

- b) Stalin also thought that it was possible that the US would leave Germany after the war, which could result in a Soviet takeover.
- c) On the other hand, the US had realised that a German recovery was important for two reasons: (1) it would generate growth in Europe, (2) it would **prevent the spread of communism in Europe**.
2. By 1948, Stalin had realised that the Berlin solution from Yalta and Potsdam, a capitalist enclave in a Soviet controlled area, was extremely problematic if Germany were to remain divided. Germans living in the Eastern zone just had to cross a street and they were in the West. With Marshall aid pouring into West Berlin, there would be economic pressure as well. There were to be elections in October 1948, and West Berlin's economic development was seen as a problem in the East. Stalin had not realised that the division of Germany might be permanent but in 1948 this outcome was seen to be likely. **The Berlin problem must be solved.**

The crisis in steps:

1946

In September 1946, the **US Secretary of State, Byrnes**, announced in his **Stuttgart Speech** that the US supported a political and economic revival of Germany.

1947

In 1947, the **Truman Doctrine** was announced. The US would play an active role globally to defend Western democracies against 'outside pressures', i.e., against communism.

The same year the **Marshall Plan** was announced. In the Soviet Union, it was seen as a US attempt to control European states economically and politically.

In January 1947, the US and Britain joined their two zones into one. Later that year the French also joined.

In December 1947, the US, Britain and France met at the **London Conference** to discuss a future German state—without the USSR.

1948

In February 1948, the Western powers proposed a new four-power currency. The Soviets rejected this proposal.

In March 1948, at the London Conference, Britain, France and the US announced their intention for a unification of the Western zones and the establishment of a **West German government**.

The Western powers announced that the **currency reform** would be implemented in the Western zones, including Berlin, from June 1948. If the German economy were to recover, it needed a stable currency. The Soviets had however debased the Reichsmark by mass printing money. The Soviets rejected Western plans for a reform and the currency reform was the formal reason for the blockade, i.e., the currency reform was a Western violation of the wartime agreements.

The USSR cut off all water-, road- and railroad links to West Berlin in June 1948. **The Soviets offered to drop the blockade if the currency reform was withdrawn.** 2.5 million inhabitants were suddenly without food and coal. To support the population of Berlin was very symbolic. This was the year after Truman had promised to 'defend democracy' in the Truman Doctrine. Many in the West feared the blockade could be followed by an invasion of the Western zones. There were 98,000 American troops in West Germany in March 1948 and 1.5 million Soviet military forces in the Soviet sector that surrounded Berlin. It should be noted that the ground routes had never formally been negotiated at Potsdam, but air space had been discussed. On 30 November 1945, they had agreed in writing that there would be three 20-mile-wide air corridors providing free access to Berlin. To shoot down a US