

## The UN's Humanitarian Airlift

In May 1945 Reich's Admiral Doenitz signed official unconditional surrender documents demanded by the big 4 powers and the War in Europe was over. Japan, with two cities destroyed by A-Bombs, surrendered August 1945. World War 2 was officially over. Occupation duties began and the Cold War with the USSR was about to begin. Political compromises began even before the key elements of surrender of the Axis Powers began. There was a massive rush to demobilize and return to peacetime pursuits in the US. Only Winston Churchill, turned out of office in Britain once the war ended, offered a war weary world cautions over rapidly changing USSR political envelopments of eastern European countries. He was ignored initially. As WW@ ended US forces alone exceeded over 6 million military overseas and 1.5 million civilian contractors.

Hundreds of troopships and thousands of returning bombers, battleships, cruisers, and even destroyers were pressed into carrying returning military and civilian personnel home. Many ships and aircraft headed to salvage yards for disposal. By mid 1946 almost all combat veterans had been returned and occupation forces generally comprised green non combat tested personnel. The Allies demanded the occupying troops not fraternize with the defeated enemy civilians by imposed anti fraternization rules. Needless to say hormones and what Winston Churchill called the USSR's imposition of an "Iron Curtain" across Eastern Europe changed many things.

After the Nazi's ravaging of Europe, dislocations of mass populations, freeing of surviving death camp victims and most of Europe's but particularly German, Polish, Russian and Czech cities, having been almost totally destroyed, the Displaced Person or DP, suddenly arose as a major political problem to hinder reconstruction. For many their homeland was occupied by the USSR. Their return to claim their property meant death or imprisonment as land owner or a part of the anti soviet intelligentsia.

The United Nations was given the problem of handling the D.P. problem. Well over 15 million displaced people could not return home. A Yugoslavian Naval pilot shot down by German fighters in 1940 and captured by German troops spent 5 years in Luftwaffe prisoner camps inside Germany. After the surrender and release he could not return to his homeland, now dominated by Marshal Tito and his communist cohorts. To do so meant death for an officer of the "Royal Yugoslavia" Naval Air Force. Those that did were immediately imprisoned and then shot. Like many he chose to accept a UN charter flight and resettlement program to Australia. Speaking only slavic and German his job choices were limited to manual labor. For 5 years he toiled in back breaking work building the Trans Australia Railroad across the Australian outback. Then he was able and eligible to migrate to Canada to work on railroad construction. Once in Canada he able to then migrate to the US. His story is one of untold millions of that era in world history.

By early 1946 War Assets Administration surplus aircraft disposals were moving swiftly and many small airlines were formed or being formed by returning military veterans. Military forces were being disbanded, many in place, and their personnel shipped home to civil pursuits. This left a major void in military airlift capability the United Nations DP

program had hoped to enlist. Australia, South Africa, Canada, United States, Brazil and many other Latin American countries offered to take and resettle displaced persons. 3<sup>rd</sup> world countries were given major economic incentives to expedite resettlement. Of course the more notorious aspect was resettlement of many wanted Nazi officials wanted for war crimes were part of the mix and hunted for decades afterwards.

At the termination of hostilities there were several contract airlines providing logistics transport to the military. Some were disbanded and their equipment returned to the military. Others, however, remained intact but under new management. Among them, California Eastern, Transocean, Overseas National, Pacific Overseas and Carvair. They operated a military bailment fleet of new Douglas 4 engine C-54 transports. With wartime logistics demands now reduced dramatically Many of the contractors were quickly chartered to the United Nations to move the DP's.. However the volume and demand was so great and available aircraft capacity so limited the UN cast about for additional uplift. To the newly emerging non skeds the UN contracts were mana from heaven.

In 1947 the USSR shut down access to Berlin to force the other Allied Powers out. By then the mix of contract carriers had joined the ranks of the other US non skeds formed by new operators from the US. This small but robust and energetic group formed the nucleus to create the initial Berlin Air Lift as subcontractors to Pan American Airways. Pan Am served as prime contractor for 5 months when the US Air Force finally took over control. The Nonskeds, British, French and American's, kept Berlin open and alive, at barely above minimal subsistence levels, until the combined Allied Air Force's could recall pilots and de-mothball stored transport to send to operate the Berlin Air Lift. Relieved from flying the Berlin Corridor routes the US Non Skeds created and operated a North Atlantic air supply line to Germany moving personnel, supplies and most importantly aircraft engines, parts and supplies. The North Atlantic Air Lift was dual purpose. Returning military personnel stateside along with engines and parts needing overhaul and repair for return to Europe.

By 1948 most DPs were resettled with the exception of many Eastern European Jews to whom the USSR refused repatriation. These unfortunates sought resettlement in Palestine in a newly created Jewish state. The British Government originally guaranteed the Jewish immigrants a Palestine homeland (UK Prime Minister Balfour's Declaration of 1916) but now resisted their migration strenuously. Displaced Palestinian Arabs planned an army to destroy the Jews when the British Army left. The UN proposed to partition Palestine into a Jewish and an Arab State. Meanwhile Jewish settlers had been continuously smuggled into Palestine after WW2 and comprised a significant and well armed minority. The British embargo of Jewish DP settlers soon resulted in open warfare with the British. With partition the Arabs attacked and temporarily beaten off. Jordan's Arab Legion was mobilized to help lead in the Arab engagement.

Non sked "free booters" were enlisted at generous rates to provide air lift into Palestine of equipment, weaponry and "Freedom Fighters". The United States and President Truman looked upon the battle between the new State of Israel and the Arabs as a British

problem offering no support to either side. Subsequently the Truman Administration sided with the then oppressed new State of Israel. In the interim support from the embattled Israeli forces and government was being carried on by worldwide jewelry. Danny Kaye, a motion picture comedy star reportedly bought enough munitions and arms to fully load a large freighter which sailed from the Port of Philadelphia and penetrated the British blockade and land the supplies on the coast of Palestine. The head of the office of Strategic services (OSS) reported in a classified document to the White House of a US registered former US military C-46 leaving the US via Canada, Ireland and Corsica but with US military insignia and crew dressed in US military uniforms carrying a classified load destined for Palestine.

USAF Gen. LeMay, Commanding general of US Air Forces Europe ordered US Air Force fighter squadrons in Europe to patrol the Mediterranean approaches to Palestine to intercept "rogue" US non-scheduled aircraft running the blockade to Palestine.

into Palestine brought up. Soon troops and after cessation by ships, across 1

The Palestinian Interlude.

The Berlin Air Lift - USAF vs Nonscheduled

The Dew (Distant Early Warning Over the Horizon Radar) Line