



**Airplane refuelling back then:**  
With the hoses developed by ELAFLEX and Continental, the aircraft could be readied for flight more quickly.



**THE FATHERS OF THE AIRLIFT**

The airlift had a number of fathers. Even before the Soviets imposed their blockade on Berlin, the British Air Commodore Rex N. Waite had put forth the absurd-sounding idea of flying enough goods to Berlin to supply not only the Allied troops but also the inhabitants of West Berlin. The US Military Governor for Germany, General Lucius D. Clay, saw in Waite's idea the sole possible way out of the crisis.



relationship between Continental ContiTech and ELAFLEX that has endured to this day. "And so it is that a situation marked by dire distress gave rise to a success story. In the meantime, almost all the world's airports work with our refuelling hoses," says Willi Emde, head of the Industrial Hose segment at the ContiTech Fluid Technology business unit.

The airlift profited from the new hose lines, which greatly sped up refuelling operations and made it possible to increase overall transport volume. When the blockade got under way, 750 tonnes arrived in Berlin each day. The volume rose quickly, however, to many times that amount. At the high point of the airlift – the so-called Easter Parade of April 15/16, 1949 – 1,398 airplanes landed in a matter of 24 hours, or one every 62 seconds, supplying 12,849 tonnes of goods.

The massive American and British relief effort for West Berlin finally proved effective. On May 12, 1949, 322 days after it had begun, the Soviet occupying power lifted the blockade. The people of Berlin breathed a sigh of relief.

# 60 Years Ago: Airlift Rescues Berlin

**Continental and ELAFLEX-Gummi Ehlers kept the "Candy Bombers" in the air, giving birth to the airplane refuelling hose.**

Berlin held its breath. In reaction to the introduction of the German mark in West Berlin, the Soviets blocked all road, rail and water access to the city through their zone of occupation as of June 24, 1948. This brought the transport of goods and passengers to a complete standstill. The more than two million inhabitants of West Berlin suddenly found themselves cut off and dependent on help from outside.

The prompt response of the Western Allies took the form of "Operation Vittles", with the American armed forces launching

an airlift the very next day following the Soviet action. General William H. Tunner, the US Air Force's key air transport expert and the one who organised the famous "Hump" airlift from India over the Himalayas to China between 1942 and 1945,

turned the Berlin airlift into what was to become the greatest humanitarian air relief effort down to the present day.

American and British aircraft headed to Germany from all parts of the world. Over a period of 322 days, 278,228 flights kept the city supplied with millions of tonnes of coal, potatoes, milk powder and flour. The Americans landed at the airports Tempelhof, Gatow and Tegel, while the British set flying boats down on the Havel River and one of Berlin's large bodies of water, Grosser Wannsee. Photos of West Berlin children waiting for pilots to throw candy

from descending aircraft made their way around the world. In Berlin parlance these soon became known as "candy bombers". In a dramatic appeal, Ernst Reuter, mayor of Berlin, pleaded with the world to keep the airlift going. His words: "You peoples of the world, behold this city!" became legendary.

The operation was a tremendous logistics challenge. An average of 300 airplanes were in the air at any one time. The aircraft

had to be loaded and unloaded and prepared for renewed take-off in the shortest amount of time. Refuelling them posed a problem at first for lack of suitable lines. This is where Continental and ELAFLEX-Gummi Ehlers stepped into the picture, developing special refuelling hoses at short notice. Continental made the fuel hoses, ELAFLEX attached fittings to them. This joint development laid the groundwork, by the way, for a successful cooperative rela-

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**Airplane refuelling in our day:**  
ContiTech and ELAFLEX are at home at every airfield. At its plant in Hamburg, ELAFLEX equips the hoses with fittings.



Photos: Elaflex (2) · dpa (2) · Landesbildstelle Berlin (1)

