In February of 1945, the three big Allied leaders – Roosevelt, Churchill, and Stalin – met to discuss the future of Europe after World War II ended. This was known as the Yalta Conference.

At Yalta, the Allies decided to divide Germany into four zones. The Allies would each have control over a specific zone. The German capital, Berlin, was also divided into four zones.

In 1948, three years after WWII ended, the Western Allies believed that it was time to make Germany an independent nation once more, free of foreign occupation. However, Stalin opposed this and wanted to keep the eastern part of Germany under Soviet control. For this reason, two nations were created. **East Germany** would be a communist satellite nation of the Soviet Union while **West Germany** would become an independent democracy with support from the United States. The nation remained split until 1990.

1. Using the map below, label the foreign countries that controlled Germany after World War II...

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Berlin, Germany’s capital, is located in East Germany. Even though the country of East Germany was under Soviet control, the city of Berlin itself was split into four zones like the country was. East Berlin was under Soviet control and West Berlin was democratic.

2. How do you think the location of Berlin might prove to be a problem in the Cold War?

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The Berlin Blockade (April 1948)

The western Allies (Britain, France and the U.S.) wanted to re-unite Germany as one democratic nation, free from outside control. Stalin, of course, disagreed. He not only wanted to keep East Germany under Soviet control, but he wanted all of Berlin – which was located in East Germany – to be under his rule. To achieve this, Stalin ordered a blockade around Berlin in April of 1948. This blockade would cut off all road and rail connections between West Berlin and West Germany (Remember that West Berlin was surrounded by communist East Germany). This blockade would prevent West Berlin’s two million residents from receiving the food and supplies they needed. Stalin believed that since the Soviet blockade was in effect, the Western Allies would allow him to take over the rest of Berlin. He would be wrong…

The Berlin Airlift (June 1948- May 1949)

The Berlin Blockade cut off all ground connections between West Berlin and West Germany, but this did not stop the Western Allies from delivering goods by air. In June 1948, the Allies launched a massive airlift campaign to deliver tons of food and supplies to the people of West Berlin. This nearly year-long event would become known as the Berlin Airlift. After failing to prevent supplies from getting into West Berlin, the Soviets called off the blockade in May of 1949. West Berlin would remain democratic, but tensions between east and west remained high.

3. Why do you think the Berlin Airlift was a major risk for the Western Allies?