

Breaking Barriers to Provide Food, Freedom, and a Future:

The Berlin Airlift's Quest to Beat the Blockade

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Thesis

The legendary Berlin Airlift was a Herculean attempt to save the city from a Soviet takeover. On June 24, 1948, the Soviets implemented a massive blockade around West Berlin to cut it off from vital food and supplies (see Appendix A).¹ Two days later, General Lucius D. Clay, the U.S. military governor of Germany, launched a humanitarian airlift known as “Operation Vittles” to rescue the city from starvation.² U.S. President Harry S. Truman granted the airlift his full support, declaring, “We stay in Berlin, period.”³ Alongside the main operation, the Candy Bomber would carry out this decree in a manner that hoped to raise the city’s spirits. Initially, both Americans and Soviets expressed doubt that the aerial operation could feed 2.5 million Berliners for more than a few days.⁴ However, against all odds, the airlift overcame difficulties in logistics, Soviet harassment, and animosities between Americans and Germans to break the barrier of the blockade.

The Barrier Emerges

Post-World War II (WWII) negotiations established the Allied occupation of Germany. Ravaged by warfare and Nazi purges, Germany lacked functioning infrastructure, agricultural

¹ Avi Shlaim, *The United States and the Berlin Blockade, 1948-1949: A Study in Crisis Decision-Making* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1983), 161-162.

² Michael D. Haydock, *City Under Siege: The Berlin Blockade and Airlift, 1948-1949* (Washington, D.C.: Batsford Brassey, 1999), 146-147.

³ James Forrestal, *The Forrestal Diaries*, ed. Walter Millis and E.S. Duffield (New York: The Viking Press, 1951), 454-455; Harry S. Truman, *Memoirs by Harry S. Truman*, vol. 2 of *Years of Trial and Hope* (Garden City: Doubleday and Company, 1956), 123.

⁴ Richard Collier, *Bridge Across the Sky: The Berlin Blockade and Airlift, 1948-1949* (New York: McGraw-Hill Book Company, 1978), 65-66.

systems, and democratic organizations.⁵ To govern their decimated former adversary, the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR), Great Britain, France, and the United States respectively occupied the eastern, northwestern, southwestern, and southern portions of the nation (see Appendix B). Berlin was divided under a similar scheme, overseen by a council, the Allied Kommandatura, with each member having the right of veto.⁶ In theory, this system was a fair solution; in practice, however, the four-power government experienced significant rifts.

The USSR became progressively uncooperative in the quadripartite system. This framework failed to consider the degree of Soviet resentment toward Germany. WWII had consumed the lives of 20 million Soviet citizens, seven million horses, and a large portion of the country's infrastructure. The USSR had suffered greatly compared to other European nations, and the Soviets were determined to exact revenge. They seized entire German factories, vehicles, and railroads as reparations. They also printed vast amounts of Reichsmarks, the German currency of the time, to enrich themselves; this exacerbated inflation and food shortages. In 1947, estimates revealed that the United States and Great Britain had to spend \$700 million to feed Germany for just one year.⁷ To suppress German dissent, the Soviet NKVD secret police kidnapped Western-aligned Berliners, including journalists, university students, and judges. They also deported thousands of skilled workers from Berlin to the USSR.⁸

⁵ Henry Ashby Turner, *The Two Germanies Since 1945* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1987), 3-6, 6-8; Gail S. Halvorsen, *The Berlin Candy Bomber* (Springville: Horizon Publishers, 2010), 47-49.

⁶ Union of Soviet Socialist Republics, "Statement Issued by the Soviet Government on Withdrawal of the Soviet Representative From the Allied Kommandatura, Berlin, July 1, 1948," in *Documents on Germany, 1944-1985* (Washington, D.C.: US Department of State, Office of the Historian, Bureau of Public Affairs, 1985), 151; Turner, *The Two Germanies Since 1945*, 8-9.

⁷ Haydock, *City Under Siege*, 58-60, 76-77; Turner, *The Two Germanies Since 1945*, 12-14.

⁸ Haydock, *City Under Siege*, 82-87, 89-90.

Ultimately, the dispute over Germany's currency led to a complete breakdown of cooperation among the governing nations. To alleviate economic instability, the Western powers replaced the old inflated Reichsmark with a new Deutsche Mark in their occupation zones (excluding Berlin) on June 20, 1948. Since the USSR had abused their Reichsmark printing rights, they did not receive printing plates for the new currency.⁹ Thereupon, the Soviets withdrew from the Kommandatura and announced their own German currency, granting the best exchange rates to Soviet sympathizers. They unilaterally claimed the Soviet currency as the only valid form of money in jointly occupied Berlin.¹⁰ At this point, they exploited the currency issue to force Western influence out of Berlin.

The USSR shut down all rail, road, and barge traffic in and out of Berlin and ended the transfer of food, coal, and electricity into the city.¹¹ They blamed the blockade on unspecified "technical difficulties" caused by the Western currency.¹² The city was 110 miles deep in the USSR's German occupation zone. Over 300,000 Red Army soldiers backed by heavy tanks stationed throughout Soviet-occupied Germany outmatched the 6,500 Western troops assigned to Berlin.¹³ The Soviets had enacted a seemingly unbreakable blockade around West Berlin.

⁹ US Department of State, "Summary of the First Law of Currency Reform Promulgated by the Three Western Military Governors, Effective June 20, 1948," in *Documents on Germany, 1944-1985*, 147-149; Haydock, *City Under Siege*, 117-118, 130.

¹⁰ US Department of State, "Tripartite Statement Announcing Extension of the Western 'Deutsche Mark' as Currency in the Western Sectors of Berlin, Effective June 24, 1948," in *Documents on Germany, 1944-1985*, 149-150; Union of Soviet Socialist Republics, "Statement Issued by the Soviet Government on Withdrawal of the Soviet Representative From the Allied Kommandatura, Berlin, July 1, 1948," in *Documents on Germany, 1944-1985*, 151; Shlaim, *The United States and the Berlin Blockade*, 161-162; Haydock, *City Under Siege*, 135-136, 138; Turner, *The Two Germanies Since 1945*, 24.

¹¹ Haydock, *City Under Siege*, 140.

¹² US Department of State, "Account Issued by the Department of State on 'Soviet Interference With Access to Berlin' in the Period March 30-July 3, 1948," in *Documents on Germany, 1944-1985*, 152-156.

¹³ Haydock, *City Under Siege*, 9-11, 142; Robert C. Owen, *Air Mobility: A Brief History of the American Experience* (Washington, D.C.: Potomac Books, 2013), 70.

Forcibly breaking the blockade not only would have been suicidal but also would have risked the instigation of another world war. Yet, a retreat from Berlin would have had grave diplomatic consequences: the withdrawal of U.S. forces would have undoubtedly destroyed German trust.¹⁴ Three air corridors, 20-mile-wide flight lanes connecting western Germany with the U.S. Tempelhof and British Gatow airfields in Berlin, were the only unobstructed points of entry.¹⁵ Berlin, typically reliant on neighboring provinces for supplies, had barely enough food for 30 days.¹⁶ An airlift was the only possible solution.

Overcoming Logistical Issues

Historically, airlifts did not have a high success rate. The only victory up to that point was U.S. Brigadier General William Tunner's effort to supply Chinese troops over the Himalayas during WWII. Tunner volunteered to lead Operation Vittles; however, his Himalayan mission had access to more planes and less than half the delivery quota.¹⁷ When he took command on July 29, 1948, the budding operation was disorganized. The U.S. airlift's limited number of decrepit planes took off days behind schedule and carried random assortments of supplies.¹⁸ By mid-July, Berlin's conditions were grim. Rations suffered regular cutbacks,

¹⁴ Stephen E. Ambrose, *Americans at War* (Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 1997), 188; Owen, *Air Mobility*, 70; Shlaim, *The United States and the Berlin Blockade*, 115, 144-145.

¹⁵ Haydock, *City Under Siege*, 25-26, 42. At a June 29, 1945 meeting between American, British, and Soviet delegates, a supposedly temporary agreement was reached: the Soviets rejected Western requests for unlimited air travel to Berlin, and restricted the Western powers to one air corridor, one highway, one railway, and the air bases in Tempelhof and Gatow. The Allied Control Council, comprised of representatives from each occupying power, later increased the number of air corridors to three.

¹⁶ Ruth Andreas-Friedrich, *Battleground Berlin: Diaries 1945-1948*, trans. Anna Boerresen (New York: Paragon House, 1990), 130-131; Shlaim, *The United States and the Berlin Blockade*, 12.

¹⁷ Owen, *Air Mobility*, 3-4, 72-75; Haydock, *City Under Siege*, 148-149.

¹⁸ Andrei Cherny, *The Candy Bombers: The Untold Story of the Berlin Airlift and America's Finest Hour* (New York: G.P. Putnam's Sons, 2008), 272-273; Haydock, *City Under Siege*, 183-184; Owen, *Air Mobility*, 71-75;

hospitals had to reuse bandages, and households only received 25 minutes' worth of cooking fuel per day.¹⁹ To keep the German people alive, Operation Vittles needed to be considerably altered.

Operation Vittles, initially small in size, had to overcome the physical restrictions of Berlin to expand. Tunner collaborated with Great Britain's much smaller airlift, securing access to the British zone for its better weather and proximity to Berlin.²⁰ He also planned to supply the French sector of Berlin.²¹ Thus, the airlift evolved into a three-nation initiative, but the city's infrastructure still presented a challenge. Tall apartment buildings and factory smokestacks surrounding Tempelhof prevented a steady descent into Berlin. Therefore, planes were required to lose altitude at an accelerated rate.²² Additionally, General Clay demanded more airfields to meet the crucial coal quotas during winter. In Tegel, a borough in French-occupied Berlin, 17,000 Berliners driven to save their city worked day and night to construct a 5,500-foot runway, the longest in Europe, by November 5, 1948, two months ahead of schedule.²³ Still, the 200-foot-tall broadcast tower of the Soviet-backed Radio Berlin prevented the full operation of the airfield. After the Soviets ignored requests to move the tower, the French demolished the structure with dynamite on December 16, 1948, which provoked Soviet retaliation.²⁴ Notably, technology was key to addressing the harsh German winter. Ground crews enhanced their

Halvorsen, *The Berlin Candy Bomber*, 58.

¹⁹ Cherny, *The Candy Bombers*, 294-295.

²⁰ Halvorsen, *The Berlin Candy Bomber*, 22; Haydock, *City Under Siege*, 229-230.

²¹ Haydock, *City Under Siege*, 170.

²² Cherny, *The Candy Bombers*, 279-280; Haydock, *City Under Siege*, 30-33.

²³ Cherny, *The Candy Bombers*, 359, 392, 422, 456.

²⁴ Daniel F. Harrington, "*The Air Force Can Deliver Anything!*": *A History of the Berlin Airlift* (Washington, D.C.: USAFE Office of History, 2008), 56; Collier, *Bridge Across the Sky*, 145-146. In retribution, the Soviets ramped up their intimidation tactics. For examples of these tactics, see page 7 of this paper.

flashlight beams with Plexiglas cylinders to cut through thick fog and strapped jet engines onto trucks to defrost airplanes.²⁵ The physical challenges of Berlin's landscape did not stop Operation Vittles; instead, they reinforced collaboration among the three Western powers and sparked a new comradery between German laborers and the West.

As his systems came together, General Tunner implemented the final optimization of the airlift. His office, helped by President Truman, acquired over half the U.S. Air Force's transport planes and qualified crews.²⁶ An unbroken stream of planes traversed predetermined routes through the air corridors to and from Tempelhof, Gatow, and Tegel every few minutes.²⁷ General Clay once estimated that Berlin needed at least 4,500 tons of supplies a day.²⁸ By the spring of 1949, the U.S. airlift was transporting 5,000 to 6,000 tons daily; crews delivered necessities such as flour, milk, meat, fish, and coal (see Appendix C).²⁹ A special 24-hour Easter Sunday competition organized by Tunner produced 1,398 flights that delivered 12,941 tons of supplies.³⁰ The numbers once considered unachievable had become a reality. The treacherous landscape and notorious wintertime conditions required meticulous operation and unwavering dedication.

²⁵ Haydock, *City Under Siege*, 244.

²⁶ Gail S. Halvorsen, interview by author, October 24, 2019; Owen, *Air Mobility*, 70-71; Cherny, *The Candy Bombers*, 253, 312-314. The airlift grew from 30 old Douglas C-47s and two C-54s to 80 C-47s and 127 C-54s.

²⁷ Owen, *Air Mobility*, 77-79. Each plane averaged over four round trips a day.

²⁸ Haydock, *City Under Siege*, 148-149.

²⁹ Berlin Airlift Historical Foundation, *Spirit of Freedom*, November 16, 2019, Page Field, Fort Myers, Florida.

³⁰ Owen, *Air Mobility*, 81-82. By its conclusion, the Western powers' airlift produced a record 277,682 flights and delivered 2.3 million tons of supplies (Harrington, "*The Air Force Can Deliver Anything!*"), 109.

Through ingenuity and pinpoint management, Tunner had overcome the airlift's logistical difficulties so that the people of Berlin could weather the blockade.

Facing Soviet Meddling

Still, the Soviets implemented every tactic to maintain the blockade. Western aviators—prime targets of Soviet fearmongering—had to avoid straying outside of the narrow air corridors or risk being shot down. Soviet anti-aircraft and live-fire “exercises” clouded the air corridors with deadly flak and bullets.³¹ Their fighter jets buzzed dangerously close to airlift planes against the flow of traffic. One Western pilot remembered an instance in which 22 Soviet fighter jets surrounded him on all sides.³² By the end of the airlift, American pilots had recorded 733 cases of harassment: blinding searchlights (103); plane interference (173); radio jamming (82); and various ballistic, explosive, and chemical projectiles (364).³³ Nevertheless, airlift crews persevered in the face of near-constant intimidation tactics to keep the German people alive.

The airlift worked concordantly with diplomacy to break the Soviet blockade. Avoiding armed conflict while preserving Berlin's freedom was their ultimate goal. The Soviets presented Truman's diplomats with significant negotiating roadblocks by delaying concrete agreements with empty promises and vague proposals. Operation Vittles prolonged open negotiations until the Soviets were forced to accept an agreement to save face.³⁴ Humiliated by the airlift's success

³¹ Haydock, *City Under Siege*, 208, 224.

³² Gail S. Halvorsen, interview by author, October 24, 2019; Cherny, *The Candy Bombers*, 391; Collier, *Bridge Across the Sky*, 145-146.

³³ Collier, *Bridge Across the Sky*, 164.

³⁴ Harry S. Truman, “Statement by the President Following General Marshall's Return from Paris,” October 9, 1948, in *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, D.C.: United States Government Printing Office, 1964), 724-725; Shlaim, *The United States and the Berlin Blockade*, 210-211.

and aware of the blockade's negative publicity, the Soviets lifted the barrier on May 12, 1949.³⁵ The airlift provided vital public pressure that defied Soviet stalling to secure an unconditional end to the blockade.

Rebuilding Bridges

The airlift helped heal deep wounds that remained after WWII between the US and Germany. The June 1945 issue of *Time* described the Germans as “full of resentment” towards the American bombing of their homes and their defeat in WWII. The US implemented a brief policy of non-fraternization, under which soldiers were forbidden to talk to or even smile at Germans.³⁶ In 1946, gangs of Nazi thugs prowled the streets and attacked occupation forces.³⁷ According to contemporary polls at that time, Nazism rose because most Berliners would rather have had food under a dictatorship than starvation in a democracy.³⁸ When the airlift began, relations between Germany and the US were still fraught.

Lieutenant Gail Halvorsen permeated this cultural divide as the famous Candy Bomber. He joined the airlift as a first lieutenant from Bear River Valley, Utah.³⁹ During a 2019 interview in Orlando, Halvorsen still vividly remembered his first encounter with some of the impoverished children of Berlin, who were standing behind a wire fence at Tempelhof to watch

³⁵ Owen, *Air Mobility*, 82. For the official Soviet proclamation detailing the end of the blockade, see W.I. Chuikov and G.S. Lukjanenko, “Order Number 56 of the Soviet Military Administration in Germany Lifting the Berlin Blockade Effective May 12, 1949, Issued May 9, 1949,” in *Documents on Germany, 1944-1985*, 258-260.

³⁶ Cherny, *The Candy Bombers*, 85, 108-109.

³⁷ Owen, *Air Mobility*, 82-83.

³⁸ Lucius D. Clay, *Decision in Germany* (Garden City: Doubleday & Company, Inc., 1950), 263-264; Cherny, *The Candy Bombers*, 124-126.

³⁹ Haydock, *City Under Siege*, 168.

planes take off and land (see Appendix D). They surprisingly asked Halvorsen for facts about his plane rather than food. Their innocence during the conversation led Halvorsen to give them two sticks of gum, his daily candy ration. To his amazement, they divided the gum and wrappers, passing them around so each child could breathe in the minty scent. Their demonstration of friendship during such a bleak time inspired Halvorsen. He promised to bring more candy; he would drop the sweets from his plane and identify himself by wiggling his wings, a signature trick he developed for signaling his parents while flying over the family farm.⁴⁰ Launching the soon-to-be-famous “Operation Little Vittles” on a small scale, Halvorsen pooled his friends’ candy rations and dropped them via handkerchief parachutes.⁴¹ Several weeks later, summoned to General Tunner’s office, Halvorsen feared a court-martial for his unauthorized candy drops. Instead, Tunner sensed Halvorsen’s humanitarian potential and sent the lieutenant on a U.S. press tour of popular talk shows. Newspapers pumped out stories about the Utah farm boy.⁴² Operation Little Vittles gained national support. It offered Americans a moral justification for supporting the airlift: the need to help starving Berliner children.⁴³ Citizens across the US donated to the Candy Bomber; the owner of the influential Huyler Candy Company secured support from Hershey’s, Mars, and other sweets manufacturers to provide 13,000 pounds of treats.⁴⁴ With Lieutenant Halvorsen at its helm, Operation Little Vittles expanded into an effort manned by roughly 30 pilots.⁴⁵ This was a far cry from the operation’s humble beginnings, in

⁴⁰ Gail S. Halvorsen, interview by author, October 24, 2019; Cherny, *The Candy Bombers*, 57-61.

⁴¹ Gail S. Halvorsen, interview by author, October 24, 2019.

⁴² Cherny, *The Candy Bombers*, 351-353, 384-387; Owen, *Air Mobility*, 80.

⁴³ Cherny, *The Candy Bombers*, 354-355.

⁴⁴ Cherny, *The Candy Bombers*, 388-389, 483-484; Haydock, *City Under Siege*, 234-236.

⁴⁵ Cherny, *The Candy Bombers*, 409.

which Halvorsen had to cut up his own shirts to make parachutes.⁴⁶ Encouraged by many letters from East Berliner children, Halvorsen also flew over that Soviet-controlled region to drop candy. However, upon landing after one such trip, he was informed of an official Soviet complaint about his deliveries. Still, Halvorsen later learned that some of those children did receive their sweets.⁴⁷ By January 11, 1949, when Halvorsen's tour of duty ended, the operation had dropped 23 tons of candy.⁴⁸ Halvorsen humanized the airlift and connected the spirits of average Americans with the people of Germany through something that started as a small, selfless act.

Thanks to Halvorsen and Operation Vittles as a whole, Berlin rose up to stand alongside its former adversary and new ally. For his part, Halvorsen received daily piles of thank-you letters from German children, most of which he kept.⁴⁹ One 10-year-old Berliner wrote, "Remember us children and we will remember you our whole life."⁵⁰ Just a few years before, these children had been Hitler's prime target of indoctrination.⁵¹ Over the course of the operation, the Germans grew to see the Western powers as protectors of their freedom.⁵² Emboldened by the airlift's moral symbolism, Berlin rejected the USSR's offers of food and

⁴⁶ Haydock, *City Under Siege*, 235.

⁴⁷ Halvorsen, *The Berlin Candy Bomber*, 129, 183; Haydock, *City Under Siege*, 235. In the complaint, the USSR considered the candy drops a "capitalistic trick," and the drops over East Berlin ended.

⁴⁸ Gail S. Halvorsen, interview by author, October 24, 2019; Cherny, *The Candy Bombers*, 505.

⁴⁹ Gail S. Halvorsen, interview by author, October 24, 2019.

⁵⁰ Cherny, *The Candy Bombers*, 411.

⁵¹ Gail S. Halvorsen, interview by author, October 24, 2019; Cherny, *The Candy Bombers*, 356-358.

⁵² Richard Reeves, *Daring Young Men: The Heroism and Triumph of the Berlin Airlift, June 1948-May 1949* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2010), 138; Turner, *The Two Germanies Since 1945*, 29-30.

supplies.⁵³ Less than one percent of Berliners chose to relinquish their Western allegiance and accept Soviet ration cards that promised fresh meat and vegetables. Moreover, the majority of Berliners now shifted their views to champion a new German democracy.⁵⁴ Decades later when Halvorsen returned to Berlin, people stopped to thank him “every 20 feet”; those who were children during the airlift burst into tears of joy at the sight of him.⁵⁵ At a commemorative event held inside the C-54 *Spirit of Freedom* (see Appendix E), one Berliner told Halvorsen about catching a parachute of one Hershey bar and spreading it out over a week, cherishing that “someone in America cared” enough to give him this “hope that someday we would be free.”⁵⁶ The airlift was a catalyst of hope for the German people, sparking democratic revitalization and reducing anti-West sentiment.

Conclusion

The Berlin airlift conquered logistical barriers, Soviet interference, and cultural animosities to save Berlin from starvation and Soviet expansionism. As President Truman concluded, “Berlin had become a symbol of America’s...dedication to the cause of freedom.”⁵⁷ Never before had a city been supported solely via air, at the pace of one plane every three minutes for over a year. However, the airlift also foreshadowed decades of impasse between the West and East during the Cold War. Indeed, the Berlin airlift can be considered that conflict’s

⁵³ Reeves, *Daring Young Men*, 138.

⁵⁴ Cherny, *The Candy Bombers*, 343-345.

⁵⁵ Gail S. Halvorsen and Denise H. Williams, “Praise for the Candy Bomber,” in *The Candy Bomber: Untold Stories of the Berlin Airlift’s Uncle Wiggly Wings* (Springville: Horizon Publishers, 2017); Gail S. Halvorsen, interview by author, October 24, 2019.

⁵⁶ Halvorsen, *The Berlin Candy Bomber*, 227-228.

⁵⁷ Harry S. Truman, *Memoirs by Harry S. Truman*, 130.

first victory, despite the loss of 48 airmen in the endeavor.⁵⁸ It encouraged German politicians to write a constitution for the country of West Germany, which absorbed the French, British, and U.S. occupation zones. The new nation joined the North Atlantic Treaty Organization in 1955, an act that symbolically reformed its ties with the Western world, which had suffered at the hands of Nazi belligerency.⁵⁹ The airlift's democratizing influence eventually led to Germany's reunification years later.⁶⁰ The year 2020 marks the 30th anniversary of this event.⁶¹ Lieutenant Gail Halvorsen, beloved hero of the people of Berlin, witnessed Germany's rebirth. He continued the practice of dropping candy parachutes in later humanitarian airlifts, including Operation Provide Promise, which targeted refugees in Bosnia.⁶² Halvorsen retired as a colonel and pursued philanthropic passions; he currently teaches K-12 children about military service through his nonprofit organization.⁶³ After General Lucius Clay's death on April 16, 1978, the citizens of Berlin installed a marker at his grave in West Point. It reads, "We thank the defender of our freedom."⁶⁴ Berliners continue to commemorate the service of those who conducted Operation Vittles; the bonds forged by breaking the Soviet blockade are a testament to the new era ushered in by this humanitarian mission.

⁵⁸ Harrington, "*The Air Force Can Deliver Anything!*", 111-112. Most fatalities were caused by crashes on landing or takeoff, bad weather, midair accidents, or engine failure.

⁵⁹ "The North Atlantic Treaty," Opened for signature April 4, 1949, in *Documents on Germany, 1944-1985*, 209-212; Owen, *Air Mobility*, 82-83.

⁶⁰ Daniel L. Haulman, *Wings of Hope: The U.S. Air Force and Humanitarian Airlift Operations* (Washington, D.C: Air Force History and Museums Program, 2007), 4.

⁶¹ Haydock, *City Under Siege*, 285-286.

⁶² Halvorsen, *The Berlin Candy Bomber*, 198-204.

⁶³ Gail S. Halvorsen, interview by author, October 24, 2019.

⁶⁴ Haydock, *City Under Siege*, 288.

Appendix A:

Historical Events Around Berlin Airlift

Date	Event
6/20/1948	New deutsche mark is introduced in the Western powers' German occupation zones (excluding Berlin)
6/24/1948	The Soviet blockade cuts off all access (road/rail/berge) to West Berlin from western Germany
6/26/1948	The Berlin Airlift (Operation Vittles) begins
7/20/1948	Lieutenant Gail S. Halvorsen begins Operation Little Vittles to drop candies to Berliner children
11/5/1948	The construction of Tegel Airfield, located in the French occupation zone in Berlin, is completed ahead of schedule
4/4/1949	The North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) is formed
5/12/1949	The USSR lifts the Berlin blockade
5/23/1949	The Federal Republic of Germany, also known as West Germany, is formed
9/30/1949	Last airlift flight is operated by American forces

A timeline of the major events during the Berlin airlift.

Cherny, *The Candy Bombers: The Untold Story of the Berlin Airlift and America's Finest Hour.*

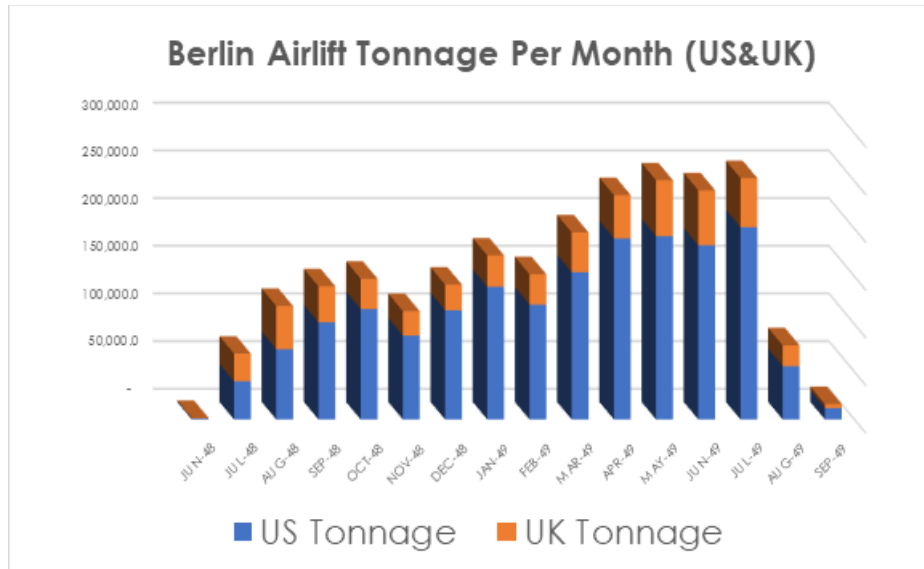
Appendix B:



A map depicting Germany's occupational borders from 1948-1949, as well as the three air corridors and the main airlift fields of Tempelhof, Gatow, and Tegel.

XNR Productions, Inc., *The German Air Corridors*, in *The Berlin Airlift* by Michael Burgan (Minneapolis: Compass Point Books, 2007), 28.

Appendix C:



	US Tonnage	UK Tonnage	Total Tonnage	US Flights	UK Flights	Total Flights	Ton /Flight
Jun-48	1,199.0	347.0	1,546.0	474	139	613	2.52
Jul-48	39,971.0	29,034.7	69,005.7	7,550	5,978	13,528	5.10
Aug-48	73,658.1	45,344.5	119,002.6	9,770	8,372	18,142	6.56
Sep-48	101,846.7	37,776.2	139,622.9	12,904	6,825	19,729	7.08
Oct-48	115,792.2	31,788.6	147,580.8	12,135	6,100	18,235	8.09
Nov-48	87,979.3	25,608.6	113,587.9	9,047	4,305	13,352	8.51
Dec-48	114,567.2	26,870.9	141,438.1	11,660	4,832	16,492	8.58
Jan-49	139,218.8	32,740.4	171,959.2	14,095	5,397	19,492	8.82
Feb-49	120,394.6	31,846.1	152,240.7	12,043	5,043	17,086	8.91
Mar-49	154,475.0	41,685.7	196,160.7	15,530	6,633	22,163	8.85
Apr-49	189,957.2	45,406.5	235,363.7	19,130	6,896	26,026	9.04
May-49	192,271.4	58,547.1	250,818.5	19,366	8,352	27,718	9.05
Jun-49	182,722.9	57,602.1	240,325.0	18,451	8,094	26,545	9.05
Jul-49	201,532.2	51,557.8	253,090.0	20,488	7,104	27,592	9.17
Aug-49	55,940.0	21,818.6	77,758.6	5,886	3,098	8,984	8.66
Sep-49	12,047.1	4,104.1	16,151.2	1,434	551	1,985	8.14
Total	1,783,572.7	542,078.9	2,325,651.6	189,963	87,719	277,682	8.38

A bar graph displaying the tonnage delivered by the Berlin airlift each month. Note that the United States carried the majority of deliveries.

Harrington, *“The Air Force Can Deliver Anything!”: A History of the Berlin Airlift*, 109.

Appendix D:



The author (left) and Colonel Gail S. Halvorsen (right) during an in-person interview conducted at the 2019 Airlift/Tanker Association Expo.

“Picture of Author and Colonel Gail S. Halvorsen,” World Center Marriot, Orlando, Florida.

Personal photograph by author. October 24, 2019.

Appendix E:



The C-54 Spirit of Freedom. The C-54 was one of the main airplane models used in the Berlin airlift. This specific example has been converted into a flying museum.

“Photograph of the C-54 Spirit of Freedom Flying Museum,” Page Field, Fort Myers, Florida.

Personal photograph by author. November 16, 2019.

Works Cited

Primary Sources

Andreas-Friedrich, Ruth. *Battleground Berlin: Diaries 1945-1948*. Translated by Anna Boerresen. New York: Paragon House, 1990.

This book is a collection of diaries written by Ruth Andreas-Friedrich, a Berliner who chronicled her experiences in Germany post-WWII leading up to the Soviet blockade. Andreas-Friedrich's descriptions of Berlin's precarious situation and its lack of resources support the assertion that the city could not survive isolated on its own. This primary source is a good worms-eye view retelling of Germany's pre-airlift years.

Berlin Airlift Historical Foundation. *Spirit of Freedom*. November 16, 2019. Page Field, Fort Myers, Florida.

The C-54 *Spirit of Freedom* is a flying museum dedicated to the history of the Berlin airlift. It features contemporary historical artifacts including authentic candy packages that were dropped during Operation Little Vittles, as well as information regarding the aircraft used in the airlift. First and foremost, the *Spirit of Freedom* provides a historically accurate look into the iconic plane that supported the airlift. Such information is key to building a holistic representation of Operation Little Vittles. In addition, the museum included other noteworthy historical exhibitions that contributed details to various aspects of the paper.

Chuikov, W.I. and Lukjanchenko, G.S. "Order Number 56 of the Soviet Military Administration in Germany Lifting the Berlin Blockade Effective May 12, 1949, Issued May 9, 1949." In *Documents on Germany, 1944-1985*, 258-260. Washington, D.C.: US Department of State, Office of the Historian, Bureau of Public Affairs, 1985.

This order, made by the Soviet occupation authorities in Germany to lift the Berlin blockade, is a key primary source. It gives concrete contemporary details about how the USSR finally relinquished its grip on the city. All travel restrictions imposed from March 1, 1948 onwards were to be lifted. The order reopened the way for transportation, commercial shipping, and communication lines. The USSR ended the blockade on roads and railways, permitting civilian and military personnel from the Western powers to cross into Berlin without the need for permits issued by Soviet soldiers. The shipment of goods into the city was also restored. Interestingly, the Soviets backed off on the currency issue, their main scapegoat for the blockade, and allowed the Western Deutsche Marks, as well as other forms of payment, to be used in Berlin. This document supports the argument that the Berlin airlift did in fact break the barrier and supply the city.

Clay, Lucius D. *Decision in Germany*. Garden City: Doubleday & Company, Inc., 1950.

General Lucius D. Clay was the military governor of the American occupation zone in Germany. *Decision in Germany* recounts important facts and details from 1945 to 1949 that may have been overlooked by a secondary source. General Clay provides firsthand insight into the sociopolitical situation of Berlin. He realized that without proper food or supplies, the city would continue to harbor doubts about democracy, and its citizens would be more susceptible to Nazism or Soviet influences. Such a conclusion reinforces the need for the Berlin airlift.

Forrestal, James. *The Forrestal Diaries*. Edited by Walter Millis and E.S. Duffield. New York: The Viking Press, 1951.

James Forrestal served as Secretary of Defense during the Berlin crisis. His close relationship with the military administration of the United States, especially in relation to President Truman, gives this primary source a special insight to the commander-in-chief's mindset. Truman's determination to stay in Berlin was integral to the commencement of a full-scale Operation Vittles. Thus, Forrestal's perspective of Truman's hard-fought decision against his Cabinet to remain involved in the city expands the reader's understanding of the United States' actions at the time.

Halvorsen, Gail S. *The Berlin Candy Bomber*. Springville: Horizon Publishers, 2010.

This book, by Gail S. Halvorsen himself, is a first-hand account of the famous Candy Bomber's experiences before, during, and after the Berlin airlift, a clearly indispensable source for this topic. The source conveys Halvorsen's thoughts and opinions about General William Tunner, the children of Berlin, and the long-term impact of Operation Vittles. Furthermore, as an avid amateur photographer, Halvorsen included contemporary photographs of the initiative within this book, which enhance its holistic explanation. Operation Little Vittles and the Candy Bomber were a key part of the airlift's humanitarian goal. Halvorsen's recounting of his press tour in New York and the gratitude of Berliner children demonstrate how the airlift broke cultural barriers.

Halvorsen, Gail S. Interview by author. October 24, 2019.

The interview was conducted at the annual Airlift/Tanker Association (A/TA) Conference in Orlando, Florida. The A/TA is a nonprofit organization dedicated to promoting the needs and interests of air mobility forces. The organizers were initially apprehensive about granting access to a civilian, as the conference is mostly targeted towards active duty military and private contractors. In addition, the event coordinator confirmed that security was very stringent due to the presence of high-ranking military personnel. Ultimately, I was granted access to Colonel Halvorsen's speaking event and an interview before and after his presentation. Gail Halvorsen was kind and insightful,

providing in-depth information and first-hand accounts of his experiences. His opinions, emotions, and memories could not have been obtained from any other source. His altruistic philosophy was inspiring. He described the ways in which he broke both physical, diplomatic, and cultural barriers through his actions. The interview furnished key evidence that affirmed the Candy Bomber's lasting impact on the outcome of the Cold War.

Halvorsen, Gail S. and Williams, Denise H. *The Candy Bomber: Untold Stories of the Berlin Airlift's Uncle Wiggly Wings*. Springville: Horizon Publishers, 2017.

Yet another book published by Gail S. Halvorsen, *The Candy Bomber* is a testament to his character and impact. It includes testimonials from various sources that praise Halvorsen's work and his moral principles. This publication helps to highlight the importance of Halvorsen's Operation Little Vittles in the larger airlift and its impact on Berlin's children. The author's copy of the book was autographed with a kind message by Colonel Halvorsen himself, who graciously granted a personal interview that was cited elsewhere in this bibliography.

"The North Atlantic Treaty." Opened for signature April 4, 1949. In *Documents on Germany, 1944-1985*, 209-212. Washington, D.C.: US Department of State, Office of the Historian, Bureau of Public Affairs, 1985.

The North Atlantic Treaty, signed in Washington D.C. on April 4, 1949, formed the eponymous organization that brought the United States and many Western European nations closer together. It formed tighter military and diplomatic bonds. This primary source supports the assertion that the Berlin airlift had long-lasting impacts. Multiple sources suggest that NATO was formed because of relationships forged during the Berlin airlift. This demonstrates how the Berlin airlift continued to break barriers long after its conclusion.

Truman, Harry S. *Memoirs by Harry S. Truman*. Vol. 2 of Years of Trial and Hope. Garden City: Doubleday and Company, 1956.

President Harry Truman's memoirs include a section about his experience dealing with the Berlin blockade and airlift. As a key primary source, it gives an important first-hand perspective on how the U.S. leadership dealt with Soviet aggression. Truman was one of the lone supporters of the airlift in his administration. His agenda and decisions shed light on the airlift's success in a time of crisis. As the nation's top diplomat, his recordings of the complex US-Soviet negotiations enhance the reader's understanding of the diplomatic barriers at the time.

Truman, Harry S. "Statement by the President Following General Marshall's Return from Paris."

October 9, 1948. In *Public Papers of the President of the United States: Harry S. Truman: Containing the Public Messages, Speeches, and Statements of the President, January 1 to December 31, 1948*, 724-725. Washington, D.C.: United States Government Printing Office, 1964.

This official publication of the United States government is a compilation of President Truman's public documents during 1948. Truman oversaw the diplomatic negotiations between the US and the USSR. His accounts in this statement affirm that his diplomats were working hard to break through Soviet stonewalling. This primary source supports the argument that the Berlin airlift was key to the eventual diplomatic success, as Operation Vittles kept the Berliners alive long enough so that the Soviets had to lift the blockade to save face.

Union of Soviet Socialist Republics. "Statement Issued by the Soviet Government on Withdrawal of the Soviet Representative From the Allied Kommandatura, Berlin, July 1, 1948." In *Documents on Germany, 1944-1985*, 151. Washington, D.C.: US Department of State, Office of the Historian, Bureau of Public Affairs, 1985.

This statement printed by the USSR's publication *Soviet News* gives the official Soviet stance on why they pulled out of the Allied Kommandatura. Although it includes some historical inaccuracies, these falsifications are key to understanding the big picture at the time. By comparing this source to statements from the Western occupation powers, one can better understand how both sides justified their stances on the conflict. Clearly, the currency dispute was a point of issue.

US Department of State. "Account Issued by the Department of State on 'Soviet Interference With Access to Berlin' in the Period March 30-July 3, 1948." In *Documents on Germany, 1944-1985*, 152-156. Washington, D.C.: US Department of State, Office of the Historian, Bureau of Public Affairs, 1985.

This report published by the US State Department is a day-by-day account of the Soviet government's implementation of various regulations which combined to form the Berlin blockade. It starts from the initial Soviet announcement that all military convoys into Berlin would be searched, and then recounts every additional restriction tacked on until by July 3 all land and water traffic to and from Berlin had been shut down. This primary source gives excellent concrete details with the time and location of each new barrier that the Soviets put up. In addition, it emphasizes how the Western occupation powers attempted to get in through land and water but were stopped by aloof Soviet diplomats and groups of armed Soviet troops. This shows how the eventual Berlin airlift was the best way to break this blockade.

US Department of State. "Summary of the First Law of Currency Reform Promulgated by the

Three Western Military Governors, Effective June 20, 1948.” In *Documents on Germany, 1944-1985*, 147-149. Washington, D.C.: US Department of State, Office of the Historian, Bureau of Public Affairs, 1985.

This joint announcement from the Department of State and Department of the Army on June 18, 1948, details the enactment of the new Deutsche Mark currency in the Western occupation zones of Germany. Since the currency dispute between competing Western and Soviet marks was the major catalyst for the Berlin blockade, this source provides an explanation of the American position at the time. It gives concrete details on the transition process by which the Western occupation powers hoped to reduce the money supply and thus solve the inflation problem.

US Department of State. “Tripartite Statement Announcing Extension of the Western ‘Deutsche Mark’ as Currency in the Western Sectors of Berlin, Effective June 24, 1948.” In *Documents on Germany, 1944-1985*, 149-150. Washington, D.C.: US Department of State, Office of the Historian, Bureau of Public Affairs, 1985.

This State Department document announces the enactment of the new Deutsche Mark currency in West Berlin. While Berlin was in principle governed by all four occupation powers, this statement accuses the Soviets of stonewalling viable cooperative efforts. The announcement serves mostly to justify the Western response to the Soviet diplomatic barrier. This document helps the reader understand how the animosity between the two blocs and the currency dispute deteriorated into a full-scale blockade.

Secondary Sources

Ambrose, Stephen E. *Americans at War*. Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 1997.

Ambrose’s book is useful primarily for its analysis on the evolution of conflict during the 20th century. Specifically, he highlights the effect of nuclear weaponry on international affairs. The apprehension to incite armed conflict brought about by the horrors of the atom bomb helps a present-day reader better comprehend the stakes of global diplomacy at the time.

Cherny, Andrei. *The Candy Bombers: The Untold Story of the Berlin Airlift and America’s Finest Hour*. New York: G.P Putnam’s Sons, 2008.

The Candy Bombers is an excellent book overall in regard to its retelling of the Berlin airlift’s history. Notably, Andrei Cherny’s discussions of psychological impacts and larger social shifts are extremely valuable. They help support the assertion that the airlift broke more than just a physical Soviet barrier. For example, Cherny demonstrates the evolution of conflict from a physical test of bloodshed during WWII to a battle of ideals

during the blockade. As such, the US and USSR fought over the allegiance and spirit of Berlin. The airlift succeeded in breaking the sociocultural barrier between the US and Germany that had formed as a result of WWII and Nazism. Cherny analyzes how this newfound relationship carried over into later years.

Collier, Richard. *Bridge Across the Sky: The Berlin Blockade and Airlift, 1948-1949*. New York: McGraw-Hill Book Company, 1978.

Richard Collier's book is notable for three key reasons. The first reason is its superb usage of contemporary sources to gain information. Collier explains that over 500 American, British, French, and German people who experienced the blockade and airlift themselves provided testimonials, interviews, documents, and memories that contributed to the wealth of knowledge in this book. The second reason is its detailed statistics on Soviet interference with the airlift. Collier has managed to compile a very specific list of instances in which the Soviets used various methods to hinder the airlift's function. These facts enhance the reader's understanding of the blockade's danger, which in turn emphasizes the achievement of breaking through the barrier with the subsequent airlift. The third reason is the nearly day-by-day timeline which spans the entire lifetime of the airlift and highlights a plethora of key events. Collier gives a place and time to important occurrences, which is a feat in itself considering the chaotic happenings during that period.

Harrington, Daniel F. *"The Air Force Can Deliver Anything!": A History of the Berlin Airlift*. Washington, D.C.: USAFE Office of History, 2008.

Daniel F. Harrington re-examines the history of Berlin airlift. The book successfully demonstrates the humanitarian efforts of US to keep a city alive, against all odds, solely by air. It is important to note that the author conducted extensive research using data from the United States Air Force and the British Royal Air Force. Harrington presents interesting statistics that substantiate the magnitude of the airlift's achievements.

Haulman, Daniel L. *Wings of Hope: The U.S. Air Force and Humanitarian Airlift Operations*. Washington, D.C.: Air Force History and Museums Program, 2007.

Haulman's book provides insight into the long-term impacts of the Berlin airlift on international politics. *Wings of Hope* points out that the Berlin airlift facilitated the eventual reunification of East and West Germany. In addition, it gives useful statistics about Operation Vittles, including how many American and British planes participated in the airlift.

Haydock, Michael D. *City Under Siege: The Berlin Blockade and Airlift, 1948-1949*. Washington, D.C.: Batsford Brassey, 1999.

Michael D. Haydock's work provides a balanced history of the Berlin crisis from multiple viewpoints: American, British, French, German, and Soviet. This allows the reader to understand the evolution of the situation's complex inner-workings and grasp how the basic currency dispute in Berlin was a proxy battle for larger competing agendas between the East and West, and how such a clash ultimately resulted in the Berlin blockade. In addition, Haydock gives an in-depth look into the bureaucratic barriers that the leaders of the airlift faced. The resolve and intelligence of prominent military figures such as Major General Tunner and General Clay are heightened by their perseverance through jurisdiction arguments with multiple groups ranging from the State Department to the Air Force to the Soviets themselves. Haydock presents a problem-and-solution structure to this chronologically oriented book that effectively highlights how each barrier was formed and eventually overcome. If one had to quibble, the author could have included explicit dates of historical moments.

Owen, Robert C. *Air Mobility: A Brief History of the American Experience*. Washington, D.C.: Potomac Books, 2013.

Robert C. Owen walks the reader through a chronological yet impressively technical retelling of air mobility history. His clarification of key aeronautical terms ensures that this paper uses the standard terminology of this field. His focus on the aircraft and policies of the airlift elaborates on an important aspect of the barrier-breaking event. The work highlights how the political situation gradually evolved to necessitate such a large-scale airlift, and how the technology and tactics evolved alongside the growth of Operation Vittles. Finally, Owen links the events of the Berlin airlift to the innovation of new technologies in later wars.

Photograph of the C-54 Spirit of Freedom Flying Museum. Page Field, Fort Myers, Florida.
Personal photograph by author. November 16, 2019.

This flying museum is a retrofitted Douglas C-54 transport airplane, which is the same model used during the airlift. Colonel Gail Halvorsen actually flew in this exact plane during commemorative events in Berlin. The museum is operated by the Berlin Airlift Historical Foundation.

Picture of Author and Colonel Gail S. Halvorsen. World Center Marriot, Orlando, Florida.
Personal photograph by author. October 24, 2019.

This photograph that depicts the author and Colonel Gail S. Halvorsen was taken during a personal interview conducted with the "Berlin Candy Bomber." This photo is a testament to Colonel Halvorsen's friendly personality and unwavering dedication to service. His personal experience, knowledge, and generosity with his time that helped improve this paper are greatly appreciated.

Reeves, Richard. *Daring Young Men: The Heroism and Triumph of the Berlin Airlift, June 1948-May 1949*. New York: Simon & Schuster, 2010.

Richard Reeves' book provides useful pieces of additional knowledge that help fill in some gaps of knowledge to create a more holistic image of the airlift. He sources his information from a multitude of firsthand accounts, including diaries, military records, and transcripts. Yet, he balances his historical analysis with entertaining storytelling. The book, which spans the beginning of the airlift to the end of the blockade, conveys an enjoyable story that underscores the most notable facts of the time period.

Shlaim, Avi. *The United States and the Berlin Blockade, 1948-1949: A Study in Crisis Decision-Making*. Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1983.

An Israeli historian and professor at the University of Oxford, Avi Shlaim has written a book that is an excellent American-focused account of the blockade. It centers on the actions of the US and its impacts on other nations such as Germany and the USSR. This source clearly explains the barriers faced by the US: military, diplomatic, weather, technological, and bureaucratic. In each instance, Shlaim identifies how the US overcame these barriers. Furthermore, he highlights the long-term impacts of the U.S. actions, which help the reader understand the significance of the airlift. Notably, Shlaim's sections on US-USSR diplomacy were the most helpful portions.

Turner, Henry Ashby. *The Two Germanies since 1945*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1987.

Henry Ashby Turner's encapsulation of Germany's tumultuous post-WWII history provides a wonderful factual framework for the paper. His chronological explanation of events highlights how each action led to the eventual Soviet blockade. He links together various economic, political, and ideological causes to paint a vivid picture of the decimated German economy and the pressing need for Allied support. Turner argues that the Berlin airlift broke not only the physical barrier of the Soviet blockade, but also the cultural and diplomatic barriers that had formed between Germany and the Western Allies.

XNR Productions, Inc. *The German Air Corridors*. In *The Berlin Airlift* by Michael Burgan. Minneapolis: Compass Point Books, 2007.

This image depicts the three air corridors that linked western Germany to Berlin. These air corridors were essential to the operation of the Berlin airlift; thus, including this picture in the appendix of this paper helps the reader visualize the contemporary geography of the region. Furthermore, this map highlights the occupation power in each sector of Germany, including the four sectors of Berlin. This is useful in representing the

four-power government of the country and identifying which victorious Allied power controlled each portion. Finally, the map indicates the location of the three main airfields used in the airlift: Tempelhof, Gatow, and Tegel. Such markers are a good addition to the reader's overall understanding of the airlift's physical scope.