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The Berlin Blockade. Soviet counteraction to American efforts to rebuild the European economy came swiftly. Besides rejecting participation in the program the Soviets, in October 1947, announced the organization of a permanent committee for coordinating the activities of the Communist parties in Europe. Then, as the United States Congress enacted the Marshall Plan, Soviet military authorities in Berlin began cutting off the city from the rest of western Europe. In Berlin each occupying power administered its own sector and matters pertaining to the city as a whole were supposed to be settled in an Allied Control Council by unanimous agreement. But from the time of its creation disagreement marked the deliberations of this body and led to the division of the city into an east and west Berlin. By June 1948 the Russians had cut off all land and water traffic with Berlin and the only means of entry was by air. Gen. Lucius D. Clay, the American Military Governor of Germany, then called on the Air Force to supply the city with food and other necessities by air. From June 1948 to May 1949 the Air Force and the Army, working together, kept the city supplied. Hundreds of American aircraft (there were also some British planes operating in this airlift) daily flew in thousands of tons of food, clothing, coal, and other vital goods into the western sectors of Berlin. By the spring of 1949 a daily average of 8,000 tons of supplies reached the capital by air.

In addition to calling for the airlift General Clay immediately halted all shipments of goods from West Germany into the Soviet Zone of Germany. The British commander imposed a similar restriction, and by the spring of 1948 East Germany felt the shortage of industrial goods and materiel that she normally received from the West. The successful efforts of the Air Force and the Army to keep the city supplied and the Anglo-American counterblockade brought realization to the Communists that their efforts to drive the Western Powers out of Berlin had failed, and the blockade of the city was lifted 12 May 1949.

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