

BOOK REVIEWS

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

Tom Cooper

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The Candy Bombers: The Untold Story of the Berlin Airlift and America's Finest Hour by Andrei Cherny. G. P. Putnam's Sons (<http://us.penguinroup.com/static/pages/publishers/adult/putnam.html>), 375 Hudson Street, New York, New York 10014, 2008, 640 pages, \$29.95 (hardcover), ISBN 978-0-39915496-6; 2009, 640 pages, \$18.00 (softcover), ISBN 9780425227718.

An excellent history, Andrei Cherny's *The Candy Bombers* addresses the role of airpower in defeating an enemy's ideas. The book describes global issues associated with the conflict between the United States and the Soviet Union, with Berlin stuck in the middle; military preparedness; decision making and politics; and the lives of key players in the airlift as well as their influence on the outcome. Portraying how "smart power" can lead to victory over a competing set of ideas, Cherny recounts the new US Air Force's and its leaders' first victory of the Cold War. Such advocates of smart power as Joseph S. Nye and Richard Armitage would likely approve of this book because of the author's ability to demonstrate an effective combination of hard and soft power (i.e., smart power).

A former White House speechwriter and editor of the quarterly journal *Democracy*, the author clearly believes that the United States can use generosity and moral superiority to defeat threats to its security. Alluding in the introduction to the atrocities committed during the terrorist attacks of 11 September 2001 and Soviet brutality during the initial push into Berlin following the fall of the Nazi regime, he establishes parallels in terms of foreseeing possible victory in the "long war." By emphasizing freedom and democracy as the strongest weapons brought to the fight by the United States, Cherny advocates the use of smart power.

The Candy Bombers captures the political intrigue surrounding a presidential election during a time of international crisis. The campaigns of Pres. Harry Truman, Gov. Thomas Dewey, and Vice Pres. Henry Wallace in the presidential election of 1948 illustrate how politicization of international affairs and domestic use of the threat of war can sway voter support. The account of decision making during the election campaign offers excellent insight into civilmilitary relations and US history.

Readers learn how direct action of the commander on the ground overcomes Washington's lack of political unity regarding Soviet expansion into Berlin. Both Gen Lucius Clay, military governor of Germany, and Col Frank Howley, commander of the military government in divided Berlin, arrived with animosity for the Germans but quickly realized how loyalty to the population and the city of West Berlin confirmed Western resolve against Soviet expansionism. To the point of nearly sacrificing his career, Clay repeatedly stands up to Washington decision makers to prevent the United States from abandoning Berlin and thus avoid armed conflict with the Soviet Union.

Cherny notes Washington's desire to return to its smaller, pre-World War II military posture as well as the rapid demobilization of the military following the war, captured through comparisons of Soviet and Western ground forces and the inability to field significant numbers of airlift aircraft. Clearly the US Air Force saw its air mobility role undermined at this point. As an assistant secretary of the Air Force declared to Washington decision makers, the "Air Force was firmly convinced that the air operation is doomed to failure" (p. 290).

The author also addresses challenges to operational leadership, reflected in his depiction of General Clay as the middleman between Washington and Moscow and the organizational efforts of Maj Gen William Tunner. Readers discover Clay's desire to be a combat commander during the hot conflict in Europe, his development as a trusted

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leader who rises to the challenge of irregular war, and his incredible success during the airlift. The description of Clay's return to the United States demonstrates the author's belief that the general personified all of the heroes of the airlift.

Another hero, General Tunner had an amazing ability to convert a "temporary measure to furnish some extra food and supplies" (p. 263) into a precise, efficient, record-setting, long-term effort. Tunner's work also captures the frequent disconnect between functioning as a leader who deals with technological and organizational issues while simultaneously seeing to his Airmen's morale and well-being.

The title of the book calls to mind the nickname of Col **Gail Halvorsen**, who, during Operation Little Vittles, dropped candy to Berlin's isolated children, thus establishing perhaps the most well known image of the airlift. Indeed, his efforts became a symbol of one man's efforts to change the world. If none of the geopolitical or national political issues presented in The Candy Bombers appeal to a student of airpower history, then the Halvorsen story alone makes it a worthwhile read. However, in the process of relating how air mobility and the new US Air Force contributed to the first face-off of the Cold War, Cherny succeeds in demonstrating the importance of using smart power to address our current national challenges.

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