
The Berlin Blockade

*A STUDY
IN COLD WAR POLITICS*

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THE RAND CORPORATION

PRINCETON, NEW JERSEY
PRINCETON UNIVERSITY PRESS

1958

The Blockade Is Lifted

In the third week of March the Jessup-Malik negotiations led to a tentative agreement for lifting the blockade and counterblockade. The discussions, slow at first, had progressed more rapidly since March 15, when Malik told Jessup that Stalin's failure to mention Berlin's currency in his statement had not been accidental, and that the currency question could be discussed at a meeting of the Council of Foreign Ministers, if such a meeting could be arranged to review the whole German problem. Dr. Jessup then asked whether the Soviet government was contemplating a meeting while the blockade was in progress, or whether the blockade would be lifted in order to permit the meeting to take place. Mr. Malik said he would refer back to Moscow, and, on March 21, came back with the answer that, if a definite date were set for the meeting of the Council of Foreign Ministers, the restrictions on trade and transportation in Berlin could be lifted reciprocally, and in advance of the meeting.⁷⁷ Details were then discussed jointly with French

LIFTING THE BLOCKADE

and British representatives, and, on May 5, an official statement issued in Washington, London, Moscow, and Paris announced that the blockade would end on May 12:

The Governments of France, the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics, the United Kingdom, and the United States have reached the following agreement:

1. All the restrictions imposed since March 1, 1948, by the Government of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics on communications, transportation, and trade between Berlin and the Western zones of Germany and between the Eastern zone and the Western zones will be removed on May 12, 1949.

2. All the restrictions imposed since March 1, 1948, by the Governments of France, the United Kingdom, and the United States, or any one of them, on communications, transportation, and trade between Berlin and the Eastern zone and between the Western and Eastern zones of Germany will also be removed on May 12, 1949.

3. Eleven days subsequent to the removal of the restrictions referred to in paragraphs one and two, namely, on May 23, 1949, a meeting of the Council of Foreign Ministers will be convened in Paris to consider questions relating to Germany and problems arising out of the situation in Berlin, including also the question of currency in Berlin.⁷⁸

The agreement did not cover all the blockade restrictions. General Howley (who had been promoted in March) pointed out that the statement failed to mention the restoration of West Berlin's electricity supply. He expressed the hope that the Soviets would allow current to flow "in the spirit of the agreement," as in fact they did. Also, the Soviet zone railways announced that 4,000 freight cars would be returned to West Germany "as a sign of good will."⁷⁹

Discussions between Jessup and Malik had at first been conducted in the strictest secrecy. Even General Clay knew nothing about them, and, in press interviews in mid-April, he discounted all rumors that the blockade would shortly be lifted.⁸⁰ He later said that he first learned about the Jessup-Malik discussions from the newspapers, and that France and Britain also were not drawn into the discussions until they had been in progress for some time.⁸¹ Newspaper stories—at first unconfirmed—began to appear on April 20. On April 26, TASS issued an account of the discussions, and this

LIFTING THE BLOCKADE

was followed immediately by an official release from the Western powers.

One event which, with the benefit of hindsight, may be called an indicator of the impending agreement was the reassignment of Marshal Sokolovsky, whose name had been so closely associated with the blockade. On March 29 the Moscow radio announced that he would be replaced by General Chuikov. Sokolovsky does not appear to have been in disgrace, however, since he became First Deputy Minister of the Soviet Armed Forces.⁸²

The manner in which *Neues Deutschland* presented the end of the blockade allows a minor case study of the treatment of unfavorable news in a communist organ. On May 4 a one-column story, under the small heading "REGARDING THE JESSUP-MALIK CONVERSATIONS," reported that American diplomats were trying to resume the talks they themselves had previously broken off. Were the Americans really serious this time? Perhaps they were, said *Neues Deutschland*, because their policies in Germany had suffered such a fiasco that they might be ready to try something else.

On May 5, the day of the official four-power statement, the paper said that the very fact of the negotiations showed the success of the world-wide peace forces, and especially of the unchangeable peace policy of the Soviet Union. Having thus attempted to turn the failure of the Soviet blockade into an advantage by crediting the end of the blockade to the communist peace campaign, *Neues Deutschland* went on to another familiar theme: Now that the great powers were meeting to discuss the German question, it was important that the voice of the German people be heard, and that everyone participate in the elections for a new People's Congress, to be held on May 15 and 16. The four-power communiqué was reported on May 6 under the headline: "THE POLICY OF PEACE IS SUCCESSFUL—TEXT OF THE COMMUNIQUE OF THE FOUR GREAT POWERS—GENERAL CLAY IS STRUCK DUMB." An editorial went on to say that the airlift, like Hitler, had killed itself with victories.

On May 11 and 12, when West Berlin papers could find space for little besides news of the end of the blockade, *Neues Deutschland* devoted its front page to a communist plan for a meeting of "all democratic mass organizations in Germany," and to speeches by communist officials. Only a small item on May 12 noted that inter-zonal trade had been resumed and that unemployed persons would welcome this news.

The barriers between Berlin and the Soviet zone fell at midnight

LIFTING THE BLOCKADE

of May 11, and May 12 was a day of jubilation for West Berlin. School classes were dismissed after brief sessions in which teachers pointed out the significance of the event. The City Assembly held a special, ceremonial meeting, which was attended by the western military governors and by German dignitaries from the west zones. This was followed by a mass meeting addressed by leaders of the three democratic parties. The first trucks and trains to arrive in the city were decked with flowers. Private and public celebrations dominated the west sectors.

A note of sadness was introduced by those who recalled the lives that had been lost in the course of the airlift. The *Tagesspiegel* devoted a large portion of its front page to a picture of a wrecked aircraft and reminded its readers that seven British and seventeen American planes had suffered accidents, and forty-eight men had been killed:

The lives of forty-eight men weigh heavily in the scales of freedom, and when in a few days the foreign ministers meet in Paris, they will not be permitted to forget these men who made the supreme sacrifice in the battle for democratic rights.

Mayor Reuter, at the special meeting of the City Assembly, also referred to the pilots who had lost their lives, and all those present rose to their feet. At the same meeting, Franz Neumann read the names of those who had been killed, and submitted a resolution that the square in front of the Tempelhof airport be named "Platz der Luftbrücke" (Airlift Square) in commemoration. The resolution was passed unanimously.

The airmen were not the only foreigners who were honored at this festive meeting of the Assembly. Mayor Reuter singled out General Clay for words of praise, the like of which have rarely, if ever, been heard by a military governor from an elected representative of a conquered people:

In our great demonstrations in the summer of the past year, we called on the world for help. The world heard our cry. We are happy to have here in our midst as a guest the man who, together with his two colleagues, took the initiative in organizing the airlift in the summer of last year. The memory of General Clay will never fade in Berlin. We know for what we have to thank this man [prolonged stormy applause], and we take advantage of this hour in which he bids farewell to Berliners to say that we will never forget what he has done for us.⁸³

LIFTING THE BLOCKADE

Dr. Suhr also extended formal thanks to General Clay, not only, he said, because of the American military governor's part in organizing the airlift, but also for his contribution to the economic support of Western Europe and to the prospects for a new governmental order in Germany: "As the representative of a victorious power you have understood how to work for peace. That, I think, is the highest praise that can be given a soldier. For that the men and women of Berlin thank you."

Konrad Adenauer, as the principal representative of West Germany at the Assembly meeting, was also greeted enthusiastically. His visit, said Dr. Suhr, was to Berliners a sign of the solidarity of all Germans. When the future West German chancellor promised that West Germany would maintain its ties with Berlin, come what may, he was answered with cries of "bravo" and thunderous applause. The various speakers' references to West German assistance during the blockade, and to the fact that Berlin representatives were taking part in the work of the Parliamentary Council in Bonn, produced the same enthusiastic response. The lifting of the blockade seemed to presage the reunification of Germany.

At the mass meeting that followed, the speakers expressed many of the same ideas, praising the steadfastness of Berliners, the help of the Western powers, and the solidarity of all Germans. Dr. Adenauer alluded to the steadfastness of Berliners as an inspiration to the writers of the West German constitution. Carlo Schmid, for the SPD, expressed the belief that West Germany, and indeed the whole Western world, had drawn moral strength from the behavior of the Berliners. Mayor Reuter, in conclusion, spoke hopefully of the future, of the day when trains would be running on double tracks from Berlin to the cities of East and West Germany, and when Berlin would once again be self-supporting. He then called for a democratic offensive in East Berlin.

Everybody applauded the mayor's remarks, including a little grey-haired woman near the rostrum. Only then did the crowd notice Louise Schroeder. Although the meeting had already been formally closed, people refused to leave until she also had spoken. And so she said a few words extemporaneously, just as she had when called upon unexpectedly at another mass meeting, the year before. She spoke primarily to the women of Berlin, who had borne so many of the privations brought on by the blockade. They could be happy, she said, for they had displayed the greatest virtue—faithfulness to a good cause.⁸⁴

LIFTING THE BLOCKADE

Berlin's troubles were by no means over. The end of the blockade was followed by a dispute between the city's railroad workers and Soviet Military Government, over the latter's insistence that railroad workers who lived in West Berlin be paid in east marks. This led to a strike, which delayed recovery by another six weeks. Soviet and East German authorities continued to impose periodic restrictions on Berlin's trade, thereby hampering economic reconstruction and causing unemployment to rise. Above all, there was the nagging feeling of insecurity brought on by the continuing East-West tension. Nevertheless, Berlin managed to rise above these problems and to remain an oasis of freedom and democracy in a totalitarian desert.

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Communist Influence Decreases

The West German Communist Party apparently had had no advance warning of the Soviet plan for a full blockade. Scattered reports of communist reaction in various localities indicate that at least the lower leaders of the party did not know what position to take. In the small town of Melsungen in the north of Hessen, the communist fraction in the county assembly voted along with the noncommunist parties in favor of a sympathy rally for Berlin. (The deputies reversed their position a short time later, apparently in response to objections from higher communist headquarters.)²⁹ At a meeting of the budget committee of the Economic Council on July 6, 1948, the communist spokesman on the committee joined with representatives of the other parties in voting a credit of 20 million marks for Berlin;³⁰ he later became a bitter opponent of

financial aid to Berlin. In the Wiesbaden City Assembly, the four communist deputies voted in favor of a resolution expressing sympathy and support for the people of Berlin, but they did oppose another resolution, which condemned the Berlin Communists specifically.³¹ In the discussion following a political mass meeting in Düsseldorf, a Communist Party member (who was not identified) was reported as saying that the policies of his party amounted to a betrayal of the German people.³²

Confusion within the party did not last long. By the middle of July communist deputies in West German legislative bodies apparently had been briefed on what line to take in their speeches. From then on all of them advanced almost identical arguments. The motions introduced by communist deputies also appear to have been framed at a central point for use by party members in the various parliaments.³³

The West German communist line with regard to Berlin was vigorously aggressive:³⁴ The other parties were using the Berlin crisis as a screen behind which to hide the catastrophic results of the West German currency reform, which in turn had been designed to split Germany. Berlin was in trouble because the Western powers had violated the Potsdam Agreement, and it was therefore up to them to find a solution for the difficulties they had caused. West Germany had no business assisting Berlin so long as it had within its borders thousands of expellees and refugees who were without the basic necessities of life. The Special Berlin Tax,* by which West Germany was raising money to support Berlin, was one of the "material and ideological preparations for war," and in supporting it, the noncommunist parties were simply acting as flunkeys for the warmongering Western powers.

The Communists also used every opportunity to mention the high cost of the airlift, and either to imply or to state outright that the costs of this huge operation would be borne by the German taxpayer. They referred to the airlift contemptuously as the American "flying sport" or "air acrobatics," and suggested that the Americans should pay for such luxuries themselves. Unemployment in West Germany, said the communist speakers, was rising as a result of restrictions imposed by the Western powers, and German workers were violently opposed to extra taxes and deductions from their pay

* *Gesetz zur Erhebung einer Abgabe "Notopfer Berlin."* The author has been unable to find a completely satisfactory translation for this title. The present one is only an approximation.

envelopes that would only finance the political ambitions of the West.

In the West German parliaments, the Communists opposed all measures for the support of Berlin in general and the Special Berlin Tax in particular, and made every effort to show that the Berlin Tax was a levy aimed at the workers and sparing the wealthy. Communist deputies in several of the parliaments proposed measures for special assistance to the needy within the West German states, rather than to Berlin. In Hessen, for example, the Communists introduced a bill to provide funds to all families with an income of less than 140 marks a month, so that they might buy coal and potatoes during the winter, and most speeches in support of this measure took the form of attacks on the Special Berlin Tax.³⁵

When other parties moved to express sympathy with Berlin or introduced legislation to provide support for the city, the Communists attempted to tack amendments on to these motions to the effect that the Western powers were responsible for the plight of Berlin. In the Hessian parliament, for instance, the SPD and CDU submitted a joint resolution, which ended with the parliament's expression of "its recognition to the Berlin population for the presence of mind and determination which the Berliners have shown." The communist fraction thereupon moved to add the words: ". . . , after the West attempted to subject the German capital to a separate currency reform."³⁶ But the amendment was rejected by the other parties.

Communist propaganda throughout West Germany echoed the refrain of communist parliamentarians. In addition, party workers promoted expressions of discontent in trade-union groups and other organizations, and many of these groups did indeed pass resolutions against the Special Berlin Tax. A veteran West German union official described the situation as follows:

They [the Communists] took advantage of the fact that workers don't like to have deductions made from their wages—no matter what the reason is, they naturally don't like it. This does not mean that they were against Berlin; they were just against *any* new tax, and still are. Therefore, the Communists were able to get quite a few West German labor organizations to pass resolutions opposing the Special Berlin Tax.

One Social Democrat explained that it was part of communist tactics to include the Special Berlin Tax on any list of grievances that was

drawn up by the unions. Politically inexperienced union leaders then would sometimes approve the whole list without scrutiny of the individual items on it. As soon as SPD officials pointed out the political stratagem by which the Communists had introduced the Special Berlin Tax into a list of legitimate grievances, most of the duped union leaders immediately tried to revise the list or at least to submit the various items to the membership for separate votes. In the few unions where Communists had gained control of the administrative machinery, the union executive committee usually passed resolutions without consulting the membership at all.

One cannot fail to be impressed by the resourcefulness, and the excellent preparation, of communist deputies in the various state parliaments, as well as by the energy of the publicists and agitators who spread the party line throughout West Germany. Communist deputies were almost invariably armed with quotations and statistics when they rose to make what appeared to be carefully prepared speeches in West German legislatures. Occasionally, they would make skillful use of rhetorical tricks. For example, a deputy in the Economic Council quoted a passage which, he alleged, had been written by Major Reuter of Berlin. When Social Democratic deputies expressed approval, the Communist revealed that the quotation actually came from former Nazi Propaganda Minister Goebbels.³⁷ It was apparent that, for the communist deputies, politics was their chief concern and a full-time job. By contrast, many of the other deputies, though quite often the better orators, appeared to speak without the benefit of much advance preparation.

In spite of the conscientious efforts of communist deputies and the perseverance of party propagandists, the communist cause suffered seriously in West Germany during the period under consideration. There were at least three reasons for these political setbacks. First, the communist line with regard to Berlin was so far removed from the facts of the matter—and these facts were easily available to every German—that it became practically indefensible; communist propagandists were forced to make suicide stands in untenable positions. Second, East Germany was a serious liability to West German Communists. No matter how glowing the pictures of a workers' paradise they painted, the news that trickled through into West Germany from the other side of the Elbe made it abundantly clear that conditions there were not such as to make communist rule attractive. Third, communist deputies and propagandists, while clever and hard-working, were frequently boorish and insulting. For the sake

SOVIET DEFEAT IN WEST GERMANY

of some slight propaganda advantage they would often sacrifice the mutual confidence that was necessary if they were to take part in the democratic process.

The attitude of noncommunist deputies toward the communist propaganda line on Berlin is illustrated by the reaction to an attempt by a communist deputy to expound the communist line in the Economic Council. The speaker was met with laughter from all sides of the house, and an SPD deputy interjected: "Do you happen to live on the moon?"³⁸ The Communists fared no better in the various state parliaments whenever they attempted to present the Soviet position.

Soviet policy in Berlin and East Germany provided democratic deputies with a ready weapon for use against communist advocates. For example, when military government in the American zone suspended certain sections of a law governing works councils, which had been passed by the German authorities, a communist deputy in the Hessian parliament used this as a peg on which to hang a vigorous denunciation of both the United States and the noncommunist parties. In reply, a Social Democratic deputy, without endorsing the action of military government, cast considerable doubt on the good faith of the communist orator:

I have not heard that Herr Müller [the communist speaker] has protested against the policy of the occupation power which is presently delivering millions of Germans in Berlin to hunger. (Cries of "that's a good one!" from the SPD and CDU.) I have heard no protest from Herr Müller and know of no exceptions taken by him to the disgraceful verdicts which have been handed down by military courts in [the Soviet sector of] Berlin. (Cries of "very good" from the SPD and CDU.) And I would have been happy if Herr Müller had protested and demanded that Lord Mayor Professor Reuter, who was elected in a democratic fashion by a huge majority, finally be installed in his office. I would have been happy to see Herr Müller come out in favor of allowing the democratic parties in the east zone to conduct their activities in a free and democratic manner. As long as the Communists do not do this they have no right and no cause to accuse others of kowtowing to the occupation powers.³⁹

In Württemberg-Hohenzollern, a communist deputy assailed the law which instituted the Special Berlin Tax as a "law for the preparation of war." A conservative (DVP) deputy replied: "I don't en-

tirely understand Deputy Zeeb. . . . I recommend that some time he take a look at the east zone police, as I was able to do, then he will know what preparations for war really are."⁴⁰ When a Communist in Nordrhein-Westfalen accused the democratic parties of trying to split Germany, a Social Democratic heckler cried: "Just look at Berlin."⁴¹ And so it went in every West German legislature, and in many public meetings.

Perhaps it was the very hopelessness of their political position that made the Communists in West German parliaments more aggressive than usual during the blockade. In the Economic Council, a communist deputy characterized the Special Berlin Tax as "a new way of robbing the workers and the poorest people among us, the refugees and the returnees." The presiding officer interrupted him and requested that he take back the term "robbery," because it went beyond the bounds of permissible language, but the communist deputy refused to take back the objectionable word.⁴² There was similar trouble between the communist fraction and the chair in almost every parliament because of interjections from the floor. German parliamentary custom permits any deputy to make comments while another deputy is speaking, so long as these interjections do not make it impossible for others in the chamber to follow the speaker's remarks. Communist hecklers, however, frequently startled their fellow deputies with interpolations of such length and volume as to disorganize the proceedings, and bring reprimands from presiding officers. And at times, communist deputies indulged in personalities that must have made their relations with the other lawmakers most difficult. To cite only one blatant example, a Communist who had been irritated by a conservative deputy's description of conditions in East Germany shouted at him: "Don't make yourself ridiculous. You surely are not more stupid than you look."⁴³

In their exposed position, and as a result of their own tactics, the Communists in West German legislatures became more and more isolated. A resolution adopted by the West German SPD shortly after the start of the blockade contained the phrase: "In the west zones, the political consequences should be drawn from the fact that the Communists have given active assistance to the terror measures in Berlin."⁴⁴ When the president of the Nordrhein-Westfalen parliament called for a standing vote on a motion to express solidarity with Berlin and present the city with 100,000 tons of coal, only the Communists stayed in their seats, and were booed by the other deputies.⁴⁵ In Hamburg, the City Assembly voted "no con-

fidence" in a communist member of the city government because he opposed certain relief measures for Berlin.⁴⁶ In some of the parliaments, and also in the Economic Council, it became the custom for most of the noncommunist deputies simply to leave the chamber whenever a Communist rose to speak.⁴⁷ This progressive isolation of the communist parliamentarians was, of course, due to a great many factors, and had begun even before the Berlin blockade. But the communist position on the blockade greatly accelerated it. Whereas previously the Communists had cooperated with other parties on certain types of legislation and had thereby managed to exert a modicum of influence on the legislative process, such cooperation and influence became almost nonexistent during the blockade.

Communist influence among the West German public suffered a similar decline. While many West Germans grumbled about the Special Berlin Tax and showed little interest in other measures for the support of Berlin, this did not mean that they endorsed the communist position. From the latter part of 1948 on, the Communists lost heavily in most West German state and local elections.⁴⁸ In the densely populated state of Nordrhein-Westfalen, where they had received 14 per cent of the votes cast in the state legislature elections of April 1947, their share of the vote dropped to 7.8 per cent in the local elections of October 17, 1948. The U.S. zone had no state elections during the blockade, but the federal elections of August 14, 1949 showed that the Communist Party had lost strength in every area.

A number of observers on the spot attributed this decline in the communist vote at least in part to the party's stand on the Berlin question. As a Social Democratic deputy said to a communist colleague who had just expounded the party position,

During the past months the German people have decided about this in all the elections which have taken place. Your party . . . has paid the cost of that point of view which you have just made known.⁴⁹

In an analogous situation in the Economic Council, another Social Democrat replied to a communist spokesman:

In answer to the criticism which the previous speaker made of this proposal [the Special Berlin Tax] and the basic ideas behind this proposal, my friends and I can only join with the

voters of Nordrhein-Westfalen, who last Sunday gave the Communist Party their answer with respect to the policies which have been followed in the east zone and in Berlin.⁵⁰

During 1946 and 1947 many West German voters had seen the Communists merely as one of the anti-Nazi political parties. By 1949, however, the Communist Party was recognized as an arm of Soviet policy; stories told by refugees from East Germany, as well as news reports, had thoroughly discredited the Soviets; and the blockade had played its part in educating the West German voters about the methods of the Soviets and the functions of their German auxiliaries. From a powerful political force the West German Communist Party was reduced to a small splinter group.

Berlin Becomes a West German Outpost

When the two currency reforms and blockade plunged Berlin into an economic crisis the Magistrat immediately turned to the West German Economic Council for aid. This plea for assistance speeded up a process that had already begun. On April 22, 1948 the bizonal Economic Council had voted to establish a committee to promote economic cooperation with Berlin.⁵¹ Then, on June 19, the Berlin Magistrat sent an urgent call for assistance to the president of the Economic Council and the chairman of the Council's Executive Committee. According to this note, West German currency reform (which at that time did not include Berlin) meant that the city would no longer be able to pay for vital imports from the three west zones. The Berlin Magistrat was therefore forced to request credit. This request was considered by the Executive Committee in its meeting on June 23, and the sum of 45 million marks was thereupon placed at the disposal of two bizonal agencies (the Administrations for Food, Agriculture and Forestry, and the Administration for Economics), with instructions that West Berlin be supplied with necessary goods from West Germany.⁵²

This West German assistance to Berlin was granted prior to the full blockade. When the blockade became total, and the Soviets froze the bank accounts of the Magistrat in East Berlin, the city's financial situation became even more urgent. The Magistrat then appealed for an additional credit of 20 million marks on an emergency basis. This was approved by the budget committee of the Economic Council on July 6.⁵³ Shortly thereafter, Acting Mayor Louise Schroeder revealed that she would ask for a further credit of

100 million marks "with which to carry on the battle for Berlin" when the minister presidents from the West German states met on July 11. At her request, a memorandum already had gone from the bizonal authorities to the finance ministers of the West German states, apparently in order to guard against the possibility that the West Germans might dismiss the financial problems of Berlin as concerning only the occupying powers. Part of this memorandum read:

In support of her request Frau Schroeder said that everything must be done from the German side to prevent the defense of Berlin from collapsing before the diplomatic actions of the Western powers could take effect. She also said that, while the fate of Berlin in this dispute between East and West could not be decided by the Berliners and the Germans, nevertheless the Germans must not neglect to use every means [to support Berlin] until the dispute has been settled, in order to ensure that in the event of an unfavorable result the Germans will not be held responsible for not having made sufficient effort.⁵⁴

The conference of minister presidents at Koblenz, in which Louise Schroeder took part,* supported her request in principle, but did not settle the problem of how to raise the money. One proposal was that the funds be raised by withholding part of the new money which was being distributed to each person in West Germany under the currency reform. West Germans had already received one installment of twenty marks per head in the new currency, and were due to receive another payment in the same amount. This proposal, to the effect that two marks of the second twenty be withheld for the benefit of Berlin, was voted down in a meeting of bizonal finance authorities on July 16. One high official felt that it would burden the West Germans too heavily. Another objected that the money to be raised would serve to finance the political actions of the Americans against the Russians, and he considered it inappropriate for German authorities to promote the policies of a foreign power. From a humanitarian point of view, however, he saw the necessity of assisting the Berliners, and the only way to do so,

* Former Minister President Arnold of Nordrhein-Westfalen testified to the deep impression that Louise Schroeder made on the West German officials present: "I shall never forget with what inner emotion the chief official of the so oppressed city of Berlin, Acting Mayor Louise Schroeder, took part in these meetings. . . ." (*Stenographischer Bericht über die 49. Sitzung des Landtages Nordrhein-Westfalen*, July 14, 1948, p. 631.)

he thought, was to issue an appeal for contributions from the public.⁵⁵

When the outcome of the meeting became known in Berlin, it brought a peppery letter from a representative of the Magistrat to the bizonal Administration for Finance. Granted that the Berlin question was highly political, wrote the Berliner, and that a final solution could be found only through negotiation among the occupying powers, it was an important *German* question too. If German authorities neglected to take financial action and simply referred the matter to the Allies, the latter were bound to say: "What are *you* doing?" The best thing would be to go ahead and vote the money and then turn to the Allies for help, if necessary. The Magistrat official also felt that withholding part of the second allotment of new money would be a good idea, even if only one mark were withheld instead of two. This measure recommended itself by its very crudity: it would show the world public what a sacrifice the West German population was actually making. "Complicated and adjusted taxes could scarcely be expected to achieve the same political effect."⁵⁶

However, West German authorities apparently still regarded the withholding idea as politically unwise. On July 29, 1948 the finance ministers of the West German states decided that 75 million marks should be provided by the newly established *Bank deutscher Länder* and guaranteed by the states of the three west zones. The bank, however, did not regard this security as adequate, and refused to provide the funds. In the end, the necessary amounts were scraped together from a variety of sources. Military government provided some from income on German exports, the bizonal administration succeeded in borrowing 45 million marks from the *Bank deutscher Länder*, and smaller sums were borrowed from the Central Bank of Hamburg and the state of Nordrhein-Westfalen. Altogether, by September 20, 120 million marks from West German sources had been placed at the disposal of Berlin.⁵⁷

By early fall, it had become apparent that the blockade might last a considerable length of time, and that funds for the support of Berlin would have to be raised by other than emergency expedients. Accordingly, the Berlin Committee of the Economic Council, on September 22, requested the Executive Committee to draft a law which would provide for a regular source of funds for the assistance of Berlin. The committee suggested that the possibility of new taxes be examined, that the post office issue special stamps to be sold for

SOVIET DEFEAT IN WEST GERMANY

the benefit of Berlin, or that the interest on frozen bank accounts be placed at the disposal of Berlin.⁵⁸

The draft legislation, which was submitted to the Economic Council on October 19, 1948, was entitled: "Law for the Collection of a Special Contribution to Relieve Distress in Berlin" (this has been referred to as the "Special Berlin Tax").⁵⁹ As finally adopted, the law provided that special 2-pfennig stamps should be affixed to every domestic letter, and that the revenue from these stamps should be used for the benefit of Berlin. It also called for a very small graduated surcharge on individual incomes, and a tax on corporations. All told, these taxes were designed to raise 25 million marks per month.⁶⁰

From then on, the Berlin problem was frequently before the Economic Council. The Special Berlin Tax law required periodic renewal, and several committees of the Council were in constant touch with the affairs of the beleaguered city. The three states of the French zone, which were not under the authority of the Economic Council, also passed laws providing for special assistance to Berlin, and then renewed them as necessary.

These new administrative ties between Berlin and the west zones led to ever more frequent personal meetings between officials from the two areas. Members of the Magistrat took part in the committee work preparatory to drafting the Special Berlin Tax law.⁶¹ Berlin's food and economic officials were in constant touch with bizonal agencies in connection with airlifted supplies, representatives of Berlin came to Bonn to assist the Parliamentary Council in drafting a provisional constitution for West Germany, and so it went.⁶² As a result of all these contacts, West German officials received first-hand information on the Berlin scene from some of the men best qualified to give it.

When, today, one enters the meeting chamber of the German federal parliament in Bonn, one sees behind the speaker's table the coat of arms of the city of Berlin along with those of the West German states. A parliamentary staff assistant explained this to the author by saying: "Although West Berlin is not a member of the West German Union *de jure*, it is *de facto*, because of the close financial and administrative relationships which grew up during the blockade."

By entering into these relationships, the West German states accepted a part of the responsibility for the support of West Berlin as an island of freedom in the Soviet zone. They were thus formally

SOVIET DEFEAT IN WEST GERMANY

aligned with Western policy and placed in a position of opposing Soviet aggression even before the airlift had demonstrated that Berlin could be sustained throughout the winter.

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CHAPTER VIII

WHY BERLINERS RESISTED

IN CONTRAST to the situation in West Germany, where politics remained the concern of political leaders and the masses were preoccupied with their personal economic problems, Berlin's population as a whole took keen interest in political developments. For the blockade directly affected the daily life of every West Berliner.

The way individual Berliners made their decision to try and hold out when the blockade came has been described in a previous chapter, in which it was pointed out that even though nearly everybody wanted to resist, most people hesitated to cast their lot with the West until they were sure there was some hope of success.* The present chapter will summarize briefly the pressures to which the population was subjected during the crisis and will then discuss the reasons *why* Berliners wanted to resist, and why such good morale was maintained in the city as a whole during the long period it was cut off.

Briefly, the thesis presented below is that Berliners wanted to resist because as a group they were tough-minded and politically sophisticated, because prior experience had left most of them with strong anti-Soviet and pro-Western attitudes, because they received a number of psychological gratifications from resistance, and because they anticipated certain material benefits after the blockade had been broken. Good morale was maintained over such a long period because a social mechanism for controlling those who showed signs of yielding to Soviet pressure developed and because the course of events during the blockade provided periodic stimuli to morale. But before discussing these subjects further, it may be useful to define more precisely the types of behavior which resistance involved.

A Definition of Resistance

By "resistance" is meant the sum total of those actions by which Berliners expressed their aversion to communist or Soviet domination and their allegiance to the Western world or the legally-elected Berlin government. Some of these actions were open to any member of the West Berlin public; they included refusal to join in commu-

* See Chapter III, pp. 132-44.

nist-led demonstrations, refusal to register for food or other supplies in East Berlin, voting for democratic candidates at the city elections in December of 1948, attending mass demonstrations called by Berlin's democratic leaders, and using west marks in preference to east marks. Numerous less specific actions also could be taken by any Berliner: putting up with hardships of all kinds without undue complaint, expressing approval of the city's noncommunist leaders, and following the instructions of the city government and the Western military governments.

Other types of resistance could be displayed only by certain specific groups. Municipal employees are a case in point. Because of the confusion attendant on the split of East Berlin from the rest of the city, and the blurring of lines of authority that this often entailed, civil servants sometimes had to choose whether they would work for the Communists or for the legal government; they occasionally had to exercise discretionary authority when no clear instructions were available, and many of them showed a devotion to duty beyond that ordinarily required of civil servants. The men of the West Berlin police deserve special mention. Although constantly exposed to kidnaping and other forms of violence at the hands of the Communists, most of them performed their functions in an exemplary manner.

Berlin's labor force was another group whose resistance was especially significant. By withdrawing majority support from the communist-led FDGB and giving it to the independent unions, the workers made it difficult for the Communists to dislocate the delicate economic machinery in West Berlin. Furthermore, members of the labor force as a whole showed great understanding in the face of their almost impossible working conditions, and refrained from protest activities that would have weakened West Berlin's ability to hold out.

Employers, large and small, also did their part. By the exercise of great ingenuity, they managed to avoid laying off workers and thereby contributing to unemployment. A British official who was concerned with the economic administration of Berlin during the blockade remarked later that the employers managed to make these difficult adjustments for the most part without direction from any authority; they simply understood the problem and met it as best they could.

Another large group that has often been singled out by observers of the blockade was composed of the housewives. Faced with new

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WHY BERLINERS RESISTED

and difficult problems of home economics, the housewives managed somehow to feed their families, raise their children, and maintain conditions in the home which made life bearable, if not pleasant.

Different individuals engaged in resistance to varying degrees. There were a few in every group who failed to oppose the Soviets in any way. Other individuals displayed resistance behavior on some occasions and not on others. On the whole, however, resistance was the rule rather than the exception.