

## II.2. The role of the United States during the Cold War

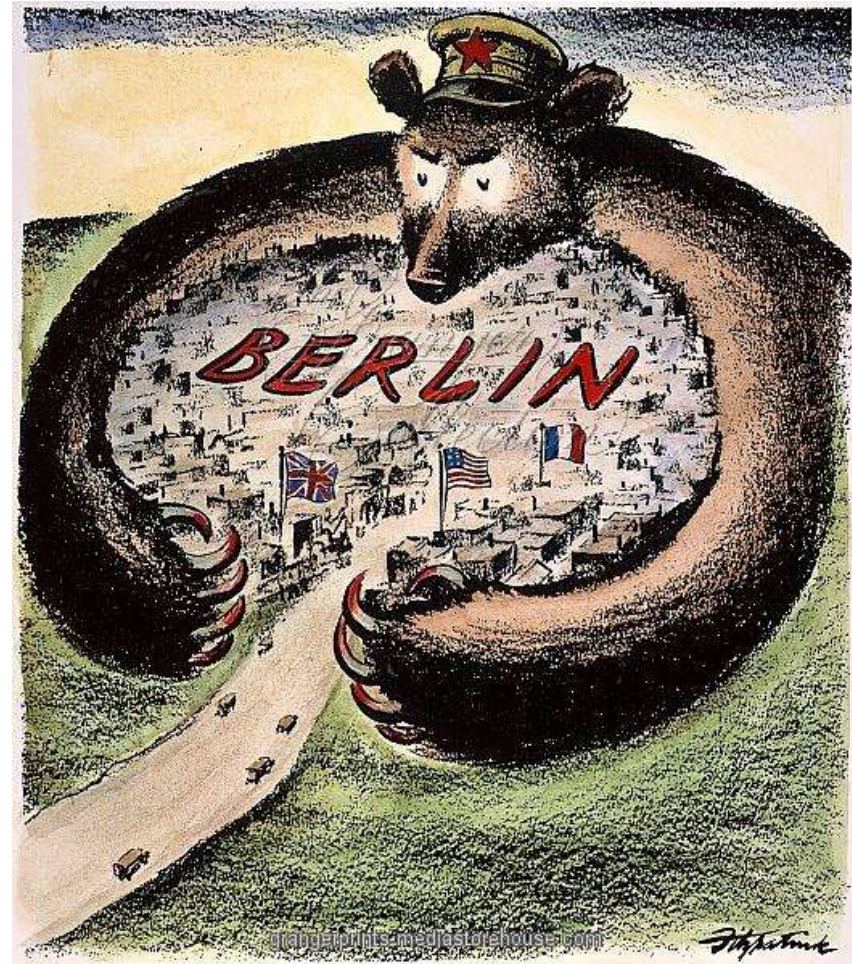
- The Berlin blockade (1948-1949)

Key-question : *Why has Stalin failed ?*



U.S. Navy and Air Force aircrafts unload at Tempelhof Airport during the Berlin Airlift. (U.S. Air Force)

*How to Close the Gap?:* American cartoon, 1948, by D.R. Fitzpatrick on the Russian attempt to drive the Western powers from Berlin by every possible means short of an outright act of war



## The Berlin blockade

The Berlin Blockade was a major crisis of the Cold War. During the occupation of Germany after the Second World War, the Soviet Union blocked the Western Allies' railway, road, and canal access to the sectors of Berlin under Western, and notably under American control. The Soviets proposed to drop the blockade if the Western Allies withdrew the newly introduced Deutschmark from West Berlin. In response, the Western Allies organized the Berlin airlift to carry supplies to the people of West Berlin.

The first document is a photograph that was taken between 1948 and 1949. On this photo, we can see airplanes of the American air force at Tempelhof Airport in Germany. On the airplanes, we can see merchandises that are supposed to supply the West Berliners. In fact, the Berlin blockade was organized by Stalin in order to prevent the American from penetrating into the western part of Berlin.

The second document is a cartoon published in 1948 by D.R Patrick. On this cartoon, we can see a bear wearing a cap with a red star on it, which is the symbol of the Soviet Union. The bear represents the Soviet Union. It is trying to grab for whole Berlin.

These documents raise the question: Why has Stalin failed ?

Great Britain, France and The United States gathered, as we can see in the second document, which symbolizes the Allies. In fact, we can see their three flags in the Western part of Berlin. The bear, who is trying to grab for the entire territory of Berlin, has a nasty look and bloody claws. This is showing us that the Soviet Union tries to control the flows that enter west Berlin. The photograph symbolizes the Air lift because we can see all the planes that are on the point to fly to Berlin, to supply for the west Berliners. These planes carry consumption goods to supply for the West Berliners by creating an airlift. Here, the USA applied the Truman doctrine of containment to prevent the world from the spread of communism. Furthermore, there is an existing threat between the United States and the Soviet Union concerning the atomic bomb. In fact, in the mid of the 20th century, the USA possessed the atomic bomb, whereas the Soviet Union didn't (until 1949).

During eleven months, thanks to American planes, 275 000 flights permitted to supply West Berlin with 2,5 million of tons of materials. Stalin lost this crisis and this gave the Berlin blockade an end on the 12th of May 1949. The Berlin blockade was the first battle of the Cold War and Stalin first failure.

But the consequences were dramatic because the Allies decided to create a free independent State in Germany : FRG or West German Federal Republic. In response, URSS created GDR : German Democratic Republic (in reality a dictatorship on the soviet model).