

## The Berlin Brigade and the Allied Right of Access

*Adapted from: "The Story of Berlin Brigade", Pamphlet 870-2, US Command, Berlin and US Army, Berlin, 1981*



Infantry on the move in Germany circa 1960.  
Photo Credit: Marshall SLA Collection,  
USAHEC



US Army Tanks on maneuvers in the German  
countryside. Photo Credit: US Army Center of  
Military History.

Throughout the 1950's and 60's Berlin remained a crisis center. The daily activities of the Berlin Brigade were closely linked to larger policy issues.

Despite legal agreements guaranteeing the right of the United States to be in Berlin, the Soviets began trying to drive the US out beginning shortly after the end of the war, hoping to bring more of Germany under their control. These efforts included attempts to block US and Allied access to West Berlin.

From the beginning, the United States took the position that the right to be in Berlin—under wartime and post-war agreements which the Soviet Union had not successfully repudiated—was inseparable from the right to get to Berlin and the right of access. This became especially important on the autobahn, where, unlike the rail lines and the air corridors, no formal post-war agreements with the Soviets confirmed access rights. On the autobahn [highways] the men of the Berlin Brigade, in single vehicles and convoys, were frequently subjected to Soviet and East German harassment. The object was to force upon the Allies new and ever more complex restrictions on the exercise of their access rights. The only way to maintain Allied rights and to assure that the Soviets did not erode them was to use them steadily and oppose all efforts by the Soviets to introduce changes to which the Allies had not agreed. Exercising Allied rights on the surface access routes became one of the Brigade's most important missions. As a result, Brigade Soldiers were often the first to bear the brunt of new Soviet tactics and policies.

The documents presented here were provided to Captain Born to guide him through the process of traveling by car through East Germany to Berlin. The documents are now part of the collection at the US Army Heritage and Education Center. Careful examination of the documents reveals the significance of travel on the autobahn, and the care that was taken to assert US rights without creating an international incident.