

BEHIND THE CRISIS IN BERLIN

Berlin's airports become the provisioning centres for two and a half million Germans in the sectors of the Western Allies. The greatest airborne loads since the Burma campaign, are lifted over the Russian land-and-water blockade, and into the city.

Weight of supplies for the support of Allied troops and the civilian population is estimated at 2,000 tons a day. The bulkier foodstuffs of the earlier shipments will be replaced by dehydrated foods. Upwards of 350 flights a day may guarantee the feeding of the population.

But Berlin faces a creeping paralysis as its transport services are curtailed and its industries close down. Lacking the daily 6,000 tons of coal and raw material which came by train and barge, shops and factories must close. The people of Berlin face a bleak future.

Crowds gather to hear political leaders sum up the situation. One conclusion is inescapable. A great power has stooped to the savage expedient of starving a city, as an indirect method to drive the Western Allies from Berlin. Speaking in Norfolk, Foreign Secretary Bevin reaffirms Anglo-American determination to stay, and deploras Russia's ruthless policy.

In Warsaw, at the Vilanov Palace, Russia's Foreign Minister Molotov calls a conference of the Eastern States, to marshal support for extended Russian influence in a Germany governed by four powers but devoid of occupation troops. Surface enthusiasm is apparent, but all is not well. Rumours of Yugoslavia's defection within the Iron Curtain coincides with Molotov's exultations.

Marshal Tito, vigorous and independent, wishes to lead a Balkan federation with Bulgaria and Albania, in defiance of the Kremlin. His action involves loss of Russian prestige with her satellite states.

Against this setting, Berlin assumes a new significance, as the Russians strive for complete control of the city. Nine years ago, Danzig was the city on which war turned. As history repeats itself, Berlin could be the Danzig of tomorrow.