the other to dominate it. Indeed, as tension rose, both sides began to wonder whether Germany itself could not perhaps be enlisted as a future ally in a possible East–West conflict.

**Germany under four power control, June 1945–November 1946**

In June 1945 Stalin told a group of German Communists that there would be 'two Germanies', implying that Germany would be divided into a Soviet-dominated part and a Western-dominated part. Nine months later, however, he informed the Yugoslavs that 'all Germany must be ours'. For a time, however, he seemed ready to co-operate with the Western powers in creating a new democratic Germany, in which the Communist Party, as in France and Italy (see pages 26–7), would play an important though not dominating role. This may well have been the reason why in June 1945 the USSR was the first occupying power to allow democratic parties in its zone. At first, the USSR was also a more co-operative partner on the ACC than France. In the autumn of 1945 the Russians were ready to agree to setting up a central German transport authority and a **national federation of trade unions**, but both these proposals were defeated by French opposition to restoring a united Germany, which might again dominate Europe.

**Key terms**  
**Council of Foreign Ministers**  
Composed of the foreign ministers of Britain, France, the USA and the USSR. Its role was to sort out the German problems and prepare the peace treaties.  
**Secretary of State**  
The US Foreign Minister.  
**National federation of trade unions**  
A national organisation representing all the trade unions.

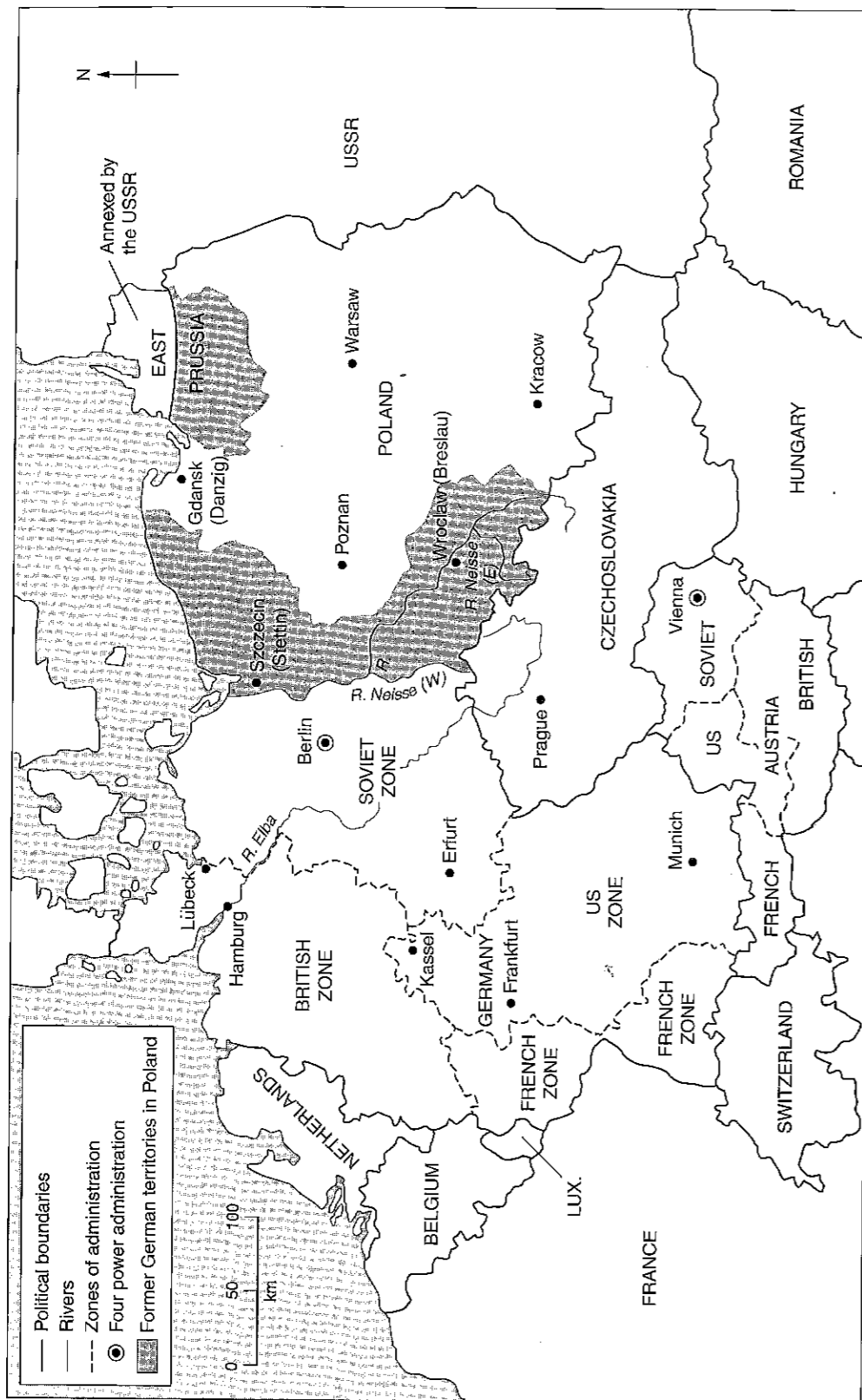


Figure 3.1 Germany in 1945.

Key terms

**Latent fear**  
Concealed (latent) or indirect terror and pressure.

**Central Executive**  
Central organising committee.

Why, then, was this co-operation not maintained? In the first place there were many high-ranking British and US officials, as well as West German politicians, such as Konrad Adenauer, the future West German Chancellor, who were convinced that the Soviet zone was lost to the rest of Germany. The historian Willy Loth has also argued that Stalin's approach was not fully grasped by his officials in the Soviet zone, who tended naturally to rely on local German Communists and to see middle-class Germans as the class enemy. As in Poland, the NKVD and the Soviet army did not hesitate to arrest anybody who got in their way, which inevitably created a climate of 'latent fear'.



**Profile: Konrad Adenauer 1876-1967**

- 1876 – Born in Cologne
- 1917-33 – *Oberbürgermeister* (Lord Mayor) of Cologne
- 1946-9 – Head of the German Christian Democrat Party in the British zone
- 1949 – Chairman of the German parliamentary council, which drafted the West German constitution
- 1949-63 – Chancellor of the Federal Republic of Germany
- 1967 – Died

Adenauer was a key figure in the early Cold War history. As Chancellor he refused point blank to negotiate with the Communist East Germany and took every chance to integrate West Germany into a US-dominated Western Europe. Some historians, such as the revisionist Willy Loth, argue that his refusal to contemplate a neutral united Germany perpetuated the division of Germany. Others, like the more orthodox Hans-Peter Schwarz, however, stress that Adenauer was simply a realist, who saw that the only way of unifying Germany was to wait until East Germany collapsed as a result of its own economic weaknesses.

It was this atmosphere that made a voluntary amalgamation in the Soviet zone of the revived German-Social Democratic (SPD) and Communist (KPD) parties impossible to achieve without the use of force. After the poor showing of the Communist Party in the Hungarian elections of November 1945, Stalin realised that only a union between the SPD and KPD could create a strong, friendly party in Germany. In these elections, which were held in November, the non-Communist smallholders or peasants' party gained well over 50 per cent of the vote, while the Socialists and Communists each gained only 25 per cent.

In an effort to win over the SPD the Soviets did force the KPD to make considerable concessions, but the threats and violence used by the Soviet Military Administration effectively disguised their extent, and alienated many SPD members. In the end, after 20,000 Social Democrats had been interrogated, imprisoned and in some cases even murdered, the **Central Executive** of the SPD in the Soviet zone agreed to the formation of a new united party,



The historic handshake between Otto Grotewohl (right), leader of the SPD in the Eastern Zone and Wilhelm Pieck, leader of the KPD (left). Looking on is the future leader of East Germany, Walter Ulbricht.

the Socialist Unity Party (SED), by a vote of 8 to 3 in February 1946. The Russians were then embarrassed when a month later a **referendum** on the decision was held in Berlin for members of both parties. In East Berlin they managed to close down the polling stations, but in the West voting went ahead and 82 per cent of the SPD members opposed the union. Inevitably, as with the USSR's actions in Poland, this only served to confirm the West's suspicions of Soviet policy.

At the end of April 1946 Stalin took stock of the situation in Germany, and in an important directive to his officials in the Soviet zone he announced:

from the standpoint of the Soviet Union, it is not yet time to establish central authorities nor in general to continue with a policy of centralisation in Germany. The first goal, organising the Soviet occupation zone under effective Soviet control, has been more or less achieved. The moment has thus now come to reach into the Western zones. The instrument is the United Socialist-Communist Party. Some time will have to elapse before the party is organised in an orderly fashion in Greater Berlin itself, and this process will take even longer in the Western zones. Only when the Soviet vision has been realised and the Unity Party has established itself in the Western zones, will the time have come to address once again the question of central Administrations and of effective Soviet support for a policy of centralisation in Germany.

The reason why Stalin wanted to delay setting up a central administration in Germany was probably that he suspected that

Social Unity Party (SED) formed: 21 April 1946

Key date

#### Referendum

The referring of a political question to the electorate for a vote. In this case the electorate was limited to members of the SPD and KPD.

Key term

the Americans and British were aiming to end the occupation of Germany as soon as possible because of the heavy financial burden it imposed on them. If that happened, he feared that the guarantees agreed on at Potsdam would be abandoned and that an aggressive and capitalist Germany would re-emerge.

#### Key question

Why could the occupying powers not agree on the reparation question?

Key date

General Clay halted reparation payments from the Soviet zone: 3 May 1946

#### The problem of reparations

By the spring of 1946 the compromise over reparations, which had been negotiated in Potsdam, was already breaking down. As the Western zones, particularly the heavily populated British zone, were taking the majority of the German refugees, who had been expelled by the Poles and Czechs from the former German territories that had been ceded to them at the end of the war (see map on page 42). Britain and the USA were anxious to encourage a moderate German economic recovery so that their zones could at least pay for their own food imports. Consequently, until that point was reached they wished to delay delivering to the USSR the quotas from their own zones of machinery and raw materials, which had been agreed at Potsdam (see pages 38–40). There was even talk that the Soviet zone would have to deliver food to the hard-pressed Western zones.

In May, General Clay, the military governor of the US zone, in an attempt to bring the French into line and to force the Soviets to agree to treat Germany as an economic unity with its economy organised on a national rather than a zonal level, announced that no further reparation deliveries would be made until there was an overall plan for the German economy. To the Soviets it seemed that the Americans were bringing pressure to bear on them to agree to a reconstructed German economy within an international capitalist system. They feared that a united German capitalist economy would play a key part in a US-dominated global capitalist trading system. In June they responded to this threat by increasing production in their zone and transforming 213 German firms into special Soviet-controlled companies, the total production of which was to go straight to the USSR.

#### Key question

Why was Bizonia formed?

Key dates

Paris Conference of Foreign Ministers: April–July 1946

Anglo-US Bizonia formed: 1 January 1947

#### The creation of Bizonia

When the Conference of Foreign Ministers returned to the question of Germany in July, Molotov, the Soviet Foreign Minister, insisted that the Germans should pay the USSR the equivalent of \$10 billion in reparations. Byrnes again argued that reparations could only be paid once Germany had a **trade surplus** that would cover the cost of food and raw material imports. He then offered to unify the US zone economically with the other three zones (see map on page 42). Only Britain, which was finding its zone a major drain on its fragile economy, accepted.

In retrospect this was a major step in the division of Germany between East and West, although its significance was played down initially. When the British and US zones were merged economically in January 1947 to form what became called Bizonia, the Americans argued that, far from breaking the Potsdam Agreement, the amalgamation would serve as an

Key term

#### Trade surplus

A surplus of exports over imports.

economic magnet and so create the economic preconditions for fulfilling the Potsdam Agreement. It was hoped that Bizonia would become so prosperous that through inter-zonal trade it would gradually attract and knit the French and Russian zones in a united national German economy. A more prosperous Germany would then be able to pay the reparations, which had been demanded at Potsdam (see page 39). In an attempt to convince the USSR that Bizonia was not an **embryonic state** the offices responsible for food, finance and transport were deliberately located in different cities.

**The Moscow Conference of Foreign Ministers, March-April 1947**

The Moscow Conference was one of the turning points in early postwar history. The Soviets made a determined effort to destroy Bizonia by demanding that a new central German administration under four power control should be immediately set up. They ran into strong opposition from the British Foreign Secretary, Ernest Bevin, who feared that this would slow up the economic recovery of the British zone. In London his officials had skilfully drawn up a plan for revising the Potsdam Agreement, which Bevin knew the Soviets could not accept. The USSR would, for instance, have to return some of the reparations that it had seized in its zone to help balance the budgets in the Western zones, and it would receive no coal or steel deliveries until the whole of Germany could pay for its own food and raw material imports. Bevin successfully managed to manoeuvre the USSR into a corner when he persuaded the Americans to agree that political unity could only come after economic unity. As this would mean a protracted delay in reparation deliveries, the Soviets had little option but to reject the proposal, which is exactly what the Western powers hoped they would do.

To the British and Americans the Moscow Conference was what Willy Loth called a 'successful failure' in that it enabled them to press on with building up Bizonia. Nothing, however, was decided on the divisive issues of reparations, and the future of Germany was left to dominate the agenda of the next conference scheduled to meet in London in November (see page 64).

**Embryonic state**  
Organisation that has some of the powers of a proper state, and is likely to grow into a fully fledged state.

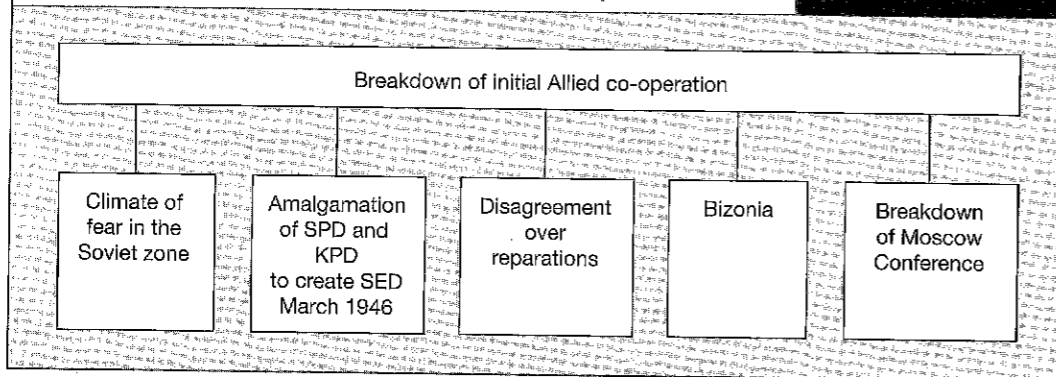
Key term

**Key question**  
Why did the Moscow Conference fail?

**Moscow Conference:**  
10 March-24 April 1947

Key date

**Summary diagram: Germany, June 1945-April 1947**



**4 | The Truman Doctrine of Containment**

**Origins of the Truman Doctrine**

In June 1945 the Americans had assumed that Britain would continue to play a major role in the eastern Mediterranean, but by January 1947 Britain faced a crippling economic crisis. As a result of political unrest in India, Palestine and Egypt and the long delay in completing the postwar peace treaties, Britain had to keep a large number of troops in Germany, Italy, the Middle East and Asia. This was, of course, enormously expensive, and by January 1947 the postwar US loan of £3.75 billion had nearly been used up. The situation was made worse by the heavy blizzards and exceptionally cold weather that had brought transport, industry and coal mining virtually to a halt for several weeks. On 21 February the British, in desperation, informed the Americans that their financial and military aid to both Greece and Turkey would have to cease on 31 March.

This was very unwelcome news to Washington, as civil war had broken out again in Greece in September 1946 when Stalin, contrary to his earlier policy in 1944 (see page 23), had asked the Yugoslavs to assist the Greek Communists against the British-backed Greek government. Truman feared above all that the Communists might launch a similar uprising in Italy once Allied troops had left after the signing of the peace treaty (see page 41). He felt therefore that he had to act quickly to strengthen non-Communist forces in areas that were vulnerable to Soviet pressure, but to do this he required money, which could only be found by persuading **Congress** to vote the necessary funds.

**The announcement of the Doctrine**

On 12 March, in a deliberately dramatic speech designed to appeal to Congress, Truman stressed the seriousness of the international situation and how Europe was increasingly becoming divided into two mutually hostile blocs:

One way of life is based upon the will of the majority, and is distinguished by free institutions, representative government, free elections, guarantees of individual liberty, freedom of speech and religion, and freedom from political oppression. The second way of life is based upon the will of a minority forcibly imposed upon the majority. It relies upon terror and oppression, a controlled press and radio, fixed elections and the suppression of personal freedoms.

I believe that it must be the policy of the United States to support free peoples who are resisting attempted subjugation by armed minorities or by outside pressures. I believe that we must assist free peoples to work out their own destinies in their own way. ... The seeds of **totalitarian regimes** are nurtured by misery and want. They spread and grow in the evil soil of poverty and strife. They reach their full growth when the hope of a people for a better life has died.

**Key question**  
What events led to the formulation of the Truman Doctrine?

**Key terms**  
**Congress**  
The US parliament.

**Totalitarian regimes**  
Regimes such as those in Soviet Russia or Nazi Germany, which sought to control every aspect of their people's lives.

**Key question**  
What were the main points of the Truman Doctrine?

**Key date**  
Truman Doctrine announced: 12 March 1947

Initially Stalin dismissed this speech as an exercise in propaganda, but it soon became clear that it marked a new and important US policy initiative, which was to lead to what became called the Marshall Plan.

## 5 | The Marshall Plan

### The origins of the Plan

Since 1945 the Americans had been pumping money into Western Europe in an attempt to prevent famine and total economic collapse. In 1947 influential US journalists and politicians were beginning to argue that only through political and economic integration could Western Europe solve the whole complex of problems facing it. This would create a large and potentially prosperous market, which would act as a barrier to the further spread of Communism and perhaps in time even pull the Eastern European states out of the Soviet bloc. It would also build a political structure into which West Germany, or indeed the whole of Germany, could be integrated and so contained.

### General Marshall's offer

In June 1947, after extensive consultations in Washington, General George Marshall, the new US Secretary of State, made his historic offer of an aid package for Europe. The key to it was that:

... there must be some agreement among the countries of Europe as to the requirements of the situation and the part those countries themselves will take in order to give proper effect to whatever action might be undertaken by this Government.

#### Profile: George C. Marshall 1880-1959

1880	- Born in Pittsburg, Pennsylvania
1939-45	- Chief of Staff of the US army
1946-7	- US ambassador to China
1947-9	- Secretary of State
1947	June 5 - Announced the Marshall Plan at Harvard University
1950-2	- Defence minister
1953	- Awarded Nobel Peace Prize
1959	- Died

At the time the Russians, and later some revisionist historians, such as Thomas Paterson and J. Garry Clifford, claimed that the Marshall Plan was inspired by the US desire to build up Europe as a market for US goods. Its prime purpose, however, was to use US economic power to halt Soviet expansion by creating a prosperous Western Europe.

**Key question**  
What were the aims of the Marshall Plan and why did the USSR reject it?

**Marshall Plan announced: 5 June 1947**

Key date



#### Key question

Why were the Americans disappointed by the way the West Europeans organised the carrying out of the Marshall Plan?

### The Paris negotiations

Stalin suspected that the offer masked an attempt by the USA to interfere in the domestic affairs of the European states, but he sent Molotov to Paris to discuss further details with the British and French. The Soviets certainly wanted financial aid from the USA but without any conditions attached. Britain and France, however, argued that the European states should draw up a joint programme for spending the aid, rather than each individual state sending in a separate list of requests. On Stalin's orders Molotov rejected this and left the Conference. Stalin feared that a joint programme would enable US economic power to undermine Soviet influence in Eastern Europe. Bevin, who had done much to engineer this break, as he did not want to run the risk of the USSR obstructing talks with the Americans, observed that Molotov's departure marked the beginning of the formation of a **Western bloc**.

On 16 July detailed negotiations on the Marshall Plan began in Paris, where 16 Western European nations, including Turkey and Greece, were represented. Relevant information on Bizonia was provided by the occupation authorities. The Eastern European states were invited but were stopped by Stalin from attending. For the Western powers this simplified the negotiations, but even so, agreement was difficult to arrive at. Each Western European state had its own agenda. The French, for instance, wanted to ensure that their own economy had preference in receiving US aid over the economic needs of Bizonia. They were, however, ready to consider the formation of a **customs union**, as long as it enabled France to control the West German economy. The British on the other hand wished to safeguard their **sovereignty** and were opposed to creating powerful **supranational** organisations.

By mid-August the Americans were disappointed to find that the Western Europeans had not come up with any radical plans for economic integration, and had only produced a series of national 'shopping lists'. Each country had merely drawn up a list of requests with its own needs in mind, rather than thinking supranationally. Jefferson Caffery, the US Ambassador in Paris, complained that this simply re-created prewar economic conditions with all the 'low labor productivity and maldistribution of effort which derive from segregating 270,000,000 people into 17 uneconomic principalities' or 17 small countries with their own separate economies. As a US citizen he was dismissive of small historical countries fiercely proud of their independence.

The Western European states also asked for \$29 billion, far more than Congress was ready to grant. To avoid the conference ending in failure, Bevin called an emergency meeting in Paris, which decided to let the Americans themselves propose where cuts in this sum could be made. The US officials immediately set up an **Advisory Steering Committee**, which attempted to bring

Key terms

#### Western bloc

An alliance of Western European states and the USA.

#### Customs union

An area of free trade unhindered by national tariffs.

#### Sovereignty

Independence. A sovereign state possesses the power to make its own decisions.

#### Supranational

Transcending national limits.

#### Advisory Steering Committee

A committee that would advise on priorities and the key decisions to be taken.

the Europeans into line with essential US requirements, but by late September Washington had achieved only a limited success:

- Although the 16 states promised to liberalise trade and France promised to start negotiations for a customs union, these commitments were hedged around with qualifications aimed at protecting national independence.
- Germany's economic revival was declared essential, although it was to be carefully controlled to protect its neighbours.
- There was to be co-operation on the development of **hydroelectric sources**, pooling of railway wagons and the setting up of production targets for coal, agriculture, refined oil and steel. But there were to be no supranational authorities that could force the individual states to carry out these policies. At most the 16 states promised to set up a joint organisation to review how much progress was being made.

### The Soviet response

Stalin's decision to put pressure on the Eastern European states to boycott the Paris Conference marked the end of his attempts to co-operate with the USA and maintain the Grand Alliance. In September 1946 he invited the leaders of the Eastern European, French and Italian Communist parties to a conference at Szklarska Poreba in Poland to discuss setting up the Communist Information Bureau (Cominform), which would co-ordinate the policies and tactics of the Communist parties in both the satellite states and in Western Europe. Andrei Zhdanov, Stalin's representative, told the delegates that the world was now divided into two hostile camps: the imperialist bloc led by the USA, intent on 'the enslavement of Europe', and the 'anti-imperialist and democratic camp' led by the USSR. From this it followed that the whole policy of co-operating with moderate socialist and liberal parties would have to be abandoned and, where possible, Communist parties would have to take over power themselves and create societies whose economy and social system would be modelled on the Soviet system. From now on, as Martin McCauley has put it, 'there was to be only one road to socialism'.

**Hydroelectric sources**  
Power stations that generate electricity through water power.

Key term

**Key question**  
What was the Soviet response?

**Cominform founded:**  
5 October 1947

Key date

### Summary diagram: The Truman Doctrine of containment, the Marshall Plan and the Soviet response

#### Truman Doctrine, March 1947

##### Reasons for its announcement

- Britain unable to defend eastern Mediterranean
- Yugoslavs assisting Greek Communists

##### The Doctrine

- Truman offers US support to countries resisting Communist subversion
- Stresses need to improve economic conditions in Europe

#### The Marshall Plan

- Offer of aid package
- Funds to be distributed by supranational organisation

- Accepted by Western European states
- Rejected by USSR, which sets up Cominform

## 6 | The European States, June 1945–December 1947

**Key question**  
How correct was Churchill's assessment that an Iron Curtain had descended across Europe?

**Key date**  
Churchill's 'Iron Curtain' speech:  
5 March 1946

**Key term**  
**Polarised**  
Divided into extremes (polar opposites).

### The 'Iron Curtain'

In a famous speech at Fulton in the USA on 5 March 1946, Churchill observed that 'from Stettin in the Baltic, to Trieste, in the Adriatic, an iron curtain has descended across the continent'.

How accurate was this analysis? Up to the spring of 1947 it can be argued, to quote the British historians, G. and N. Swain, that 'diversity rather than uniformity' still characterised the situation in Europe. Yugoslavia and Albania had their own Communist regimes whose aggressive plans for a Balkan union and meddling in Greek domestic affairs Stalin at first attempted to control. Poland and Romania, both vital to the USSR's security, underwent Socialist revolutions and were in effect already Soviet satellites. In Hungary, Czechoslovakia, Finland and even Bulgaria, Stalin pursued a more moderate policy of influence rather than direct control. Yet with the escalation of the Cold War brought about by the Marshall Plan discussions and the creation of the Cominform, Stalin began to impose a much more uniform pattern on Eastern Europe. In Western Europe the intensifying Cold War **polarised** domestic politics with the

Communists on one side and non-Communists on the other. Communist parties were forced out of coalitions in France and Italy. Only in Finland did the situation remain unchanged.

### Poland

To deflect Western criticism from his Polish policy, Stalin had set up a provisional Government of National Unity in June 1945, which had been joined by Stanislaw Mikolajczyk, the former leader of the government-in-exile in London. Stalin could not risk genuinely free elections as the Communist Party would inevitably suffer defeat. Mikolajczyk therefore resigned in protest from the provisional cabinet in August 1945, and in October 1946 he refused to allow his party, the Polish Peasants' Party, to join the Communist-dominated **electoral bloc**, which would present the electors with a single list of candidates who would all support a Communist-dominated government. He hoped that this boycott would trigger a political crisis that would force Britain and the USA to intervene.

In fact the new **doctrine of containment** being worked out by Truman accepted unofficially that Poland was within the USSR's sphere of interest and that the USA would not intervene in its domestic affairs. Thus, when Mikolajczyk suggested that Britain and the USA should send officials to monitor the election in January 1947, both declined in the knowledge that there was little they could do to influence events in Poland. The results were a foregone conclusion. The bloc, which used terror and falsified electoral results with impunity, officially gained 394 seats, while the Peasants' Party gained a mere 28.

Although Wladyslaw Gomulka, the leader of the Polish Communist Party, was dependent on Soviet assistance, he believed passionately that Poland had a unique history and could not just follow unquestioningly the Soviet example. He therefore viewed with dismay the creation of the Cominform, as he feared that it would force the Eastern European Communist parties to follow down to the last detail the Moscow model of socialism. Only under considerable pressure did he reluctantly accept it, and a year later Stalin had him removed from the leadership (see page 66).

### Romania

The Soviet Union's claim that Romania was a vital security zone continued to meet with considerable understanding from the Western powers. There was no strong opposition leader there like Mikolajczyk in Poland and consequently the Soviets were able to consolidate their position more quickly than they did in Poland. In March 1946 the Socialist Party agreed to amalgamate with the Communists and in November the voters were presented with an electoral bloc which even the opposition joined. Not surprisingly it won 80 per cent of the vote.

#### Key question

Why did Britain and the USA not intervene in Poland to stop the Communists from seizing power?

#### Electoral bloc

An electoral alliance by a group of parties.

#### Doctrine of containment

A policy of halting the USSR's advance into Western Europe. It did not envisage actually 'rolling back' Soviet power from Eastern Europe.

#### Key question

How did the USSR tighten its control of Romania?

Key terms

#### Key question

How did the USSR tighten its control of Bulgaria?

### Bulgaria

Soviet techniques and policy were similar in Bulgaria, although Stalin hoped to avoid unnecessary friction with the Western powers until the peace treaty had been signed. In December 1945 he therefore forced the Communist-dominated Bulgarian government to include two members of the opposition, but when these began to demand changes in policy Stalin advised the Communists to adopt a series of well-planned measures to smother the opposition. Yet with an eye on the still unfinished peace treaties (see page 41) he remained anxious to mask the party's dictatorship. He even urged the sceptical Bulgarian Communists in September 1946 to set up a 'Labour Party' which would have 'a broader base and a better mask for the present period'.

In October elections took place for a national assembly. The opposition parties managed to win over one-third of the total votes, but Western hopes that this would form the basis of an effective parliamentary opposition were soon dashed. The Truman Doctrine and increasing US involvement in Greece meant that Bulgaria became a frontline state in the defence of Communism. Consequently, Stalin allowed the Communists to liquidate the opposition. The Bulgarian Communist Party also took the creation of the Cominform as a cue for pressing on with its radical programme for nationalising industry, **collectivising agriculture** and creating a one-party state.

Key term

#### Collectivising agriculture

Abolishing private farms in favour of large units run collectively by the peasantry along the lines of Soviet agriculture.

#### Key question

How did the political question in Yugoslavia differ from elsewhere in Eastern Europe?

### Yugoslavia

Yugoslavia occupied a unique position among the Soviet-dominated states in Eastern and Southeastern Europe, as the Communist Party had effectively won power independently of the Soviet forces. The People's Front, a bloc of parties dominated by the Yugoslav Communist Party, won 90 per cent of the votes in the election of November 1945, and Tito was then able smoothly to implement a revolution based on the Stalinist model in the USSR. Tito had his own plans for making Yugoslavia the major regional power in Southeast Europe. Only the continued presence of British and US troops stopped him from annexing Trieste in the period 1945–8, when he was perceived by the West, not entirely accurately, to be acting as the proxy of the USSR. Yet his dramatic break with Stalin in 1948 was to change this assessment (see pages 66–8).

#### Key question

Why were Hungary and Czechoslovakia not able to remain 'bridges' between Eastern and Western Europe?

### Czechoslovakia and Hungary

Up to the autumn of 1947 Stalin appeared to be interested primarily in preserving a strong Communist influence in Czechoslovakia and Hungary rather than in complete domination.

#### Czechoslovakia

In Czechoslovakia, the postwar social revolution had been carried out by an alliance of socialists and Communists under the direction of President Beneš. Soviet troops had been withdrawn as early as December 1945. The elections in May 1946, in which the Communists won some 38 per cent of the vote, were carried out



without any violence or efforts by the Communist Party to manipulate the vote. Although Gottwald had established a tight grip on the Czech security forces, he had no plans for a *coup* and appeared to pin his hope on winning the 1948 election. Without the intensifying Cold War Czechoslovakia might perhaps have remained a bridge between East and West, as Beneš had hoped, but the Marshall Plan and the subsequent creation of the Cominform effectively created a climate where this was impossible. The Czech cabinet voted unanimously in July to attend the Paris Conference on the Plan (see page 49), but the Soviet government insisted that the Americans under cover of offering a loan were trying to form a Western bloc and isolate the Soviet Union.

Czech proposals for compromise were ruthlessly dismissed. Jan Masaryk, the Foreign Minister, later told the British Ambassador: 'I went to Moscow as the Foreign Minister of an independent sovereign state; I returned as a **lackey** of the Soviet government'. What this implied became clearer at Szklarska Poreba in September when the Secretary-General of the Czech Communist Party, Rudolf Slansky, told the conference that the reactionary forces would have to be expelled from the National Front.

### Hungary

It seemed in the autumn of 1945 that Hungary, like Czechoslovakia, was treated as a special case by Stalin. The elections of November 1945 were free, even though the Soviets could have influenced them easily. Two years later the press was still free as was debate in parliament, the borders with the West were open and most small- and medium-sized businesses were in private hands. Yet, until the signing of the peace treaty, Soviet influence was guaranteed through its dominating position on the Allied Control Commission, which was the real governing force in Hungary (see page 19), and Stalin was able to insist on the Communist Party participating in the coalition government and controlling the vital Ministry of the Interior.

In the spring of 1947 the most powerful opposition to the Communists was shattered, when the leader of the Smallholders' Party, Bela Kovacs, was arrested by Soviet troops for conspiring against the occupation. Yet even this did not lead to an overwhelming Communist success in the August elections when the left-wing bloc only won 45 per cent of the vote. As late as the autumn of 1947, it still seemed possible that Hungary might retain some independence, but it was increasingly being drawn into the Soviet bloc. On 8 December a Treaty of Friendship and co-operation was signed with Yugoslavia and, a month later, a mutual aid treaty with the USSR.

### France and Italy

#### France

After the **liberation**, the French government initially attempted to balance between the USSR and the Western powers. Indeed many historians argue that France did not really join the Cold War on

#### Lackey

An uncritical follower, a servant, who cannot answer back.

#### Liberation

The freeing of a country from foreign occupation.

Key terms

the side of Britain and the USA until the Moscow Conference of March 1947. However, a French historian, Annie Lacroix Riz, has shown that long before then Paris had unofficially aligned itself with Britain and the USA. As early as October 1945 General de Gaulle was thinking of a Western European Defence Organisation with a US and possibly even a German contribution, but when he fell from power, the new government, a Communist, Socialist and Christian Democrat coalition, attempted to act as a bridge between East and West. Even then, though, to quote the French historian Georges-Henri Soutou, 'behind the scenes and in the utmost secrecy' the Christian Democrats and some of the Socialists attempted to draw nearer to the USA.

In March 1946 the French Socialist leader, Leon Blum, went to Washington to negotiate an American loan, and quite voluntarily accepted the US arguments for free international trade, which effectively meant France's inclusion in the capitalist Western world. At the Moscow Conference in March 1947 France openly aligned itself with the British and Americans, and two months later the Communists were expelled from the governing coalition. Initially they remained allied with the Socialists, but in the autumn Stalin ordered them to stage a series of violent strikes against the Marshall Plan. This finally persuaded the Socialists to distance themselves from them and to accept the pro-US policy of the Christian Democrats.

### Italy

There was a similar pattern of events in Italy. The Communists joined the coalition government in April 1945, and some Italian statesmen argued that Italy should try to balance between the USSR and the Western powers. Yet essentially, Italy, as Stalin himself conceded, had little option but to support the latter group, since it had been liberated and occupied by them. In December 1945 a new coalition government was created under de Gasperi, a Christian Democrat, who rapidly won US support for his economic policies. As East-West tension grew in 1946–7, the Italian government moved to the right, and in May 1947 the Communists were dismissed from the cabinet. This cleared the way for the government to accept the Marshall Plan and to align itself unambiguously with the West.

### Finland

Finland again remained the exception to the pattern developing in the other Eastern European states. Its weak Communist Party received little help from the USSR. Why was this so? The British historian Adam Ulam argues that Finland escaped being integrated into the Soviet bloc merely by chance, as Zhdanov, the Soviet chairman of the Allied Control Commission, was away most of the time in Moscow. Yet Jukka Nevakivi, who has studied the relevant Soviet sources, argues that Stalin simply wanted to neutralise Finland, and once the Finns had signed the Treaty of Friendship, Co-operation and Mutual Assistance in 1948, he was ready to leave them alone.

Key date

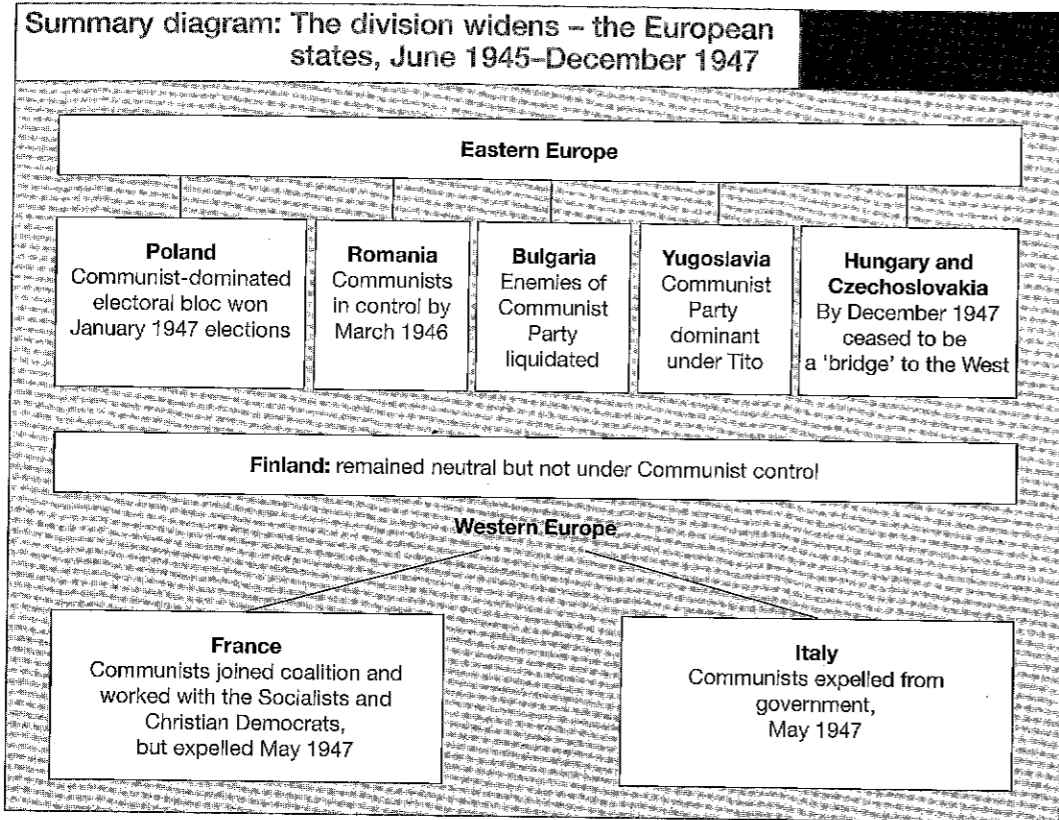
Communists excluded from government in France and Italy: May 1947

#### Key question

Why was Finland able to retain its neutrality in 1946–7?

#### Key question

What role did the Communist parties play in France and Italy?



### 7 | Conclusion

How likely was the break-up of the Grand Alliance by the autumn of 1947? We have seen that its real glue was Hitler. Once Nazi Germany and Imperial Japan were defeated, it was always more realistic to suppose that it would disintegrate than remain intact. Stalin was quite determined to turn Poland, Romania and Bulgaria into satellite states regardless of what the liberal West might think about the violation of democracy or human rights. On the other hand, he did have a **'differentiated' policy**, which for two years allowed Hungary and Czechoslovakia to be 'bridges' to the West.

Is it an exaggeration to say that Stalin pursued a relatively moderate line in Eastern Europe up to 1947, and that his German policy, rather than a result of deep-laid plans to take over the former *Reich*, was more a clumsy attempt to neutralise it and gain the vital reparations needed by the USSR? Michael McCwire has argued that Stalin was actively seeking to preserve the 'remaining shreds of the collaborative wartime relationship', and as a consequence of this, had by 1947 lost his chance to control Greece and allow Yugoslavia to seize Trieste. By the spring and summer of 1947 Stalin was thrown on the defensive first by the Truman Doctrine and then by the Marshall Plan.

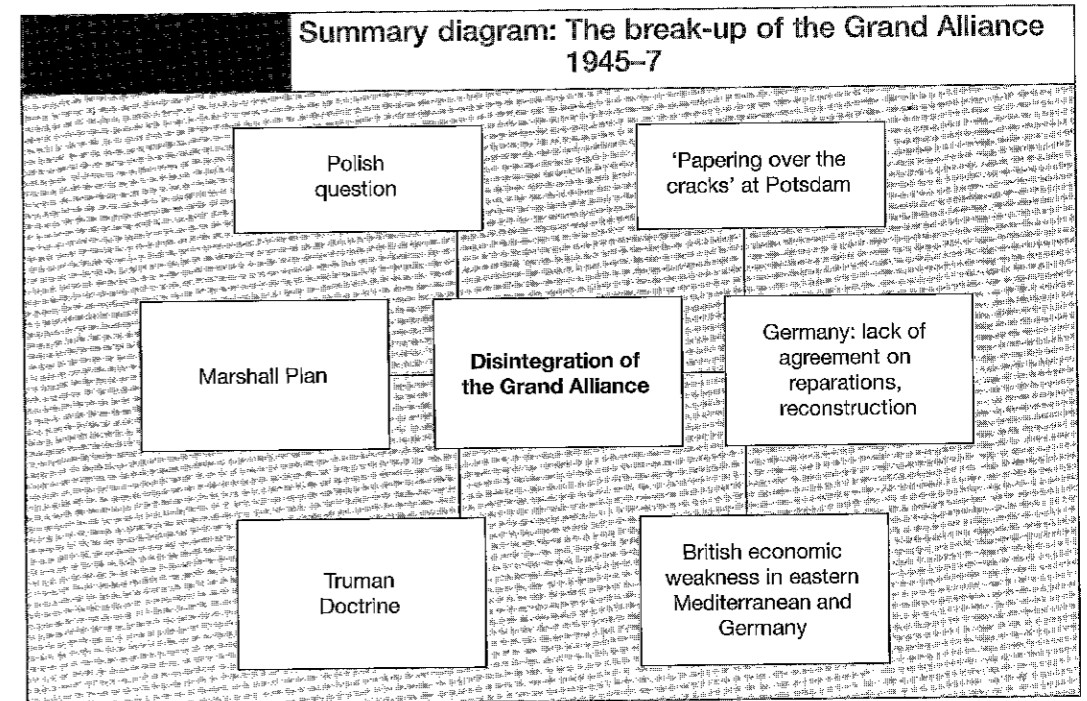
Does this mean that Truman in fact started the Cold War? The Truman Doctrine and the Marshall Plan were certainly important

**Key question**  
Was the break-up of the Grand Alliance in the period 1945-7 more a result of Soviet or US policies?

**'Differentiated' policy**  
Stalin's policy to treat each Soviet-occupied country differently.

Key term

thresholds or stages reached in the escalation of the Cold War, but the context in which the Americans acted is also important. The seismic events of early 1947 – Britain's near bankruptcy and withdrawal from the eastern Mediterranean, growing economic paralysis in Germany and the strength of the Communist parties in Italy and France – galvanised the Americans into announcing first the Truman Doctrine and then the Marshall Plan. This was the turning point in the immediate postwar period and provoked the USSR into tightening its grip on Eastern Europe and creating the Cominform.



How far do you agree with the view that the origins of the Cold War in 1945 and 1946 owed much to ideological differences and little to personalities and conflicting national interests?

Explain your answer, using the evidence of Sources 1 and 2 and your own knowledge of the issues related to this controversy. (40 marks)

### Exam tips

The cross-references are intended to take you straight to the material that will help you to answer the question.

Source 1 initially emphasises 'ideological differences' even ending with a reference to 'crusade'. The perspective is Western and it specifically challenges the view that the Soviet Union was 'just ... defending its national interests'. Note too, the reference to 'armed ideology, threatening to expand'. In relating this to the question be careful to distinguish the first sentence of the source that gives Walker's own view from the remainder in which the views of the Western powers in 1945–6 are presented.

In contrast to Source 1, Source 2 concentrates on Eastern (specifically Stalin's) perspectives and concentrates on short-term events: the death of Roosevelt and the very different personality of Truman (page 37) and the dropping of the atom bomb (pages 39–40). This source suggests that Stalin was genuinely ready to co-operate in the 1945–6 period. The emphasis here on the impact of individuals and events would suggest that personalities and conflicting national interests played a significant part in the origins of the Cold War.

The sources provide clear differences of view that you can explore, expand upon and debate, using your own knowledge of 1945–6. In dealing with events and disputes in the period, be careful to relate them back to the question. Clearly all three of the factors stated in the question played their part. Which do you view as having most significance?

What was the significance of Yalta (pages 28–9), Potsdam (pages 38–40) and disagreements about Germany (pages 41–5)? What evidence is there of Western fears of what they saw as Soviet expansionism? Churchill's Fulton, Missouri, speech (page 51) could be used as evidence of the gulf between East and West, but keep in mind that this was not a foregone conclusion in 1945 (page 31) and what caused that belief is a matter of debate which this questions allows you to enter into.

# 4

## The Division of Germany and Europe 1948–9

### POINTS TO CONSIDER

This chapter covers the crucial two years from the collapse of the London Conference in December 1947 to the creation of the German Democratic Republic in October 1949. It is the period when not only Germany, but Europe, was divided into two blocs dominated by the USA and USSR. How this came about is studied under the following headings:

- The emergence of a Western bloc
- The consolidation of the Eastern bloc 1948–9
- The Yugoslav–Soviet split
- The decision to create a West German state
- The Soviet response: the Berlin Blockade
- The North Atlantic Treaty Organisation
- The division of Germany

### Key dates

1947	December 15	Break-up of London Foreign Ministers' Conference
1948	February 22	Communist <i>coup</i> in Czechoslovakia
	March 17	Brussels Pact signed
	June 7	London Six Power Conference recommended calling of a West German Constituent Assembly
1949	June 20	Currency reform in Western zones
	June 24	Berlin Blockade began
	September 5	Parliamentary council met in Bonn
	April 4	NATO set up
	May 12	USSR lifted Berlin Blockade
	May 23	Basic Law approved in FRG
	May 30	People's Congress approved GDR Constitution
	September 22	Occupation Statute in force in FRG
	October 12	GDR set up

## 1 | The Emergence of a Western Bloc

### The London Conference of Foreign Ministers, November–December 1947

By the time the conference opened in London the chances of any agreement on Germany seemed remote. The Americans vigorously supported the idea of **Western European integration** and had at least temporarily resigned themselves to the division of Germany. The USSR still wished to avoid the partition of Germany, as this would result in the great industrial complex of **the Ruhr** becoming a part of a US-dominated Western European bloc; but its attempts to disrupt the Marshall Plan (see pages 48–50) by orchestrating widespread strikes in Italy and France merely fuelled the mistrust of the Western powers of Soviet intentions in Germany and indeed throughout Europe.

The Soviets had also tried hard to rally public opinion right across Germany against the policy of the Western Allies. Walter Ulbricht, the leader of the SED (see page 44), was instructed to organise a 'German People's Congress for Unity and a Just Peace'. Representatives from all parties throughout Germany were invited to attend its meetings on 6–7 December 1947 in Berlin. The intention was then to send a delegation to the London Conference to back up the Soviet demand for the formation of a German central government. Roughly one-third of the 2225 delegates came from the West, but these were overwhelmingly Communists from areas like the Ruhr and the big industrial towns. The movement did not therefore genuinely reflect West German opinion and Bevin refused to allow its delegation permission to enter Britain.

The London Conference broke up on 15 December 1947 amid bitter recriminations. The Soviets accused Britain and the USA of violating the Potsdam Agreement and of denying the USSR its fair share of reparations, while the Western powers rejected Soviet proposals for forming a German government, which would govern a united Germany, as they feared that it would only fall under Soviet control. All hope of four power co-operation now disappeared, and instead the alternatives of a Western alliance, closer economic co-operation in Western Europe and the creation of a West German state appeared to be the only practical options. All three policies were interrelated and depended ultimately on the military and political integration of West Germany into a Western European defence system linked to the USA and directed against the USSR.

**Key question**  
Why did the Western European and North Atlantic states begin to form a Western bloc?

**Key question**  
Why was no agreement on the future of Germany achieved at the London Conference?

#### Western European integration

The process of creating a Western Europe that was united politically, economically and militarily.

#### The Ruhr

The centre of the German coal and steel industries and at that time the greatest industrial region in Europe.

The London Conference broke up: 15 December 1947

Key terms

Key date

### The Brussels Pact and 'Western Union'

The creation of a West German state was still viewed with deep mistrust and fear by the French. In an effort to calm their anxieties, the British came up with a plan for a defensive alliance against Germany, but which, in reality, as Paul-Henri Spaak, the Belgian Prime Minister, pointed out, 'was meant as a screen behind which to consider defences against Russia', as occupied Germany was hardly in a position to threaten its neighbours. The Communist seizure of power in Prague on 22 February (see page 67) was a powerful factor in persuading the French to join an alliance system directed primarily against the USSR rather than Germany. The French government was also reassured by the US decision to keep troops in West Germany for the foreseeable future.

On 17 March the Brussels Pact was signed by Belgium, Britain, France, Luxemburg and the Netherlands. It did not mention the USSR by name but simply promised mutual defence against an aggressor from any quarter. The treaty contained clauses on cultural and social co-operation and provision for setting up a **Consultative Council**. This reflected Bevin's wish to encourage general Western European co-operation as a further barrier to the spread of Communism. Bevin intended that the Brussels Pact should be underpinned by an Atlantic alliance in which the USA would be a key member. The Americans responded rapidly to this suggestion, and by the end of March the first of a series of secret meetings between British, Canadian and US officials began to explore the possibility of such an alliance. Eventually this was to lead to the signing of the North Atlantic Treaty (see pages 72–3).

### The Marshall Plan and European integration

The Americans intended, as the revisionist historian Michael Hogan has said, to 'refashion' Western Europe 'in the image of the USA'. They hoped that a European political and economic union would create a United States of Europe, which would be very similar to the USA. They were convinced that once an economically integrated and politically united Western Europe existed, it would rapidly become as wealthy as the USA. It would deter the USSR, significantly boost world trade and provide valuable markets for US exports.

In the spring of 1948 the US Congress approved a programme for \$5 billion as the first instalment of the Marshall Plan aid. Washington then attempted to persuade the Western European states to set up an international committee, which would be powerful enough to supervise the distribution of Marshall aid and enforce the integration of their economies. In response to this, the Organisation for European Economic Co-operation (OEEC) was set up, but each state still had its own national agenda, especially Britain, which was determined not to surrender any power to a supranational organisation. Effectively this defeated US attempts to use Marshall aid as a means to create an integrated Western Europe in the US image, although over the next three years the Europeans themselves were to develop their own path to integration.

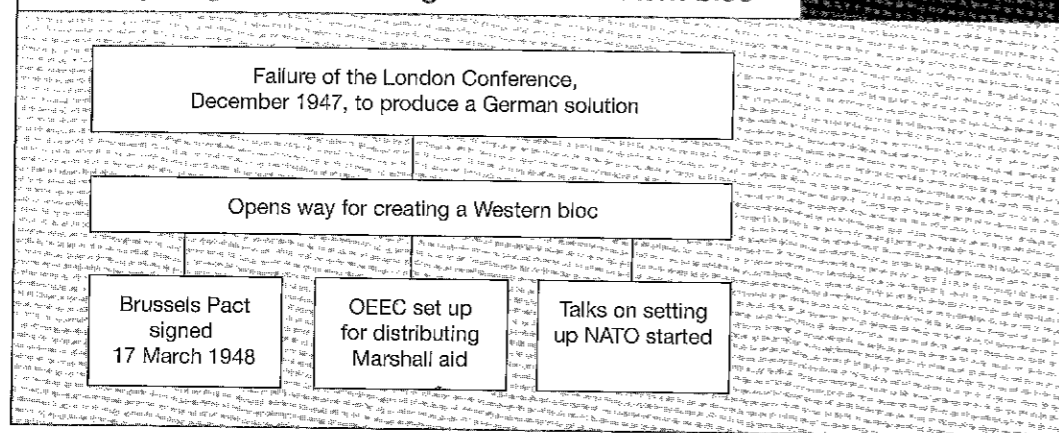
**Key question**  
What was the real intention of the Brussels Pact?

**Key dates**  
Communist coup in Czechoslovakia: 22 February 1948  
Signature of Brussels Pact: 17 March 1948

**Key term**  
**Consultative Council**  
A council on which the member states were represented and where they could discuss mutual problems.

**Key question**  
What did the Americans hope to achieve with the Marshall Plan?

## Summary diagram: The emergence of a Western bloc



## 2 | The Consolidation of the Eastern Bloc

By June 1948 the Cominform (see page 50) had become a powerful instrument for controlling the Soviet bloc. Theoretically each state in the bloc remained independent, but all had to adopt identical cultural, military, economic and social policies. This meant an end to the policy of diversity that had characterised Eastern Europe for the first two years after the war (see pages 51–4). In Czechoslovakia the Communists seized power at the end of February, while in Hungary they steadily strengthened their position throughout 1948. A Communist-dominated People's **Independence Front** was set up there, and in the elections in May 1949 only candidates approved by the Front could stand. In Poland the Deputy Premier, Władysław Gomułka, who wished to create a socialist society that would reflect the actual conditions in Poland rather than the USSR, was forced to resign in August 1948 and then imprisoned.

## 3 | The Yugoslav–Soviet Split

By the summer of 1948 not only was Europe divided into two blocs, but within the Soviet bloc there ran a split between the USSR and Yugoslavia that was every bit as deep and bitter. Although Tito had been publicly praised at the Cominform meeting (see page 50) in September 1947 as one of the USSR's most loyal and effective allies, Stalin nevertheless had some reservations about him. He was critical of Yugoslav attempts to play an independent role in the Balkans and of 'certain tendencies' among Yugoslav party leaders 'to overestimate their achievements'. In the course of the winter 1947–8 the friction between Moscow and Belgrade increased.

Tito alarmed Stalin with talk about forming a South-eastern European federation which would include Greece and Bulgaria. He was also planning to set up a military base in Albania. Stalin feared not only that this would make the Yugoslav Communist

**Key question**  
How did the USSR consolidate Communism in the Eastern bloc?

**Independence Front**  
A political bloc or alliance of parties.

Key term

**Key question**  
What caused the Yugoslav–Soviet split?

### The Communist seizure of power in Czechoslovakia

The Prague *coup* did not come as a surprise to the West. In practice, London, Washington and Paris had already written off Czechoslovakia and were not ready to intervene to save it from Communism. The Czech Communists, with nothing to fear from the West, were anxious to seize power as quickly as possible because their popularity was sharply declining and they were likely to suffer a severe defeat in the coming elections.

The crisis point was reached on 13 February 1948 when the cabinet protested against the unfair demotion of eight senior non-Communist police officers. A week later in protest against the Communist Minister of Interior's refusal to intervene, 12 ministers resigned from the cabinet, hoping to bring down the government, but this did not happen, as the Social Democrats and the two non-Party ministers, Jan Masaryk and Ludvík Svoboda, remained. The Communists were therefore able to use their control of the trade unions and the police to seize power and force Beneš to appoint a new cabinet which would follow loyally the policies laid down in Moscow. The elections of 30 May were held on the basis of a single National Front list which committed all candidates to a manifesto approved by Moscow.

Party the strongest force in the Balkans, but also that it would provoke the USA at a time of escalating tension over Germany.

As a result, party delegations from Bulgaria and Yugoslavia were summoned to Moscow and made to confess their 'mistakes'. Stalin specifically vetoed the stationing of Yugoslav troops in Albania and, instead of the wider federation favoured by Tito, proposed a smaller Bulgarian–Yugoslav union. The two states also had to commit themselves from now on to regular consultations with Soviet officials on foreign policy questions. Tito refused to subordinate his foreign policy to Moscow, and rejected union with Bulgaria, as he feared that, given Soviet influence there, it would merely be a way for Stalin to tighten his grip on Yugoslavia.

Stalin reacted to this open defiance of his leadership by turning the conflict into what has been called 'a head-on collision'. He withdrew his advisers from Yugoslavia and accused its leaders of a long list of political and ideological 'crimes'.

Stalin also put pressure on the other Eastern bloc states to support the Soviet line. By the time of the second Cominform meeting in June 1948 the whole Soviet bloc, as well as the Western European Communist leaders, were united against Tito, who was then formally expelled from the organisation. Although many privately doubted the truth of Stalin's accusations, they supported them because in the final analysis, at a time of acute tension with the West triggered by the Berlin Blockade (see page 69), they were dependent on Moscow for their own survival. Only in Yugoslavia did a Communist party have a base genuinely independent of the USSR.



On 1 July 1948 the three Western military governors handed over their permission to start drawing up a constitution for a West German state.

#### 4 | The Decision to Create a West German State

The collapse of the London Foreign Ministers' Conference in December 1947 (see page 64) and the emergence of two rival power blocs in Europe strengthened the Western allies in their resolve to form a separate West German state. How this was to be done was then discussed by Britain, France, the USA and the **Benelux states** at another conference in London, which sat, except for a break of six weeks in the middle, from 23 February to 2 June 1948.

Anglo-American plans for creating a West German state met with considerable hostility from France, which dreaded the revival of German power. Neither the British nor the Americans were ready to compromise on this, but as the new West German state was to be subjected to tight controls and the Americans had already committed themselves to joining a North Atlantic Treaty Alliance, French fears were to a certain extent appeased (see page 65). The production of the great industrial centre of the Ruhr was to be regulated by the

**Key question**  
How was French opposition to setting up West Germany overcome at the London Conference (February–June 1948)?

**Benelux states**  
Belgium, the Netherlands and Luxemburg.

London Six Power Conference recommended creation of a West German state: 7 June 1948

Key term

Key date

Key terms

#### International Ruhr Authority

Laid down how much coal and steel the Germans should produce and ensured that a percentage of its production should be made available to its Western neighbours. It was replaced in 1951 by the European Coal and Steel Community.

#### Occupation Statute

A treaty defining the rights of Britain, France and the USA in Western Germany.

#### Devalued Reichsmarks

The original German currency had been destroyed by wartime and early postwar inflation and was almost valueless.

#### Key question

Why did the Soviets think that they could exert pressure on the Western allies in Berlin?

#### Key question

Why did the Berlin Blockade fail?

Key dates

Currency reform in West Germany: 20 June 1948

The Berlin Blockade began: 24 June 1948

Key term

**Military Governor**  
The head of a zone of occupation in Germany.

**International Ruhr Authority**, which would be controlled by the Western allies. The West Germans would also have to accept the **Occupation Statute**, which would give Britain, France and the USA far-reaching powers over trade, foreign relations, economic questions and disarmament.

The West Germans were authorised on 7 June to draft a constitution for a democratic, federal West German state. On 20 June the Western allies introduced the new currency, the Deutschmark, into the Western zones and four days later the Soviets responded by introducing the new East German Mark (*ostmark*) into their own zone. With the introduction of the currency reforms the outline of the two German states was beginning to take shape.

#### 5 | The Soviet Response: The Berlin Blockade

##### Pressure on Berlin begins

The Six Power Conference in London and the Brussels Treaty had confronted the Soviets with a major challenge. Stalin, however, believed that he could force the Western allies to reconsider the whole German question by applying pressure to their position in West Berlin, which as a city deep in the Eastern zone (see the map on page 42) was vulnerable as it was dependent on rail and road links running through the Soviet zone for bulk supplies from the West.

Consequently, in March 1948 the Soviet occupying forces began to exercise an ever tighter control over the movement of people and freight from West Berlin to the Western zones. The introduction of the Deutschmark first into the Western zones and then into West Berlin on 23 June provided the Soviets with the necessary excuse to begin the full blockade of West Berlin. They argued that it was a defensive measure to stop the Soviet zone being swamped with the **devalued Reichsmarks**, which the new Deutschmark was replacing in West Germany. During the night of 23–24 June the blockade began. The rail and road links to the West as well as the supply of electricity from East Berlin to the Western sectors were all cut.

##### The Berlin Blockade, 24 June 1948–12 May 1949

The Western response was confused and unsure. The French were convinced that West Berlin could only hold out for a matter of weeks, while, to quote the British historian, Avi Schlaim, the US administration 'seemed almost paralysed by uncertainty and fear'. It was Bevin who again provided the initial leadership of the alliance, and suggested forceful counter-measures. Essentially he was determined to maintain the Western position in Berlin and press on with setting up a West German state, while at all costs avoiding war. He rejected suggestions by General Clay, the US **Military Governor**, that an armed convoy should force its way through to West Berlin, because this could easily have provoked a clash with Soviet forces. Instead he

convinced the Americans that West Berlin could be supplied by an **airlift** made possible by aircraft flying along the three 'corridors', or flight paths, allocated to the Western Allies by the Soviets in 1945 (see the diagram on page 72). He also responded enthusiastically to US requests to transfer 60 B-29 bombers to East Anglia. It was assumed at the time that these carried atomic bombs, but in fact this was a bluff, as the modified B-29s, which could carry them, only arrived in Britain in 1949. Nevertheless this gesture probably did deter the Soviets from trying to interfere with the airlift, although they, too, wanted to avoid war.

By the end of July British and US planes were managing to fly into West Berlin an average of 2000 tons of food and raw materials a day. Yet if stocks were to be built up for the coming winter, 5000 tons would have to be flown in on a regular daily basis.

As it was very uncertain whether these totals could be maintained, the three Western powers were ready to explore the possibility of reaching an agreement over Berlin. On 2 August their ambassadors met Stalin in Moscow. Interpreting their approach as a sign of weakness, he was uncompromising over his demands. According to the Soviet record of the meeting on 2 August:

Comrade Stalin spoke of two factors – the special currency in Berlin and the decisions of the London Conference. He thought that it was those decisions which gave rise to the restrictive measures under discussion... Comrade Stalin said that... simultaneously with the rescinding of the restrictions on transport applied by the Soviet Military Administration, the special currency [the Deutschmark]... introduced by the three powers into Berlin should be withdrawn and replaced by the currency circulating in the Soviet zone... That was the first point. Secondly, assurance should be given that application of the London Conference's decisions would be postponed until representatives of the four powers had met and negotiated on all the basic questions concerning Germany.



West Berlin children watch a US plane, loaded with food, come in to land in early August 1948.

#### Airlift

The transport of food and supplies by air to a besieged area.

Key term

The Western powers would not reverse their decision to create a West German state, but they were ready to agree to the circulation of the *ostmark* in the whole of Berlin, subject to four power financial control. Yet, as further discussions between the Military Governors of the four zones in September showed, the Soviets wanted total control of the currency. If they were to abandon the blockade, at the very least, they intended, as one Soviet official observed:

to restore the economic unity of Berlin, to include all Berlin in the economic system of the Soviet zone and also to restore unified administration of the city. That would have served as a basis for winning over the population of West Berlin, and would have created the preconditions for completely ousting the Western powers from Berlin.

These talks broke down on 7 September because neither side would give way. As the Soviets were convinced that the airlift to West Berlin could not be sustained during the winter, they decided to play for time and avoid any compromise. Consequently all the efforts of the United Nations to mediate during the winter of 1948–9 failed.

#### End of the blockade

By the end of January 1949, however, it became clear that Stalin's gamble was failing. The winter of 1948–9 was exceptionally mild and, thanks to the effective deployment of the large American C54s, which flew to Berlin from bases in the British zone, the average daily tonnage for January was 5620. By April this had reached 8000 tons per day and about 1000 aircraft were able to use the air corridors to Berlin at any one time (see the diagram on page 72). In February, the Western powers also declared the Deutschmark to be the sole legal currency in West Berlin and stopped all Western exports to the Soviet zone, which increased the pressure on the zone's economy.

Stalin, who was not prepared to go to war over Berlin, had little option but to cut his losses. In an interview with a US journalist on 31 January he made a considerable concession, when he indicated that he would make the lifting of the blockade dependent only on calling another meeting of the Council of Foreign Ministers. The Americans responded to this and talks began between the Soviet and US representatives on the Security Council of the United Nations in New York. In early May they finally reached agreement that the blockade would be called off on 12 May and that 11 days later a Council of Foreign Ministers should meet in Paris to discuss both the future of Germany and the Berlin currency question. On neither issue did the Council produce a breakthrough, but the four powers approved the New York agreement on lifting the blockade and agreed to discuss how the situation in Berlin could be normalised.

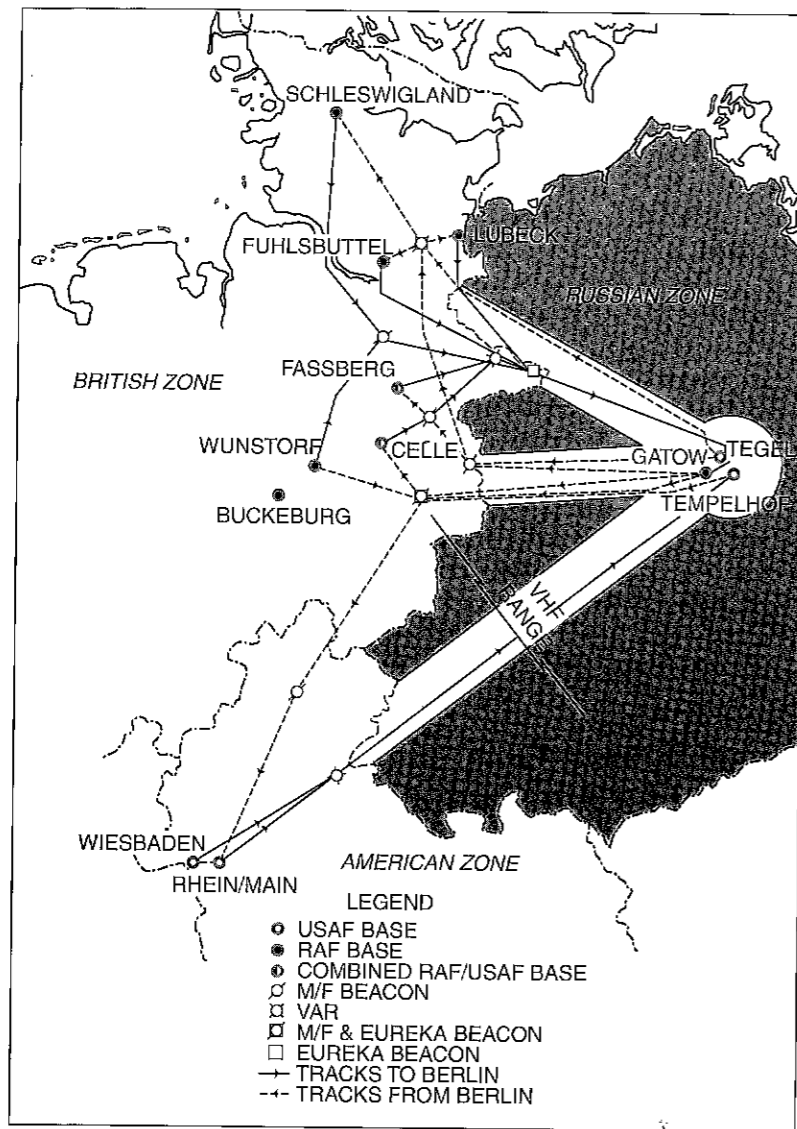
Key term

C54s

Large US transport planes.

Key date

USSR lifted the Berlin Blockade: 12 May 1949



A diagram showing how the airlift worked. Radar beacons regulated the flow of aircraft before they entered the corridors to Berlin.

## 6 | The North Atlantic Treaty Organisation

### Negotiating the Treaty

The Prague *coup* and the Berlin Blockade finally persuaded the Americans that there was no alternative to a formal commitment to defend Western Europe. From the spring of 1948 through to early 1949 the US government gradually worked out the framework for a North Atlantic-Western European military alliance with both **Congressional leaders** at home and its allies in Europe. Over the course of these negotiations it became increasingly clear that the proposed North Atlantic Treaty interlocked with the plans for setting up a West German state. Without this treaty it would have been very difficult, perhaps even

**Key question**  
Why was the treaty signed and to what extent was it a compromise between European and US wishes?

**Congressional leaders**  
Influential political leaders in the US Congress (parliament).

Key term

**Key terms**  
**NATO Council**  
NATO's decision-making committee on which each member state was represented.

**High Commission**  
A civilian body charged with the task of defending the interests of the Western allies in Germany.

impossible, to have persuaded the French to tolerate the creation of West Germany, whose potential military and industrial power they still feared.

The US government had to take a middle line between the West Europeans, who hoped for a military alliance, which would commit US troops to the defence of Western Europe, and Congress, which wanted to avoid any precise commitments. To win over Congress, President Truman had to stress that the treaty did not commit the USA to go to war without its consent and that it would help the West Europeans to defend themselves. In the end the key article 5 contained the rather imprecise wording that each treaty member 'will take such action as it deems necessary, including the use of armed force, to restore and maintain security in the North Atlantic area'. The West Europeans, particularly the French, found this too weak, but decided to use article 3, which called for 'continuous and effective self-help and mutual aid', to involve the Americans ever more closely in the defence of Western Europe.

### The creation of NATO

The North Atlantic Treaty was signed on 4 April 1949 in Washington for an initial period of 20 years by Canada, the USA, the Brussels Pact Powers (page 65), Norway, Denmark, Iceland, Italy and Portugal. It came into force on 24 August 1949. When the **NATO Council** met for the first time in September, defence and military committees were set up and its members were divided into five regional groups to all of which the USA belonged. At the same time Congress approved a military assistance programme to help to build up Western Europe's armed forces. These actions ended, for the time being anyway, the fears that the Europeans still had that the USA might again retire back into isolation as it had done in 1919.

**Key date**  
NATO Treaty: 4 April 1949

**Key question**  
Why did the Western Allies persist with the setting up of the FRG?

**Key dates**  
West Germans approved the Basic Law or West German Constitution: 23 May 1949  
Occupation Statute approved in the FRG: 22 September 1949

## 7 | The Division of Germany

### The creation of the Federal Republic of Germany

The West German constitution was approved in the spring of 1949 by the three Western occupying powers, and elections for the new parliament (*Bundestag*) took place in August. A month later when parliament met, Konrad Adenauer (see page 43) became the first West German Chancellor.

The FRG was, however, far from being independent. The Occupation Statute, which came into force in September, replaced the military government in the former Western zones with a **High Commission**. This still gave Britain, France and the USA the final say on West German foreign policy, security questions, exports and many other matters that an independent state is free to decide on for itself.





Konrad Adenauer being sworn in as Chancellor of the Federal Republic of Germany, 15 September 1949.

### The emergence of the German Democratic Republic

In the winter of 1948–9 the Soviets were reluctant to set up a separate East German state if there was still a chance of stopping British and US plans for West Germany and of one day creating a neutral pro-Soviet Germany. Stalin was prepared to give the Soviet zone a greater degree of independence, but for the moment this was just a temporary step that would not block eventual German unity. He feared that the creation of an East German state would make the division of Germany final.

Throughout the spring and summer of 1949 Walther Ulbricht and the other leaders of the SED claimed that only their party was working for national unity, in contrast to the **splitters** in the West, who he alleged were deliberately plotting to divide Germany. To emphasise this claim, in March 1948 the SED set up a 'German People's Council' (*Volksrat*) of 400 delegates, a quarter of whom were Communists from the Western zones, to draft a constitution for a united German state. If a unified Germany proved impossible to create, then this constitution would form the basis of a new East German state. In May, Wilhelm Pieck, the Chairman of the SED, pointed out that once a West German state was set up, the Soviet zone would inevitably have to 'develop its own independent state structure. It did not matter whether the Western Powers tore Germany apart ... a month earlier or a month later. The important thing was to be prepared for every eventuality.'

By March 1949 the SED was ready for this 'eventuality'. The constitution of the future East German state had been drafted and approved by the People's Council. On paper at least, it did

#### Key question

To what extent was East Germany set up in response to the creation of the FRG?

#### Splitters

The SED accused the West Germans and the Western allies of splitting or dividing Germany.

Key term

Key term

#### Make-believe constitution

A constitution that was not genuine and merely hid a dictatorship by one party: the SED.

Key dates

People's Congress approved the GDR constitution: 30 May 1949

GDR set up: 12 October 1949

#### Key question

What impact did the division of Germany have on Berlin?

not seem to be so very different from West Germany's. In reality, however, it was as British historian Peter Merkl observed, a **make-believe constitution** camouflaging a one-party dictatorship. In May a new People's Congress was elected. The voters, as in the other Soviet-dominated countries in Eastern Europe, had been presented with just one list of candidates, all of whom represented the views of the SED.

At the end of May the congress met and approved the draft constitution, but Moscow, where the real power lay, kept the SED in suspense. The Soviets believed that there was still a slim chance of stopping the setting up of the FRG. However, once the West German elections, in which the KPD won only 5.7 per cent of the voters, had taken place in August, Stalin realised that there was no longer any alternative to forming the German Democratic Republic (GDR), even though for him it was an exercise in damage limitation, which would ensure that the Soviet zone did not become sucked into a united Western-orientated Germany. On 12 October the government of the new state was formed and the Soviet military occupation of the zone came to an end, although a Soviet Control Commission was set up, which, like the Allied High Commission in the West, retained considerable reserve powers.

### Berlin

The division of Germany ensured that Berlin remained a divided city within a divided state within a divided continent. At the end of November 1948 the Germans in West Berlin, in response to threats and intimidation from the SED, set up their own city government with an elected assembly, which had an overwhelming anti-Communist majority. Britain, France and the USA permitted West Berlin to send representatives to sit in the West German parliament in Bonn but, as the city was still legally under four power control, they had no voting rights.

There was as yet no physical barrier between East and West Berlin. Nevertheless, the Soviet sector of Berlin became the capital of the new GDR. The frontier was still open in the city. The Berlin Wall was not built until August 1961 (see page 119).

## 8 | Key Debate

Was the division of Europe and Germany inevitable in 1948–9?

In the autumn of 1947 the USA had hoped that it could, through economic assistance alone, set up a strong but friendly Western Europe that would be able to withstand pressure from the Soviet bloc. US officials believed that a strong economically and politically integrated Western Europe could also act as a magnet that would pull the Soviet satellites out of Moscow's orbit. By the spring of 1948, however, it was clear that European economic integration was not happening. Military and economic weakness and the reluctance of Britain and France to go too far down the

road of integration meant that the Western Europeans desperately needed assurances of US military support. The US presence was also the key to persuading France and the Benelux states that they had nothing to fear from a revived West Germany.

The more the USA was drawn into establishing in Western Europe what the US historian Geir Lundestad has called an **empire by invitation**, the more it provoked Soviet reaction and the consolidation of the Soviet bloc, without Yugoslavia. The Prague *coup* (see page 67) appeared to confirm all the worst fears about the USSR, and was an important factor leading to the decision to create West Germany and negotiate the North Atlantic Treaty. Stalin's unsuccessful attempt to force the Western allies to drop their plans for West Germany by blockading West Berlin merely accelerated the division of Germany and left him with no option but to form an East German state.

With hindsight the division of Germany and Europe seemed inevitable. Yet for Stalin the creation of a potentially independent West German state was a serious blow. East Germany has been described by the German revisionist historian Willy Loth as his 'unwanted child'. Until his death, Stalin saw the GDR as only a temporary structure that he would be happy to dismantle, if he could somehow create a neutral Germany independent of a US-dominated Western Europe. By moving so quickly to set up a separate West Germany and a North Atlantic security system, were Britain, France and the USA responsible for the partition of Europe into two blocs? The eminent US diplomat George Kennan warned in September 1948 that this policy would lead to 'an irrevocable congelment of the division of Europe into two military zones: a Soviet zone and a US zone. Instead of the ability to divest ourselves gradually of the basic responsibility for the security of Western Europe, we will get a legal perpetuation of that responsibility'. In Britain, too, there were critical voices. In July 1948 General Robertson, the British Military Governor in Germany, in a memorandum to Bevin suggested that:

it would be impossible for the Western Allies to concede total evacuation because once British and US troops left Germany, the Soviets would have the country at their mercy. There is no reason, however, why the armed forces of the Allies should not withdraw into given frontier areas, leaving Berlin and the main part of Germany to a single central government. ...

From the reaction to this advice in London, Paris and Washington, it was obvious that most Western Europeans and their governments preferred a divided Germany and a West Europe protected by a US military presence to the uncertainties and risks to which a neutral unified Germany would have exposed them. It was by no means clear that Stalin would in reality have tolerated a genuine independent and neutral Germany.

### Empire by invitation

The Western Europeans were in effect asking to be put under US protection and so become a part of a US 'empire' or a US-dominated region.

Key term

## Summary diagram: The division of Germany and Europe 1948–9

