The decision of General Clay to begin the airlift settled temporarily the question of whether the United States would remain in Berlin. As we have seen, this decision was taken in the absence of a clear-cut directive from Washington. Even after the airlift began, there were many in Washington who thought that Berlin could not be defended. The Department of Defense agreed with the Army in considering the Allied position in the isolated city militarily unsound. The Air Staff in the Pentagon was similarly dubious and resisted for almost a month all efforts to increase the number of transport planes in Europe on the grounds that so great a concentration of Allied aircraft would be militarily unwise. It relented only when the Air Chief of Staff, General Hoyt Vandenberg, was specifically overruled by President Truman at the meeting of the National Security Council on July 22.

The military were not alone in questioning our decision to remain in Berlin. Secretary Marshall and many in the State Department likewise doubted whether the Allied position could, or even should, be maintained if the Soviets were serious in continuing the blockade. In addition to the strategic considerations, many felt that it wasn’t fair
to force the people of Berlin to go hungry and cold merely to maintain Western prestige. There were also those who felt that Berlin was not worth risking war in a showdown with the Soviet Union. Indeed, in the summer of 1948, Washington seemed more fearful of the risks than cognizant of the advantages of a firm stand in Berlin.

Fortunately for the West, President Truman was an exception. Like General Clay in Berlin, the President recognized that a time of crisis was a time for firm decision and a time for rapid action. Like General Clay, he was prepared to make that decision and to take the necessary action in the teeth of the conflicting and, indeed, the contrary opinions of his principal advisers. Had he not, had he temporized or engaged in the extensive deliberations which many sought to foist upon him, the position in Berlin very likely would have been lost.

In Berlin itself, when Ernst Reuter was asked by General Clay if the Berliners would resist, the intrepid Mayor cast his lot with the Allies and trusted in his ability to bring the city with him. At the moment when Reuter pledged himself to Clay, however, the Berliners themselves were still wavering between the fear that the Soviet blockade had induced, and their own desire for freedom. There was then no way for them to know whether the West would stay in Berlin or whether, under Soviet pressure, they would leave never to return. In this context, a moment's hesitation, even the slightest sign of indecision by the West, would have driven many to seek their peace with the East.

For Ernst Reuter, the road to resistance in 1948 had been a difficult one. When he arrived in Berlin after the war, Reuter shared the view of most of his colleagues in the Social Democratic Party that the city government should try to get along with all four occupying powers and not just the West alone. Throughout 1946 and 1947, he continued to believe that by co-operating with all four powers Berlin could serve as a bridge between East and West—as a pilot study which might lead to the eventual reunification of Germany.¹

In a similar spirit, most of Berlin's other political leaders in 1947, and even into 1948, continued to oppose the economic integration of the Western zones in Germany, and the creation of a West German state. Such a state they feared would cause the Soviets to take further repressive measures in their own zone and would only widen the existing breach between East and West.
Only gradually did this opinion change, and among the leaders who brought about this change was Ernst Reuter. By the spring of 1948, he, like General Clay, had decided that the Soviets were intent not only on maintaining the division of Germany but on absorbing Berlin as well. The only way to prevent this, Reuter felt, would be for Berlin to tie her future firmly to that of the emerging West German government and to secure Western economic assistance.

To Reuter, the presence of the Western powers in Berlin ceased being a burden and became a guarantee of freedom. The greatest danger in the immediate future, as he saw it, was that under Soviet pressure the Allies might decide to withdraw. To prevent this, he and other SPD leaders, in early 1948, began the arduous process of convincing the people of Berlin that only through a complete acceptance of the Western occupation could their liberty be insured.

Until the airlift began, the Western powers gave Reuter little support. To many in the Allied military occupation it was still the Germans, not the Russians, who were the principal danger to peace. When the Soviets had utilized their veto in the Kommandatura to keep Reuter from becoming mayor, the United States, Great Britain and France had quietly acquiesced. But in spite of this, Reuter continued his efforts to arouse both the Berliners and the occupation authorities to the dangers they faced. "A struggle for Berlin is going on," Reuter wrote in April, 1948. "It may be that the Berliners will not be able to determine the final decision in this struggle, but without them Berlin would have been written off long ago. The fact that it cannot any longer be written off today, is certainly due to the efforts of freedom loving Berliners."  

As the creeping Soviet blockade tightened around Berlin in March and April of 1948, very few of the city's political leaders continued to believe that the Russians would allow a peaceful reunification of Germany. The greatest problem for Reuter therefore became whether the West would stand firm. Had Washington offered any appreciable compromise to the Soviets in the spring of 1948, Reuter and the other Berliners who had spoken out for resistance would have had the ground cut from under them.

The events in Berlin immediately preceding the airlift illustrate the difficulty which Reuter and his associates in the city government faced. On June 18, the Western powers ordered the currency reform
which was to take place in their zones of Western Germany but not Berlin. Four days later, on the evening of June 22, Berlin's acting mayor, Louise Schroeder, and deputy mayor Dr. Ferdinand Friedensburg were summoned to the City Hall by the Soviet liaison officer to the city government, Major Vladimir Otschkin. Major Otschkin informed Louise Schroeder and Friedensburg that on the following day, June 23, a new Soviet currency reform would go into effect throughout the Soviet zone and would include the entire city of Berlin. He then handed them an order to that effect signed by Marshal Sokolovsky.

Although the Soviet currency move had been anticipated, the Western powers were little agreed how it should be met. Later in the evening, when they received the details of the Soviet order from Frau Schroeder, Generals Clay and Robertson* proposed a second currency reform of their own. General Koenig, the French Military Governor, was not in Berlin at the time and his deputy, General Noiret, refused to accept the proposal.** When General Clay persisted and said that the United States and Britain would act anyway, the French still declined to participate. Only after the Western currency order was in its final stages of preparation early the next morning did the French agree to participate. Even then, they advised Clay and Robertson (in writing) that they were acting only because they had been forced to and that they still were not in sympathy with the move.3

Under the provisions of the Western currency order, the Western sectors of Berlin would convert to their own currency (i.e., the new West German currency with a “B” superimposed) simultaneously with the conversion in the Soviet sector. The two currencies would then circulate together throughout the city and would be interchangeable at par. In General Clay's words, to have accepted the Soviet currency (Ostmarks) as the sole currency of the Western sector would mean that henceforth “we would be guests in Berlin.” 4

One of the results of the rival currency orders was that the Soviet

* General Sir Brian Robertson, the British Military Governor.

** Because of the initial difficulty over the French sector in Berlin (see Chapter VI) French occupation headquarters for Germany had been established at Baden-Baden. Later, when the somewhat smaller French sector was finally agreed to, General De Gaulle considered it an affront and declined to move French headquarters to Berlin. As a result, the French Military Governor for Germany continued to sit in Baden-Baden while his counterparts were in Berlin. He came to Berlin for official meetings of the Control Council but otherwise was represented there by his deputy.
occupation authorities in Berlin were given a splendid pretext to intimidate the city government. When the city assembly attempted to convene on the afternoon of June 23 to take final action on the conflicting reforms, the way to the City Hall was blocked by several thousand Communist demonstrators. Berlin’s historic City Hall was located in what had been the downtown area of the city and was now in the Soviet sector. The East sector police made no effort to control the demonstrators and the assembly members had to get through the mob as best they could.

While the mob milled outside City Hall, other demonstrators entered the building and took over the assembly chamber and gallery. Here, they refused to allow the meeting to begin and withdrew only when signaled to do so by the several Communist (SED) delegates who were members of the assembly. When the meeting finally began, the city assembly defied the Communist mob and, in a courageous demonstration of spirit, voted that Marshal Sokolovsky’s currency order would apply only to the Soviet sector and not to the entire city.

Afterwards, when the assembly members filed out of the building, they were brutally set upon by Communist thugs. One SPD assemblywoman, Jeanette Wolff, who formerly had been imprisoned by the Nazis, was critically injured. Once more, the East sector police refused to intervene, and a police official who later escorted several of the delegates safely out of the building was discharged the following day by order of the Soviet Military Government.

The courageous behavior of the members of the city assembly in the face of the Communist mob did much to rally the people of the Western sectors to resistance. The following day, when the Soviets instituted the total blockade, a mass meeting of 80,000 citizens heard Ernst Reuter and Franz Neumann, the local SPD chairman, attack the Communist action. According to Neumann: “More than ever the eyes of the world are focused on Berlin. Yesterday the Communists Grotewohl and Pieck, following the model of Hitler and the example of Prague, tried to seize power in Berlin by terror. But they miscalculated . . . Berlin will remain free, it will never become Communist.”

In the principal speech that day Ernst Reuter accused the Russians of trying to use “the look of hunger and the specter of economic blockade to achieve that which they were not able to attain with raw violence in front of City Hall.” When acting mayor Louise Schroeder
escorted a limping assemblywoman Jeanette Wolff to the platform, they were given a tumultuous ovation. Neumann closed the meeting with an appeal to the world to come to Berlin's assistance.⁶

When the airlift began the following day, most Berliners were still uncertain whether the West would remain. Phillips Davison, in his definitive work on the blockade,⁷ has described the uncertainty which the rival currency measures created among many West Berliners. Should they also convert some of their money to Ostmarks as a precaution against Allied withdrawal? And what about their own existence? How would they themselves be able to survive in the face of the Russian blockade?

Then, as doubt increased, as people wondered what would happen and what course the Allies would take, the roar of the planes which General Clay had ordered could be heard overhead. Suddenly, the airlift became a vivid demonstration to the Berliners that the United States intended to remain. As the number of planes increased, so did the confidence of the Western sectors. By the first week in July, there was a widespread conviction among the Berliners that the city could be held.⁷

The Allies, however, were not so sure. Two days after the airlift began General Robertson wrote Marshal Sokolovsky to suggest a meeting on lifting the blockade in return for the acceptance of Soviet currency in the Western sectors. According to General Clay, both he and General Koenig were opposed to the meeting but "the British appeared to want agreement so badly that they believed it possible of attainment." Washington left the decision whether to attend up to Clay, who reluctantly agreed.⁸

The meeting with Sokolovsky took place at Russian headquarters in Potsdam on July 3. When General Robertson mentioned the blockade and indicated a Western desire to compromise on the currency issue, Sokolovsky interrupted. The "technical difficulties," he said, would continue until the West gave up its plans for a West German government. As General Clay reports it, Sokolovsky did not even refer to the currency matter. "It was evident," states Clay, "that he was confident we would be forced to leave Berlin and that he was enjoying

The City Is Split

the situation. We were not. We had nothing further to gain from the
conference so we left after a very brief discussion. . . ." 9

The break-up of the meeting with Sokolovsky was reported to the
three Allied capitals, and after some intramural sparring in which the
United States suggested taking the issue immediately to the UN, it
was decided that the next round of negotiations would be conducted
in Moscow. Accordingly, on July 6, U.S. Ambassador Walter Bedell
Smith, and his British and French colleagues, called at the Kremlin
and demanded that the blockade be lifted immediately. Like Sokolov-
sky, however, Moscow was in no mood for compromise and the West-
ern demand was ignored.

Meanwhile, in Berlin, the firm stand taken by General Clay was al-
ready having its effect. Tensions there had relaxed surprisingly; the
Berliners now felt assured that the West was going to stand fast.
What few local incidents the Russians attempted were countered
promptly by Western military authorities and as a result, the Soviets
had become extremely cautious. On July 10, four days after the Allied
ambassadors had called on the Kremlin, General Clay reported this
change to Washington and suggested that the West now try to break
the blockade by decisive action. According to Clay:

The care with which the Russians avoided measures which
would have been resisted with force had convinced me that the
Soviet Government did not want war although it believed that the
Western Allies would yield much of their position rather than
risk war. . . . I reported this conviction . . . suggesting that we
advise the Soviet representatives in Germany that under our rights
to be in Berlin we proposed on a specific date to move an armed
convoy which would be equipped with the engineering material
to overcome the technical difficulties which the Soviet representa-
tives appeared unable to solve. . . .

In my view the chances of such a convoy being met by force
with subsequent developments of hostilities were small. I was
confident that it would get through to Berlin and that the highway
blockade would be ended. . . .10

In Washington, General Clay's suggestion was turned down. Four
days later, Moscow replied to the West's diplomatic demand that
the blockade be lifted by announcing that Russia would discuss the
situation in Berlin only as a part of the overall German question.
Until such “all-German” talks began, Moscow said, the blockade would continue. Clearly, the Kremlin had raised its demands in Germany and was waiting for the West to give in.

As a result of Moscow’s reply, the Allies themselves now fell to bickering and the next two weeks were spent in ironing out individual Western differences. In particular, both France and Great Britain were a great deal more anxious to compromise and meet the Soviet demands than was the United States. Washington by this time was beginning to share Clay’s opinion and therefore resisted any headlong dash toward concessions.

On July 19, General Clay again requested permission to send an armored column to Berlin and once more was turned down. Clay’s insight into the situation, however, is worth quoting. Said Clay:

I feel that the world is now facing the most vital issue that has developed since Hitler placed his political aggression underway. In fact the Soviet government has a greater strength under its immediate control than Hitler had to carry out his purpose. Under the circumstances which exist today, only we can assert world leadership. Only we have the strength to halt this aggressive policy here and now. It may be too late the next time. I am sure that determined action will bring it to a halt now without war. It can be stopped only if we assume some risk.¹¹

The day after Clay’s message, the Soviets resumed the offensive in Berlin and began a determined effort to undermine the city’s morale. Food, including fresh fruits and vegetables, they announced, henceforth would be available in East Berlin for all those from the West who wanted it. All the West Berliners would have to do would be to come to the East sector and fill out a registration form. They could pay in East marks—then worth only one third a West mark—for their purchases.

The Soviet offer caused immediate alarm in West Berlin. Were enough people to accept it, the morale of the city would be seriously weakened.

As it turned out, there was little reason to be disturbed. For most Berliners the Soviet food offer was an opportunity to demonstrate their faith in the Western cause. By not taking advantage of it they could show their neighbors and the Allies alike that they were doing their share in the city’s defense. In the first three weeks after the Soviet plan
was announced, less than one percent of the more than two million people in the Western sectors had succumbed to it. In the entire eleven months of the blockade, including even the dreary winter months of December and January, the number of people from West Berlin who registered in the East totaled less than 85,000 (3.2 percent).12

By July 30, Allied differences on Berlin had been settled and the three Western ambassadors returned to the Kremlin. This time they requested a personal interview with Marshal Stalin and the meeting was arranged for 9 P.M. on the evening of August 2. When the meeting took place, Stalin appeared more open to argument than his subordinates had been. After initially questioning the integration of the three Western zones in Germany, Stalin indicated that he might be willing to lift the blockade provided the Allies agreed to accept Soviet currency in Berlin. Unlike his subordinates, Stalin no longer insisted that the settlement be made contingent on solving the overall problem of Germany.13

The negotiations in Moscow continued throughout the month of August. The West stood firm on West German integration but were willing to concede part of the issue in Berlin. The airlift had not yet been proven and there was a great deal of pressure, particularly from France and Great Britain, to reach a negotiated agreement that would lift the blockade.

On August 30, a modified settlement was reached. The Western powers agreed to recognize the East mark as the sole currency in Berlin and in return, the Soviets agreed to lift the blockade. The four military governors were to carry out the agreement and Stalin orally agreed that the West could share in the control of the new currency. Stalin's promise, however, was not incorporated into the instructions which were then sent to the four military governors.

In Berlin, news of the Moscow Agreement caused widespread apprehension. General Clay was concerned because Stalin's remarks about currency control had not been included in the final directive. He also feared the effect that returning the negotiations to Berlin might have on the city's morale. "I could see no reason to hope," Clay states, "that the military governors would be able to succeed in view of their previous failure. . . . I felt certain that the Soviet Foreign Office had no intention of really permitting quadripartite control [of
East German currency] and that our acceptance of ambiguous word-
ing just to obtain an agreed directive would lead nowhere.”

When the four military governors met the following day, Clay stole
the march on the Russians and insisted that before any agreement
could be put into effect, the arrangements for controlling the East
German currency would have to be nailed down. Doubtless, Clay’s
earlier experience in negotiating with the Soviets helped prompt this
stand. Perhaps more important, however, was his belief that the air-
lift would succeed and that compromise would not be necessary.
Therefore, by insisting on his own terms for effective control before
considering the implementation of the Moscow Agreement, General
Clay was exerting a veto over the whole proceeding.

Marshal Sokolovsky, on his part, was also in no hurry to press for
an agreement since the Russians were convinced that the airlift would
soon fail. Accordingly, he refused to expand the scope of the Mos-
cow directive to include Stalin’s comments and even demanded cer-
tain added provisions which would insure Soviet control of civilian
air traffic into Berlin. On these points the negotiations quickly broke
down. When Clay questioned Sokolovsky’s additional demands and
once more insisted on the right to share in the control of the Soviet
currency, Washington supported him. As Clay has suggested, an agree-
ment on currency without effective provisions for Western control
would have made a mockery of Berlin’s resistance. Had the Moscow
Agreement been implemented without such a provision, financial con-
trol of Berlin would have been handed over to the Russians. Since
the blockade had been begun in the first place because the West had
refused to agree to the introduction of the Soviet currency on June
23, an acceptance of it at this point would have amounted to a virtual
surrender. Thus, by now insisting on a firm agreement regarding con-
trol of the Eastern currency, Clay doomed the negotiations from the
start.

The failure of the Berlin negotiations greatly disheartened those in
the West who feared that the airlift would not succeed, and this feel-
ing existed in Washington as well as in London and Paris. At a meet-
ing of the National Security Council on September 9, Secretary of

* In General Clay’s own words, “our insistence in Berlin that the final agreement
reflect [Stalin’s] comment led in large part to the breakdown of negotiations.”
Lucius D. Clay, Decision in Germany, p. 370.
State Marshall said that in spite of the airlift, time was on the side of the Russians in Berlin.⁠¹⁵ Ambassador Bedell Smith in Moscow also thought that Berlin was an indefensible position and should be disposed of as soon as possible.⁠¹⁶ The Western planners at this time, of course, grossly under-estimated the effectiveness of the airlift and the determination of the Berliners to resist, both of which were nearly scuttled in the desire of the Allied capitals for agreement. A later Rand Corporation research study of these negotiations concludes as follows:

... the West, particularly the United States, seems frequently to have misinterpreted Soviet signals. American newspapermen, and also those professionally concerned with the conduct of U.S. foreign policy, tended to greet each affable expression or minor concession by the Soviets as an indication of a basic change in Soviet foreign policy, without asking whether this affability might have some other meaning. This tendency precluded a full and sober assessment of what the Soviets were really trying to accomplish, and it also inhibited any long-term measures by which to offset Communist pressure.⁠¹⁷

Following the break-up of the negotiations in Berlin, the Western powers returned to the regular diplomatic channels. On September 14, the Western ambassadors presented Stalin with an aide-mémoire placing the blame for failure of the Berlin talks on Marshal Sokolovsky's refusal to agree on a suitable method for currency control. The Soviets replied on September 18, blaming the West for failure and pointing out (correctly) that the matter of four-power currency control had not been contained in the original August 30th Moscow directive.⁠¹⁸ Four days later the West replied in identical notes delivered to the Kremlin restating their position and asking the Soviet Union to remove the blockade before negotiations were continued.

In Berlin, meanwhile, the Soviets intensified their efforts to gain control of the city government. On August 26, just four days before the Moscow accord was completed, five thousand Communist demonstrators stormed a meeting of the city assembly in City Hall. The following week, while the military governors were still in conference, two more demonstrations were held before City Hall. On September 3, just after the negotiations broke down, the Russian Commandant in Berlin announced that he could no longer guarantee order in front
of City Hall, and a meeting of the city assembly scheduled for that day was then canceled by the delegates themselves.

On September 6, when the assembly attempted to meet once more, Communist toughs again stormed the building and Soviet sector police obligingly made no effort to interfere. Forty-six policemen who had gone over from the Western sectors to preserve order proved unable to cope with the situation.\footnote{The fate of these forty-six policemen provides an interesting footnote to Russian faithlessness. When it became obvious that they would not be able to control the Communist mob, the policemen had sought shelter in the offices of the American, British, and French liaison groups which were located in the City Hall. The Soviet sector police then forced their way into the United States Liaison Office and at pistol point seized twenty of the West Berlin policemen. The British and French liaison officers thereupon refused to open their doors to the East sector police and for two days the other West Berlin policemen remained there, unable to leave. Meanwhile, General Koenig, the French Military Governor, obtained a promise from Marshal Sokolovsky that the policemen would be allowed to leave unmolested. General Ganeval, the French Commandant in Berlin, received a similar guarantee from the Soviet Commandant, General Kotikov. As a result of these assurances, the West Berlin policemen emerged from their sanctuary and prepared to board a French military vehicle which had been sent to take them back to the Western sectors. As soon as they left the building, however, they were arrested by East sector police and imprisoned. Three were subsequently sentenced to long prison terms. See Howley, \textit{Berlin Command}, pp. 215–17.} The assemblymen were driven out of the building and fled to the West where they reconvened later that afternoon. At the second meeting, according to Colonel Frank Howley, the U.S. Commandant, the assemblymen had no chairs or desks but were able to conduct their business nonetheless. They voted to establish their permanent meeting place in West Berlin, and the old Berlin City Hall in the Soviet sector was officially abandoned as the seat of the city government.\footnote{\textit{The action of the Soviets on September 6, forcing the city government out of East Berlin, was protested on September 9 by a mass meeting of Berliners in front of the blackened ruins of the Reichstag (located in the British sector near the Brandenburg Gate). Over three hundred thousand Berliners stood in a drizzling rain that day to hear Ernst Reuter and Franz Neumann condemn the Soviet action. Following the rally, part of the crowd marched into the nearby Soviet sector, where several youths climbed to the top of the Brandenburg Gate and tore down the Russian flag which was flying there. When others in the crowd began to burn the flag, Russian guards stationed at the nearby Soviet War Memorial rushed to recover it. Almost be-}
before anyone was aware of what was happening the Russians fired into
the crowd, killing at least two and injuring others. The British Deputy
Provost Marshal then courageously jumped in front of the Russian sol-
diers and ordered them to cease firing. Had it not been for his action,
a bloodbath would have ensued. But British military police worked
frantically to restore order and by evening the crowd had been dis-
persed. The action of the Russian soldiers, however, ended any hope
of compromise in Berlin.

Shortly afterward, the Russians gave up their efforts to intimidate
the city government and began instead to incorporate East Berlin
into the Soviet zone. Up until this point, all of the bureaus of the city
government, except for the police, had carried on a precarious city-
wide operation. By the end of September, however, Russian authori-
ties had removed all non-Communist personnel chiefs from the bor-
ough administrations of the eight boroughs comprising the Soviet
sector. By October 10, over one thousand other borough officials had
been dismissed in East Berlin, and by the end of the month the total
had risen to two thousand.

At the same time, the various agencies of the city government, re-
acting to the pressure which the Russians were exerting, laboriously
began to move their departments from East Berlin to the Western sec-
tors. Since most of these offices had been located in the eastern part
of the city since the time of the Hohenzollerns, this was a lengthy proc-
cess and one accomplished only with the greatest difficulty. The So-
viets, however, made little effort to interfere and by the middle of
November virtually all of the city offices had been transferred.

While the Russians were acting to complete the division within the
city, the Western powers were moving to bring the Berlin question
before the United Nations. After an initial Allied request, the UN Se-
curity Council agreed to place the matter on its agenda. On October
19, the three Western delegates, Dr. Philip Jessup for the United
States, Sir Alexander Cadogan for Great Britain, and Alexandre
Parodi for France, presented the Allied case. Three days later, on
October 22, the six remaining member nations of the Security Coun-
cil who were not involved in the Berlin dispute suggested a reso-
lution aimed toward settlement. Under its provisions, all traffic re-
strictions imposed on Berlin were to be raised immediately, four-
power talks between the military governors were to be resumed on
the currency question, and the Council of Foreign Ministers would reconvene for further discussions on the subject of Germany. These recommendations were vetoed by Andre Vyshinsky, the Soviet delegate to the Security Council, on October 25.

In spite of the Soviet veto, the six “neutral” nations on the Security Council continued their efforts toward settlement. Simultaneous with their efforts, Trygve Lie, the UN Secretary General, sought to arrange a solution through informal discussion between the principals themselves. But Lie’s offer was declined by the West since its acceptance would have constituted a willingness to negotiate with the Russians while the blockade was still in effect. Instead, the Western powers encouraged the “neutrals” to continue their independent efforts. A committee of experts was then set up by the “neutrals” to consider the technical details involved in Berlin. Heading the committee of experts was Dr. Gunnar Myrdal of Sweden, who at that time was Executive Secretary of the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe.

In preparing its recommendations, the committee attempted to implement the Moscow Agreement calling for Soviet currency in Berlin, and therefore soon antagonized the West, especially the United States. When the Committee finally submitted its proposals for settlement in December, the United States refused to accept them. According to an American UN official, the Committee “took the ‘neutralist’ position that East and West were equally to blame for the situation in Berlin, and they were always trying to shove East marks down our throat.”

President Truman, who was determined not to yield in Berlin at any price, was equally critical of the Committee’s proposals. According to the President:

Our reactions to these proposals were that our experience with the Russians impelled us to reject any plan that provided for four power operation. We had learned that the Russians would usually agree in principle but would rarely perform in practice. We wanted a settlement, but we could not accept a settlement that would put the people of Berlin at the mercy of the Soviets and their German Communist hirelings.

While the UN negotiations were in progress, the Russians continued their efforts to complete the separation of the Soviet and Western sec-
tors. On November 15, the Soviet Military Administration unilaterally dismissed the chiefs of each of the various city departments. The Allied Commandants responded in each case with an announcement that the Soviet order was invalid in the Western sectors and that the incumbents would remain in office. The Soviets then appointed their own division chiefs for the Eastern sector and announced that the old department heads were holding office illegally. Two weeks later, on November 30, 1948, the Soviets convened what they termed an "extraordinary session of the city assembly" in East Berlin. This meeting, however, was attended not by the regularly elected city representatives but by 1,500 carefully selected Communist functionaries. Fritz Ebert, Jr., son of the first President of the Weimar Republic, was elected (there was no opposition) Oberbürgermeister of Greater Berlin and a new city executive body was appointed. As a result of the Soviet action, Berlin now for the first time had two city governments: the one which had been duly elected by the people of Berlin and which continued to meet in the Western sectors, and the rump government installed by the Russians which assumed control in the East.

Five days after the Soviets had installed their puppet government in office, free elections were held in the Western sectors. The residents of East Berlin were prohibited by the Russians from participating. In spite of heavy pressure from the Communist Party (SED) to stay away from the polls, 86.3 percent of those who were eligible in West Berlin turned out to vote. It was the first election held in Berlin since the blockade had begun and the results were a crushing defeat for the Soviets. Ernst Reuter was overwhelmingly elected Lord Mayor, and this time was not prevented from taking office by a Soviet veto. When the outgoing city assembly met two days after the election, Reuter was temporarily installed in office pending the meeting of the new assembly in January. The final tabulation of the election results was as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Party</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>SPD (Social Democratic Party)</td>
<td>64.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CDU (Christian Democratic Party)</td>
<td>19.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LDP (Liberal Democratic Party)</td>
<td>16.1%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Two weeks after the election had taken place, the Allied Kommandatura in Berlin was reorganized on a three-power basis. The Russians
were tendered an invitation to return whenever they wished but in the interim, the three Western Commandants said they would govern in West Berlin without them.

The reorganization of the Allied Kommandatura represented the climax in Soviet efforts to split Berlin’s government. The effect of the move was administrative rather than juridical, however, and the joint four-power status of Berlin remained unchanged. The Kommandatura, it should be remembered, was a creation of the military authorities to aid in the governing of Berlin and had been established in July of 1945, after the Allied sectors had been taken over from the Russians. The four-power status of the city rested on the political agreements which had been concluded while the war was still in progress. Accordingly, except for simplifying the administrative set-up in the Western sectors, the reorganization of the Kommandatura had no outward effect on life in Berlin. Free movement between the sectors continued unimpeded and all other occupation agreements remained in effect.

But still, the splitting of the city government represented the high point of Soviet recalcitrance in Berlin. Unquestionably, one of the major reasons for this recalcitrance was the Russian belief that the airlift would soon fail. Winter was reaching its height in Berlin and the Soviets were not only sure that the Allies would be unable to bring in enough fuel by air to keep the city from freezing, but that flying itself would soon be seriously curtailed.

In many respects the Soviets were very nearly right. The thick ground fog which accompanies winter in Berlin halted airlift operations on several occasions for about a week at a time. In November, planes were able to fly on only fifteen out of thirty days and conditions did not improve materially in December. By January, an acute shortage of coal had developed in Berlin with scarcely one week’s supply remaining on hand. At this point, with the Russians still gambling on failure, Generals Clay and Howley* took a calculated risk. With a thirty-day supply of food still on hand, food was cut from the airlift in favor of coal. Within a few days, the supply of coal in the city had been brought up to a three-week supply, with food stocks reduced to about the same level. At this point, the weather broke and Allied aircraft were able to fly every day from then on. The winter

* Colonel Howley was promoted to Brigadier General in December, 1948.
had been defeated and the Soviets now had to recognize that the blockade had failed.*

The success of the airlift naturally had a great deal to do with reinforcing Western diplomatic resolve not to give in. Just as the Berliners didn’t want to let the airlift down, a feeling began to develop in the West that it in turn could not let the Berliners down. On October 27, 1948, General Clay had reported to Washington that the airlift was capable of supplying Berlin indefinitely. As President Truman has recorded it, General Clay “placed before us an account not only of the technical achievement of the airlift but also of the effect our action in Berlin had had on the German people. They had closed ranks and applied themselves to the task of reconstruction with new vigor. It had turned them sharply against communism. Germany, which had been waiting passively to see where it should cast its lot for the future, was veering toward the cause of the Western nations.”

In his Memoirs, Trygve Lie notes that as the success of the airlift increased, the less ready the Western powers were to make concessions. In particular, he mentions the case of Ambassador Jessup who visited Berlin in October and saw the airlift in operation. From that time onward, according to Lie, Jessup was convinced that the West would be able to hold out.

By the end of January, with the success of the airlift demonstrated, the United States repudiated the Moscow Agreement entirely and announced that the West mark would remain the currency in West Berlin until a unified government was restored on a workable basis. This decision represented a decisive victory for Clay and Howley, as well as for those in Washington who had advocated a strong line from the beginning.

In Germany meanwhile the pressure of the West’s counter-blockade was also beginning to be felt. When the blockade first began, Generals Clay and Robertson had ordered all shipments of goods between West Berlin and the Soviet zone halted. On July 8, reparation

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* In June, 1948, when the airlift first began, scarcely more than three hundred tons of supplies had been brought into Berlin during each 24-hour period. Military government officials estimated 4,000 tons as the minimum necessary to sustain the city’s existence and 8,000 tons as essential to sustain its economy. In January the daily average of supplies brought into Berlin rose to 5,500 tons. By March, the 8,000-ton daily figure had been exceeded and on April 12, 1949, almost 13,000 tons were brought into Berlin in one 24-hour period.
deliveries to the Soviet Union from the Western zones were also sus­
pended and on September 13, the shipment of all goods produced in
the American and British zones to the Russian zone was prohibited.
Thereafter, the counter-blockade was gradually tightened until soon
only a small trickle of goods was arriving in eastern Germany from the
West. Since most of East Germany's manufactured goods at this time
came from the West, the counter-blockade now began to hurt the
Soviet Union more than the blockade of Berlin was hurting the Allies.

By the end of January, 1949, it had become apparent to the Rus­
sians that the West was not going to withdraw from Berlin, nor yield
to any settlement short of an outright lifting of the blockade. The Rus­
sians therefore began to seek a way out and on January 31, 1949,
Stalin granted an interview in Moscow to Kingsbury Smith of the
International News Service. Smith's questions to Stalin were submitted
before hand in writing and the Kremlin made public Stalin's replies.

One of the questions asked dealt with Berlin. In his answer, Stalin
indicated that he might be willing to lift the blockade regardless of
the outcome of the currency problem. Smith's question and Stalin's
reply were as follows:

*Question:* If the governments of the United States of America, the
United Kingdom and France agreed to postpone the establish­
ment of a separate West German state, pending a meeting of the
Council of Foreign Ministers to consider the German problem
as a whole, would the Government of the U.S.S.R. be prepared to
remove the restrictions which the Soviet authorities have imposed
on communications between Berlin and the Western zones of
Germany?

*Answer:* Provided the United States of America, Great Britain, and
France observe the conditions set forth [above], the Soviet Gov­
ernment sees no obstacles to lifting transport restrictions, on the
understanding, however, that transport and trade restrictions
introduced by the three powers should be lifted simultaneously.

Stalin's answer caused little jubilation in the West. There was no
intention at that time of delaying the formation of the West German
government, and Smith's question had been prefaced on this condi­
tion. But in the State Department, Stalin's reply was considered with
great care. President Truman reports how he and Secretary of State
Dean Acheson studied Stalin's answer during one of Acheson's regu-
larly scheduled visits to the White House. According to the President, "we noticed that for the first time since June, 1948, the Berlin blockade was not tied to the currency matter in the Russian statement. Acheson suggested, and I approved, that we instruct Jessup to find out from the Russian delegation at the U.N. if this had been intentional."

Accordingly, on February 15, 1949, Philip Jessup asked his counterpart, Jacob Malik, whether this omission by Stalin had been accidental. One month later, on March 15, Malik replied that the omission was "not accidental."

Following Malik's reply negotiations went ahead rapidly. Jessup asked Malik whether the Soviet Union would be willing to lift the blockade to allow a meeting of the Council of Foreign Ministers to take place. On March 21, Malik replied that if a definite date were set for the Foreign Ministers' meeting, then restrictions on transportation could be lifted reciprocally by both East and West prior to the meeting.

From that point on, the Malik–Jessup conversations were conducted in the greatest secrecy. Not even General Clay was informed that they were in progress. The month of April was consumed largely with completing the final arrangements of the agreement and on May 5, an official statement announcing the end of the blockade effective May 12 was released simultaneously in London, Paris, Washington and Moscow. According to the communique:

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.

In effect, the Soviets had agreed to lift the blockade without extracting any concessions from the West in return. The firm stand by General Clay was vindicated, and Russia had been forced to acknowledge its defeat.

When the barriers across the highways and rail lines into Berlin finally were lifted at midnight May 11, 1949, Berlin was a city of wild rejoicing. Everyone who could headed for the autobahn to greet the first trucks as they arrived. Similar ceremonies were held along the rail lines when the first flower-bedecked locomotives came in early the following morning. May 12 itself was declared a city holiday, schools were dismissed after a brief lesson on the airlift, and a special commemorative meeting of the city assembly was held which was attended by all three Western military governors and all of the major political leaders of western Germany.

When Mayor Reuter rose to address the assembly he spoke of the forty-eight American and British pilots who had lost their lives in air crashes during the blockade. As he spoke, all those present rose to their feet in a moment of tribute. Franz Neumann, chairman of the SPD, then read the names of the airmen who had been killed and introduced a resolution that the plaza in front of Tempelhof airfield be renamed *Platz der Luftbrücke* (Plaza of the Airlift) in honor of them. The resolution was passed unanimously.

Reuter concluded the meeting of the city assembly with a ringing tribute to the man who had made the airlift possible:

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 Berlin to say that we will never forget what he has done for us.