

The Berlin Airlift – I

Lead: By July 1948 the Soviet Union no longer was willing to tolerate West Berlin.

Intro.: *A Moment in Time* with Dan Roberts.

As the end of World War II drew near, the alliance that had hammered Germany into submission began to fall apart. After the war, the Soviet Union forced communist governments on most of those Eastern European nations its army had occupied and erected barriers to impede communications, trade and travel

between East and West. Yet, it was Germany that would prove to be the most serious irritant between the two emerging Cold War coalitions. The Soviets occupied the eastern zone while the western zones of Germany were administered by the United States, France and Britain.

In agreements reached at the Allied wartime conference at Yalta in early 1945 the City of Berlin received the same general division as the nation as a whole. Four nations, four zones. The Soviets treated their section of Berlin as if it were conquered territory, forcibly transferring skilled workers back to Russia, failing to clean up the wartime bomb damage or only repairing destroyed public works such

as sewage and water systems. The Allies, most especially the United States, began to spend billions of dollars to repair the economies and societies of Europe many of which made their way to Germany and West Berlin. Gradually a new city began to emerge from the rubble of war in marked contrast to the pitiful municipality just across the barrier East Berlin.

In February 1948 at a conference in London, the Allies made plans to unify the western zones of Germany and Berlin into a national state with a single stable currency. This the Soviets refused to accept and began to restrict the flow of supplies to Berlin isolated

110 miles inside the Soviet Zone. Next time: A choking city is relieved by air.

At the University of Richmond, this is Dan Roberts.

Resources

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