

Berlin: Fracture Point

The firm of Uncle Sam & John Bull, flying grocers, kept the Western Allies in the Battle for Berlin last week.

The U.S., using two-engined C-47's, the Army's World War II "workhorse," and four-engined C-54's, lugged 3 to 7 tons of food a trip over the Soviet land blockade into Templehof airdrome, Berlin. The British also lent considerable support to "Operation Victuals." They flew big Yorks and Dakotas into the city's Gatow airfield, landing planes in one period at the rate of one every six minutes.

If the pace continues, the U.S. and British estimated, by mid-July there will be enough food in Berlin's stockpile to feed the 2 million Germans in the western sectors of the capital until Sept. 1.

Supplying coal and fuel oil was another problem. As June ended, Berlin had a 28-day supply of coal. But that was only for hospitals, public utilities, food-processing plants, and not for hard goods factories. Berlin needs 3,000 to 4,000 tons of coal a day, and the best the food-carrying transports could do was 1,100 tons a day.



N.Y. Her. Trib. Inc.

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Back to Earth. At week's end the U.S. was toying with the idea of using Berlin's Olympic Bowl, site of the 1936 Olympic Games, as a "catcher's mitt," to deliver coal on the fly. One experimental run of this type was tried, but most American experts feared air transport simply couldn't do the job. So did the British, apparently, for Sir Brian Robertson, Britain's military governor in Germany, again demanded that the Russians lift their blockade by reopening the railroad and the Autobahn, Hitler-built superhighway which runs into Berlin from the west. Three weeks ago the Russians had closed the railroad, ostensibly because of "technical troubles" and they stopped traffic on the highway to "repair" a bridge over the Elbe river.

Robertson called the blockade "a ruthless act against humanity which finds no parallel in the history of the world." But the Russians continued to enforce the blockade, with broad hints that it was imposed to force a Four Power conference to review the entire German situation.

Meanwhile, the Kommandatura, the four-power organization which runs Berlin, sputtered to a stop last week. The Russians tersely announced that it had "ceased" to exist."

Come on. On Tuesday, the Western Allies delivered a sharply worded protest to Russia. This might set the stage for Four Power talks. Moscow would welcome such a conference since it would give impetus to Russia's stalled campaign to force the U.S., Britain and France out of Berlin, and, eventually, all of Germany.

Next Stop. Russia might well welcome such a conference. The "starvation siege" has been a failure. So has the Soviet campaign to win the support of the German people. Col. Frank L. Howley, American Military Governor in Berlin, estimates that only 3% of the German people favor the Russians.

The Russian strategy would be to go into a conference, make minor concessions with the idea of getting a working hand and trying to wreck the German recovery program from within.