A Look Back at the Berlin Blockade and Airlift (1961)

Abstract

This clip is taken from a propaganda film titled *Journey across Berlin* produced by the U.S. Information Service (USIS) in 1961. The film recaps some of the major developments in Berlin's postwar history from the early days of the occupation to the city's becoming the main battleground of the Cold War. The clip featured here tells the story of the Berlin blockade and airlift from the American perspective.

Source

/Abandoning agreements they had made, the Russians blocked off access routes. West Berlin was cut off from the free world. Supplies dwindled rapidly. Although the free Berliners were resolved not to yield to Soviet pressure, the outlook was dark.

/The response of the non-communist world was the Berlin Airlift. For the next 11 months, after the Russians left the Berliners to starve, American, British, and French planes landed one after another at the airports of West Berlin.

/Into the besieged city came supplies of food, coal, petroleum. A massive airlift unequaled in history.

/Now there was bread again. Coal to power the machines in the factories. Now there was again precious medicine for the sick, the helpless, and the young. And especially for the young even a few candies now and then – the idea of the men who flew the airlift to sweeten those grim days a little for the kids of Berlin.

/I was in Berlin again during the airlift. I remember planes landing day and night. There was time for only a brief rest before the airmen flew back to West Germany for another load. And in they came again, through fog and bad weather, whatever the elements. Some brave men made their last flight in that Berlin Airlift.

/April 1949. The planes were still coming with no end in sight. The Russian blockade was a failure. Accordingly, the Russians admitted defeat. A new agreement signed in New York between the USSR and the United States reaffirmed the removal of all restrictions on communications, transportation, and trade between West Berlin and the Western zones of Germany.

/Supplies of food came into the city again – by barge, rail, road as well as air. But the Berliners would never forget those airmen who died so Berlin could maintain freedom in her hour of peril. And near Tempelhof airport stands a monument to those who made the last flight. To the bridge of friendship between the free world and the people of the city.

Source: *Journey across Berlin*, USA, 1961. NARA. NAID: 49495

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