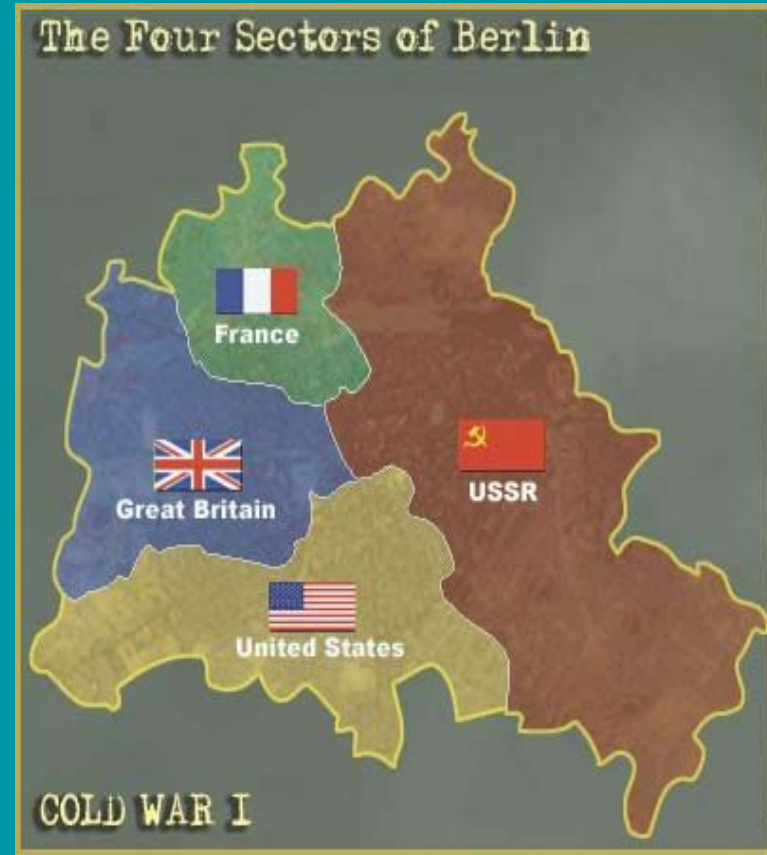




# Berlin Airlift

At the end of the Second World War, U.S., British, and Soviet military forces divided and occupied Germany. Also divided into occupation zones, Berlin was located far inside Soviet-controlled eastern Germany. The United States, United Kingdom, and France controlled western portions of the city, while Soviet troops controlled the eastern sector.





**In June 1948, Josef Stalin's government attempted to consolidate control of the city by cutting off all land and sea routes to West Berlin in order to pressure the Allies to evacuate. As a result, beginning on June 24 the western section of Berlin and its 2 million people were deprived of food, heating fuel and other crucial supplies.**

**Though some in U.S. President Harry S. Truman's administration called for a direct military response to this aggressive Soviet move, Truman worried such a response would trigger another world war. Instead, he authorized a massive airlift operation under the control of General Lucius D. Clay, the American-appointed military governor of Germany. The first planes took off from England and western Germany on June 26, loaded with food, clothing, water, medicine and fuel.**





**By July 15, an average of 2,500 tons of supplies was being flown into the city every day. The massive scale of the airlift made it a huge logistical challenge and at times a great risk. With planes landing at Tempelhof Airport every four minutes, round the clock, pilots were being asked to fly two or more round-trip flights every day, in World War II planes that were sometimes in need of repair.**



The Soviets lifted the blockade in May 1949, having earned the scorn of the international community for subjecting innocent men, women and children to hardship and starvation. The airlift—called *die Luftbrücke* or “the air bridge” in German—continued until September 1949, for a total delivery of more than 1.5 million tons of supplies and a total cost of over \$224 million. When it ended, the eastern section of Berlin was absorbed into Soviet East Germany, while West Berlin remained a separate territory with its own government and close ties to West Germany.

