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# Between land and sky: A comparative look at Soviet and American relations and perspectives during the Berlin Airlift

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Between Land and Sky: A Comparative Look at Soviet and American Relations and Perspectives  
during the Berlin Airlift

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A Project Presented to  
the Faculty of the Undergraduate  
College of Arts and Letters  
James Madison University

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in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements  
for the Degree of Bachelor of Arts

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by Jacqueline Danielle Guerrier

May 2014

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Accepted by the faculty of the Department of History, James Madison University, in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the Degree of Bachelor of Arts.

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## Introduction

The wings of countless angels beat across the sky above Berlin. The sound of their flight provided a constant background thrum for the life of Berliners in the rubble of their city. These “angels” were the C-47s<sup>1</sup> and C-54s<sup>2</sup> of the Berlin Airlift, which provided the lifeline into and out of the city from June of 1948 to the following May of 1949.<sup>3</sup> Berlin was blockaded. This ancient city had been cut off from the rest of the world, from the rest of Western Europe, and even from the rest of Germany. The impetus for the Soviet Blockade was the success of the European Recovery Program and the planned formation of a West German government. The Soviets implemented the Berlin Blockade in an attempt to use starvation to goad the West into reopening negotiations for a unified Germany or to drive out the Western Powers.<sup>4</sup> The Allies were forced to make a decision: they could either abandon the city and its inhabitants, or they could stay. The latter was an act many felt certain would lead to a third World War. Yet, the Allies opted to remain in Berlin, feeling a withdrawal would allow the threat of communism to spread unchecked across the European continent. A self-supporting and self-reliant Germany was essential to the restoration of stability in the region, and without a stable Europe lasting peace was impossible.<sup>5</sup> Having made this decision, they were now approached with a greater question: how does one feed a city of two million with no land or water routes open? The only answer was by air.

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<sup>1</sup> The Douglas C-47 Skytrain or “Dakota” is a military transport aircraft which could carry a maximum of around 12,000 pounds.

<sup>2</sup> The Douglas C-54 Skymaster is the newer, larger variant of the C-47, and could carry a maximum of around 34,000 pounds.

<sup>3</sup> This was when the Berlin Blockade came to an official end, but the Airlift actually carried on into September 1949.

<sup>4</sup> Lucius D. Clay, *Decision in Germany* (Garden City: Doubleday & Company Inc., 1950), x.

<sup>5</sup> Clay, ix.

The Berlin Airlift began with a mere ripple of action as the initial planes scrambled to deliver the absolute necessities in the first days of the Blockade. The Berlin Airlift simply came into existence in the span of a single night, taking flight over the heads of the Berlin populace. It was ironic for the Air Force, which so readily bombed the city of Berlin a mere three years earlier, to now be the only means of survival for Berlin. The irony increased when the Americans hired former Luftwaffe members to help provide maintenance for the planes of the Airlift.

By its completion, the Berlin Airlift was not only a resounding success in terms of feeding a beleaguered city, but it was also the largest successful airlift in history. It further served to unite the West against the Soviet Union, which was completely the opposite of Stalin's goals. This unfortunate outcome for Russia set the stage for future events in the Cold War to come.

In most cases, the study of the Berlin Airlift focuses on touting the heroism of the Americans and their allies in aiding the people of Berlin. Others approach it as an examination of Flight History, as the Berlin Airlift revolutionized air traffic control. Still the largest part of researchers, historians, professors, and classroom teachers see the Berlin Airlift as an opening event to the Cold War. Yet sometimes when covering the entire Cold War history it is mentioned briefly or not at all. This paper challenges these notions while agreeing with them. The Airlift is indeed all these things: a time of glory, a time of flight revolution, and an early event in the Cold War, but it is also much more. The Berlin Blockade and the subsequent Airlift served as a proving-ground for American and Soviet ideals and ambitions. Unlike other times in history when American democracy and Russian communism were at odds with one another where there were thousands of miles of land and sea to provide a buffer zone, in this case, the two very different mindsets and perspectives were next-door neighbors. In this situation they would have to either get along, or try to force the opposing side out. Very rarely is the Soviet perspective on

the Berlin Airlift considered alongside the Americans' view. This work desires to provide a comparative examination of American and Soviet perspectives, actions, and intentions before and during the Berlin Airlift.<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> Works focusing on the Berlin Airlift in general include Richard Reeves, *Daring Young Men The Heroism and Triumph of the Berlin Airlift, June 1948-May 1949* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2010); Ann, Tusa and John Tusa, *The Berlin Airlift* (New York: Atheneum, 1988); Andrei Cherny, *The Candy Bombers: The Untold Story of the Berlin Airlift and America's Finest Hour* (New York: Berkley Caliber, 2008). For works concerning the Cold War as a whole see D.F. Fleming, *The Cold War and its Origins, 1917-1960*. Volume I (Garden City: Doubleday & Company Inc., 1961); Martin McCauley, *The Origins of the Cold War, 1941-1949*. Revised 3<sup>rd</sup> ed. (Great Britain: Pearson Education, 2008); Melvyn P. Leffler, *The Specter of Communism: The United States and the Origins of the Cold War, 1917-1953* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1994). Works which examine Russo-American relations are David E. Murphy, Sergei A. 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[http://www.trumanlibrary.org/whistlestop/study\\_collections/berlin airlift/documents/PDFs/2-11.pdf#zoom=100](http://www.trumanlibrary.org/whistlestop/study_collections/berlin airlift/documents/PDFs/2-11.pdf#zoom=100); *State Department Summary of Telegrams*, July 27, 1948. Harry S. Truman Research Library.

[http://www.trumanlibrary.org/whistlestop/study\\_collections/berlin airlift/documents/PDFs/2-13.pdf#zoom=100](http://www.trumanlibrary.org/whistlestop/study_collections/berlin airlift/documents/PDFs/2-13.pdf#zoom=100); *State Department Summary of Telegrams*, August 5, 1948. Harry S. Truman Research Library.

[http://www.trumanlibrary.org/whistlestop/study\\_collections/berlin airlift/documents/PDFs/2-15.pdf#zoom=100](http://www.trumanlibrary.org/whistlestop/study_collections/berlin airlift/documents/PDFs/2-15.pdf#zoom=100); *State Department Summary of Telegrams*, October 1, 1948. Harry S. Truman Research Library.

[http://www.trumanlibrary.org/whistlestop/study\\_collections/berlin airlift/documents/PDFs/2-30.pdf#zoom=100](http://www.trumanlibrary.org/whistlestop/study_collections/berlin airlift/documents/PDFs/2-30.pdf#zoom=100); *Report on U.S. Public Opinion on the Berlin Situation*, July 29, 1948. Harry S. Truman Research Library.

[http://www.trumanlibrary.org/whistlestop/study\\_collections/berlin airlift/documents/PDFs/3-5.pdf#zoom=100](http://www.trumanlibrary.org/whistlestop/study_collections/berlin airlift/documents/PDFs/3-5.pdf#zoom=100); *Memo from General Clay on Berlin Crisis*, ca. 1948. Harry S. Truman Research Library.

[http://www.trumanlibrary.org/whistlestop/study\\_collections/berlin airlift/documents/PDFs/5-4.pdf#zoom=100](http://www.trumanlibrary.org/whistlestop/study_collections/berlin airlift/documents/PDFs/5-4.pdf#zoom=100); *R. H. Hillenkoetter to Harry S. Truman*, June 30, 1948. Harry S. Truman Research Library.

[http://www.trumanlibrary.org/whistlestop/study\\_collections/berlin airlift/documents/PDFs/6-5.pdf#zoom=100](http://www.trumanlibrary.org/whistlestop/study_collections/berlin airlift/documents/PDFs/6-5.pdf#zoom=100); *R.H.*

The Berlin Airlift is a period of history which has received much attention since its end in 1949. This adoration of the “Lift” comes almost exclusively from American historians who recognize Operation Vittles<sup>7</sup> as one of the greater moments of heroism in modern American history. Books upon books and countless documentaries have been produced since the end of the Airlift to time and again applaud the selflessness of the American spirit in aiding the city of Berlin in its greatest hour of need since the war. This does, however, limit the type and kind of research done on the Berlin Airlift. The vast majority of secondary sources on the Berlin Blockade and Airlift serve as a record of events and myriad mini-biographies of the people involved in the Airlift. These events and individuals are almost exclusively contained within the Allied West sectors of Berlin. Thusly, the perspective historians have on Berlin in 1948-1949 (especially if researching in America) is almost entirely Amero-centric.

This is, however, not without just cause. On the opposite side of the line, the Soviets kept very tight lips about the “Berlin Situation.” In Moscow, Stalin’s government leaked very little information on Berlin to the general public, and censored everything.<sup>8</sup> What few documents do exist remain locked in unopened Soviet archives.<sup>9</sup> As these invaluable documents have yet to see the light of day, gaining an accurate Soviet perspective on these events in history is nigh impossible. Such being the case in this work, many of the Soviet perspectives given are derived from American accounts of Soviet relations. In all, few Soviet documents have been found concerning the Berlin Blockade and Airlift, except for minutes of a Politburo meeting of

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*Hillenkoetter to Harry S. Truman*, June 9, 1948. Harry S. Truman Research Library.  
[http://www.trumanlibrary.org/whistlestop/study\\_collections/berlin\\_airlift/documents/PDFs/15-1.pdf#zoom=100](http://www.trumanlibrary.org/whistlestop/study_collections/berlin_airlift/documents/PDFs/15-1.pdf#zoom=100).

<sup>7</sup> Operation Vittles was the official name given to the Berlin Airlift.

<sup>8</sup> Norman A. Naimark, *The Russians in Germany: A History of the Soviet Zone of Occupation, 1945-1949* (Cambridge: Belknap Press, 1995), 8.

<sup>9</sup> During Glasnost, Gorbachev opened the Soviet Archives for a very short period of time. The Hoover Institution worked tirelessly to copy as many Soviet documents as possible while the archives were open. Unfortunately, none of the documents they recovered and published online pertain to the Berlin Blockade or Airlift.

June 30, 1948, when there was a short discussion of Soviet anti-aircraft readiness. One Soviet military historian, Viktor Gorbarev, spent years scouring archives and concluded that, as in the case of other historical failures of Stalin's, records had been destroyed or simply never kept.<sup>10</sup>

There are instances when a Soviet perspective is available, however. One is the *Soviet Weekly* newspaper. Though published for an English-speaking audience in London, this newspaper archive provides invaluable insight into the Soviet perspective on the Berlin Occupation, Blockade, and Airlift. Another such of useful insight into the Soviet Occupation of Berlin in the years before the Berlin Airlift is *The Russians in Germany*. This source covered the many aspects of the Russian occupation, including numerous things that are left out of other sources. Without this book, my own work would have taken a very different course.

Of the American-centric sources utilized, *The Candy Bombers* stands out as incredibly useful for its comprehensive coverage of the Berlin Airlift and its impact in the United States. *Daring Young Men* also served to discuss the lives of the many members of the Berlin Airlift.

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<sup>10</sup> Richard Reeves, *Daring Young Men The Heroism and Triumph of the Berlin Airlift, June 1948-May 1949* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2010), 22.

## **Chapter 1:**

### **Before the Airlift: The American and Soviet Experiences in Berlin Post-World War II**

#### **Events which led to the Berlin Blockade**

“It is very important not to leave in the German mind the concept of ‘the Reich.’”

President Franklin D. Roosevelt told Stalin at the 1943 Tehran Conference. Indeed, “the very word Reich should be stricken from the language.” Stalin replied it was “not enough to eliminate the word. The very Reich itself must be rendered impotent, so as never again to plunge the world into war.” When Winston Churchill declaimed that postwar Germany should be stripped of all its aviation and armament factories, Stalin said this too was not enough: “Furniture factories could be transformed into airplane factories. Watch factories could make fuses for shells.”<sup>11</sup>

From this exchange at Tehran, it was already obvious that the three Allies regretted not occupying Germany after the Treaty of Versailles, and had found themselves in another war. This time the three powers would not be so lenient with Germany and its people. Or, such was the plan. Stalin’s own comment about removing factories from the German people hinted at his future action of taking German manufacturing plants to Russia after the end of the war and at the onset of the joint occupation of Germany. The Allied leaders made very clear their intention to maintain a strong presence in Deutschland after the war was won.

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<sup>11</sup> Andrei Cherny, *The Candy Bombers: The Untold Story of the Berlin Airlift and America’s Finest Hour* (New York: Berkley Caliber, 2008), 23.

Preceding the German surrender in May 1945, Lucius Clay was appointed the replacement for General Eisenhower as the Military Governor for Occupied Germany. This was a job which suited the man well. Clay quickly settled in, and before long the war-torn city of Berlin was where he was most in his element.

General Lucius D. Clay's career is inextricably tied to postwar Germany: the occupation of a defeated nation, its rebirth, and reshaping. And were this the sum total of his achievements, it would rank among the biggest accomplishments of the Second World War. Clay was more than a military proconsul. He was, as John Kenneth Galbraith observed, "one of the most skillful politicians ever to wear the uniform of the United States Army." In a military tradition with little skill in terms of political insight, Lucius Clay stands as a unique figure. His selection to head Germany's occupation reflected a working relationship with the Roosevelt administration that was both close and long standing.<sup>12</sup>

Clay's political acumen was born and bred in Georgia politics. According to Army records, he was born April 23, 1897.<sup>13</sup> His father Alexander Stephens Clay was a three-term U.S. Senator. Senator Clay died in 1910, and Lucius, the youngest of six children, was soon packed off to West Point. He graduated at the top of his class in English and History, but ranked at the bottom in conduct and discipline.<sup>14</sup>

Brevetted to the Corps of Engineers in 1918, Clay rose methodically through the ranks of the peacetime Army. But he was as much of a maverick in his own way as George Patton was in his. The trouble was, Clay did not suffer fools gladly---regardless of rank--- and quickly tired of

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<sup>12</sup> Jean Edward Smith, *Lucius D. Clay: An American Life* (New York: Henry Holt and Company, 1990), 2.

<sup>13</sup> Clay was actually born on April 23, 1898.

<sup>14</sup> Smith, 2.

garrison routine. And in the small peacetime Army, Clay rapidly acquired a reputation as a military iconoclast.

In 1940, Clay was recalled to Washington to head the emergency airport construction program then being established under Commerce Secretary Jesse Jones. Between September 1940 and Pearl Harbor, Clay selected the sites and supervised the construction of some 450 airports in the United States, creating the nucleus of America's commercial air network.<sup>15</sup> If only Clay could have known just how useful this expertise with airports would be in the years to come.

When the Japanese attacked Pearl Harbor, Clay requested an immediate return to active duty. Instead he was sent to Brazil to negotiate for additional air bases, and then was selected by General Joseph Stilwell to go to China as Stilwell's chief engineer.<sup>16</sup> But before Clay could leave, Dwight Eisenhower, then head of the Army's War Plans Division, intervened to hold him in Washington. Army Chief of Staff General George C. Marshall announced a sweeping reorganization of the War Department immediately thereafter, and at the age of forty-three, Clay was appointed the youngest Brigadier General in the U.S. Army and the head of all wartime military procurement—a very disappointing assignment, as Clay saw it.<sup>17</sup>

From March 1942 until April 1945, Clay was America's soldier in charge of defense production. As the War Department's Director of Materiel, he supervised the vast procurement

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<sup>15</sup> Smith, 4.

<sup>16</sup> General Stilwell was the commander of the China-Burma-India theater during World War II.

<sup>17</sup> Smith, 4.

activities of the Army, set production schedules, doled out military aid to the Allies, and provided the weapons with which the war was won.<sup>18</sup>

In light of Clay's considerable political experience in Washington---and his close and easy working relationships with Harry Hopkins, Jesse Jones, James Byrnes, Sam Rayburn, and Henry Morgenthau--- it is not surprising that he was quickly tapped to head Germany's occupation.<sup>19</sup>

Before the newly-appointed four-star General Clay left Washington for his new role in Germany, friends would often tell him the process of occupying, rebuilding, and in fact remaking Germany would be an impossible one. "It's got to work," Clay said, at his first military governor's press conference a week later, "if the four<sup>20</sup> of us cannot get together now in running Germany, how are we going to get together in an international organization to secure the peace of the world?"<sup>21</sup>

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At first, the joint occupation of Germany and Berlin was simple enough. The American and Russian forces met on the banks of the Elbe River with, in fact, hugs and delight. Both parties shared a great animosity for the Germans, not simply the Nazi Party. Many blamed the German citizens themselves for the success of the Nazis in government. The goal of the American occupation was to ensure the malignancy in the German national character which

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<sup>18</sup> Smith, 4.

<sup>19</sup> Smith, 5. Harry Hopkins served as a diplomatic advisor to President Roosevelt during World War II. Jesse Jones was United States Secretary of Commerce. During James Byrnes's time serving the country in this time period he was not only a U.S. Senator, but also a Supreme Court Justice and Secretary of State. Sam Rayburn served as Speaker of the House of Representatives. Harry Morgenthau was the Secretary of the Treasury and the creator of the Morgenthau Plan, which called for the postwar deindustrialization of Germany.

<sup>20</sup> By this point America, Britain, France, and Russia had divided up Germany and Berlin into sectors of governance.

<sup>21</sup> Cherny, 76.



made this (Nazism,) possible was torn out for good.<sup>22</sup> To this end, the Americans believed that the denazification program was a precondition to German recovery and rehabilitation; that it was necessary before Germans could develop a sound democracy; that its laws and procedures would not be relaxed until Germans showed some willingness to assume responsibility for thorough denazification; and that the military government would do the job if the Germans did not want to commit to denazification on their own.<sup>23</sup> To make this possible, the four powers needed to come together and create a means of governing the defeated German nation.

Soon after the German surrender, representatives of the Soviet Union, the United Kingdom, and the United States gathered at the Potsdam Conference to create the protocols for the Allied occupation of Germany. First they established the Council of Foreign Ministers to prepare a peace settlement for Germany. Economically, they agreed that they must eliminate Germany's war potential, allow Germany to fully make reparations, and also to help the country to be reestablished as a part of the European economy. A fundamental part of this economic agreement was that Germany must be treated as a single unit, despite quadripartite occupation.<sup>24</sup>

Shortly after the fourth of July 1945, Lucius Clay arrived in Berlin to set up the offices of the Occupation. He marveled at the desolation of the bombed out city. An estimated one in ten bombs dropped on Germany during the war fell in Berlin.<sup>25</sup> It brought some realizations to the new military governor:

Conditions in Germany are getting progressively worse and large sections of all important cities have been obliterated. Of course, we have a long range problem in preventing

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<sup>22</sup> Cherny, 85.

<sup>23</sup> John Gimbel, *The American Occupation of Germany: Politics and the Military, 1945-1949* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1968), 107.

<sup>24</sup> *Selected Documents on Germany and the Question of Berlin 1944 – 1961* (London: Her Majesty's Stationery Office, 1961), 2.

<sup>25</sup> Cherny, 93.

the restoration of Germany's war potential. However, this is not the short range problem as several years will be required to develop even a sustaining economy to provide a bare minimum standard of living. The coming winter months will be most difficult.

I think that too much of our planning at home has envisaged Germany in which an existing government has surrendered with a large part of the country intact. In point of fact, it looks as if every foot of ground will have to be occupied. Destruction will be widespread, and government as we know it will be non-existent. In solving the short range problem we should find the answer to the long range problem, if at the same time we develop unanimity of action among the Allies.<sup>26</sup>

Several days later Clay prepared to meet Soviet General Georgy Zhukov, the man who defeated the German army at the gates of Moscow. He was also the official in charge of the Russian occupation of Germany. As Clay recounted, "The Russians treated us cordially. I presented Zhukov, in the name of the President, the Legion of Merit in the grade of Chief Commander and he reciprocated by awarding me the Order of Victory."<sup>27</sup> Together, these two leaders drew up the plans for the Kommandatura in Berlin. In this four-party system of governance in Berlin it was agreed each of the Allies would carry out the policies of the Kommandatura<sup>28</sup> in each occupied sector on a unanimous basis.<sup>29</sup> It also gave each government the power of a veto. Already the Americans could see the Soviet political maneuvering. As Clay noted, "It is possible that the Control Council may become a negotiations agency, nothing more, and in no sense an overall government for Germany."<sup>30</sup> General Clay's foresight did not prove to be wrong. Years later he would reflect:

Unfortunately there was never full cooperation. Three of the four occupying powers had signed the Potsdam Protocol which formed the directive for the occupation. France was not a party to this understanding and therefore did not feel bound by its provisions. But French unwillingness to abide by the Potsdam decisions was the major cause for dissent within the Control Council for only a few months. It soon became apparent that the Soviet Government

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<sup>26</sup> *The Papers of General Lucius D. Clay: Germany 1945-1949*. Vol 1, Edited by Jean Edward Smith (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1947), 6.

<sup>27</sup> *The Papers of General Lucius D. Clay: Germany 1945-1949*. Vol 1, 19.

<sup>28</sup> The Kommandatura was the military occupation headquarters in Berlin.

<sup>29</sup> Cherny, 107.

<sup>30</sup> *The Papers of General Lucius D. Clay: Germany 1945-1949*. Vol 1, 19.

interpreted the decisions very differently than did the British and American governments. The Russians wanted to create conditions that would provide opportunity for Communist penetration and domination for German political life and economic resources.<sup>31</sup>

Despite this, however, if for nothing more than a show of goodwill, they agreed to the new system.

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In the next two years, Clay and the American forces did everything in their power to facilitate the growth of democracy in occupied Germany and to redeem the nation culturally. By 1948 there were dozens of newspapers up and running in Germany, and the American-sponsored radio station RIAS (Radio in the American Sector) was listened to by 80 percent of Berliners.<sup>32</sup> Clay also created 126 libraries around Germany, which provided both reading materials and cultural events.<sup>33</sup> He oversaw the replacement of Nazi textbooks in schools, and even set up free elections for the German people. General Clay also began the implementation of a film program to enrich and reorient the German people. Anti-Nazi films stressed the causal connection between German aggression and the misery of postwar Europe. Films about the nascent Cold War did not antagonize the Germans with references to Nazism, but instead emphasized American-German cooperation.<sup>34</sup> The Americans tried everything to build a democracy—subtly be damned. Despite their best efforts and intentions, however, by early 1948 General Clay and the Americans had been stymied in fashioning their ideal of a democratic and peaceful Germany.

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<sup>31</sup> Clay, x.

<sup>32</sup> Cherny, 124.

<sup>33</sup> Cherny, 124.

<sup>34</sup> Cora Sol Goldstein, *Capturing the German Eye: American Visual Propaganda in Occupied Germany*, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2009), 58.

Six months after the war, 70 percent of Germans thought the Americans were helping the reconstruction of Germany. By August 1947, only 44 percent agreed with this statement.<sup>35</sup> Public opinion surveys administered by social scientists under military government command consistently bore bad tidings. After reviewing these results, it was clear to Clay why democracy was failing in Germany in 1948, and why Nazism and Communism were looking so appealing to the occupied populace. In survey after survey, the hungry, cold Germans were asked whether they preferred a government that provided “economic security” or one that guaranteed “free elections, freedom of speech, press and religion.” They chose the guarantee of a full stomach over freedom and democracy by two or more to one every time. In Berlin, the margin was 70 percent to 22 percent.<sup>36</sup>

One of General Clay’s earliest actions in Germany was to establish a means of feeding the German populace in the American zone.<sup>37</sup> Since Berlin was completely encircled by the Soviet occupation zone, the Western powers had to transport all the food and supplies for their sectors of the city. Shortly after the war, the Americans pledged to supply an official ration of 1,550 calories per day to the Germans in their sector.<sup>38</sup> This food was brought in by trains, trucks, and barges every day. A year after the end of the war, the Americans’ food distribution was only 1,180 calories, and dropped to 1,040 calories a year later.<sup>39</sup>

These rations were tiered based on age for children and on physical labor for adults. People doing heavy labor got relatively higher rations to keep them going. As a result, the economy slowed under too little nourishment. In 1947, the average adult German over the age of

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<sup>35</sup> Cherny, 137.

<sup>36</sup> Cherny, 126.

<sup>37</sup> Each occupying power was responsible for feeding its own zone.

<sup>38</sup> Cherny, 126-127.

<sup>39</sup> Cherny, 127.

forty was thirty pounds underweight and the average man in the American zone weighed 112 pounds.<sup>40</sup> Hunger became the all-consuming concern for the German populace, and the lens through which it would view the world. Food, and the search for it, was the true power over Berlin. Anyone who could provide a respite from the constant emptiness in German stomachs would have their hearts as well.

The American antipathy towards the Germans also did not improve the situation. Two and half years after the war's end, the GIs and Germans still looked at one another with hatred and distrust. Even the new soldiers arriving in Germany needed little reason to loathe the defeated. To make matters worse, American soldiers were given strict orders not to give, sell, or trade any food with the Germans, the logic being "the American taxpayers buy the food the military uses."<sup>41</sup> It also served as one more barrier between the occupying forces and the "natives". Americans would burn leftover food and pour drinks down the drain rather than give it to the German people.

The directive on nonfraternization remained intact long after V-E Day. Local entertainment facilities were to be taken over for exclusive use at all times or at specified hours by the Allies. Americans were forbidden to enter German theaters. Leave and rest centers were to be established, as far as possible, outside Germany, and leaves of more than forty-eight hours were to be granted only for destinations outside Germany. Germans could not be invited to dances or other social functions sponsored by military units, and the Army sports program forbade competition with Germans.<sup>42</sup>

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<sup>40</sup> Cherny, 127.

<sup>41</sup> Cherny, 135.

<sup>42</sup> Oliver J. Frederiksen, *The American Military Occupation of Germany, 1945-1953* (Historical Division Headquarters: United States Army, Europe, 1953), 129.

Americans were also banned from interactions with the Germans. This “fraternization ban” only helped to further the tensions. Many Germans found the U.S. Army’s initial ban on fraternization “extraordinarily embarrassing.” They resented the troops’ aloofness and abuses, and bristled at the rule of “Negroes and mixed-breeds.”<sup>43</sup>

Nonfraternization as an official occupation policy came to an end on 1 October 1945, when the Allied Control Council, at the initiative of the American element, removed all restrictions with the exception that marriage with Germans and the billeting of troops with German families were left to the discretion of the zone commander.<sup>44</sup>

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Like the Americans, the Soviets encountered myriad problems in establishing their governance of East Berlin and their portion of Germany. Once the Allies had divided the city into Eastern and Western zones, it was clear the Soviets ideally wanted Berlin (and the rest of East Germany for that matter) to be a satellite state under Soviet imperialism. At a meeting in June 1945, Stalin stated his desire for Soviet hegemony in the East German zone, though he eventually wanted a new Germany to be an ally of the USSR.<sup>45</sup> Within the zone, Stalin’s forces restored some semblance of order swiftly and successfully with the distribution of food and the formation of political parties and trade unions. With these new unions, Stalin hoped to goad the Germans into working to make reparations to the USSR.

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<sup>43</sup> Edith Sheffer, *Burned Bridge: How East and West Germans Made the Iron Curtain* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2011), 24.

<sup>44</sup> Frederiksen, 131.

<sup>45</sup> Vladislav Zubok and Constantine Pleshakov. *Inside the Kremlin’s Cold War: From Stalin to Khrushchev* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1996), 48.

While Soviet goals in Germany were obvious, the actual implementation of Stalin's plans was not so simple, or even understandable. Stalin's orders to his underlings were often vague to the point of being unintelligible, which frequently led to problems in East Berlin. In many cases directives were simply ignored. American intelligence reported Soviet command was chaotic, lacking handbooks, and simply out of date. Even maps were lacking, sometimes just being cutouts from old German maps. Oftentimes, when a German official had to defer to the Soviet Kommandantura, it could take so long to get a response that the Germans would settle the problem on their own. The Soviet forces in Berlin also had an unfailing sense of superiority over the German populace, which caused endless problems when it came to governing the zone with a fair hand.

Soviet soldiers in Germany had a more-or-less favorable time in the occupied country. As they were paid in both rubles and reichsmarks, these men were able to purchase a plethora of special goods-- sausages, cigarettes, and liquor among them. They also made frequent trips to downtown Berlin and took photos of the damage, proud of their accomplishments.

Russian relations with the German civilians were tenuous at best and inhumane at worst. The Russians could be friendly, brutal, exploitative, or even intimate in any given situation (though the latter was by far the least common). Theft was commonplace from the beginning of the Berlin occupation to the Airlift and even afterwards. Just as cities in ancient days were sacked after a conquest, so too was Berlin. This epidemic was facilitated by the Soviets being in a constant position of power over the Germans. These men would take what they could not buy and therefore had a want for everything. Soldiers who extorted desirable goods from German

civilians would often then sell them illegally for a profit. This was a matter which the Soviet government in Germany vehemently denounced.<sup>46</sup>

While the Soviets were willing to punish those who committed theft in East Germany back into line, the same was not true for Russian soldiers when it came to rape. This was the true pandemic of the Russian occupation. It was vicious, it was relentless, and it destroyed the lives of German women. Worst of all, no one did anything to stop it. Rape went hand-in-hand with the pillaging of Berlin and the rest of Germany at the beginning of the occupation, but inexplicably continued throughout the occupation of Germany. It was not until the time of the Berlin Airlift that Russian soldiers would be confined to guard posts and the women of Germany would finally be safe. As Norman Naimark noted in *The Russians in Germany*, “The impersonal violence of war itself breeds rape, as the conquest of women complements, or in some cases, substitutes for the defeat of the enemy.”<sup>47</sup> This makes a sick sort of sense, considering many Russians felt the German defeat was incomplete. These Soviet soldiers raped endlessly, with utter disregard to nationality or social status. Reports of women being raped in front of their husbands, their families, and even at their jobs were commonplace, but no one tried to stop it. The mayor of Mengersgereuth-Hammern claimed the Soviet command removed him from office because he “did not provide young women.”<sup>48</sup> Shockingly, Stalin showed utter disregard for these early rapes, treating the situation as a joke, which foreshadowed his future indifference to many such similar events. Many members of the Soviet government hoped the sexual violence would decrease after a military government was established. Early governance of regions in East German was more like the ruling of a fief and, as such, punishment for rape varied. Sometimes

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<sup>46</sup> Naimark, 173.

<sup>47</sup> Naimark, 70.

<sup>48</sup> Sheffer, 27.



rape was very severely punished by death or a severe whipping, but in most cases local commanders sympathized with their soldiers and ignored the pandemic of rape.

Even after the normal occupation began, rape and pillage continued without halt. The local Frauenbund (Women's League) in Klausdorf complained to the Soviet commandant in April 1949 that "men in Russian uniform" harassed and attacked so many women that it was impossible to hold any meetings after dark. No woman in her right mind would venture onto the streets.<sup>49</sup>

The German populace rarely intervened in a rape, for fear of being killed. This firmly reinforced the fact that it was the Russians who were in charge in East Berlin and East Germany, and it was they who called the shots.

The endless rapes also damaged the KPD and SED's<sup>50</sup> attempts to establish and grow a communist future for Germany. The matter was made all the worse as rape was a topic which could not be discussed in public due both to social taboos and the ire it would elicit from the Soviet authorities. They viewed these complaints of rape as "anti-Soviet". In an effort to quell this perceived attitude, they agreed to hold public discussions to attack the matter head on. These discussions began on November 18, 1948, months into the Berlin Airlift (it could be surmised this was planned to win Germans over to the Soviet side and away from American aid). The open discussion took place in an auditorium overflowing with 700 people and lasted for four hours. This was one of the liveliest and last open forums in East Berlin until the fall of 1989. Throughout the forum, the various issues plaguing occupied Germany were addressed, and the matters of theft, pillage, and rape were all equated to "Soviets battling the tide of fascism." Once

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<sup>49</sup> Naimark, 89-90.

<sup>50</sup> *Kommunistische Partei Deutschlands* or the Communist Party of Germany. *Sozialistische Einheitspartei Deutschlands* is the Social Unity Party of Germany.

again, it seemed as if the raping of German women and the theft would be disregarded and brushed aside. It was not until a young German woman and member of the SED stood to ask the question about the great taboo. While she never said the word “rape” or that she, herself, was a victim, everyone understood what she meant. Rather than own up to the terror the Soviet forces inflicted upon German women, the forum leaders once again evaded the matter, saying women were also terrorized when American and English forces bombed the city. The forum, as a result of this blatant avoidance, focused almost exclusively on the problem at hand. Some expressed sympathy, while others asserted there was no rape. When the topic of rape was raised in a second forum, it was lost in a sea of rhetoric and trivialities, making it clear that the women of Germany would have no peace and no safety from their supposed Soviet protectors.

In both the Soviet and American occupation, soldiers’ physical and economic dominance fused through sex, giving rise to a complicated continuum from coercion to semiprostitution to profitable dating. The devastated post-war economy, as well as the skewed ratio of young German men to women (verging on two to three), worked in the soldiers’ favor, as did their access to goods and privileges. Troops took full advantage, with a culture of coupling arising especially in the American zone. Most encounters were short-lived, yet German families would go to great lengths to “find an American to take care of them.”

Sex between soldiers and German women—both coerced and consensual—was contentious. Discretion was hard to come by in close-knit communities where housing shortages meant an average two to three people per room, and “lying in” a potato field could lead to a police report. Compromised women became symbols of Germany’s submission and humiliation, with images of Soviet “rape” versus American “fraternization” expanding into metaphors of

occupied rule more broadly. Angry verses addressed to “chocolate-wenches” disseminated near Neustadt, raged:

We do not want to be raped/ So we go out with Amis (Americans) to be buffered..../Six years the men have fought/ Six years long have you suffered/ Have you since really so forgot/And now think about devouring chocolate!<sup>51</sup>

Over the years of the occupation, it is estimated hundreds of thousands of German women were raped, and some believe it could have been as many as two million. Venereal disease ran rampant across East Germany, and thousands got abortions. This was the East Germany for millions of women in the zone, This was the hellish reality in which they suffered.

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The Soviets also affected the livelihood of the German people with an occupation policy of gaining as much as possible with a minimum of risk.<sup>52</sup> It became clear early on that the Russians were unlikely to get the reparations owed them from the crushed German government and banks. This, coupled with the inability to settle on reparations during the Potsdam Conference, made them turn elsewhere, namely their own zone. They dismantled and carried off industrial equipment and entire factories back to Russia to account for the \$10 billion in reparations of “minimum compensation” for the war.<sup>53</sup> Since two-thirds of Germany’s prewar industrial capacity lay outside the boundaries of the Soviet occupation zone, the Soviets were willing to compromise with the Allies on the reparations issue in the beginning, as demonstrated in the Potsdam Conference. For a time, the Soviets’ extreme need for help in rebuilding their

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<sup>51</sup> Sheffer, 27.

<sup>52</sup> *U.S. Occupation in Europe After World War II*. Edited by Hans A. Schmitt (Lawrence: Regents Press of Kansas, 1978), 46.

<sup>53</sup> Naimark, 167.

shattered economy diminished the importance of all other matters.<sup>54</sup> The Soviets clearly had their own plan which was in operation before the discussions about reparations in the Allied Control Council had even begun. The carrying out of this plan is difficult to understand, because of the secrecy with which it was conducted and the complexity of its administration. The dismantling teams were completely separate and independent from the SMA (Soviet Military Administration). In fact, they sometimes carried out their orders directly against SMA orders.<sup>55</sup>

The essential factor in the dismantling process was speed. The Soviets started removing plants and equipment from their occupation zone as soon as the surrender took place. The first stage of the Soviet removals involved “trophy teams,” which were formed at division and army levels. These were composed of untrained Red Army personnel who were destructive in their work and whose acquisitions were often shamefully wasted. This was apparently of little concern to Moscow. M.Z. Saburov, who headed the dismantling operation at this time, stated his attitude at a meeting in Neuebhagen, Germany on July 2, 1945: “if we can’t ship it out, it’s better to destroy it so that the Germans won’t have it.”<sup>56</sup>

Soviet sources estimate only about one-fourth of the equipment that was dismantled was actually delivered to the Soviet Union. Materials were poorly packed, there were few machines to load heavy industrial equipment, and there was also a shortage of broad-gauge rolling stock. It was reported that some of the dismantled equipment lay out-of-doors for several years before being shipped to the USSR. Dismantling teams usually burned all of the papers that they found, including blueprints. Therefore, even if the industrial equipment did eventually reach the Soviet

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<sup>54</sup> *U.S. Occupation in Europe After World War II*, 52.

<sup>55</sup> *U.S. Occupation in Europe After World War II*, 52-53.

<sup>56</sup> *U.S. Occupation in Europe After World War II*, 53.

Union, it was incredibly difficult to reassemble it properly.<sup>57</sup> It would be General Clay who would eventually put an end to Soviet reparations at the start of the Berlin Blockade, deciding that, as thirty-one thousand tons of equipment from war plants were a part of these reparations, that they would be better off kept out of the hands of the Soviets for fear of war potential.<sup>58</sup>

The Soviet Union insisted on agrarian reform and political and economic transformations throughout Germany to ensure that country's democratic rejuvenation and its conversion into a peaceful state.<sup>59</sup> To augment this, the SED requisitioned farms across Germany and took direct control over mines and other enterprises in the zone.<sup>60</sup> It is possible this was also to help hide the fact they were carting off large amounts of industrial equipment.

As James Bacque notes, in the east of Germany in 1946, the people starved because the Russians confiscated so much food and virtually all the factories. The French also took a terrible toll in their zone, by forced seizure of food and housing, and by physical violence including mass rapes, in Stuttgart and elsewhere. . . . The official ration in the French zone in January 1947 was 450 calories per day, half the ration of the Belsen concentration camp, according to the writer and theologian Prince zu Lowenstein.<sup>61</sup>

Reparations were made even more problematic when the Americans introduced the Marshall Plan to Western Europe in June 1947, and put it into action in 1948. While the Americans said Eastern Europe was more than welcome to partake of the aid, Stalin and the

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<sup>57</sup> *U.S. Occupation in Europe After World War II*, 53.

<sup>58</sup> U.S. Department of State, *Foreign Relations of the United States 1948 Volume II Germany and Austria* (Washington D.C.: U.S. Government Print. Ofc., 1973), 212.

<sup>59</sup> A.A. Gromyoko, and B.N. Ponomarev, eds. *Soviet Foreign Policy 1917-1980*, Volume II, 1945-1980 (Moscow: Progress Publishers, 1981), 74.

<sup>60</sup> *Confuse and Control: Soviet Techniques in Germany*. (Washington DC: Department of State Publication, 1951), 11.

<sup>61</sup> James Bacque, *Crimes and Mercies: The Fate of German Civilians Under Allied Occupation, 1944-1950* (Toronto: Little, Brown, and Company Ltd., 1997), 94.

Soviet government viewed it as an affront to their occupation and as capitalism attempting to encroach on their satellite states. The Soviets attempted to mislead the people of Europe, stating that America's support would only be in economic matters and that they would shy away from any military risks.<sup>62</sup> The implementation of the Marshall Plan was a factor that contributed heavily to the Berlin Blockade.

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Months before the Soviets blockaded Berlin, plans towards this eventuality were already being made. Clay and the American forces did their best to stave off this unknown climax to the tensions in that ancient city. Since the end of World War II, the Soviets had expanded Communist control over large tracts of Europe and Asia, while the Americans turned inward, dismantling their military and instead focusing on consumer goods. Now, the United States had been awakened to the problem at hand. In the space of a month, America had announced the proposal to create a democratic West Germany, had passed a plan to rebuild the economies of free nations in Europe, and had begun to revive and reconstitute its military might. America was very close to making the promise to protect the security of Western Europe from a potential Soviet invasion. The Russians saw this and knew their moment to spread control across Europe was passing. If they intended to make a move, they would have to do so with great haste.<sup>63</sup>

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<sup>62</sup> Harry S. Truman, . *Memoirs by Harry S. Truman vol.2 : Years of Trial and Hope*. (Garden City: Doubleday & Company, 1956), 123.

<sup>63</sup> Cherny, 219-220.

## Chapter 2:

### Breakdown in Berlin: The Events which led to the Berlin Blockade

The situation in Berlin was breaking down during the winter of 1948. Soviet expansionism in Eastern Europe and elsewhere supplied the fuel for Western fears, and Germany's future was the bonfire in which it would burn. Those in Berlin, having seen the spread of Soviet power and its gaining of satellite states caused worries to rise in the American sector of the city.

A top-secret document created by the U.S. Government on January 2, 1948, posed the "what/if" scenario of the Soviets attempting to force the United States out of Berlin. The document deduced such an act would likely be accompanied by a forced British and French withdrawal as well, and surmised two methods the Soviets might try to utilize. The first method would be through direct military force, which would result in war. The second method would be to impose administrative difficulties that would make a continued Allied occupation far more difficult.<sup>64</sup> As a withdrawal would result in a loss of prestige for the Americans, the best course of action would be to "place the Soviets in a position in where it will be clear to the world that they are the ones attempting to break the existing contract, divide Germany, and eliminate this avenue for reaching an eventual agreement."<sup>65</sup>

The Soviets, however, had already begun the mudslinging over Berlin. In the aftermath of a meeting of the Council of Foreign Ministers on December 6, 1947, the *Soviet Weekly*

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<sup>64</sup> George C. Marshall Research Library, Lexington, Virginia. National Archives- Declassified Collection. Box 10, Folder 13. "U.S. Course of Action in the Event of Soviet Attempt to force us out of Berlin, 2 January 1948." P. 1

<sup>65</sup> George C. Marshall Research Library, Lexington, Virginia. National Archives- Declassified Collection. Box 10, Folder 13. "U.S. Course of Action in the Event of Soviet Attempt to force us out of Berlin, 2 January 1948." P. 2.

newspaper published an article entitled “Potsdam Agreement Must Stand.” This article explained to the Soviet public (or, more accurately, to the communist sympathizers in London) why the Soviet Ministers had rejected the British draft titled “Supplementary Principles to Govern the Treatment of Germany.” The Soviets, in this article, vehemently protested this draft on the basis that it superseded the principles of the Potsdam Agreement. It goes on to say, “Separate actions of the American and British authorities, as well as of the French authorities, in the Western Zones of Germany have gone too far as it is, putting a brake on the economic rehabilitation of Germany and hampering the urgent establishment of firm peace in Europe.”<sup>66</sup> A separate article also claimed the Western Allies had gone so far as to cripple industrial growth in Germany, rather than aid it.<sup>67</sup> Based on such a statement in the newspaper, it is clear the Soviet government wanted the world to believe it was their government that was set on upholding the Potsdam Agreement. In another event, the Soviet administration in Berlin had barred Western representatives from attending a political meeting in the Soviet sector to which they were invited by the Germans. When the Allies protested this action, Sokolovsky claimed Berlin as a part of the Soviet Zone and accused the Western Powers of using “their position to prejudice their right to remain in Berlin.” The attempt to build a record to justify the Blockade was under way.<sup>68</sup> Already, months before the Berlin Blockade, the powers in Berlin were ready to begin vying for the legitimacy of their causes before the rest of the world.

General Lucius Clay had held onto the dream of amity with the Russians long after most had abandoned it. He opposed the establishment of U.S.-backed, Russian-speaking Radio

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<sup>66</sup> “Potsdam Agreement Must Stand: Statement by V.M. Molotov on December 8,” *Soviet Weekly*, 11 December 1947.

<sup>67</sup> “Economic Principles for Germany,” *Soviet Weekly*, 11 December 1947.

<sup>68</sup> Clay, 351.



Liberty to beam anti-Russian propaganda into the Soviet zone.<sup>69</sup> Clay's faith in peace with the Russians grated upon the nerves of Frank Howley, his military government commander in Berlin. Howley was a man who made a point out of exhibiting his toughness, and also had no misgivings about displaying harshness to the Berliners and disdain for the Russians, thus earning him the nickname "Howlin' Mad" Howley.

The Berliners and the Russians had reached an impasse. Only days after the 1947 election in Berlin, letters mailed to the new "Mayor Reuter" were filtered through the Soviet-controlled mail system and returned to the sender with a note saying "no such person existed."<sup>70</sup> Kotikov, the Russian commandant, had in fact, vetoed the election, rendering the new mayor ineffectual.

New Mayor Ernest Reuter was a unique individual in Germany. Throughout World War II, and even beforehand, he maintained an anti-Nazi, anti-Communist mentality that for anyone else should have earned a death sentence.<sup>71</sup> After spending years in concentration camps, Reuter returned home to Berlin, and instantly became trusted by the Berlin populace. In the election he won 82 percent of the vote.

Despite the insistence of the Soviets, the Berliners stood their ground. Louise Schroeder, the first woman to be elected to the Reichstag, was Reuter's deputy, and now stood next in line to be mayor. She agreed to be acting mayor until such a time as Reuter could claim his new position. Reuter, too, was unsurprisingly uncowed. He ordered new business cards: "Ernest Reuter, the Elected but Unconfirmed Mayor of Berlin."<sup>72</sup>

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<sup>69</sup> Cherny, 140.

<sup>70</sup> Cherny, 149.

<sup>71</sup> Cherny, 148.

<sup>72</sup> Cherny, 149.

Later in January, Clay's perfected routine was interrupted by a wire service ticker bearing a public message from George Marshall proclaiming that the State Department would take control of the German occupation later on that spring.<sup>73</sup> Neither Clay nor the Pentagon had been notified in advance.<sup>74</sup> The Army agreed to set the date for Clay's retirement as military governor of Germany, which would be April 1, 1948.<sup>75</sup>

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His approaching retirement did little to deter General Lucius D. Clay's devotion to his duty. Clay had already assessed the situation in Germany and found it to be greatly unsatisfactory. American forces, in the years after World War II had not been demobilized, but demolished.<sup>76</sup> If the Western Allies were to make any stand against the Soviets, they would need to remobilize in order to bolster their mere 6,500 troops in Berlin. This was opposed to the 400,000 the Russians had stationed in and around the city.<sup>77</sup> Added to this deficit of troops, the original 1700 fighter planes stationed in postwar Europe were now all but nonexistent.<sup>78</sup> It was clear from the outset that the American forces were incredibly insufficient to address the Soviet threat, whether it be to America itself, abroad, or in Berlin.<sup>79</sup> In the first days after the message from Marshall, he sent a cable to the Pentagon stating,

If the USSR has decided it will fight us for Berlin, then we will be driven from Berlin. If we have decided we will not be driven from Berlin except by force, then we will remain in

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<sup>73</sup> Cherny, 157.

<sup>74</sup> Cherny, 157.

<sup>75</sup> Cherny, 158.

<sup>76</sup> This was part of the effort to "bring the boys home" as quickly as possible after the war ended. Also the American citizens wanted to stop funding the war, so everything fell into a state of disrepair. This was also when the shift to having a nuclear armory took place, as nuclear weapons were cheaper and easier to maintain than standing troops.

<sup>77</sup> Cherny, 185.

<sup>78</sup> *Composition of USAAF for the occupation of Germany*, October 20-23, 1944. George C. Marshall Research Library, Lexington, Virginia, reel 121, item 3008, p.2.

<sup>79</sup> George C. Marshall Research Library, Lexington, Virginia. National ArchivesDeclassified Collection "Memorandum to the Chief of Staff, 14 March 1948." P.2.

Berlin regardless of appeasement on the one hand or annoyances on the other. The reality of our position in Berlin depends on our determination to stay in Berlin unless we are driven out by acts of war.<sup>80</sup>

Once, the idea of war with Russia had been inconceivable to Lucius Clay. By the year 1948, this idea had changed as the kidnapping of Americans legally in the Soviet zone, banning of non-Communist newspapers and magazines, and the near daily harassment of the traffic of food and supplies into Berlin continued without abating.<sup>81</sup> Clay almost instinctively felt a change in the attitude of the Russians towards Berlin.<sup>82</sup>

For many months, based on logical analysis, I have felt and held that war was unlikely for at least ten years. Within the last few weeks, I have felt a subtle change in Soviet attitude which I cannot define but which now gives me a feeling that it may come with dramatic suddenness. I cannot support this change in my own thinking with any data or outward evidence in relationships other than to describe it as a feeling of a new tenseness in every Soviet individual with whom we have official relations.<sup>83</sup>

Despite growing tensions, Clay adamantly rejected an evacuation of Berlin. However, in light of Clay's approaching retirement, few were willing to listen to his advice. The Berliners all knew if it was not for the joint occupation of the city, it would have already been in Communist hands. On March 14, following the coup in Prague and the collapse of Czechoslovakia before the Communist tide, the Soviet-controlled radio *Berliner Zeitung* alerted the public to the "unpreventable withdrawal of the Western Powers which may someday soon occur very suddenly."<sup>84</sup> To the Berliners, this loosely veiled threat indicated they would do well to show their fealty to the Communists as soon as possible.

It was March 20, 1948 when the Allied Control Council next met in Berlin. Throughout the meeting, Soviet Marshal Sokolovsky ranted against the Western Powers, denouncing their

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<sup>80</sup> Cherny, 185.

<sup>81</sup> Cherny, 185.

<sup>82</sup> Cherny, 186-187.

<sup>83</sup> George C. Marshall Research Library, Lexington, Virginia. National Archives- Declassified Collection "Memorandum to the Chief of Staff, 4 January 1949." P.1.

<sup>84</sup> Cherny, 205.

actions and policies in Germany. Earlier in the month, *Soviet Weekly* raised similar accusations against the Western Allies over the Marshall Plan, claiming it would cause further unemployment in Europe and only push American capitalist ideals.<sup>85</sup> It was clear from the current atmosphere in the Soviet world that they were striving to portray all Western, especially American, actions in a negative light. If force could not be used, ostracism would be the next best method.

Lucius Clay, after hearing this diatribe, refused to comment on the charges given. At this, Sokolovsky, in a flat monotone, uttered, “The Control council no longer exists as an organ of government.”<sup>86</sup> He gathered his papers, slid back his chair, and walked out. With this simple statement the veneer of four-power occupation in Berlin and Germany was destroyed.<sup>87</sup> It was March 1948 and already Germany had been split in twain.

Almost immediately the situation in Berlin worsened. The Russians began field exercises outside the city, strongly suggesting a coming attack. Clay fumed before the press, continually telling them the Americans would stay in Berlin. President Truman echoed this sentiment. In light of the situation, General Clay rescinded his plan to retire.

On March 31<sup>st</sup> Clay received a notice from the Soviets of a new regulation which would be put into action at midnight on April 1<sup>st</sup>. It would allow Soviet soldiers to inspect all personnel on the thirty-two Allied supply trains which arrived in the Western zones each day, bringing food and other necessities. Permits would also be required in order to continue operation. Clay, in turn, offered to hand over passenger lists and freight manifests, but not allow inspection. “It is my intent to instruct our guards to open fire if Soviet soldiers attempt to enter our trains,” Clay’s

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<sup>85</sup> “Soviet Trade Unions on the Marshall Plan,” *Soviet Weekly*, 4 March 1948.

<sup>86</sup> Cherny, 207.

<sup>87</sup> Cherny, 207.

cable read.<sup>88</sup> This action was reconsidered later that day in Washington and modified to “fire only if fired upon”. Clay was, of course, irritated at being second-guessed. It all came down to the three trains coming into Berlin at midnight. When stopped, the commandant of one train got scared and allowed the Soviets onboard. They allowed him to continue on into the city. The other two pushed onwards and were halted at the border. Soviets surrounded the trains and the three hundred American soldiers inside. Neither made a move and the train remained there all day. At 8:20 in the evening, the train began moving backwards, returning to the American zone under the express orders of Clay, who had no other option but to call a retreat.<sup>89</sup>

That same day, Clay contacted the commander of Tempelhof airfield in Berlin, inquiring as to the number of cargo planes available in Europe. Thirty-six were stationed at the Rhein-Main airbase, but only twenty-five were in operating condition. Finding this to be sufficient Clay ordered thirty daily flights into Tempelhof so that enough food could be flown in to feed the 10,000 American troops, employees, and family members stuck in Berlin.<sup>90</sup>

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Worry plagued the governments in Washington and in Moscow, but fear ruled in Berlin. On April 5 a Russian Yak fighter plane and a British plane collided near Gatow; the Russian fighter plane, apparently attempted to buzz the transport and dove into it.<sup>91</sup> To worsen the situation, the collision happened in the safe space for air traffic. Overall fifteen people died, including two Americans, the five crew members of the British plane, seven other passengers,

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<sup>88</sup> Cherny, 210.

<sup>89</sup> Cherny, 214.

<sup>90</sup> Cherny, 214.

<sup>91</sup> Eugene Davidson, *The Death and Life of Germany: An Account of the American Occupation* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf Inc., 1961), 195.

and even the Yak pilot.<sup>92</sup> It was generally thought that this crash was unintentional, but the result of some “fight-happy pilot” out to show his defiance of the Western Powers, though this did not ease the pain of the loss of life.<sup>93</sup> While news of this crash was not released to the Soviet public until April 29<sup>th</sup>, it resulted in the regulation that Western occupiers had to warn the Soviets of airspace use a day in advance, furthering Soviet control in Germany.<sup>94</sup> It was, however, balanced by the lifting of the rail restrictions.<sup>95</sup> Tensions remained on the rise and Clay continually shot down talks of pulling out of Berlin. He ranted, he fumed, he raged, he spelled out that a withdrawal from Berlin would result in the rest of Europe falling into Communist hands.

Early in June, the top brass of America’s military was informed by Boudikine, a top FBI agent, of a massive Soviet plot. He had overheard a Russian General and Admiral, each highly inebriated, talking in a London park. Thoroughly convinced no one around them understood Russian, they outlined the largest military operation the world had ever known. The invasion of America would begin with Soviet bombers, attacking from hidden airfields in Canada, obliterating major military installations in the United States. Soviet speedboats and submarines would sink the entire U.S. Navy. At the same time 50,000 Russian sleeper agents would bring a tidal wave of terrorist attacks all across the country. President Truman, George Marshall, and Douglas MacArthur would be assassinated immediately. Dwight Eisenhower would be kept alive however, as the Soviets felt he “could be controlled.”<sup>96</sup> Whether this fabulous tale was true or not, the most powerful men in America felt it was believable enough to be considered.

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<sup>92</sup> *Foreign Relations of the United States 1948 Volume II Germany and Austria*, 891.

<sup>93</sup> *Memo from General Clay on Berlin Crisis*, ca. 1948. Harry S. Truman Research Library. [http://www.trumanlibrary.org/whistlestop/study\\_collections/berlin\\_airlift/documents/PDFs/5-4.pdf#zoom=100](http://www.trumanlibrary.org/whistlestop/study_collections/berlin_airlift/documents/PDFs/5-4.pdf#zoom=100).

<sup>94</sup> “Berlin Air Crash,” *Soviet Weekly*, 29 April 1948.

<sup>95</sup> Cherny, 220.

<sup>96</sup> Cherny, 226.

This supposed infiltration also marked one of the early instances of Soviet intelligence gathering in relation to the Berlin Blockade. Despite Soviet Intelligence being a highly professional bureaucracy, and having access to the highest echelons of the American, British, and French governments, it seemed wholly incapable of understanding the Western and even the German reaction to the Blockade. They had no sense of what the Americans would actually do—and yet, the American intelligence community—with far fewer resources and successes, were able to accurately assess the Soviet willingness to wage war over the Blockade.<sup>97</sup>

A month prior, on May 13, the Soviet Minister of Foreign Affairs Vyacheslav Molotov had engaged in a series of correspondences with General Walter Bedell Smith, the U.S. Ambassador in Moscow. In his first letter, Smith had assured the Soviets that the American government was making no aggressive moves against the Soviet Union or her satellites, and wished to work hand-in-hand with the USSR. Molotov's reply was a sharp retort to the Ambassador's letter, claiming the American's peacetime negotiations to be nothing but a façade. He even went so far as to press the issue of setting up bases in other countries, and bluntly stated the Russians had done no such thing.<sup>98</sup> Such was the atmosphere in which the U.S. Government decided it was on the verge of war.

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For more than three years, the citizens of East and West Berlin had skirted the line between subsistence and starvation. By the middle of 1948, the daily ration for adults was two cups of milk, two tablespoons of vegetables, two tablespoons of meat, three small potatoes, three

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<sup>97</sup> David E. Murphy, Sergei A. Kondrashev, and George Bailey, *Battleground Berlin: CIA vs. KGB in the Cold War*, (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1997), xxv.

<sup>98</sup> "Soviet-American Relations," *Soviet Weekly*, 13 May 1948.

slices of bread, a small slice of cheese, and a lump of sugar. German students protested with placards that read, “Even a dog needs 1,700 calories.”<sup>99</sup>

While Berlin suffered hunger pangs, its occupiers squabbled behind closed doors. After Sokolovsky walked out of the Control Council, if the Kommandatura disbanded, then the Soviets would claim sole rights to Berlin. The Soviets knew this and so put all their effort into undermining the Kommandatura as much as possible. Howley feared the end would be coming soon. When the time was right, he suspected, the Soviets would walk out of the Kommandatura.

From the beginning of the year 1948, the Americans and the British worked together towards forming a new West German government and economy. This was mostly established at the London Conference of 1948—a series of meetings between the Western Allies which lasted from February to April, 1948. It served as a means of deciding Allied action in Berlin, Germany, and Western Europe as a whole. In particular, the delegations discussed means of economic recovery for Germany, as well as the creation of a participatory democratic government for the occupied nation. In addition, in order to facilitate the association of Western Germany with the European Recovery Program, the three Allied sectors would strive to coordinate economic recovery in their zones as much as possible.<sup>100</sup> It was for this reason that the Americans and British sought to combine their sectors into a united region—Bizonia. This bizonal government would not extend to the corresponding sectors in Berlin, however.

Throughout the process, the French had gone along grudgingly, fearing they would upset the Soviets as well as communists in Paris. They even initially protested the formation of

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<sup>99</sup> Cherny, 227.

<sup>100</sup> *Documents On Germany, 1944-1961*. Committee On Foreign Relations, United States Senate. (New York: Greenwood Press, 1968), 88.



Bizonia.<sup>101</sup> This was not without just cause, however, as the Americans and British agreed that the French would have no consultation on matters pertaining specifically to Bizonal affairs.<sup>102</sup> It was the general consensus that this would change only if the French agreed to form Trizonia, a united region of all three Western Allies. Trizonia would eventually become reality, but for the time being, the French continued to cling to their policy of appeasement. Still, in an effort to not abandon the French completely, the American government agreed that they would take any comments from the French in regards to bizonal reorganization into consideration.<sup>103</sup> They would still be left out of the actual governance of the region, but at least they would have a part to play in its formation.

It is likely that one of the other reasons French cooperation was halfhearted at best was the fear of Germany regaining power. This was, of course, outmoded and unrealistic, as Secretary of State George Marshall pointed out to the French Embassy. Germany could possibly pose a threat in the distant future, but for the time being Marshall ascertained that the security of the French nation would depend heavily upon the integration of Western Europe, including the West German economy.<sup>104</sup> This being said, however, it is unsurprising that the French did not relish the idea of aiding the Germans who had once so willingly devastated their country, let alone help them reenter the European economy. As such, the French dragged their feet in regards to the reorganization of Germany as much as possible, right up until the Berlin Blockade.<sup>105</sup>

As unrealistic as France's fears of Germany returning to the power of the Third Reich era were, it did give cause for consideration of what the future of Germany's military power should

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<sup>101</sup> *Foreign Relations of the United States 1948 Volume II Germany and Austria*, 26.

<sup>102</sup> *Foreign Relations of the United States 1948 Volume II Germany and Austria*, 28.

<sup>103</sup> *Foreign Relations of the United States 1948 Volume II Germany and Austria*, 34-35.

<sup>104</sup> *Foreign Relations of the United States 1948 Volume II Germany and Austria*, 71.

<sup>105</sup> *Foreign Relations of the United States 1948 Volume II Germany and Austria*, 155.

be. It was agreed that, along with denazification, Germany would also need to be demilitarized. Heavy prohibitions were placed upon the German military, forbidding them from becoming aggressive, or a nuclear power.<sup>106</sup> Each of these would be enforced and overseen by the four-power occupiers.

Unfortunately, the American government did little to reassure the Europeans in the months of May and June. In the House, the Republicans were voting to slash the appropriation funds needed to fund the Marshall Plan. Without it, Berlin, Germany, and Europe could not be rebuilt.

On June 16<sup>th</sup> 1948, Berlin fell apart, and the mess was blamed on Howley.<sup>107</sup> The four commandants of Berlin made their way into the Kommandatura meeting. There were the British General Edwin Herbert, French General Jean Ganeval, and Frank Howley. Kotikov, the Russian commandant, was not present. In his place was his deputy, Alexei Yelizarov, and a shadowy political adviser, a man known only as Maximov.

The meeting began at ten in the morning. In the stuffy room, the agenda they discussed was mundane, and was constantly punctuated by a flow of languages between the commandants and their translators. The meeting droned on til 7:00 p.m., when a Russian commissar entered the room to speak to Yelizarov and Maximov. The two usually unexpressive men sat bolt upright as the man took a seat. Yelizarov immediately called for a recess, which was mercifully granted.

Upon reconvening, Yelizarov wasted no time in unleashing a stream of calumny. The mood grew steadily worse, and by 10:45 p.m. Howley had reached his limit. He called to adjourn

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<sup>106</sup> *Foreign Relations of the United States 1948 Volume II Germany and Austria*, 316.

<sup>107</sup> George C. Marshall Research Library, Lexington, Virginia. National Archives- Declassified Collection Box 35, Folder 1. "Telegram no.1565 from Berlin to Secretary of State, 1 July 1948."

at 11:00. Yelizarov refused, and he then began outlining a fourteen-point communist plan for the working conditions of Berlin. The British and French commandants quickly leapt into their rehearsed lines against the plan, while Howley sat and fumed.

At a quarter-past eleven, Howley asked to be recognized by Ganeval, who was presiding as chair. He rose and said, "Half an hour ago, I suggested we end our meeting. I am tired. I'm going home and I'm going to bed. With your permission, General, I will leave my deputy, Colonel Babcock, to represent me." Ganeval gave his assent. Howley turned to Yelizarov and said, "You have reduced the dignity of the Kommandatura to a point below which the Kommandatura shouldn't be lowered." He stormed out, slamming the door in his wake.<sup>108</sup>

Yelizarov stood and threw his papers to the table, stating the meeting couldn't possibly continue after Howley's "hooligan actions."<sup>109</sup> He was then fairly pushed out of the room by Maximov. No future date for the Kommandatura to meet had been set.

Later that evening, Howley was informed the last ties between the four-powers occupation had been severed, and he was being blamed. It was the occurrence the Americans had assumed would presage a Russian attempt to claim the entire city.<sup>110</sup>

It was not until long after midnight that Howley saw fit to contact Lucius Clay and explain the situation. Clay demanded his presence at once. At the general's house he was greeted with the words, "You have done a terrible thing." Clay then launched into berating his subordinate. "And the worst part is you're not even sorry about it."

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<sup>108</sup> Cherny, 231-233.

<sup>109</sup> Cherny, 233.

<sup>110</sup> Cherny, 233.

“You’re damn right I’m not,” Howley exploded. Clay told him to leave and come back the next day. Upon returning to Clay’s office the following morning, both men had already seen the Soviet newspapers castigating Howley, and Clay promptly followed suit, cataloguing the ways in which the Kommandatura collapse could harm American interests. Howley’s justification was simple: “I have taken all I can stand from the Russians.”

“Your job is to sit there and take it,” Clay replied through gritted teeth.

“I thought my job was to keep them from stealing the city of Berlin.”

Silence reigned in the room for a moment. Howley fully expected to be fired on the spot. Finally, Clay nodded slowly. “All right Frank. I guess you’ve had your quota of conferences for one day. Go home and get some rest.”<sup>111</sup>

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The following week felt like a jumble of chaotic instances. On June 18, after a series of communist riots and strikes, as well as furious arm-twisting, the French National Assembly voted and approved the plans to begin creating a West Germany. Later that night at 8:00 p.m., via special German radio broadcast, Clay announced he was instituting a new currency for Germany at 7:00 a.m., Monday morning. These new Deutschmarks would be effective in all three of the Western zones. Refusing to accede to quadripartite control of the currency of Berlin, the Soviets issued their own orders for currency reform both in their zone and also within the other western zones.<sup>112</sup> This was, of course, ignored. The Soviets also made it increasingly

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<sup>111</sup> Cherny, 234.

<sup>112</sup> U.S. Department of State, *Germany 1947-1949: the Story in Documents* (Washington D.C.: University Press of the Pacific, 2005), 204.

obvious that they had no real interest in the reunification of Germany, and that they also felt a great antipathy towards the European Recovery Program.<sup>113</sup>

A day later on June 19<sup>th</sup> 1948, after midnight Congress finally approved an appropriation to provide funds for the Marshall Plan.<sup>114</sup> The stalemate had been broken only because the Republican members of Congress needed to leave Washington to make it to their national convention in Philadelphia the following morning.<sup>115</sup>

This same day, the Soviets retaliated against the Western currency announcement. They placed new restrictions on western travel into Berlin. Passenger service on rail lines came to a grinding halt, with only one train allowed to move at a time. Freight was carefully inspected. The bridge over the Elbe River was suddenly closed for repairs.<sup>116</sup> Clay wanted to send a letter of protest to the Russians, but was quickly rebuffed and told the United States could not act without the backing of the British and the French. It could not stand alone this time.

Two days passed without further incident. Life in Berlin continued on, despite the new travel restrictions, as Berliners continued to adapt to being under occupied rule. On Monday June 21, however, the Russians matched the Allies by announcing they, too, would introduce their own currency in their zone. This began the pattern of action and reaction, challenge and response between the Allies and the Soviet Union.<sup>117</sup> The same day, the Russians introduced Order 111, which created this new currency. This took the form of coupons attached to existing

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<sup>113</sup> *R.H. Hillenkoetter to Harry S. Truman*, June 9, 1948. Harry S. Truman Research Library. [http://www.trumanlibrary.org/whistlestop/study\\_collections/berlin\\_ airlift/documents/PDFs/15-1.pdf#zoom=100](http://www.trumanlibrary.org/whistlestop/study_collections/berlin_ airlift/documents/PDFs/15-1.pdf#zoom=100). P.1.

<sup>114</sup> Note that the U.S. currency reform was at least in part to stabilize the West German economy so that aid from the Marshall Plan could be used more effectively.

<sup>115</sup> Cherny, 236.

<sup>116</sup> Cherny, 236.

<sup>117</sup> Marshall D. Schulman, *Stalin's Foreign Policy Reappraised* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1963), 13-14.

banknotes. The coupons were stuck on with glue made from the ubiquitous potato, which quickly fell off. The Berliners were quick to dub them *Tapetenmark* or wallpaper money. This new currency was ready on July 26.<sup>118</sup> When representatives of the four zones met the following day to discuss this new currency, it was met with a stalemate. With French pressure, the American and British representatives agreed to let the new Soviet currency be the official currency for all four of the Berlin zones. This the Soviets promptly turned down, claiming the Soviet legislature needed to approve any law for all four zones in Berlin. At this point, they were merely looking for a pretext with which to force the Western powers out of Berlin.<sup>119</sup> They also claimed it would be illegal to carry Western zone currency into the Soviet zone.<sup>120</sup> A few days later, the *Soviet Weekly* paper would accuse the Western Allies of splitting Germany completely (much in the same way the West accused the Soviets of doing the same thing). They called the act unlawful, and a gross violation of the Potsdam Agreement. The paper vehemently claimed the passing of this currency reform would only dismember Germany further and make her a slave to foreign economies.<sup>121</sup>

The following day, June 23, a City Assembly was scheduled in City Hall in the Soviet zone. However, when a riot broke out in front of the Hall, the delegates could not get anything done for two hours, and the whole affair fell to shambles as rapidly as had the Allied Control Council and the Kommandatura. When order was finally restored, the people of Berlin voted on the currency issue in their city. They voted to have the Soviet currency only in the Soviet sector and the Western currency in the American, British, and French sectors. Startlingly, the Berliners

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<sup>118</sup> Giles MacDonogh, *After the Reich: The Brutal History of the Allied Occupation* (New York: Basic Books, 2007), 528-529.

<sup>119</sup> Cherny, 238.

<sup>120</sup> George C. Marshall Research Library, Lexington, Virginia. National Archives- Declassified Collection. "Naval Message Admiral Schuirmann Omgus Correspondence, 24 June 1948."

<sup>121</sup> "Germany," *Soviet Weekly*, 24 June 1948.

were becoming less and less reproachful of Western involvement in Berlin. They could feel the Soviets reaching for a power grab in their city.

It was shortly before midnight on Wednesday, June 23, that the Soviets announced the Transport Division of the Soviet Military Authority would be compelled to halt all passenger and freight traffic to and from Berlin the next day at 6:00 a.m. due to technical difficulties. Coal shipments would be halted, water traffic suspended, and the Soviet authorities also ordered the central power stations to quit supplying electricity from the Soviet zone and sector of Berlin to the Western sectors, also as a result of technical difficulties.<sup>122</sup> Pedestrian entry into the Soviet zone was prohibited everywhere.<sup>123</sup> Journalists were gathered around the news ticker until late into the night. “Here it is,” said one. “This time it’s final. A Blockade has begun.”<sup>124</sup>

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<sup>122</sup> Cherny, 241.

<sup>123</sup> *Foreign Relations of the United States 1948 Volume II Germany and Austria*, 910.

<sup>124</sup> Cherny, 241.

### Chapter 3:

#### On the Wings of Glory: The Berlin Airlift, the American Drive, and the Soviet Reaction

The 31 million pounds of supplies the Allies delivered by river, rail, and road to the 2.25 million Berliners every day came to a halt. Now those necessities of life--- food, clothes, medicine, coal for energy and heat—were all cut off.<sup>125</sup> No “agreed” upon surface routes were established for passage into the Western sectors of Berlin. The zones of occupation had been drawn up while the war was still taking place, and no side wanted to lay claim to roads that may be involved in combat or destroyed. Even in the aftermath of the war the subject of roadway access was not addressed, and as it all was in Soviet territory, it all fell under Soviet control by default. When these access routes were discussed, it was only in terms of military routes and personnel.<sup>126</sup> Access rights to Berlin, specifically, were not so much as mentioned.<sup>127</sup> Ironically, the access rights to water routes for American supply barges were one of the few regularized arrangements made.<sup>128</sup> This proved to be one of the costliest mistakes of the war, and of the general policy of postponing major decisions until after the war.<sup>129</sup> The policy of “riding out current events”<sup>130</sup> held by the German occupiers meant that many integral decisions, such as deciding on roadways and things such as currency, were put off indefinitely.<sup>131</sup> This was a policy held by American, British, French, and Russians alike-- to remain tentative, ambivalent to major

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<sup>125</sup> Cherny, 241.

<sup>126</sup> Alan Donald Pauw, *The Historical Background Relating to Access Rights to Berlin*, January 1965. George C. Marshall Research Library, Lexington, Virginia, reel 219, item 3548, p.77.

<sup>127</sup> Pauw, 80.

<sup>128</sup> Letter to Admiral Leahy, July 22, 1945. George C. Marshall Research Library, Lexington, Virginia, reel 79, item 2264.

<sup>129</sup> Franklin M. Davis, Jr., *Come as a Conqueror: The United States Army's Occupation of Germany 1945-1949*, (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1967). 200-201.

<sup>130</sup> Pauw, p.4-5.

<sup>131</sup> Pauw, 13.



decision-making, and uncertain.<sup>132</sup> It seems no one wanted to incite the ire of their fellows and so deigned to tread delicately instead. General Lucius Clay would later reflect on this grave error: “I think now that I was mistaken in not... making free access to Berlin a condition for our withdrawal into our occupation zone.”<sup>133</sup>

As soon as the electricity was shut down, nighttime lights went out across the city, and raw sewage was discharged into the river. By the following morning, backup power and coal-burning plants in the Western sectors were activated and, over the radio, Berliners were made aware of their fate. In a city already severely undernourished this news shocked and scared its citizens.

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From Stalin’s perspective, the situation in Berlin and West Germany was far worse in terms of the consequences for his nation. Famine still devastated parts of the Soviet Union; guerilla warfare was just subsiding in the Ukraine, Belorussia, and Lithuania; and the demoralization and despair of the Russian people mounted. Stalin wished to safeguard his periphery, control German power, and utilize local Communists in Western Europe to enhance Soviet influence and strength. But he saw the United States trying to rebuild and co-opt German power while Britain was forging a new Western alliance. At the same time, he was agitated by the efforts of Tito’s Yugoslavia to conduct an independent foreign policy in the Balkans.<sup>134</sup> It was also clear to Stalin that the Western Allies were violating the guidelines set by the Potsdam

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<sup>132</sup> Pauw, 19.

<sup>133</sup> Davis, Jr., 201.

<sup>134</sup> Marshal Josip “Tito” Broz was the leader of the Soviet satellite of Yugoslavia under Stalin until he broke away from the Soviet Union in 1949.

Conference;<sup>135</sup> rather than do what he wanted with the economy, they instead chose to set up their own economic systems through the London Conference—something he would claim was a major impetus for the Blockade.<sup>136</sup> While the Marshall Plan was an open attempt to entice his satellites with promises of markets and dollars, the formation of a West German republic with hopes for economic revitalization might also serve as a magnet for his own East Germans. Stalin, then, had to worry about the near-term threat of a West German state co-opted into a hostile alliance and the long-term threat of an independent, reconstructed, and reunited Germany reemerging as a dominant power in central Europe.<sup>137</sup> Thus, alarmed at the prospect of a reindustrialized West Germany under Allied control, Stalin launched a risky gamble: the Berlin Blockade.<sup>138</sup>

The Blockade was not initially designed to force the United States out of Berlin—although if the Allies wanted to leave, the Russians would certainly not stop them. It was primarily intended to force the reopening of high-level negotiations on the future of Germany. Those negotiations, in turn, were not meant to produce a settlement—unless, unexpectedly, the West chose to settle on Soviet terms. The Soviet hope, rather, was to deflect progress toward a separate West German state. Blockading Berlin was an odd way to tempt the Allies, but Moscow had reason to think it might work; for even in 1948, Western governments still seemed

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<sup>135</sup> Gimbel, 3. 205.

<sup>136</sup> *Foreign Relations of the United States 1948 Volume II Germany and Austria*, 339.

<sup>137</sup> Melvyn P. Leffler, *The Specter of Communism: The United States and the Origins of the Cold War, 1917-1953* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1994), 75.

<sup>138</sup> George C. Herring, *From Colony to Superpower: U.S. Foreign Relations since 1776* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2008), 623-624

susceptible to taunts.<sup>139</sup> And, if nothing else, the threat of starvation posed the possibility of inciting the Berliners against the West.<sup>140</sup>

If Stalin could not get Washington, London, and Paris to reconsider their decisions regarding a Western Germany, he hoped the Blockade would eventually force them out of Berlin. Either way he could reap a great victory.<sup>141</sup> Thus Stalin waged what some came to call “a war of nerves”.<sup>142</sup> In the end, however, Stalin’s attempts served to only unite the Allies in opposition to his aims, and to speed up the formation of a West German state.<sup>143 144</sup>

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That first day of the Blockade the gravest questions which plagued the minds of the Berliners were if there would be food available and if the Western Allies would retreat from the city. The Americans estimated there was enough food saved on-hand for the Western Germans to last for fifteen days, and enough coal for Western sector electric plants for two to three weeks.<sup>145</sup>

Berliners were debating in the streets as to the relative merits of starvation, war, and life under Russian rule.<sup>146</sup> It was lost on no one that there had not been a reaction to the Blockade from any American official. Finally, after returning from an all-day inspection of troops in the

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<sup>139</sup> William Taubman, *Stalin’s American Policy: From Entente to Détente to Cold War*. (New York: W.W. Norton & Company Inc., 1982), 182.

<sup>140</sup> *State Department Summary of Telegrams*, June 28, 1948. Harry S. Truman Research Library. [http://www.trumanlibrary.org/whistlestop/study\\_collections/berlin\\_ airlift/documents/PDFs/2-2.pdf#zoom=100](http://www.trumanlibrary.org/whistlestop/study_collections/berlin_ airlift/documents/PDFs/2-2.pdf#zoom=100).

<sup>141</sup> Leffler, 82.

<sup>142</sup> *State Department Summary of Telegrams*, June 29, 1948. Harry S. Truman Research Library. [http://www.trumanlibrary.org/whistlestop/study\\_collections/berlin\\_ airlift/documents/PDFs/2-3.pdf#zoom=100](http://www.trumanlibrary.org/whistlestop/study_collections/berlin_ airlift/documents/PDFs/2-3.pdf#zoom=100).

<sup>143</sup> Thomas W. Wolfe, *Soviet Power and Europe, 1945-1970* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins Press, 1970), 12.

<sup>144</sup> Martin McCauley, *The Origins of the Cold War, 1941-1949*. Revised 3<sup>rd</sup> ed (Great Britain: Pearson Education, 2008), 101.

<sup>145</sup> George C. Marshall Research Library, Lexington, Virginia. National Archives- Declassified Collection. “Naval Message Admiral Schuirmann Correspondence, 27 June 1948.”

<sup>146</sup> Cherny, 245.

American zone, General Clay said to a reporter, “Do you think the Russians want to starve two million Germans?” He did not truly believe the Soviets would follow through on their threat. When asked if the Americans would bow to Soviet demands, he responded no, “the Russians are trying to put on the final pressure but they cannot drive us out of Berlin by any action short of war.” Was there some other way to bring food into Berlin? He practically guffawed. “It is absolutely impossible to supply the city by airpower alone.”<sup>147</sup>

Clay kept his thoughts to himself, but he had already made up his mind. Every fiber of his being wanted to make a stand against the Russians. His plan was to send an armed convoy of 6,000 men with tanks and artillery down the autobahn by breaking through the Soviet barricades. The Russians would not dare shoot, he believed.<sup>148</sup> When he presented this idea to the British, they swiftly declared they would offer him no support should such an event take place.

It was clear at this point the Americans could not act alone against the Blockade, as doing so would damage any friendship between America, Britain, and France. The other widely assumed option was to evacuate the city, which would leave the rest of Europe ripe for the taking by the Communists. With such paltry options, Lucius Clay was losing his patience.

Winston Churchill had long since given his thoughts on the decaying situation in Berlin. In mid-April he came up with a possible plan in regards to Soviet incursions. He felt certain that if the USSR ever gained nuclear technology, then war would be a certainty. He felt that the time was nigh to tell the Soviets that if they do not retire from Berlin and abandon East Germany, withdrawing to the Polish frontier, then the Allies would raze their cities. It was further his view that the Soviets could not be appeased or conciliated and that the only vocabulary the Soviets

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<sup>147</sup> Cherny, 245-246.

<sup>148</sup> Cherny, 246.

understood was one of force.<sup>149</sup> Churchill's proposed method was a very heavy-handed means of resolving the tensions in Berlin, but it showed that many world leaders were losing patience with Stalin's actions.

On the first day of the Blockade, the Truman administration was unsure of what to do in Berlin. They knew they had to prevent their general from starting World War III, but otherwise the issue seemed foggy at best. President Truman felt from the outset that this was the Russian's attempt to force the West out of Berlin, but his administration also felt the Soviet threat to be negotiable, something they could hopefully work out.<sup>150</sup> Clay was adamant. "We have to sweat it out, come what may. If the Soviets go to war it will not be because of the Berlin currency issue, but because they believe this is the right time."<sup>151</sup>

Clay knew the Berliners of 1948 were not equipped emotionally or physically to withstand the sort of siege the Soviet measures were foreshadowing. Despite the top-secret dispatch he sent to the army stating "German population remarkably steady,"<sup>152</sup> he knew they would need outside assistance. Clay called on Ernst Reuter. The General assured the mayor that the Americans would not withdraw from the city and Reuter assured the General the people of Berlin could withstand whatever the Soviets threw at them. After Reuter left, General Lucius Clay, almost as an afterthought, made a phone call which would change the path of history for the people of Berlin forever.

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<sup>149</sup> *Foreign Relations of the United States 1948 Volume II Germany and Austria*, 895.

<sup>150</sup> Truman, 124.

<sup>151</sup> Cherny, 248.

<sup>152</sup> George C. Marshall Research Library, Lexington, Virginia. National Archives- Declassified Collection. "Naval Message General Clay Correspondence, 25 June 1948."

“Curt, have you any planes that can carry coal?” Asked General Lucius Clay of General Curtis LeMay, the head of the Air Force in Europe, and soon to be Commander of the Strategic Air Force.<sup>153</sup>

“Carry what?”

“Coal.”

“General, we must have a bad connection. It sounds like you’re asking whether we have planes for carrying coal.”

“Yes, that’s what I said. Coal.” said General Clay, no small hint of annoyance in his voice. After a long pause, LeMay responded, “The Air Force can deliver anything.”<sup>154</sup>

It was with this legendary exchange over the phone in Clay’s office that the Berlin Airlift began. In the coming months the Airlift would face near-insurmountable odds to supply a city of two million with the paltry 31 million pounds of supplies which had arrived daily before the Blockade. LeMay believed that the most which could be brought in by air was less than a half-million pounds per day—just over one percent of Berlin’s meager pre-Blockade rations.<sup>155</sup>

Clay quickly made preparations to fly cargo planes into Berlin, requesting flour to be the first shipment. In Western Germany, LeMay made his best-concerted effort to scrape together the few resources available for the cargo transport operation. The primary plane to be used was the C-47, of which only 102 remained in Europe, and only 70 were in proper working condition. What the operation really needed were the larger C-54s, which could each carry 20,000 pounds of cargo. Of those behemoths, he only had two. In those early days, they used whatever planes were on hand.

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<sup>153</sup> George C. Marshall Research Library, Lexington, Virginia. National Archives- Declassified Collection “Letter to Stuart, 26 September 1948.”

<sup>154</sup> Cherny, 252.

<sup>155</sup> Cherny, 252.

On the first day of the Airlift, thirty-two flights landed at Tempelhof, bringing 160,000 pounds of fresh milk in glass bottles, bags of flour, and serums and vaccines.<sup>156</sup> The British Royal Air Force flew in another 26,000 pounds. As Howley watched the old and patched, dusty and worn planes clumsily land on the runway, he saw them as angels of deliverance for the war-torn city. He was the first to sense this was the start of something wonderful. United States aircraft, which for four years brought death to the city, would bring life in the form of food and medicines to the people of the Western sectors, whose food supplies had been cut off by the Russians.<sup>157</sup>

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Of all the airports which would play key roles in what would be known as the Berlin Airlift, Tempelhof was by far the most integral. Without this airport, the Airlift would have gotten off the ground, but would have had no place to land within Berlin. This sprawling 1.2 kilometer-long complex curved itself around the airfield (which more resembled a pasture), evoking the image of an eagle spreading its wings for flight. Though the airport was never actually finished, it served as the main airfield of the Berlin Airlift. This airport was a challenge to each and every pilot of the Airlift, as the runway was obstructed by two huge structures created by dumb luck and poor planning.

To the left of the runway was the massive, 400-foot tall smokestack of a local brewery. To the right was an even more dangerous seven-story apartment building which sat almost on top of the runway. Of all the innumerable troubles that would vex the Airlift, this apartment building proved to be the most formidable. Pilots would curse the Nazis time and again for having had the

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<sup>156</sup> Cherny, 255.

<sup>157</sup> Cherny, 260.

stupidity to leave such a building flush with an airport. They would regularly wonder how the American bombs had managed to flatten so much of the city during the war but leave this building unscathed.<sup>158</sup>

Another important airfield in the Allied zones of Berlin was Gatow, in the British sector. This small airfield butted up against the Soviet zone, which made flying difficult. Throughout the Airlift the Soviets would shine bright searchlights straight into the eyes of the pilots taking off at the end of the runway. Pilots covered up their cockpit window with newspapers and maps, and flew using only their instruments.<sup>159</sup>

In the Western Zone of Germany, there were many important airports feeding into Tempelhof and Gatow. The Rhein-Main Air Base became the main field for the U.S. Air Force flying into Tempelhof. It had one small runway, and the base was carved out of the forest around it.<sup>160</sup> As more and more Air Force squadrons arrived to help in the Airlift, Rhein-Main quickly reached full capacity and began to overflow, making it the base with the worst living conditions of any American air base in the world. When the soon-to-be-famous Candy Bomber Gail Halvorsen<sup>161</sup> arrived at the airfield with his squadron, they were given the choice between tents and tarpaper shacks. They chose the shacks, but later migrated to a nearby abandoned barn, and lived like kings in comparison to the others living at “Rhein-Mud.”<sup>162</sup>

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<sup>158</sup> Cherny, 276-277.

<sup>159</sup> Cherny, 426-427.

<sup>160</sup> Cherny, 271.

<sup>161</sup> Gail “Uncle Wiggly Wings” Halvorsen was a pilot from Salt Lake City, Utah. He became known as the illustrious Candy Bomber of the Berlin Airlift and architect of “Operation Little Vittles” after dropping tiny parachutes bearing candy to the children of Berlin.

<sup>162</sup> Cherny, 272.



Not far west of Rhein-Main was the Wiesbaden airfield, which was the headquarters of the United States Air Force in Europe. It, too, served as a hub of transportation during the Airlift, supporting round-the-clock flights from Wiesbaden to Tempelhof.

The British Zone contained two airfields which supported the British Royal Air Force, Celle and Fassberg. Both handled massive numbers of flights to and from Berlin, landing in Gatow.

It would not be until later in the timeline of the Airlift that the French would construct their own airbase at Tegel.

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Advice was arriving from around the world in the immediate aftermath of the Russians closing the roads and waterways. The *New York Times* opined that the “surrender of Berlin would be such a blow to the democratic forces” that it “would inevitably lead to the loss of Germany,” which “would in the end mean the loss of Western Europe.” The paper endorsed an armed convoy to avoid “at least as grave a menace as was ever posed by Hitler.” Conversely, the *Washington Post* supported a retreat.<sup>163</sup> Winston Churchill, at a rally, stated the British would not back down before the Nazis, and so too would not back down from the Communists. Privately, Churchill had sent word that he believed America should use its nuclear monopoly to tell the Soviets that it was they who had to leave Germany or face having their cities razed by a preemptive atomic strike. In the western sectors of Germany there was almost immediate support for their fellows trapped in Berlin. The SPD quickly coined the phrase “retter Berlin” (save Berlin) and helped spread awareness of the Blockade to both political and non-political groups

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<sup>163</sup> Cherny, 256.

alike. It was not only gratifying to the Berliners to have such support, but also underscored the inhumanity of the measures taken by the Soviets.<sup>164</sup> In contrast, the French were so worried about offending the Russians they were shrinking from even sending a strongly worded diplomatic note.<sup>165</sup>

Letters from the American people expressing their sentiments on the Blockade flooded the oval office, each calling for unique action. Many demanded the United States take this matter to the United Nations.<sup>166</sup> “...it would demonstrate the essential unity of all American non-Communist opinion against Soviet aggression and would strengthen the chances of maintaining world peace,” said Norman Thomas, Socialist Party leader and presidential candidate, in a letter to President Truman.<sup>167</sup> One individual, a Mr. Lewis, suggested that Truman delegate the handling of the Berlin Crisis to General Douglas MacArthur, since he handled Japan with such great ability.<sup>168</sup> Another citizen, a Mr. Arthur Baer, thought the situation in Berlin could be resolved by having both the American and Russian forces move out of this controversial area, leaving it instead to the governance of smaller nations.<sup>169</sup> Still others blamed the President personally for Soviet actions, feeling that the President should have worked to establish a corridor into the American zone of Berlin, thus preventing the Blockade from ever happening.<sup>170</sup>

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<sup>164</sup> George C. Marshall Research Library, Lexington, Virginia. National Archives- Declassified Collection Box 35, Folder 1. “Telegram no.1583 from Berlin to Secretary of State 2 July 1948.” P.1-2.

<sup>165</sup> Cherny, 257.

<sup>166</sup> *Correspondence between Norman Thomas and Harry S. Truman*, September 11, 1948. Harry S. Truman Research Library. [http://www.trumanlibrary.org/whistlestop/study\\_collections/berlin\\_airlift/documents/PDFs/1-1.pdf#zoom=100](http://www.trumanlibrary.org/whistlestop/study_collections/berlin_airlift/documents/PDFs/1-1.pdf#zoom=100). P. 2.

<sup>167</sup> *Correspondence between Norman Thomas and Harry S. Truman*, September 11, 1948. P. 2.

<sup>168</sup> *Joseph C. Lewis to Harry S. Truman, with reply from William D. Hassett*, November 10, 1948. Harry S. Truman Research Library. [http://www.trumanlibrary.org/whistlestop/study\\_collections/berlin\\_airlift/documents/PDFs/1-20.pdf#zoom=100](http://www.trumanlibrary.org/whistlestop/study_collections/berlin_airlift/documents/PDFs/1-20.pdf#zoom=100). P.2.

<sup>169</sup> *Arthur B. Baer to Harry S. Truman, with reply from William D. Hassett*, December 4, 1948. Harry S. Truman Research Library. [http://www.trumanlibrary.org/whistlestop/study\\_collections/berlin\\_airlift/documents/PDFs/1-23.pdf#zoom=100](http://www.trumanlibrary.org/whistlestop/study_collections/berlin_airlift/documents/PDFs/1-23.pdf#zoom=100). P.2.

<sup>170</sup> *Philip Johnston to Harry S. Truman*, September 12, 1948. Harry Truman Research Library.

Yet the majority by far implored that America stay in Berlin, almost entirely for the good of the German people.<sup>171</sup> It is nothing short of shocking that the sentiments Americans had towards the Germans had changed so drastically in a few short years. Many organizations, such as the Long Beach Chamber of Commerce, even went so far as to give their official support to President Truman should he decide to remain in Berlin.<sup>172</sup> Mayor Disalle of Toledo recommended the President request the United Nations to send in the Red Cross to aid in Berlin “-because the present situation in Berlin is in fact a disaster to those people.”<sup>173</sup> Overall strong and decisive action against the Russians was what many Americans desired, feeling that anything resembling a surrender would only result in later aggressive action.<sup>174</sup> They wanted the Berliners supported by rail or by convoy—anything to show the support of the United States and to not back down from Soviet encroachment.<sup>175</sup> Matthew Woll, Chairman of the International Labor Relations Department wrote, “ The feeling in the United States, as I learn from trade unionists, is deeply resentful of the ruthless aggression by which Communist control has been extended, and fearful of the treachery which has deprived individuals and nations of the right which give life dignity and purpose.”<sup>176</sup>

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[http://www.trumanlibrary.org/whistlestop/study\\_collections/berlin airlift/documents/PDFs/1-7.pdf#zoom=100](http://www.trumanlibrary.org/whistlestop/study_collections/berlin airlift/documents/PDFs/1-7.pdf#zoom=100).

<sup>171</sup> *Telegram, Alfred M. Bingham et al., to Harry S. Truman*, June 25, 1948. Harry S. Truman Research Library. [http://www.trumanlibrary.org/whistlestop/study\\_collections/berlin airlift/documents/PDFs/1-10.pdf#zoom=100](http://www.trumanlibrary.org/whistlestop/study_collections/berlin airlift/documents/PDFs/1-10.pdf#zoom=100). P.1.

<sup>172</sup> *C.E. Scott to Harry S. Truman, with reply from Matthew J. Connelly*, October 13, 1948. Harry S. Truman Research Library. [http://www.trumanlibrary.org/whistlestop/study\\_collections/berlin airlift/documents/PDFs/1-15.pdf#zoom=100](http://www.trumanlibrary.org/whistlestop/study_collections/berlin airlift/documents/PDFs/1-15.pdf#zoom=100). P.2.

<sup>173</sup> *Michael V. Disalle to Harry S. Truman, with reply from Matthew Connelly, with attached internal memos*, July 23, 1948. Harry S. Truman Research Library.

[http://www.trumanlibrary.org/whistlestop/study\\_collections/berlin airlift/documents/PDFs/1-11.pdf#zoom=100](http://www.trumanlibrary.org/whistlestop/study_collections/berlin airlift/documents/PDFs/1-11.pdf#zoom=100). P.6.

<sup>174</sup> *Report on U.S. Public Opinion on the Berlin Situation*, July 29, 1948. Harry S. Truman Research Library. [http://www.trumanlibrary.org/whistlestop/study\\_collections/berlin airlift/documents/PDFs/3-5.pdf#zoom=100](http://www.trumanlibrary.org/whistlestop/study_collections/berlin airlift/documents/PDFs/3-5.pdf#zoom=100). P.2.

<sup>175</sup> *Telegram, Preston E. Peden to Harry S. Truman*, October 27, 1948. Harry S. Truman Research Library. [http://www.trumanlibrary.org/whistlestop/study\\_collections/berlin airlift/documents/PDFs/1-8.pdf#zoom=100](http://www.trumanlibrary.org/whistlestop/study_collections/berlin airlift/documents/PDFs/1-8.pdf#zoom=100). P.2.

<sup>176</sup> *Correspondence between Matthew Woll and Harry S. Truman*, June 30, 1948. Harry S. Truman Research Library. [http://www.trumanlibrary.org/whistlestop/study\\_collections/berlin airlift/documents/PDFs/1-14.pdf#zoom=100](http://www.trumanlibrary.org/whistlestop/study_collections/berlin airlift/documents/PDFs/1-14.pdf#zoom=100). P.2-3.

Despite the massive amount of support for America to remain in Berlin, undoubtedly a question still nagged the back of every citizens' mind, not unlike the Berliners themselves: "does peace or war hinge on what happens in Berlin?"<sup>177</sup>

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Clay's decision was to fight, with the prospect of an armed convoy that would call the Russians on their presumed bluff and force them to either fire upon the Americans or let them through. When Truman questioned Clay about what risks his plan involved, Clay replied that he felt the initial reaction of the Soviets would be to set up road barriers, which American engineers could easily dismantle. The next step he felt the Russians would make, would be to meet the convoys with armed force.<sup>178</sup> Many felt this would result in war and, as such, Truman and General Marshall quickly dismissed Clay's plan at the American officials meeting to decide how to react to the Blockade.<sup>179</sup> Even if the column did break through, what would happen then? Potentially, if this course of action were to be taken, the Americans would have to capture the entire highway in order to secure caravan shipments into Berlin. If this plan were to be followed through it would be a risky option by anyone's estimation. In retrospect, however, Clay would be but the first of many American military generals to state that if they had confronted the Soviet military in a more direct manner from the start, then many future problems could have been prevented.<sup>180</sup>

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<sup>177</sup> *Telegram, Richard Minasian to Harry S. Truman*, September 22, 1948. Harry S. Truman Research Library. [http://www.trumanlibrary.org/whistlestop/study\\_collections/berlin airlift/documents/PDFs/1-18.pdf#zoom=100](http://www.trumanlibrary.org/whistlestop/study_collections/berlin airlift/documents/PDFs/1-18.pdf#zoom=100).

<sup>178</sup> Truman, 125.

<sup>179</sup> Mark A. Stoler, *George C. Marshall: Soldier-Statesman of the American Century* (Farmington Hills: Twayne Publishers, 1989), 169.

<sup>180</sup> Bailey, 8.

Clay was putting his faith in military intelligence reports which said that there were no signs that the Soviet military was making the preparations that would naturally accompany a decision to wage all-out war.<sup>181</sup> This sparked myriad questions, such as if the intelligence reports were false, or what if war just broke out? Each side would be far too willing to fire upon the other, and the Russians with their twenty divisions greatly outnumbered the combined American, British, and French divisions which only totaled to three.

Even if the armored convoy did not lead to war, it could also just lead to embarrassment. All the Russians would have to do is blow up a bridge and the entire convoy would be stopped. The “get out” option seemed to be inevitable. With the Airlift supplying the city and if the city consumed only dry food, then they could survive sixty days, giving the Americans til September 1 to withdraw. It was with this in mind the officials agreed to take these three options to President Truman.

The following day, June 28, at half past noon, James Forrestal, Robert Lovett, and Kenneth Royall<sup>182</sup> went to see Truman. They began to hotly debate the course of action to take. Truman let them talk and then lay out the three alternatives. Finally, as Lovett began to describe the steps to take for a withdrawal, Truman cut him off. “We are going to stay. Period.”<sup>183</sup>

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Following Truman’s decision, the order to increase the number of planes flying in the Airlift soon followed. He personally gave the command to station two groups of B-29 “atomic

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<sup>181</sup> Cherny, 257.

<sup>182</sup> Forrestal was the Secretary of the Navy and the first Secretary of Defense. Undersecretary of State Lovett would become the fourth Secretary of Defense. Royall was a United States General and the last man to hold the position of Secretary of War (abolished in 1947) and was the first Secretary of the Army.

<sup>183</sup> Cherny, 258-259.

bombers” in England, as well, to act as an implicit nuclear threat against Russia should it choose to make any rash moves.<sup>184</sup> These two groups each consisted of three squadrons of ten, making for sixty planes in total.<sup>185</sup> The arrival of these bombers was billed as a part of a routine long-range flight-training program.<sup>186</sup> Truman’s action indicated how the monopoly of these bombs allowed the administration to balance the budget and cut back conventional army forces,<sup>187</sup> yet not diminish its capacity or willingness to brandish military force.<sup>188</sup> At one point there was also talk of stationing B-29 squadrons within France and also Germany itself.<sup>189</sup> This idea was shelved, however, as it would likely be interpreted as a direct threat. Royall also gave the order to General Clay that should the Russians place barrage balloons or other obstructions in the air corridor, he was forbidden from giving the authorization to shoot them down at present. In order to do this, a clearance from the department would be needed.<sup>190</sup> This would ideally limit the potential for striking the first blow against the Soviets and kicking off a new World War. It would later be stated by Admiral Leahy<sup>191</sup> that there was no evidence the Russians would attempt to place obstructions in the air corridor. General Bradley<sup>192</sup> also added that the placement of these barrage balloons would be an overt act of aggression that surely the Soviets would wish to avoid.<sup>193</sup> Later, when these barrage balloons were physically placed in the corridor, the

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<sup>184</sup> These B-29s were outfitted with no atomic bombs, we had too few of them at the time, not that the Soviets were aware of this. They were merely to provide a reminder of America’s nuclear power.

<sup>185</sup> George C. Marshall Research Library, Lexington, Virginia. National Archives- Declassified Collection Box 35, Folder 1. “U.S. Urgent from London, 15 July 1948.” P.3.

<sup>186</sup> “U.S. Urgent from London, 15 July 1948.” P.2.

<sup>187</sup> As atomic weapons were far cheaper to produce and maintain than troops and normal weapons.

<sup>188</sup> Walter LaFeber, *America, Russia, and the Cold War, 1945-2006*. 10<sup>th</sup> ed (New York: McGraw-Hill, 2008), 86.

<sup>189</sup> George C. Marshall Research Library, Lexington, Virginia. National Archives Declassified Collection. Box 9, Folder 3. “Movement of Aircraft to Europe, 29 January 1948.”

<sup>190</sup> George C. Marshall Research Library, Lexington, Virginia. National Archives- Declassified Collection. “Aerial Obstruction in Air Corridor Berlin, 30 June 1948.”

<sup>191</sup> Fleet Admiral William Leahy worked closely with intelligence communications between the Army and the Navy.

<sup>192</sup> General Omar Bradley served as the Army Chief of Staff beginning in 1948.

<sup>193</sup> George C. Marshall Research Library, Lexington, Virginia. National Archives- Declassified Collection. Berlin Joint Chiefs of Staff. “Memorandum for Record of Conversations between U.S. Chiefs of Staff and Representatives of the British Chiefs of Staff, 9 July 1948.p. 1-2.”

Russians showed a distinct docility when complaints were made and promptly removed them.<sup>194</sup>

In this game, the goal was to never, ever appear to be the aggressor as the Soviets and Americans danced around one another, appearing intimidating, yet not overtly threatening. At the same time, each side knew the time for appeasement was over.<sup>195</sup> On June 30, the official policy on Berlin was released in a Washington in a presentation:

1. We stay in Berlin.
2. We will utilize to the utmost the present propaganda advantage of our position.
3. The city of Berlin should be supplied by air as a beleaguered garrison.<sup>196</sup>

To these ends, Truman made a series of radio speeches to tell the American public the details of the crisis and also his decision:

The Russians shut off all highway/rail/river traffic into Berlin and the only thing left for the Allies to do was to fly supplies into the city. The Russians didn't care how many people they starved to death if they could push the Allies out of Germany, which they were trying very hard to do. And, they didn't care how many children starved to death for the lack of milk, they didn't care how many people starved to death. They had no heart, whatever, about anything. They have a small value for human life because in the days when this was happening Russia was the most populous country on the globe.<sup>197</sup>

So we could place our difficulties before them, argue it out, and then have the decision of that organization enforced. The Russians had been disappointed in several of the undertakings since the war, and they were of the opinion that they ought to have a victory in Berlin. I felt that they should not have a victory in Berlin, that that wasn't the place for them to have a victory. And we did stay in Berlin and we flew the supplies in over East Germany. And it was necessary we do this in order to stand the Russians up.....And now, we had to wait for the Russian reaction, would they react with war?<sup>198</sup>

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Generals Curtis LeMay and Lucius Clay began discussions on how to properly supply Berlin. LeMay was against the idea of supplying by air, as he felt this was not what the Air Force

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<sup>194</sup> MacDonogh, 527.

<sup>195</sup> "Stand Firm on Berlin," *America Press*, 24 July 1948, 362.

<sup>196</sup> George C. Marshall Research Library, Lexington, Virginia. National Archives- Declassified Collection.

"Presentation Concerning Berlin Situation, 30 June 1948." p. 1.

<sup>197</sup> *President Harry S. Truman describes the 1948 Berlin Blockade on Radio* (no date provided)

<sup>198</sup> *President Harry S. Truman speaks on the 1948 Berlin Airlift* (no date provided)

was intended for. His thoughts on whether his bomber fleet should be used for transport aside, the fact of the matter still remained the current cargo being flown into Berlin was only supplying a fraction of the populace. In essence, the C-47 was too small to carry bulky cargo like coal. Even their two C-54s, the so-called Skymasters, though three times bigger, would not carry enough. The B-29 bombers were their only option, however, the Tempelhof Airport runway was too short to land a B-29, let alone get coal to the people of Berlin.

The Berlin Airlift never truly began, at least not in an official sense. It was simply a temporary measure to furnish some extra food and supplies for the city's rapidly depleting stockpiles that dragged on and grew in importance. No one involved in even the most remote way in the decisions being made over Berlin thought it was possible to feed the city by air.<sup>199</sup> But the operation was by no means shoddy. It started with the determination of priority requirements in Berlin. The next steps were the requisition of supplies by the Bizonal Administration in Frankfurt, then the coordinated movement of these supplies by ship, rail, and truck to the planes at the five airports in the Western zones, the Airlift delivery to the three Berlin airports, and the transfer of cargo from these airports to the German authorities.<sup>200</sup>

The British were also assessing the situation from their end. In a document presented to the British Staff, it estimated the immediate Airlift was providing 75 tons of food a day, but could rise to 400 tons per day at 48 hours notice. When the rebuilding of the runway in Gatow was finished, the number could rise further to 750 tons per day and could be maintained for a month. Once in operation, landing at the British airfield was easy—a “*morceau de gateaux*” as the pilots said. The approach was clear—it could be made in comparatively poor visibility—and

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<sup>199</sup> Cherny, 263.

<sup>200</sup> Clay, 382.



the chief danger came from the odd slip in navigation which occasionally landed pilots at the next-door Russian military airfield, Staaken.<sup>201</sup>

Furthermore, the British Defence Committee officially approved the Airlift. It was important that even though the Lift could not feed everyone in Berlin, it would be integral to keep morale boosted and “feed the key Germans who collaborate with us (Britain).” The document also noted that, in order to make the Airlift as effective as possible, the use of dehydrated foods was also being taken into consideration and that the committee would be interested to know the American food supply position and capabilities.<sup>202</sup>

This document is particularly stunning for displaying the British determination to aid Berlin at this point in time. Already the British were trying to find way to maximize the Airlift, unlike the Americans who deemed it a temporary measure and so devoted not nearly enough time to the effort. The British drive could be largely attributed to Great Britain being a part of Europe, and thus far more likely to be affected by a Soviet attack should it come to an all-out conflict. It could also be attributed to some vague sort of kinship the British felt with the Germans, as countless British citizens still vividly remembered the bombings their homeland suffered in World War II, and the difficulties of trying to survive in a city reduced to rubble.

In all, the official statement of the British Foreign Office given on June 26 announced: “The statement that we intend to stay in Berlin holds good. The opinion of the whole world will condemn the ruthless attempt by the Soviet Government to create a state of siege in Berlin and

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<sup>201</sup> Ann Tusa and John Tusa. *The Berlin Airlift* (New York: Atheneum, 1988), 147.

<sup>202</sup> George C. Marshall Research Library, Lexington, Virginia. National Archives- Declassified Collection. Berlin File. “British Chiefs of Staff Measures to Hold in Berlin, 30 June 1948.”

so, by starving the helpless citizen population, to secure advantages at the expense of the other Allied Powers.”<sup>203</sup>

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American and British occupiers decided they would have to fly in what supplies they could as freight. LeMay appointed one of his deputies, Lieutenant General Joseph Smith, to organize the operation. He told Smith the duty would not last more than a couple weeks. Among Smith’s first decisions was to give the operation a designated moniker. His officers proposed “Operation Lifeline” or “Operation Airplane.” He found these too pompous for such a modest effort. “Hell’s fire,” he supposedly said, “we’re hauling grub I understood. Call it ‘Vittles’ if you have to have a name.”<sup>204</sup>

Early on in the effort there were not nearly enough planes to fly even remotely adequate supplies to Berlin. LeMay advised Lucius Clay to “send up a smoke signal back home.” In no time the alert flashed to Air Force bases around the globe: “Prepare to release all available C-54 Skymasters to the United States Air Force’s command in Europe.”<sup>205</sup>

When Allied planes began flying supplies into Berlin, the Soviets raised a powerful old specter for the people of city, flying in 3,000 planes into the Eastern Sector. Everyone considered the possibility each one could be carrying a bomb. This play by the Russians coincided with the release of an intelligence report which outlined the American estimate of a potential “Soviet Plan for War in the West.” This document surmised the projected war plan would include 120 divisions (15 Infantry, 25 Motorized Infantry, 30 Air Transportation Infantry, 20 Armored

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<sup>203</sup> George C. Marshall Research Library, Lexington, Virginia. Vertical File Collection. Berlin Airlift Folder. “A Record of the First Four Months of Operation Vittles (June 26-October 26), November 1948,” 1.

<sup>204</sup> Cherny, 263-264.

<sup>205</sup> Cherny, 264.

divisions, 7 Calvary, 8 Mechanized Calvary, and 15 Artillery divisions. These units would be supported by 350,000 troops in occupied Germany, 65,000 in Austria, 60,000 in Rumania plus the reinforcement satellites troops. These latter included 200,000 troops in Poland, 180,000 in Czechoslovakia, 20,000 in Hungary, 20,000 in Rumania, 600,000 in Yugoslavia, and 80,000 in Bulgaria.<sup>206</sup> These staggering numbers increased the unease for the occupying nations in Berlin. In its current state, should the Soviets attack, there would be little the American military could do to stop them, or even slow their march across Europe.

The Berliners cheered at the Allied attempt to bring in food and supplies, but this did not distract them from the deadliness of the situation in which they found themselves. They were right in not trusting the Allies implicitly just yet. The Blockade had been in place for a week and yet it had only been met with official silence from Washington. It was clear America would try, at least temporarily, to bring supplies to the city because it was in the nation's own interests, not for the sake of the conquered Germans.

Spot polls reflected this confidence. Four weeks after the beginning of the Berlin Blockade, 98% of a Berlin sample felt the West was pursuing the correct policy in dealing with the Blockade. Nine in ten Berliners thought the Americans would stay in Berlin as long as they remained in Germany. 77% felt the West was doing all they could to relieve Berlin and 84% thought the Airlift could supply Berlin with enough supplies. Despite that, the Berliners still had their niggling fears. 52% felt doubted that the Airlift could successfully supply them through the winter.<sup>207</sup>

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<sup>206</sup> George C. Marshall Research Library, Lexington, Virginia. National Archives- Project Declassified Collection. Box 10, Folder 12. "Soviet Plan for War in West, 29 June 1948."

<sup>207</sup> Richard and Anna Merritt, ed., *Public Opinion in Occupied Germany: The OMGUS Surveys, 1945-1949*, (Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1970), 27.

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On July 3, Clay and his British and French counterparts traveled to Sokolovsky's headquarters in Berlin to confront the man directly about the "technical difficulties" the railways were suffering. A day before, Sokolovsky had sent a letter to British General William Robertson indicating he hoped for a restoration of the railways into and out of Berlin, though he was vague as to the date of said restoration. Rear Admiral Roscoe Schuirmann, the proprietor of this information, believed the Russian official did indeed want to allow rail transport of food and fuel back into the city. According to him, the sight of the air transport carrying supplies into Berlin had also "deeply impressed the German population who appear confident of our (the Americans) ability to maintain them."<sup>208</sup> This is, of course, the opposite view of many in Berlin, particularly the little faith of the Berliners, as previously mentioned. Regardless of Schuirmann's feelings on the matter, it was still obvious that despite Sokolovsky's words, the railways were not going to be "fixed" anytime soon. And so, the American, British, and French officials journeyed into the Soviet zone.

In his office Sokolovsky greeted them properly. Robertson, the British official, expressed concern over the deterioration of the Western Allies' relationship with the Soviet Union, and begged for there to be a way to repair the rift. Sokolovsky interrupted him and, dropping his charade, evenly stated that "the technical difficulties would continue" until the Allies abandoned their plans for a West German government and added that actions by Western Allies at the London conference had created "economic disorders" in the Soviet Zone that had made it

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<sup>208</sup> George C. Marshall Research Library, Lexington, Virginia. National Archives- Declassified Collection. "Naval Message Admiral Schuirmann Correspondence 2 July 1948."

impossible to provide alternative routes.<sup>209</sup> Even when the current technical problems were fixed, others may develop. No mention was made of the new Western currency as a reason for the Blockade, but the London Conference was not-so-vaguely referenced to, indicating it as a potential source for Soviet actions.<sup>210</sup> Over time it became increasingly obvious that the only way the Soviets would negotiate would be if the entire German question was put on the table, including the Berlin situation. It was surmised that the duress of the Blockade would be continued until the situation in Germany was restored to pre-London conference conditions.<sup>211</sup>

That same day a Naval message stated the average tonnage for the last four days of the Airlift was about 380 tons, with a daily incoming freight of 143 tons. On July 1, the American offer to permit one coal train from the Western zone to the Soviet zone in exchange for a similar train to the American sector had been refused. The normal daily coal consumption in Western sectors had been cut from 6,000 tons to about 2,000 tons.<sup>212</sup>

In the early days of the Airlift, it was a roulette wheel as to whether a cargo plane would be carrying something useful or not. Early cargo loads included 5,000 mimeograph sheets, shrubbery, watermelons, and French wine (which caused a massive uproar among the pilots, as the French had yet to contribute to the Airlift effort).<sup>213</sup> Even if the cargo was valuable, such as the priceless coal, it still presented difficulties for the Airlift crews. Maintenance was difficult because of the coal haulage. To prevent a combustion hazard, the coal had to be wetted down.

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<sup>209</sup> Kenneth W. Condit, *The History of the Joint Chiefs of Staff and National Policy*. Volume II: 1947-1949 (Wilmington: Michael Glazier Inc., 1979), 137.

<sup>210</sup> *Foreign Relations of the United States 1948 Volume II Germany and Austria*, 949.

<sup>211</sup> *Foreign Relations of the United States 1948 Volume II Germany and Austria*, 955.

<sup>212</sup> George C. Marshall Research Library, Lexington, Virginia. National Archives- Declassified Collection. "Naval Message Admiral Schuirmann Correspondence 3 July 1948."

<sup>213</sup> Cherny, 274.

This made cleaning the plane a problem, not to mention it meant the plane could carry less due to the extra water weight.<sup>214</sup>

This method of transporting coal was one of trial and error. When the Airlift was first tasked with carrying coal, the crews were perplexed as to how to do so, since coal dust within the plane interior was incredibly hazardous. It also occurred to them that perhaps cutting out the taking off and landing portion of flights would be a good idea (since these planes would be contending with Tempelhof's infernal runway). The minds behind the Airlift decided they would attempt to drop the coal shipments from a bomb bay into an empty field to be picked up later.<sup>215</sup> This ended with disastrous results. The coal pulverized on impact with the ground, covering everyone gathered in a fine layer of coal dust.

As the Airlift progressed, so did the systems for how to load the planes to optimum capacity. Light, bulky cargo such as noodles were paired with dense, heavy cargo such as tractors, to guarantee the proper balance of the aircraft. Certain types of cargo had to be carried on certain planes. Salt, for example, had a tendency to turn into liquid over the long flight and so could contaminate and deteriorate aircraft control cables and other metal surfaces, so it was carried in the bomb bays of bomber aircrafts, where it was least likely to cause damage.<sup>216</sup>

A flight from Rhein-Main to Tempelhof was a tricky affair. After the pilot turned on the engines, taxied down the runway, and lifted into the air, a series of Morse code beacons would direct the plane into the designated air corridor. After a half hour of flight the plane would be over Soviet territory. With no radio contact available, they used highways, railroads, and

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<sup>214</sup> Clay, 384.

<sup>215</sup> George C. Marshall Research Library, Lexington, Virginia. National Archives Declassified Collection Box 35, Folder 1. "Telegram no.1631 from Berlin to Secretary of State 8 July 1948."

<sup>216</sup> Davis, Jr., 208.

mountain ranges below to guide them. After forty minutes over the Soviet zone they would begin to descend towards Berlin.<sup>217</sup> With the very short runway at Tempelhof (and the accursed apartment building), fully loaded planes would need to make use of its entire length in order to slow down and come to a stop. That meant a Skymaster had to dive down from the top of the apartment building to the start of the runway at a glide path more than twice as steep as Army regulations allowed.<sup>218</sup>

The runway onto which the planes of the Berlin Airlift would belly flop for many months to come was made of steel planks, with holes the size of hockey pucks. Already these mats were beginning to deteriorate. Women from Berlin were hired to stand by the runway and pour a mixture of tar, sand, and rubble into the gaps. LeMay ordered his staff to keep the runway open, even if it meant placing “German workers one yard apart on either side of it.” He was not far off. Crews of 225 women stood just off the runway as planes came in. After each one landed, these “rubble women” ran onto the steel mats with shovels and wheelbarrows and patched up the breaks. They then ran back off the runway and knitted while waiting for the next plane to land.<sup>219</sup>

After a successful landing, the planes would be led by a yellow jeep with a “Follow Me” sign to the unloading area where a dozen German workers descended upon the plane to unload the precious cargo.

For the pilots who arrived on the Airlift, working side-by-side with the Germans was a common conflict. They had come to hate the Germans during the war and now were being asked to save them. In fact, a number of men flying in the Airlift had failed in the mission they had been assigned only a few years earlier: to bomb Tempelhof Airport out of existence.

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<sup>217</sup> Cherny, 274-275.

<sup>218</sup> Cherny, 277.

<sup>219</sup> Cherny, 278.

There would be a period of waiting before pilots would be able to return to Rhein-Main from Tempelhof. Inside the operations center, they would fill out the forms required for takeoff, check on the weather, and buy a hamburger at the snack counter.

Up to this point the Airlift had been running on excitement and caffeine, but by the middle of July the effects of both had begun to wear off. Pilots were sleeping seven out of every thirty-six hours. With erratic schedules, it was impossible to separate crews flying at night from those flying during the day. People were constantly coming or going inside the barracks. Aircraft engines roaring around the clock made sleep virtually impossible.

The problem with the jumble and mess of the Airlift was not simply its inefficiency—flying watermelons and wine to a city on the brink of starvation—but the havoc it wrought on the pilots. They would be awoken with a shake in the middle of the night, being told their flight had been rescheduled and they were about to leave. The drowsy pilot would then sit for hours on the tarmac waiting for a delayed takeoff, growing hungry and becoming sick with fatigue. In the third week of the Airlift, entire crews started falling asleep, awakening only when their planes' falling altitude jarred them from their slumber.<sup>220</sup>

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A three-power protest to Moscow on July 6, 1948 elicited a full statement of the Soviet position, which seemed to look toward a new session of the Council of Foreign Ministers. A

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<sup>220</sup> Cherny, 280-281.



Russian offer to feed the whole population of Berlin was rejected, as this was clearly a ploy to make the Allies feel responsible for any hunger the Berliners were experiencing.<sup>221</sup>

As Truman met with his advisors to plan for the upcoming Democratic Convention, he also kept an eye on the deteriorating situation in Berlin. By July 9, the Airlift had flown 1.6 million pounds, total, of supplies into Berlin--- far below even the 8 million pounds a day the Allies had calculated was the bare minimum Berliners required. Yet this did not change the sentiment that America and its Allies would supply Berlin by any means possible.<sup>222</sup>

A message from the Russian element of the Berlin Air Safety Center had also gone through, stating that for an indefinite period of time, starting July 9, the Russians would be practicing instrument training via airplane in the Frankfurt-Berlin air corridor. This immediately raised suspicions as to whether the Russians would try to impede the Airlift. It was decided no matter what the Russians chose to do, it would result in a strong protest from General Clay to Skolovsky.<sup>223</sup>

General Lucius Clay had received intelligence reports that the Soviets were bluffing, that they would back down rather than risk war against an America that had atom bombs. "I am still convinced that the Soviets do not want war. However, they know that the Allies also do not want war." This was the crux of the problem. Each side was convinced the other would be forced to give in. The question was--- in this game of chicken, who would be the first to swerve to avoid the inevitable crash? The Allies were slowly realizing the greatest virtue of an Airlift: on the

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<sup>221</sup> D.F. Fleming, *The Cold War and its Origins, 1917-1960*. Volume I (Garden City: Doubleday & Company Inc., 1961), 507. George C. Marshall Research Library, Lexington, Virginia. National Archives- Declassified Collection Box 35, Folder 1. "Telegram no.1375 from Moscow to Secretary of State, 20 July 1948."

<sup>222</sup> George C. Marshall Research Library, Lexington, Virginia. National Archives- Declassified Collection. "Memorandum for the Under Secretary of State Regarding Soviet Reply to Tripartite Note on Berlin, 9 July 1948."

<sup>223</sup> George C. Marshall Research Library, Lexington, Virginia. National Archives- Declassified Collection. "Message from General LeMay to Chief of Staff, Airforce Regarding Actions to take in Germany, 9 July 1948."p.1-2.

ground they had the burden of making an initial hostile move. In the sky, it was the Russians who had to shoot first.<sup>224</sup>

The Soviets chose Wednesday, July 14, the day of President Truman's nomination, to reply to an Allied message that had been delivered eight days previously. Up until this point, the Soviets had remained quiet about negotiations over the Blockade, which made Ambassador Smith think that they could in fact be considering lifting the Blockade. He surmised that if the Soviets lifted their restrictions, they could then attack the Allies for being so antagonistic over what was not really a serious situation. They could effectively end the Airlift while retaining the ability to reinstate the Blockade at any time.<sup>225</sup> "Berlin lies in the center of the Soviet zone and is a part of that zone," the Russians wrote. The Allies, by their actions in Germany, had undermined "the legal basis which assured their right to participate in the administration of Berlin." The Soviets were willing to negotiate, so long as the future of all of Germany was on the table, and yet they made no offer to lift the siege. They had little reason to budge. "Time is still working entirely in favor of the Soviets if they desire to make the position of the Western powers untenable," wrote Ambassador Walter Bedell Smith from Moscow.<sup>226</sup>

Clay's response to the Soviet rejection was unsurprising. "The intransigent position as indicated in the note should be tested and I see no way in which it can be tested except by proceeding promptly with the movement of the armed convoy as I have recommended previously," he cabled to Washington.<sup>227</sup> The National Security Council silenced Clay's remarks, restating that they should avoid lifting the Blockade by convoy or any other direct

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<sup>224</sup> Cherny, 283.

<sup>225</sup> *State Department Summary of Telegrams*, July 14, 1948. Harry S. Truman Research Library. [http://www.trumanlibrary.org/whistlestop/study\\_collections/berlin airlift/documents/PDFs/2-8.pdf#zoom=100](http://www.trumanlibrary.org/whistlestop/study_collections/berlin airlift/documents/PDFs/2-8.pdf#zoom=100).

<sup>226</sup> Cherny, 285-286.

<sup>227</sup> Cherny, 286.

means of aggression.<sup>228</sup> Ambassador Smith echoed this sentiment, feeling that “all other possibilities should be exhausted before we attempt anything in the nature of armed convoys.”<sup>229</sup>

The situation in Berlin was darkening, like a candle about to expire. Should the situation deteriorate further, 50,000 American non-combatants, along with British and French non-combatants would need to be evacuated.<sup>230</sup> The exact number of American civilians inside Germany was 30,183, compared to the 91,150 U.S. Army personnel across Germany. The British had 94,426, the French 70,000, all of which were dwarfed by the 305,000 Soviets within Germany.<sup>231</sup> It was also becoming apparent that a possible defense of the Rhine would be necessary should the German crisis come to blows. The British, French, and American chiefs in Germany agreed there should be a supreme allied commander appointed post-haste. They also requested the creation of a small joint staff to begin the operational and administrative planning necessary for a possible defensive maneuver.<sup>232</sup>

By the middle of July, the stockpiles in Berlin were dwindling so fast that new cutbacks were announced almost daily. Sufficient food was being delivered to sustain life, but not to sustain morale over an extended period of time. Industrial activities were also being curtailed, resulting in greater unemployment within Berlin.<sup>233</sup> In the city’s hospitals, nurses were sterilizing and reusing bandages. Berliners were now limited to twenty-five minutes of gas a day from a

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<sup>228</sup> *State Department Summary of Telegrams*, July 15, 1948. Harry S. Truman Research Library. [http://www.trumanlibrary.org/whistlestop/study\\_collections/berlin\\_ airlift/documents/PDFs/2-9.pdf#zoom=100](http://www.trumanlibrary.org/whistlestop/study_collections/berlin_ airlift/documents/PDFs/2-9.pdf#zoom=100).

<sup>229</sup> *State Department Summary of Telegrams*, July 20, 1948. Harry S. Truman Research Library. [http://www.trumanlibrary.org/whistlestop/study\\_collections/berlin\\_ airlift/documents/PDFs/2-10.pdf#zoom=100](http://www.trumanlibrary.org/whistlestop/study_collections/berlin_ airlift/documents/PDFs/2-10.pdf#zoom=100).

<sup>230</sup> George C. Marshall Research Library, Lexington, Virginia. National Archives- Declassified Collection. “Message from Wiesbaden regarding current Allied Mission in Germany, 16 July 1948.” p. 2.

<sup>231</sup> George C. Marshall Research Library, Lexington, Virginia. National Archives- Declassified Collection. “Memorandum for Admiral Leahy regarding Personnel Strengths in Germany, 16 July 1948.”

<sup>232</sup> George C. Marshall Research Library, Lexington, Virginia. National Archives- Declassified Collection. “Top Secret Dispatch from Cinceur Berlin, 16 July 1948.” P.1.

<sup>233</sup> *State Department Summary of Telegrams*, July 21, 1948. Harry S. Truman Research Library. [http://www.trumanlibrary.org/whistlestop/study\\_collections/berlin\\_ airlift/documents/PDFs/2-11.pdf#zoom=100](http://www.trumanlibrary.org/whistlestop/study_collections/berlin_ airlift/documents/PDFs/2-11.pdf#zoom=100).

single burner, and received only four hours of electricity a day. On its best day thus far, the Airlift had brought in just over a quarter of the coal Berlin usually imported every July day of previous years.

Bizarrely, in this time of shortage both for food and power, reports surfaced of the Soviets supplying fuel and power to certain factories and shops in the western sectors of Germany. This move was seen as evidence that the Soviets, upon feeling the pinch of the Blockade, realized they needed certain supplies from the West or that they were endeavoring to gain control over key industries in the western sectors of the city.<sup>234</sup>

At this time, information was received about a secret conference between the Soviets, led by Sokolovsky and German members of the German Industrial Committee. During this conference the German's detailed all the ways in which the Blockade was affecting Berlin's abilities to produce goods; goods that Russia depended on. "We had no idea of this situation," stated a shocked Russian General, "Russia is suffering from heavy droughts and is counting on German food supplies this year. Food supplies must be maintained, come what may. If we had known this, we would not have gone so far."<sup>235</sup> Mayor Reuter deduced that the Russians needed Ruhr coal, and needed electrical equipment even more.<sup>236</sup> During the meeting Sokolovsky also provided three solutions to the Blockade: starting a war, lifting the Blockade, or leaving Berlin to

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<sup>234</sup> *State Department Summary of Telegrams*, July 27, 1948. Harry S. Truman Research Library. [http://www.trumanlibrary.org/whistlestop/study\\_collections/berlin airlift/documents/PDFs/2-13.pdf#zoom=100](http://www.trumanlibrary.org/whistlestop/study_collections/berlin airlift/documents/PDFs/2-13.pdf#zoom=100).

<sup>235</sup> *R. H. Hillenkoetter to Harry S. Truman*, June 30, 1948. Harry S. Truman Research Library. [http://www.trumanlibrary.org/whistlestop/study\\_collections/berlin airlift/documents/PDFs/6-5.pdf#zoom=100](http://www.trumanlibrary.org/whistlestop/study_collections/berlin airlift/documents/PDFs/6-5.pdf#zoom=100). P.1.

<sup>236</sup> George C. Marshall Research Library, Lexington, Virginia. National Archives- Declassified Collection Box 35, Folder 1. "Telegram no.1746 from Berlin to Secretary of State, 20 July 1948." P.2.

the West.<sup>237</sup> Clearly this conference served to be an eye-opener in regards to the long-term effects of the Blockade on the already beleaguered Russia.

It was not just food and coal the Berliners were missing, however. After the defeat in the war and the terrible eking out of their existence for years in a city of rubble, the Blockade rattled the confidence Berliners had that somehow their future might be better. The West Berliners were reliant for their very survival on occupiers they did not trust and whom they felt loathed them. If the Allies deserted the city, said the head of the largest hospital in the American sector, “we will have a wave of suicide on our hands worse than in 1945.” One German woman was known to wear a vial of poison around her neck wherever she went. A social worker summed up Berlin: “The energies of the people are spent in pursuit of a loaf of bread and a pair of shoes. Hope is alien.”<sup>238</sup>

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For Hal Halvorsen, the first days of the Airlift passed by in a blur. With the constant flights to Berlin (sometimes up to three round trips a day), and the lack of sleep, he quickly began to see the mission as a slog. But there were moments which shook him so much as to make him remember there were larger things at stake than the mechanized rush of airplanes and the delivery of millions of pounds of food. Most pilots were disconnected from the larger stakes of the Airlift because they never saw anything of Berlin other than from the sky, and they did not have time to explore outside of Tempelhof. Halvorsen was one of the few who wanted to see more, and on July 19, he got his chance.<sup>239</sup>

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<sup>237</sup> *R. H. Hillenkoetter to Harry S. Truman*, June 30, 1948. P.1.

<sup>238</sup> Cherny, 295.

<sup>239</sup> Cherny, 296.

After constant flights, Hal and his crew got ten hours off to eat and sleep before beginning their next round of flights. He promptly found a ride to Tempelhof from Rhein-Main, with his movie camera in tow. When he arrived at Tempelhof, he quickly set about filming planes as they flew in and the rubble women filling in the runway mats. He had filmed a couple of planes on their downward dive to the runway when he noticed a gaggle of about thirty children standing in the small grassy area between the apartment building and the fence. They had come to watch the planes land.

They were unlike any children Halvorsen had ever met before, speaking with evident feeling not only about the details of the planes, but about ideas like freedom, about dreams that were not walled in by rubble.

When he realized the jeep to take him into Berlin was probably waiting for him he said, "Sorry kids, I have to go," and waved goodbye. As he did, he put his hand in his pocket and felt two sticks of gum in a green packet of Wrigley's Doublemint he had picked up at the Rhein-Main base exchange. He thought of giving them to the children, and also of the jeep waiting for him. He stood at the crossroads. His future all came down to this moment.

He turned back towards the fence, and the children. He pulled the sticks out of his pocket and watched their eyes widen as the tinfoil flashed in the sunlight. He worried that with only two pieces of gum, the children might start to fight over them. He tore the sticks in two. Four children got pieces of gum, the rest passed around the wrappers, tearing off a sliver and sniffing it wistfully. He could see it in their eyes, to them, this was better than Christmas.

Hal Halvorsen was already turning it over in his mind. If he brought back thirty cents worth of gum he could put these kids on Easy Street. As another plane flew down overhead he

blurted out to the children that he would drop candy down on them the next day. One asked how they would know which plane was his. He told them the one with the wiggly wings, gesturing with his arms. The children laughed and he ran back to the waiting jeep.<sup>240</sup>

By the time Halvorsen was back at the Rhein-Main base he had formed the rudimentary elements of a plan. He had three hours before his next flight and ran to the base exchange, buying his weekly allowance of candy and gum, as well as the allowance his crewmates Herschel Elkins and John Pickering grudgingly gave him.

Hal's flight took off a little after ten. When they entered the corridor over Soviet airspace, he scanned the horizon for Soviet interference. The Russians had begun to play a dangerous game of harassment with the American cargo planes. Repeatedly, Soviet Yak planes would buzz the lumbering transports, missing a collision by only a few feet. Thankfully, there was no sign of Soviet activity this flight.

Over Berlin, Halvorsen had Elkins watch for the patch of grass and the children. His fears about the children telling others proved to be false, as it appeared only the same small group from the previous day was back. Hal moved the plane to the left and right, wiggling its wings as promised. He could see the kids jumping and cheering. On the approach Halvorsen shouted at Elkins to drop the candy, which he did at precisely the right moment. The candy cascaded down to the children, though on the landing strip Hal and his crew could not see the kids or determine whether the candy had reached them at all.

It had, and Hal began to drop candy to the children regularly. As he continued to do this his fame among the children of Berlin grew, spreading around Berlin until his superiors took

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<sup>240</sup> Cherny, 298-300.

notice. Rather than shut down his operations (which were clearly against regulations), they let him continue, even giving him helpers and special permission to fly out of pattern to make drops. These officials realized something incredible: the candy drops were winning the hearts of the Germans.

“Hal the Candy Bomber” became a sensation among the German people, and across America. Candy drives were held to help provide sweets for the hungry children of Berlin, and mail flooded in to Rhein-Main for “Uncle Wiggly Wings” every day. Hal Halvorsen continued to make these flights throughout the duration of the Airlift, before finally returning home to Utah and his sweetheart at its close.

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At the National Security Council meeting on July 22<sup>nd</sup> in Washington, General Lucius Clay presented with great energy his beliefs on the Berlin situation. He emphasized that the “abandonment of Berlin would have a disastrous effect” on plans for a West German state. He repeated his request for more planes, stating that the Airlift had increased American prestige in Europe dramatically. The Berlin Airlift was operating with 52 Skymasters and 80 of the smaller C-47s, altogether making 250 trips a day to Berlin. He felt that with more planes, 75 more C-54s to be exact, they could hold out until winter came. He added that the Berliners themselves had changed since the beginning of the Airlift as well. They were now willing to fight for democracy and freedom, and it would be folly to ignore that. The number Clay gave was half of the Air Force’s entire transport fleet.<sup>241</sup>

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<sup>241</sup> Cherny, 312.



That same day, the Soviets released perhaps their most vociferous declaration about the whole of the Berlin Airlift in a newspaper article titled “On the Situation in Berlin.” This article continued to condemn the Allies for the production of their own currency in direct violation of the Potsdam Agreement, calling it “a policy for the dismembering of Germany”. This article went on to state that the Soviet Command had continued to care about the well-being of the Berlin population and would continue to do so, and would even care for the Allied sectors if need be. This was a bold claim and a direct stab at the efforts of the Berlin Airlift, stating the Russians knew how little they were bringing in to Berlin. The article ended with the assurance that no pressure was necessary in Berlin, as when the Allies violated the Potsdam Agreement they lost all right to participate in the occupation of Berlin.<sup>242</sup> The Soviets had announced their claim to all Berlin, now it was up to the Allies to fight it.

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Truman overruled the Joint Chiefs, giving Clay all the airpower he needed to maintain the Airlift. Clay had called for more planes, and the planes came in from American posts all over the world, from Hawaii, Alaska, the States, the Caribbean, and Australia. British planes joined the Airlift, and then planes of the American Navy.<sup>243</sup> While word of this splashed across the front pages of newspapers nationwide, the West breathed a sigh of relief. As of July 24, the combined British and American efforts were only bringing in 2415 tons daily with an average 455 flights a day, which was far less than was needed.<sup>244</sup> This could now be expected to improve.

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<sup>242</sup> “Soviet Government’s Reply,” *Soviet Weekly*, 22 July 1948.

<sup>243</sup> *This is Germany*. (New York: Sloane, 1950), 36.

<sup>244</sup> George C. Marshall Research Library, Lexington, Virginia. National Archives- Declassified Collection. “Naval Message Admiral Schuirmann Correspondence 24 July 1948.”

This was the day the Russians closed their trap on Berlin. Up until that point, the Berliners had been frantic in their search for food, sneaking into the Russian sector to trade away possessions for food, or scouring the woods. On this day, almost a month after the Blockade began, Soviet-controlled newspapers were distributed bearing the headline: “Airlift Has No Purpose- In the Future All Berliners Can Buy Their Rations in the East Sector.” West Berliners would receive fresh produce and meats within the eastern sector, and all they had to do was trade in their own sector’s ration card for a Soviet one. Should they do so, the Berliners would effectively surrender their loyalty to the communists. The program would begin on August 1. The Soviets had followed through on their boast to care for all of Berlin.

This did little to deter the Allies. The world was captured by the imagination and daring of the Airlift. But despite this, the Berlin Airlift was not making the numbers it should have—nowhere close. Almost all airlifts prior to Operation Vittles had failed, and the Berlin Airlift seemed destined to do the same at the rate it was going. In forty-five years of flight, planes had been used for fighting, not for the aid of people on any substantial scale. Attempts to reconcile this almost always ended in failure, with the airplanes never being able to deliver the tonnage needed to keep the beleaguered alive. The Airlift needed a professional, someone with the know-how to run such an operation successfully. Only one such man existed, and he had operated the only successful Airlift in the history of aviation. His name was Bill Tunner, the hero of the Hump, and General Albert Wedemeyer, the Army’s chief of plans and operations, knew where to find him.

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General Bill Tunner began his time in the Air Corps differently than most other men. Most aviators were raring to get into the air, be the daredevils and sky cowboys the public loved and longed for; Tunner would go to his desk. He was happy completing the mundane tasks most of his colleagues despised. Tunner knew both men and planes could not remain in the air forever, and both required regularly scheduled maintenance, of which he was the proprietor.

In World War II, Tunner worked with the Ferrying Division of Air Transport Command, the operation tasked with delivering new planes to airfields. He put everything he had into completing his mission, even going so far as to use women to fly military planes for the first time in the history of aeronautics for the sake of completing his duty.<sup>245</sup>

In August 1944, four years before the Berlin Airlift he would save, Bill Tunner set out to help another failing air operation, this time in India. During World War II, America helped aid the Chinese war effort by flying planes from India to China. To do so required a dangerous flight between the Himalayas and some of the densest jungles in the world. This flight path was assailed with hail and monsoon winds between cliffs and wild rivers. A trail of wrecked planes marked the path. “The Hump,” as it came to be known, was home to the highest plane fatality rate in the war.

Tunner arrived and reconstituted the wreckage that was the Chinese aid operation and put it back onto its feet. Everyone had to march to the beat he set whether they liked it or not, and indeed they did not. The Hump pilots hated him, despised him, dubbed him “Willy the Whip”, but they did as he said. Tunner’s approach worked. When he arrived in August 1944, the record for the Hump had been 308 flights per day, carrying 2.6 million pounds to China. By the time the

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<sup>245</sup> Cherny, 328.

war was over a year later, they were flying 1,118 flights a day and transporting over 10 million pounds—more than in some entire months of 1943.<sup>246</sup>

After the war, Tunner was reassigned home and appointed a deputy to the new Military Air Transport Service. His job remained the same, but he was plunged from the heights of glory to the depths of despair as the years dragged by.

When Berlin was Blockaded in 1948 and an airlift was proposed, General William Tunner expected to be called to help the effort as he had helped with the Hump. The call did not come. He fumed, knowing that all the operators of the Airlift only knew how to lead planes in combat situations, not as a relief effort. Tunner was disgusted with the bedlam of the Berlin Airlift, and grew restless, knowing he could straighten the mess out.

His prayers were eventually answered. When Truman approved the additional Skymasters to be added to the Airlift, Wedemeyer proposed Tunner be sent along, regretting not having done so from the very beginning.<sup>247</sup>

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Tunner arrived in Wiesbaden, the Airlift's headquarters, at dusk on July 28, 1948, and in just the flight over he had filled a notebook with short-hand dictation and had diagnosed the problem with the Airlift. The first day in Wiesbaden was spent in a whirlwind of searching for office supplies (his offices were barely outfitted with even a desk) and sending underlings to assess the problem at each individual base. Tunner himself set out for Berlin to examine the situation first-hand.

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<sup>246</sup> Cherny, 331.

<sup>247</sup> Cherny, 335.

What he found was not pleasant. The cowboy operation of the Airlift was in shambles. Everything was in a state of confusion and entire flight crews were milling around, the opposite of what would be happening in a successful airlift. Though he was not dealing with the tempestuous weather of the Hump, Tunner found himself facing a task that was equally daunting, if not more so. In India, he had the use of 450 Skymasters and unlimited airspace and time, along with nine landing strips to choose from. In Germany, all the Allied aircraft did not equal 450, they had three 20-mile-wide air corridors to use over enemy territory, and only two crumbling landing strips to use. To top it off, the maximum the Hump mission was able to deliver in a day was less than half the minimum Berlin needed daily.<sup>248</sup>

Within three days, Tunner had issued new orders to all Operation Vittles personnel. Flight crews would no longer be allowed to leave their aircraft to wander about. Instead, everything would come to them including an unloading crew, an operations officer with paperwork, a weather officer with the forecast, and a mobile snack bar stocked with ham sandwiches, Coca-Cola, and the prettiest girls in Berlin as an extra incentive.

Tunner did not stop there. He installed a large board in all air bases (affectionately dubbed the “Howgozit” board) for all personnel to see each squadron’s performance for the day, engendering a spirit of competition in the Airlift itself. Tunner not only changed how the Berlin Airlift operated, he changed its very culture. Slowly, he was converting the cowboys of the sky into number crunchers for tonnage.<sup>249</sup>

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<sup>248</sup> Cherny, 339.

<sup>249</sup> Cherny, 340-341.

As Tunner's new directives began to work in the Airlift, the Berliners themselves also experienced a change. Hope was making a comeback. Seeing and hearing the near-constant stream of planes coming into Berlin let the Berliners know they were not abandoned, and if the Airlift was successful, neither would they have to go hungry. Impressed by the operation, Berliners would joke about how lucky they were to not have the efficient Americans blockading the city and the bumbling Russians flying the Airlift.<sup>250</sup> As a result of this new-found hope, when the August 4 deadline the Soviets gave for the Germans to switch over their ration cards arrived, only 22,000 Berliners did so, a mere one percent. In the Western sectors, Berliners, despite being weak with hunger, let the food stacked in Russian stockrooms rot.<sup>251</sup>

In Moscow, Walter Bedell Smith and the French ambassador met with Stalin to discuss the future of Berlin. Smith was eager to come to a conclusion and was ecstatic when Stalin presented a deal: he would lift the Blockade if negotiations could be reopened as to the future of Germany and also if Berlin could run exclusively on Soviet currency. Smith and the other representatives accepted this idea and met feverishly to work out the details. In Washington, however, General Marshall forbade his ambassador from making any final agreement that did not allow for all four powers to control Berlin's currency, and he could not under any circumstances link the future of Germany to the lifting of the Blockade.<sup>252</sup> It would be foolhardy to trade away Germany to the Russians over a Blockade that was at that very moment being trumped by the Berlin Airlift. This event would serve to be the first of many in which the Allied

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<sup>250</sup> Cherny, 342.

<sup>251</sup> Cherny, 345.

<sup>252</sup> Cherny, 345.

leadership felt the Soviets needed to show “by deeds, not words” their sincerity in reaching an agreement over Berlin.<sup>253</sup>

Tunner’s new system for the Airlift solved many of its problems, but not all of them. On Friday, August 13, a day that would later be known as “Black Friday,” a storm cropped up that sent the whole operation spiraling into chaos. Planes were unable to land properly at Tempelhof in the storm, some skidding off the runway, others overshooting the runway and bursting into flames. Tunner got to watch this terrible display with his own eyes as his plane attempted to land for a ceremony in Berlin. He immediately tasked two of his staff to figure out the problem, no matter how long it took. The results revolutionized air traffic control forever.

By utilizing an array of checkpoints and beacons, the Airlift would be timed with such precision that it would make the Rockettes look like a first grade dance recital. Every ninety seconds -- precisely every ninety seconds -- a plane would take off or land. As each plane passed over a beacon at the city of Fulda, on the border of the Soviet zone, the pilot would call out his tail number over the radio, and planes behind him would adjust their speed to maintain a three minute gap between them. Furthermore the planes would have one chance to land in Berlin, and only one, to ensure no stacking, circling, or piling up on the runway. If a pilot missed his chance to land, he would have to return to home base.<sup>254</sup>

Tunner also implemented a new time schedule based around three minutes. He realized that three minutes would be the perfect cadence to set the Airlift to; with 1,440 minutes in a day

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<sup>253</sup> U.S. Department of State, *Foreign Relations of the United States 1949 Volume V Eastern Europe: The Soviet Union* (Washington D.C.: U.S. Government Print. Ofc., 1976), 567.

<sup>254</sup> William H. Tunner, *Over the Hump*. Berlin Airlift 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Commemorative Edition (United States Airforce: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1964), 172.

this meant 480 landings at Tempelhof in a twenty-four-hour period.<sup>255</sup> With this new system in play, there was a plane landing or taking off at the Tempelhof airfield every 90 seconds.<sup>256</sup> This new routine transformed the airplanes from independent agents into cogs in a single machine, allowing the Berlin Airlift to truly run like clockwork.<sup>257</sup>

General Clay saw this, and was pleased, once again confident in the Allies' ability to succeed. On the 21<sup>st</sup> of October he gave these remarks:

The Soviet giant has failed to recognize our strength in the air. They did not understand our determination to fulfill our obligations to the people under our charge. They did not reckon with the will of several million Germans in Berlin who want no part of the type and kind of government which is being imposed upon them.<sup>258</sup>

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The success of the Airlift did little to halt the Soviets' incessant efforts to control Berlin. It was not the Red Army that overthrew the governments of Eastern Europe, but Soviet coups, and in Berlin they sought to attain just such a thing. In mid-August, the Acting Mayor Louise Schroeder's health collapsed under the constant strain of the Blockade, leaving her deputy Ferdinand Friedensberg in charge. The Soviets wasted no time in turning up the pressure to force him to step down. The next person in charge if he did so would be a Communist. And so, nearly every night the Soviets called him away for hours of interrogation on ridiculous charges against his character, and during the day Russian spies followed him everywhere.<sup>259</sup>

General Lucius Clay, began to see a new problem arise, despite the use of Tunner's new protocols and rising graphs. This was the lack of suitable air bases. An open piece of land in the

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<sup>255</sup> Tunner, 174.

<sup>256</sup> Tunner, 174.

<sup>257</sup> Cherny, 347-348.

<sup>258</sup> *General Lucius Clay Statement on Berlin*, 21 October 1948, Audio File.

<sup>259</sup> Cherny, 350.



French sector, in a neighborhood called Tegel, seemed suitable enough. It was also felt that the building of a new airfield to take the pressure off Tempelhof would also generate excellent propaganda and glean increased aid to the Berlin population.<sup>260</sup> The French agreed to build a new air base, but said it would not be completed until February of 1949, a date Clay found unacceptable. They did not have until February to find a new place to land planes.

To at least ease the strain at Tempelhof in the meantime, it was decided that all C-54s would operate from the British airfield at Fassberg. The low topography of its air route into Berlin would assure more consistent weather for these behemoths to make their deliveries.<sup>261</sup>

At the beginning of August, three ambassadors from the Western Allies met with Stalin in the hopes of opening negotiations. He stated the restrictive transport measures undertaken by the Soviets were caused by technical reasons. He also cited large quantities of equipment moving westward from Berlin, and the London conference, or more specifically, the currency reform and the introduction of Western currency in the Berlin, which was in the center of the Soviet zone of occupation. He felt that in the face of economic disruptions, the Soviet authorities were defending the Soviet zone.<sup>262</sup>

Throughout the month of August, negotiations continued in Moscow, with the Russians alternating between being as conciliatory and as uncooperative as possible. Their stance on bargaining changed on a daily basis. Just when the Western envoys would be ready to quit, the Russians would give ground. Eventually the Soviets agreed to lift the Blockade and have the

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<sup>260</sup> George C. Marshall Research Library, Lexington, Virginia. National Archives- Declassified Collection Box 35, Folder 1. "Telegram no.3516 from Paris to Secretary of State 2 July 1948."

<sup>261</sup> George C. Marshall Research Library, Lexington, Virginia. National Archives- Declassified Collection Box 35, Folder 1. "Telegram no.2014 from Berlin to Secretary of State, 12 August 1948."

<sup>262</sup> U.S. Department of State, *Foreign Relations of the United States 1948 Volume II Germany and Austria*, 999.

Soviets' mark, under four-power control, serve as the currency for Berlin. The end seemed to be in sight. All that remained was for Clay, Sokolovsky, and the rest to work out the details.<sup>263</sup>

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In Berlin, the four powers resumed meeting in an attempt to meet the deadline that Stalin had set for negotiations. Despite the clear efforts being made in Moscow towards the lifting of the Blockade and putting an end to the strife, the same could not be said for the governors of Berlin themselves. Clay and Sokolovsky were equally hostile, despite the French governor Marie-Pierre Koenig's attempts to recreate the harmonious spirit of old. As the days dragged on, and with the deadline looming, it was becoming increasingly obvious that the Russians would not allow the Western powers any real say in the economic life of Berlin, and they would not commit themselves to the lifting of the Blockade.<sup>264</sup> Sokolovsky even went as far as to demand that part of the agreement be the limiting of the aircraft flying into Berlin, which would effectively shut down the Airlift. He then added that the Soviets would begin extensive flying maneuvers in the air corridors over Berlin, a thinly veiled threat that the Russians were going to cause trouble for the Airlift if their demands were not met. Clay thanked him for this warning. After a recent harassment of American troops by the Russians, he was past taking abuse. Even Truman's advisers realized the negotiations had ended in failure.

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As soon as the negotiations ended, the situation in Berlin worsened. The Soviets, having attempted to nullify all Western influence through agreements and negotiations, now began to use brute force. The promised Soviet air maneuvers began, as did an increase in the arrests of

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<sup>263</sup> Cherny, 360-361.

<sup>264</sup> Cherny, 363.

British, French, and American individuals in the Western sectors by the Russians (which were not actually arrests, but kidnappings). In Washington, the Pentagon gave final approval for HALFMOON, the first war plan that envisioned an all-out nuclear assault on Russia in the event of war.<sup>265</sup> HALFMOON assumed that war with the Soviet Union was a distinct possibility; that in the first phase of war the Soviet Union would be capable of wide-ranging, concurrent, and the effective offensives in virtually every major region of the globe; and that the United States would use atomic weapons in counteroffensive operations against the Soviets in Europe.<sup>266</sup> This approval coincided with the top secret memorandum to General Wedemeyer, presented on September 14, that in the event of a war the goal of the United States forces would be to obliterate the war-making capacity of the USSR and to force them to retreat to within the 1939 borders from which they had expanded.<sup>267</sup> This same document goes on to describe FLEETWOOD, a capabilities plan which would cover the first twelve months of the war.<sup>268</sup> This would be the template for many future documents describing contingency plans should the Soviets decide to provoke a war and strike.<sup>269</sup>

The Berliners themselves were ready to stand up to the Soviets as well. The democratic parties pushed for a rally for citizens on the steps of the Reichstag. The rally was held on the afternoon of September 9, and all Berlin turned out for the event. One woman wrote in her diary: “Everybody came running, thinking: I must demonstrate. We belong to the West. We are

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<sup>265</sup> Cherny, 376.

<sup>266</sup> Thomas H. Etzold and John Lewis Gaddis, *Containment: Documents on American Policy and Strategy, 1945-1950* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1978), 315. For more on HALFMOON and FLEETWOOD, consult this text.

<sup>267</sup> George C. Marshall Research Library, Lexington, Virginia. National Archives- Declassified Collection. “Memorandum for General Wedemeyer regarding P&O Presentation, 14 September 1948.” p.2

<sup>268</sup> George C. Marshall Research Library, Lexington, Virginia. National Archives- Declassified Collection. “Memorandum for General Wedemeyer regarding P&O Presentation, 14 September 1948.” p.3

<sup>269</sup> George C. Marshall Research Library, Lexington, Virginia. National Archives Declassified Collection. Box 10, Folder 10. “Our Readiness Today.” P.1.

Berliners. We are a community of fate.—<sup>270</sup> These acts of courage, to stand against food and electricity and warmth if it meant sacrificing the freedom of the city, was a testament to the strength of the Allies' answer to the Blockade. All day the rally and its speeches were broadcast all over the world. For the first time since the war, Berlin was making itself heard.

Almost in answer to the rally, that same day Russia stated to the rest of the world in *Soviet Weekly* that they would be raising the food rations in the Soviet zone of Berlin. This effort to continue undermining the Allied relief in Berlin and portray themselves as the do-gooders was by now a favored tactic of the Soviets. Their claim, that they would increase the daily caloric intake of the entire zone to 2,314 calories was ludicrous.<sup>271</sup> What they were not saying was this was only for Soviet allies. Claims that it would benefit some 16 million individuals were just as unfounded. The Russians were clearly willing to exaggerate numbers if it meant better publicity for them.

This article did little to undermine the attention Berlin was getting, thanks to its people and the Airlift. The day after the rally, Tunner determined that September 10 was the first day that the Airlift had delivered more than 10 million pounds of supplies to the beleaguered city. That very same day, Sokolovsky turned up the heat. Soviet fighter planes had already been flying in the Allied air corridors, but this day they began to test-fire anti-aircraft missiles as well. These Soviet planes flew patterns over Berlin, leaving vapor trails in their wake, making it the largest show of Russian military strength since the end of the war.<sup>272</sup>

It was now apparent that the Russians were willing to see the Blockade through to the end, and that the Berlin Airlift was now the only chance the city had for survival. Clay needed

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<sup>270</sup> Cherny, 378.

<sup>271</sup> "Germany- Increased Food Rations in Soviet Zone," *Soviet Weekly*, 9 September 1948.

<sup>272</sup> Cherny, 391.

more planes to hold up to the increasing tonnage of Tunner's program. After much calculating between Tunner and LeMay, they decided they needed 225 Skymasters to make the Airlift work. They needed another 107 planes to keep Operation Vittles off the ground and in the air. It was also apparent that the Airlift would likely not get this number—nowhere close.

At the same time, Clay had begun to oversee the construction of the Tegel airfield. When the call for workers went out, 16,000 Berliners showed up, mostly women and maimed veterans. Berlin was ensuring its own survival. Not just the people, but the city itself. The 10 million bricks needed to make the runway at Tegel all came from rubble piles and decrepit walls within the city.<sup>273</sup>

On September 25 the Soviets turned down another plea to lift the Blockade, leaving the Allies no choice but to go to the United Nations, a final step before going to war.<sup>274</sup> Feeling that the time for subtlety had passed, the State Department issued a press release on September 27<sup>th</sup> stating that,

“The issue between the Soviet Government and the Western occupying powers is not that of technical difficulties in communication nor that of reaching agreement upon the conditions for the regulation of currency for Berlin. The issue is that the Soviet Government has clearly shown by its actions that it is attempting by illegal and coercive measures in disregard of its obligations to secure political objectives to which it is not entitled and which it could not achieve by peaceful means. It has resorted to Blockade measures; it has threatened the Berlin population with starvation, disease, and economic ruin; it has tolerated disorders and attempted to overthrow the duly elected municipal Government of Berlin. The attitude and conduct of the Soviet Government reveal sharply its purpose....”<sup>275</sup>

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<sup>273</sup> Cherny, 393.

<sup>274</sup> Cherny, 401.

<sup>275</sup> *State Department Press Release*, September 26, 1948. Harry S. Truman Research Library. [http://www.trumanlibrary.org/whistlestop/study\\_collections/berlin airlift/documents/PDFs/2-1.pdf#zoom=100](http://www.trumanlibrary.org/whistlestop/study_collections/berlin airlift/documents/PDFs/2-1.pdf#zoom=100). P. 13.

This blunt address clearly cemented the views of the United States, United Kingdom, and France against the Soviet's Blockade. President Harry Truman also added that he was done trying to "negotiate under attempted duress."<sup>276</sup>

Despite the quarreling in negotiations, the Berlin Airlift was proceeding accordingly, as Colonel Landry wrote to the President after a recent visit to Berlin.

"The Airlift is the greatest feat of its kind in the history of air transport and particularly military air transport. The efficiency with which the operations are being conducted now, and the plans that are being made for future operations during bad weather months are outstanding, and a tribute to the initiative, thoroughness and foresightedness of everyone engaged in its various phases. During the winter months when flying conditions will be at their worst, the Airlift operations will continue to meet the 4500 ton daily requirement established by General Clay."<sup>277</sup>

Clearly from the Colonel's letter, all doubt about the success of the Berlin Airlift had been wiped away and only hope, determination, and wonder remained.

While tensions remained high in Berlin, Moscow released a statement in the *Soviet Weekly* newspaper about the "Berlin Situation". This lengthy article provided a recap of the events in Berlin, all while condemning the Allies for not bowing to Soviet demands. According to the article, it was "certain differences" between the Allies and the USSR that halted negotiations, not Soviet belligerency.<sup>278</sup> The Soviets then made an argument for their side of the story, providing the Government's statements on these "differences." The Soviets demanded control of transportation and cargo; and that they be in control of the currency (stating that this

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<sup>276</sup> *Public Papers of the Presidents of the United States Harry S. Truman : Containing the Public Messages, Speeches, and Statements of the President January 1 to December 31, 1948.* (Washington: United States Printing Office, 1964), 481-482.

<sup>277</sup> George C. Marshall Research Library, Lexington, Virginia. National Archives- Declassified Collection. "Memorandum for the President from Colonel Robert B. Landry, 28 September 1948."

<sup>278</sup> "Situation in Berlin: Tass Statement," *Soviet Weekly*, 30 September 1948.

was already agreed upon in Moscow). And yet, they also expressed consent for quadripartite control of Berlin, clearly two incongruous statements.<sup>279</sup>

The planes continued to deliver supplies into Berlin, orchestrated by Bill Tunner, a man most Berliners had never heard of. The question plaguing him was whether or not the Airlift could survive the winter. He had managed to convert all of the romance of the “wild blue yonder” into an assembly-line machine operating at peak performance. It was a dull, steady rhythm with no pomp or circumstance, but it ran like no man had ever dreamed.

Coal and food combined for 90 percent of the Airlift’s total cargo, but it also carried just about anything the Berliners needed.<sup>280</sup> Just as each minute mattered in the Airlift, so did each pound. Flying in dehydrated potatoes was preferred over the real thing as it cut weight by 80 percent. Bread was baked in Berlin rather than flown in to reduce water weight. Each plane had a cargo weight goal of 19,500 pounds.<sup>281</sup>

One of the worst shortages the Airlift had, however, was of airplane mechanics. An aircraft supplying Berlin could be flown by a crew of three. It needed at least a further seven men to keep it fit to fly, and ideally each aircraft would have had a maintenance team of fifteen.<sup>282</sup> By the time Tunner had 160 Skymasters, he only had enough men to service 50 of them. From the start, he wanted to hire the former Luftwaffe ground crewmen to help service planes, but LeMay prevented him from doing so. Tunner went to Clay, and Clay agreed, overturning LeMay’s decision. Tunner now had the pick of any German mechanic he wanted.<sup>283</sup>

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<sup>279</sup> “Situation in Berlin: Tass Statement,” *Soviet Weekly*, 30 September 1948.

<sup>280</sup> Cherny, 420.

<sup>281</sup> Cherny, 420-421.

<sup>282</sup> Tusa, 309.

<sup>283</sup> Cherny, 422

In light of the ongoing success of the Berlin Airlift, as well as the newly awakened voice of the Berlin people, a new film documentary was released, titled “The Bridge.” This film used the Berlin Blockade to emphasize the growing collaboration between the West Germans and the Americans. The massive airlift is shown as heroic, effective, and politically meaningful because it consolidated the postwar bond. The narrative centers on the personal relationship that develops between an American pilot and a German who works at Tempelhof unloading planes. At first the two men belong to different worlds and only meet on the tarmac. By the end, however, they have grown to trust and respect one another. The narrator concludes, “That’s the story of the air bridge. More than food and coal are coming in. Friendship is coming in too. And belief. Belief in tomorrow. Sometimes I think this is not an air bridge at all. It is a human bridge, linking together people who want to be free.”<sup>284</sup>

This film showcased the camaraderie shared by the Allies and the Germans and showed the world not only the success of the Berlin Airlift, but also the drive of the people who were making it possible. The Berlin Airlift itself also served as a certain sort of visual propaganda, though that was not its primary aim. Yet it is without a doubt that the images of airplanes delivering coal, food, and medicine to the West Berliners became symbols of the Western commitment to a noncommunist Germany.<sup>285</sup> It also showed that it was not only the Allies who wanted a free Berlin, but the Berliners themselves standing up against the Soviet Blockade, which was perhaps, the most effective propaganda of all. Gone were the days of American nonfraternization and treating the Germans as if they were abominations. Now the Americans and Germans had linked hands to save the beleaguered city of Berlin.

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<sup>284</sup> Goldstein, 60.

<sup>285</sup> Goldstein, 130.



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Flying in the air corridors was becoming dangerous as the Soviets did their best to impede the Airlift in any way they could. Russian Yak and MiG planes would dive at the lumbering C-54s, missing them by only a few feet. The Soviets would fire rockets, drop bombs (which may or may not have been dummies), and shoot bullets near the Airlift planes before disappearing back into the sky.<sup>286</sup>

On October 7, the USSR released another long exposé on the events happening in Berlin. This issue contained not one but two articles regarding Berlin, the first recapping the situation in Berlin from the Soviet perspective, the second being an interview with Marshall Sokolovsky. The first article summed up the Allies' transgressions against a quadripartite Berlin, with the Soviets continuing to point the finger at the Allies for a "policy of dismemberment." This article added a new take on this, however, by claiming that the Allied actions have been leading to a growth in the influence of radical, anti-democratic parties, such as the Nazi element, and were contributing to a resurgence of their aggressive policies of revenge on Europe.<sup>287</sup> Such a bold statement no doubt was intended to incur a rash action from the Allies.

Sokolovsky's interview was just as incendiary. He stated that the aggressive policies of the Airlift were created with the intention of creating a military bloc in the Allied zones against the Soviet Union itself. Sokolovsky also claimed that the Soviet restrictions on the Western zones were to keep the old, useless German currency out.<sup>288</sup> It is clear from the tone of this article that the Soviet government was doing everything in its power to negate the importance of the events in Berlin to the rest of the world and even to its own people. Sokolovsky's

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<sup>286</sup> Cherny 425.

<sup>287</sup> "Soviet Reply on Berlin," *Soviet Weekly*, 7 October 1948.

<sup>288</sup> "Marshal Sokolovsky's Press Interview on the Berlin Situation," *Soviet Weekly*, 7 October 1948.

interviewer goes so far as to refer to the Berlin Blockade as the “so-called Berlin crisis,” undermining its effects and the efforts of the Airlift.

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The Soviets continued to attempt to lure the Berliners into exchanging their Western sector ration cards for Russian-issued papers. They made the paperwork easier, added evening hours of operation, and threw in home heating oil. In October they offered 175 pounds of real potatoes, a real inducement to the Berliners sick of the taste of potato paste of Pom, the dehydrated potato paste supplied by the Airlift. In reply, Berliners who had lived through the plunder of the city’s women by the Russians three years earlier joked, “Better Pom than ‘*Frau Komm.*’”<sup>289</sup>

To increase the direness of the situation, on October 19 the Soviets also began erecting physical barriers and checkpoints on 92 roads crossing between the Eastern and Western sectors to physically impede the coming and going between these two areas. This was as close to completely sealing off the Western sectors as they were going to get.

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All throughout October, the United Nations ambassadors sought to find a solution to the standoff in Berlin. The best they could come up with was to lift the Blockade and open talks for Soviet control over the economy in Berlin, which would give the Russians exactly what they wanted. The neutral nations introduced their plan to the Security Council on October 22, and on the 25<sup>th</sup> the Soviets vetoed it, indicating they really had no intention of coming to an

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<sup>289</sup> Cherny, 433.

agreement.<sup>290</sup> As a result, the Americans felt it was time to prepare the western sectors for indefinite operation as a going concern under Blockade conditions.<sup>291</sup> On October 29, Joseph Stalin issued a rare public statement, accusing Truman of having an aggressive policy that would ultimately lead to unleashing a new war.<sup>292</sup> In another interview, a few days later, he would go on to state that it was the Allies who were being uncooperative and that Churchill himself was trying to orchestrate a new war to afflict the world.<sup>293</sup> By comparison, President Truman stated that he was gladdened by the sense of unity that had prevailed between the Americans, British, and French throughout the Berlin Crisis, and by the earnest efforts of the Security Council and the General Assembly of the United Nations to find solutions to the crisis. He was assured by the determination of the American people to support him and the efforts of those involved in the crisis to find a road to peace.<sup>294</sup>

With the onset of winter drawing near, the uncertainty of what it would bring increased. It was well-known that Berlin winters often included fog which would enclose the city for days. As if on cue, on November 1, the fog came in, shutting down Tempelhof for the better part of two days.<sup>295</sup> Thanks to the tireless efforts of Clay and thousands of Berliners, Tegel airfield was completed on November 5 and the first plane flew in, carrying Bill Tunner and ten tons of cheese.<sup>296</sup> The only problem facing this new airfield was the Soviet controlled Radio Berlin towers standing about 400 yards away from the runway. The French government was still wary of antagonizing the Soviets, yet the French commandant Jean Ganeval nonetheless sent a letter to

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<sup>290</sup> Cherny, 445.

<sup>291</sup> *State Department Summary of Telegrams*, October 1, 1948. Harry S. Truman Research Library. [http://www.trumanlibrary.org/whistlestop/study\\_collections/berlin\\_airlift/documents/PDFs/2-30.pdf#zoom=100](http://www.trumanlibrary.org/whistlestop/study_collections/berlin_airlift/documents/PDFs/2-30.pdf#zoom=100).

<sup>292</sup> Cherny, 448.

<sup>293</sup> "Stalin Replies," *Soviet Weekly*, 4 November 1948.

<sup>294</sup> *Public Papers of the Presidents of the United States Harry S. Truman*, 725.

<sup>295</sup> Cherny, 452.

<sup>296</sup> Cherny, 456.

Kotikov asking if they could pull down the radio towers, giving him a deadline of December 16.<sup>297</sup>

At the same time, the Allies also made a progressive step towards a positive relationship with Soviet military deserters and political refugees. A message to General Bradley sought permission to let these refugees seek sanctuary in the Western zones, a benefit for anyone wanting to get away from Soviet control.<sup>298</sup> The Allies also sought to make sure everyone-- particularly the Soviet people—knew that they did not hold them responsible for the Berlin Blockade, instead assuring them that the blame lay solely with the Soviet Government. The Allies hoped to have a peace and friendship with the Soviet people, a hope constantly being frustrated by the actions of their government and leaders in isolating them from normal relations with the rest of the world.<sup>299</sup>

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On November 9, the Navy C-54s began to join the Airlift. Tunner was on hand at Rhein-Main to greet the first crew, standing up to his knees in a downpour. A Navy officer poked his head out and asked, “Are we at land or sea?” Tunner laughed: “Why, we ordered this just for you. We wanted the Navy to feel at home.”

As the weather in and around Berlin remained abysmal, Tunner began to space planes out for safety. Unloading crews became human chains, with a man’s left toe touching another’s right heel so as not to get lost in the fog. As such, new necessities were created to keep the Airlift

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<sup>297</sup> Cherny 457.

<sup>298</sup> George C. Marshall Research Library, Lexington, Virginia. National Archives- Declassified Collection. “Correspondence from General Clay to Department of Army for General Bradley, 8 November 1948.”

<sup>299</sup> U.S. Department of State, *Foreign Relations of the United States 1948 Volume IV Eastern Europe: The Soviet Union*(Washington D.C.: U.S. Government Print. Ofc., 1974), 931.

going. The Westinghouse Electric Corporation sent 42 of the “world’s brightest lights” filled with krypton gas and flashing with the brilliance of 50 million 60-watt bulbs. These strobe lights were placed atop apartment buildings on the approach to Tempelhof and in the graveyard below. The Soviets used this for propaganda purposes, claiming the Americans had no respect for the dead. Nevertheless these innovations worked, and were adopted around the world. A young man in the fog also created the colored wands used to direct taxiing planes on the landing mat.<sup>300</sup>

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The Hatfield and McCoy feud came to an end on its 67<sup>th</sup> anniversary during the Airlift. Two surviving members of the families shook hands amid much pomp and circumstance, reported the United Press on November 8. Paul McCoy and Miss Toney Terry Hatfield shook hands and sent a telegram to Premier Joseph Stalin asking him to “Shake hands with the rest of the world and lift the Berlin Blockade.”<sup>301</sup>

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Tensions continued to grow with the rising tonnage of the Airlift. In Berlin, the open question was whether the Blockade would end with a bang or a whimper. In a survey, three out of four Berliners thought the situation in Berlin was serious enough that it could cause a war in the near future. The purpose of the Blockade, however, was not to start a war or even kill the Berliners by starvation. What the Soviets were counting on, the one element they needed for the siege to be successful, was a psychological breakdown in the city. Berliners would not give in

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<sup>300</sup> Cherny, 465.

<sup>301</sup> Cherny, 466.

and reject the Allies out of hunger, they would only do this as a result of fear and despair. That November, with fog encasing the city in misery, this became a very real possibility.<sup>302</sup>

Yet, the Berliners did not fold under the pressure of the Soviets and their Blockade. Instead, that pressure gave rise to something unexpected. A commitment to democracy had come to Berlin, despite all of the Soviet's hopes to keep it out, and all the fruitless attempts of the Allies to promote it in the city. This new love of democracy came with a devotion so fierce it would awe the world.<sup>303</sup>

In the winter of 1948-1949, in the direst of straits, Berlin and its people were changing. As the Blockade wore on, Berlin not only became a haven for democracy, but it also became a place free from crime. The city that had been the crime capital of the world the year before was slowly becoming a crime-free city, where even unprotected vegetable patches would remain unmolested.<sup>304</sup> This was a very different city from the one the Soviets had ransacked in previous years. To this end the city assembly of West Berlin met and voted on what currency they wanted in their city. It would not be until March 1949 that the final decision would be made to cease the usage of the East mark as legal tender in West Berlin, but the occasion was still monumental.<sup>305</sup> Through democracy, the Berliners were casting out the encroaching Soviets.

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Berlin and the Airlift were surviving November, albeit by the skin of their teeth. The Berlin government, however, was not doing nearly as well. Berlin's municipal elections were

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<sup>302</sup> Cherny, 470.

<sup>303</sup> Cherny, 472-437.

<sup>304</sup> Cherny, 474-475.

<sup>305</sup> U.S. Department of State, *Foreign Relations of the United States 1949 Volume III Council of Foreign Ministers: Germany and Austria*(Washington D.C.: U.S. Government Print. Ofc., 1974), 692.

fast approaching, and this would be the chance the city had to show their support of democracy outside of opinion polls. The Soviets decided early on that they would not participate in the elections to be held on December 5, though this did not stop them from trying to pull away as many voters as possible. They began a full-scale propaganda assault.

On Thanksgiving Day, the fog cleared and all of the pent-up energy burst, bringing with it a flood of supplies into Berlin. Clay hoped the worst of the winter was behind them, but it was not to be so. The skies darkened once more, this time blanketing not only Berlin, but a vast majority of Europe as well.

November 30 was as foggy as the rest, and was the day the Soviets brought the coup they had longed for, rather than wait till the election itself. Fritz Ebert, the Soviets' man, was chosen by the Soviets as the new mayor of Berlin. He declared that the upcoming elections have "hereby become null and void." Berlin was now formally divided.<sup>306</sup>

The rancor of the Allies was not withheld. Clay called Ebert "worthless", and Ganeval dubbed the attempted coup "the most stupid putsch ever made." Western media rejoiced at the SED's utter failure as well.<sup>307</sup> It fell to Howley to ensure the elections in the Western sectors would still be held, despite the "election of the new Lord Mayor."<sup>308</sup>

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Despite holding their own "election" as December 5 approached, the Soviets used any means necessary to keep Berliners away from the polls. They continued to sweeten the deal of Soviet ration cards, adding in a ton of coal and unlimited electricity. When this did not work,

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<sup>306</sup> Cherny, 480.

<sup>307</sup> George C. Marshall Research Library, Lexington, Virginia. National Archives- Declassified Collection Box 35, Folder 1. "Telegram no.2169 from Berlin to Secretary of State, 27 August 1948."

<sup>308</sup> Cherny, 480-481.

they turned to fear. “If you vote on the 5<sup>th</sup> you vote for war,” was heard all over Berlin.<sup>309</sup>

Rumors spread through the city of Soviet heavy artillery and troop regiments massing outside Berlin, of the Soviet police being armed with machine guns. It did little to stop the determined Berliners. All of the non-communist parties had long-since rallied together to isolate the communists.<sup>310</sup>

They voted in beer halls and in bombed out buildings, in hospitals and around the city the Berliners were voting for their freedom. At the end of the day, Ernst Reuter’s Social Democrats had won out, being the most vociferous in their anti-Communist platform.

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December 16 arrived and on cue the telephone lines in the Radio Berlin tower next to Tegel were cut. Within moments a hundred French military personnel broke into the building and ordered the Russian and German workers onto a bus back to the East sector. American and British officers were called into Ganeval’s conference room to enjoy pastries and drink, which they enjoyed without knowing the occasion. At 10:45am the room rattled with an explosion, making the officers flock to the windows. Just in time, they saw the tower crumple to the ground, followed by Ganeval stating softly, “you will have no more trouble with the tower.”

By 2:30 in the afternoon Kotikov called Ganeval asking for a meeting. “How could you do it?” he demanded as he stormed into Ganeval’s office at 4. Ganeval gave a delighted smile, “With dynamite—from the base.”<sup>311</sup>

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<sup>309</sup> Cherny, 485.

<sup>310</sup> *State Department Summary of Telegrams*, August 5, 1948. Harry S. Truman Research Library. [http://www.trumanlibrary.org/whistlestop/study\\_collections/berlin\\_airlift/documents/PDFs/2-15.pdf#zoom=100](http://www.trumanlibrary.org/whistlestop/study_collections/berlin_airlift/documents/PDFs/2-15.pdf#zoom=100).

<sup>311</sup> Cherny, 491.



On December 23, right before Christmas, the American ambassador in Moscow released a document to the Secretary of State detailing his findings over the year. This document provided interesting insight into Soviet machinations. Despite all the bluster of the Soviets, it was clear they would not deliberately resort to military action. However, that did not stop them from cultivating the “war scare” plan, which was designed to keep the West in fear of another war and impede Western recovery, all while hiding Soviet weaknesses.<sup>312</sup> Though the Soviets were very willing to portray themselves as acting defensively, keeping the ghost of World War II alive was a clever technique to make the Soviets seem more powerful simultaneously. Control of Berlin would have been the first real display of actual power over the West. This notion went in tandem with a later document which confirmed,

“That the Soviets will avoid war as long as their other methods of expansion are successful and until they feel that they have built up their military-economic potential to equal or surpass that of their potential enemies. This would require a minimum of ten years.”<sup>313</sup>

Despite this general no-war assumption, the intelligence agencies of both American and British forces still gave various estimates for Soviet capabilities in the event of war. The Western Allies agreed that the Soviets would attempt to undertake a multi-front campaign against Western Europe, China, the Middle East, and South Korea. This would be augmented by aerial bombardments of the British Isles and also of America and Japan.<sup>314</sup> It was assumed that in the event of a full-scale war, the USSR would indeed try to take on the world.

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<sup>312</sup> George C. Marshall Research Library, Lexington, Virginia. National Archives Project- Declassified Collection. Box 8, Folder 3. “Correspondence from Moscow to Secretary of State, 24 December 1948.”

<sup>313</sup> George C. Marshall Research Library, Lexington, Virginia. National Archives- Declassified Collection. Box 8, Folder 1. “Memorandum to Chief of Staff regarding Intelligence Estimate in March 1948, 4 January 1949.”

<sup>314</sup> George C. Marshall Research Library, Lexington, Virginia. National Archives- Declassified Collection. “Memorandum for Chief of Staff regarding Soviet Intentions and Capabilities – 1949-1956/7, 4 January 1949.”

Christmas came to Berlin through the Airlift, through the Airlift personnel, and through the Berliners themselves, taking the bleakest of times and making them warm and special. The Allies brought in comedians and Rockettes to entertain in halls all across the Western sectors. Gail Halvorsen dropped more candy than ever before. The people of Berlin were thankful to the Airlift, and it was common for airbases to get phonecalls from Germans inviting the soldiers into their homes to share in the holidays. In the face of all odds, Berlin was perhaps the city that best exhibited the warmth of the holidays that year. “The new year,” Howley predicted, “will witness the same unswerving courage and determination on the part of the people of Berlin, which in the long run will bring plenty with freedom, instead of misery with slavery.”<sup>315</sup> To echo this sentiment, as well as recognize the endless courage and dedication of the men and women of the Berlin Airlift, President Truman issued a scroll to each member, detailing the unity of the western nations in the cause of peace and the success of Operation Vittles.<sup>316</sup> There was also talk of these brave individuals being awarded a Special Medal for Valor.<sup>317</sup>

In January General Geroge C. Marshall would resign from his position as Secretary of State.<sup>318</sup> His failing health due to years of service finally took its toll on the man. Throughout 1948 his involvement in the Berlin Blockade dwindled till he stepped away from it completely, leaving it in the hands of more able-bodied men.

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<sup>315</sup> Cherny, 503.

<sup>316</sup> *Summary of Berlin Airlift developments*, October 21, 1948. Harry S. Truman Research Library [http://www.trumanlibrary.org/whistlestop/study\\_collections/berlin\\_airlift/documents/PDFs/1-27.pdf#zoom=100](http://www.trumanlibrary.org/whistlestop/study_collections/berlin_airlift/documents/PDFs/1-27.pdf#zoom=100).

<sup>317</sup> *Summary of Correspondence from Leonard G. McAneny*, October 21, 1948. Harry S. Truman Research Library. [http://www.trumanlibrary.org/whistlestop/study\\_collections/berlin\\_airlift/documents/PDFs/1-30.pdf#zoom=100](http://www.trumanlibrary.org/whistlestop/study_collections/berlin_airlift/documents/PDFs/1-30.pdf#zoom=100).

<sup>318</sup> George C. Marshall Research Library, Lexington, Virginia, Vertical File Collection. Box 81, Folder 49, “Letter from Harry Truman to George C. Marshall, January 7 1949,” P.2.

“It looked like curtains,” remembered Army undersecretary Bill Draper of the awful fog that choked Berlin in November and December. “If that fog had stayed another three weeks we probably would have had to run up the white flag. We probably couldn’t have gone on, You can’t have people starving, and keep on the occupation. But the weather lifted about the fifth of January....”<sup>319</sup> Winter had, for once, not come to Stalin’s aid.<sup>320</sup>

Despite the hopelessness of the haze and the fog, after November and December had done their worst, the Airlift was still going and Berlin remained determined to survive. The 225 planes of the Airlift were operating at full capacity, still under the watchful eye of Bill Tunner. By the end of February, the Airlift would be flying in 16 million pounds of food a day, double the minimum required amount. The Airlift was, for the first time, not only providing sustenance for the Berliner’s, but also providing them with food stores to spare. The specter of war had passed along with the winter fog. The crisis was coming to an end, and the threat of Communism, for all its endless efforts, had been nullified.

February also saw the beginning of talks on the Berlin Blockade taking place in an entirely separate part of the world: New York City. On February 15, 1949 United States Deputy Representative on the United Nations Security Council Dr. Philip Jessup, spoke briefly with Mr. Jacob Malik, the Soviet Representative on the Security Council. These talks, while casual in nature and taking place far from Berlin, became the primary means of negotiations for the lifting of the Berlin Blockade with each Representative serving as envoy for his government. The conversation focused around Stalin’s recent omission of currency as a source of the Berlin crisis in a response to an American journalist. Jessup wanted to know if this omission held any

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<sup>319</sup> Cherny, 508.

<sup>320</sup> Jonathan Lewis and Phillip Whitehead, *Stalin: A Time for Judgment* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1990), 155.

significance. A month later they met again and Malik informed Jessup that the omission was likely “not accidental” and felt that it would be better discussed in a meeting of the Council of Foreign Ministers. Jessup inquired if the Soviets wanted the meeting to take place while Berlin was still beleaguered, in which case it would never happen, or if this meant they would be willing to lift the Blockade in order for the meeting to take place.<sup>321</sup>

On March 18, 1949, the North Atlantic Treaty was unveiled in Washington, creating the North Atlantic Treaty Organization and pledging mutual assistance if any member nation of NATO was attacked. When Secretary of State Dean Acheson was asked as to what would constitute an “armed attack” he said an example would be a Soviet aircraft attacking Berlin Airlift planes.<sup>322</sup> The Soviet siege of Berlin and the Allies’ response had helped convince Americans to make this unprecedented military commitment. It brought America closer to Europe. Together with the Marshall Plan, the Russian threat helped bring about economic alliances which would one day lead to the European Union. In Western Germany, the demonstration of American commitment to the Airlift gave the men forging a new constitution the confidence to go forward.

On March 21, Malik approached Jessup again to inform him that if a definite date for the meeting of the Council of Foreign Ministers could be set, the restrictions on trade and transportation in Berlin could be lifted reciprocally and that the lifting of the Blockade could take place in advance of the meeting. Malik and Jessup again met on April 5. Jessup read a statement that represented the agreed-upon position of the three Western Powers to make clear that the points under discussion were the following: the lifting of the Berlin Blockade and the fixing of a

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<sup>321</sup> *Documents On Germany, 1944-1961*, 89-90.

<sup>322</sup> Cherny, 515.

date for the meeting of the Council of Foreign Ministers. The two met one more time after this to address some points requiring some clarification.<sup>323</sup>

April came with a thaw and the knowledge of a job well done. The unloading crews would play touch football at Celle while waiting for planes to land. The Airlift was working without the pilots needing to strain themselves. Tunner did not want the flight crews resting upon their laurels. He proposed a plan to get the vigor back into his men. Over Easter weekend the Airlift would make a one-day, all out effort to set a new record of 20 million pounds. Tunner dubbed it the “Easter Parade”, and set to racing around Germany to personally make preparations for the effort. On April 16, in twenty-four hours of the Easter Parade, on 1,398 flights, the Berlin Airlift transported more than 26 million pounds.<sup>324</sup>

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Ten days after the Easter Parade, the Russians privately indicated that they would end the Berlin Blockade without conditions. A four-party communiqué, referred to by some as the Jessup-Malik Agreement, was issued on May 4<sup>th</sup>. It addressed the details of the removal of the Blockade:

1. All 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 zones and the Western zones will be removed on May 12, 1949.
2. All 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 Western zones of Germany and between the Eastern zones and the Western zones 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, May 23, 1949, a meeting of the Council of Foreign Ministers

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<sup>323</sup> *Documents On Germany, 1944-1961*, 90.

<sup>324</sup> Cherny, 523-524.

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.<sup>325</sup>

This was the beginning of an easing of Russia's tactics in the Cold War. It began a temporary changing to a milder foreign policy due to a severe political crisis over not only Stalin's throne but in the economy and morale of the Soviet Union.<sup>326</sup> It should be noted that the Berlin Blockade did not ultimately fail for Stalin, at least in regards to the reopening of negotiations about Berlin and Germany; here he succeeded in his goal. Still, Stalin opted to begin solidifying his power at home and building power there, rather than continue to focus on amassing power abroad. Russia was still a devastated land, and it was in his best interest to do everything in his power to remedy the matter, or at least disguise it sufficiently.

On May 8, after eight months of drafting, the German Parliamentary Council was ready to vote on a constitution for the new state of West Germany.<sup>327</sup> It was the four-year anniversary of the fall of Hitler's regime. This would mark the death of Nazism, and the birth of freedom. Democracy had come to Germany.

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On May 11, around midnight in Helmstedt at the Western border of the Soviet zone, hundreds of Germans had gathered to watch the first cars and trucks pass through the checkpoint heading to Berlin. The mood was raucous, as if it were carnival night. At exactly one minute past midnight, the Russians lifted the barrier. The line of jeeps and cars loaded with people and supplies grew so long the Russians eventually gave up trying to validate their documents. In Berlin a throng of six hundred greeted the first trucks to arrive, and were still there when the sun

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<sup>325</sup> *Documents On Germany, 1944-1961*, 90-91.

<sup>326</sup> Ellesworth Raymond, "Russia's Triple Crisis," *Saturday Evening Post* (5 November 1949), p. 25-26, 123-125.

<sup>327</sup> Cherny, 527.

came up. All through the night the crowd reveled among the trucks and under the overhead hum of the Airlift. At 1:23am the first trains left for Berlin.<sup>328</sup> A correspondent on the scene wrote, “Berlin is the happiest city in the world today.”<sup>329</sup>

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<sup>328</sup> Cherny, 531.

<sup>329</sup> Cherny, 532.

## Conclusion:

### The Berlin Airlift, its Impact, and its Aftermath

The siege of Berlin had not only failed, it had backfired. Berliners had become rabidly pro-democratic, and the nascent government of West Germany began the initial steps in its return to the family of free nations,<sup>330</sup> Western European nations under threat were banding together and seeking a defense treaty with a United States that was turning its back on isolationism; and all around the world the Berlin Airlift had become a symbol of an America that was not only strong but good.<sup>331</sup> After ten months, the Soviets opened the ground corridors to the Allies again, but Berlin remained an international, and emotionally American, outpost behind the Russian lines.<sup>332</sup>

The end of the Blockade did not merely mean trucks and trains could travel to and from the city again, it meant the end of something even greater than hunger plaguing Berlin. The Berliners had endured the physical, psychological, and moral breaking of their city and of themselves. Through the capture and destruction of Berlin, through rape and theft and abandonment, the Berliners survived, and grew strong. The success of the defiance of the Soviets by the Western Allies is surely a lesson in what civilian courage coupled with technical ingenuity, daring, and skill can accomplish.<sup>333</sup> As General Lucius Clay stated: “ There is one important thing to remember. The Blockade was broken by air power.”<sup>334</sup> He also insisted that,

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<sup>330</sup> Clay, 393.

<sup>331</sup> Cherny, 510-511.

<sup>332</sup> “How We Got Here: Moments that Shaped U.S. and Soviet Views.” *Time*, 22 January 1979, Vol. 113 Issue 4, 15.

<sup>333</sup> James B. Conant, *The Federal Republic of Germany, Our New Ally*, (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1957), 7.

<sup>334</sup> *Foreign Relations of the United States 1949 Volume III Council of Foreign Ministers: Germany and Austria*, 747.



so as to prevent further setbacks, the Airlift should remain in place until the meeting of the Council of Foreign Ministers was concluded.

The Airlift did better than that.

Though the Blockade was lifted in May of 1949, the Berlin Airlift continued on until the end of September in order to build up Berlin's stockpiles. At the close of the Berlin Airlift it had the following impressive statistics:

1,783,572.7 tons of supplies delivered

62,749 passengers flown

189,963 total flights

586,827 total fly hours

92,061,862 aircraft miles flown by C-47 and C-54 transports.<sup>335</sup>

The Autobahn opened to traffic, barges used the canals again, trains came through; but there were stoppages and delays, and the Allied commanders, who had dealt with these matters before kept the Airlift going as added insurance. General Clay, who left Berlin to return to the United States on May 15, flew out of the city preceded and followed by the planes of the Airlift. The State Department was to take over administration of the American zone in Germany, and he could now retire, as he had announced before the Blockade started.<sup>336</sup> Later, Clay would state that it was the Russians, who, by imposing the Blockade and occasioning the Airlift, had done more (all unwittingly) "to inculcate democracy in Berlin than anything we have been able to do in the past three and one-half years."<sup>337</sup>

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<sup>335</sup> Tunner, iii.

<sup>336</sup> Davidson, 220.

<sup>337</sup> "Triumph of the Airlift," *America Press*, 20 November 1948, 171-172

During the eleven months of the Airlift, Berlin had returned to wartime conditions. There was an evening curfew, and a lack of gas and electricity obliged its inhabitants to live by candlelight and eat the dehydrated food provided by the Western Allies. The city was deserted in the evenings and there was no street lighting. Jobs were non-existent. The Russians decided to drop their demands for the scrapping of the new Deutsche Mark, but they still insisted the West cease its attempts to create a West German state. The Russian Blockade failed. The Soviet operation had been both a waste of time and a loss of face. One recent historian has called it ‘a harvest of blunders’.<sup>338</sup>

The spirit of the Berlin Airlift had transformed the city of Berlin into a bastion of democracy deep in the heart of Soviet territory, and instilled a faith in the West in its citizens. It had revolutionized air traffic control and served as the most successful airlift in history. The Airlift made three men, General Lucius Clay, General William Tunner, and Gail “Hal” Halvorsen come together and change the lives of the Berliners. And it would set forth parameters to be respected by both the Soviets and the Allies even after the end of the Berlin Blockade.

When General Clay finally retired and returned home to the United States, the American people poured fourth their gratitude for what was achieved in Berlin under his direction. He desired that all who assisted in the great effort of the Berlin Airlift to have that same recognition.<sup>339</sup> President Truman fulfilled his wish, awarding each member of the Berlin Airlift the Medal for Humane Action in protecting the citizens of Berlin from sure starvation.<sup>340</sup>

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<sup>338</sup> MacDonogh, 536-537.

<sup>339</sup> *Correspondence Summary, Louis Johnson*, September 26, 1949. Harry S. Truman Research Library. [http://www.trumanlibrary.org/whistlestop/study\\_collections/berlin\\_airlift/documents/PDFs/1-36.pdf#zoom=100](http://www.trumanlibrary.org/whistlestop/study_collections/berlin_airlift/documents/PDFs/1-36.pdf#zoom=100).

<sup>340</sup> *Summary of correspondence from Hon. J. Howard McGrath*, February 5, 1952. Harry S. Truman Research Library. [http://www.trumanlibrary.org/whistlestop/study\\_collections/berlin\\_airlift/documents/PDFs/1-32.pdf#zoom=100](http://www.trumanlibrary.org/whistlestop/study_collections/berlin_airlift/documents/PDFs/1-32.pdf#zoom=100).

Years later, in 1961, the Soviets would once again attempt to isolate Berlin, this time building a physical barrier between East and West Berlin. The Allies would respond rapidly and angrily to the ghost of the Berlin Blockade:

“On August 13, East German authorities put into effect several measures regulating movement at the boundary of the Western sectors and the Soviet sector of the city of Berlin. These measures have the effect of limiting, to a degree approaching complete prohibition, passage from the Soviet sector to the Western sectors of the city. These measures were accompanied by the closing of the sector boundary by a sizable deployment of police forces and by military detachments brought into Berlin for this purpose.

All this is a flagrant, and particularly serious, violation of the quadripartite status of Berlin. Freedom of movement with respect to Berlin was reaffirmed by the quadripartite agreement of New York of May 4, 1949, and by the decision taken at Paris on June 20, 1949, by the Council of the Ministers of Foreign Affairs of the Four Powers.”<sup>341</sup>

Despite Allied efforts, however, the Russians would maintain the Berlin Wall until the 1990s, but this did not change the mindset of the world and specifically the Americans. It was America which had first aided the besieged West Berliners and went toe-to-toe with Soviet ideals in order to maintain the dream of democracy in the crumbling city. It had been a deadly dance across the skies of Germany and in the hearts of the Berliners, but in the end the Americans had prevailed. The West had prevailed, and no one, neither Europeans nor Americans, would ever forget that.

"Ich bin ein Berliner," said President Kennedy. The hearts of the West reached out to Berlin in its time of need that summer of 1948, and so would continue to do so until Berlin was truly a united, free city once again. This was the promise of the West to Berlin, the West would not forget, Berlin was a part of the West, and the West was a part of Berlin.

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<sup>341</sup> W. Bruce Lincoln, *Documents in World History, 1945-1967* (San Francisco: Chandler Publishing Company, 1968), 70.

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