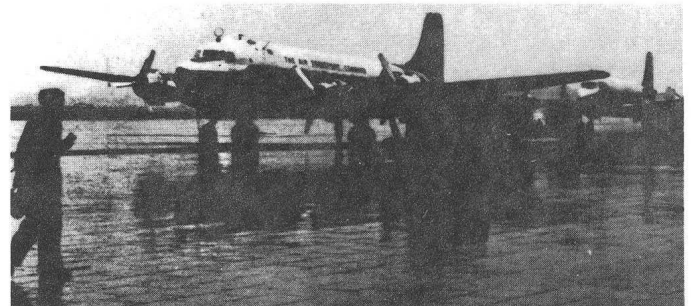


pattern at a fixed altitude and speed over location markers, so that they entered the corridor at precisely the moment planned. When a pilot entered the corridor his time was broadcast so that all of the crews in the formation knew the location of each aircraft. Jack O. Bennett, one of the pilots on the airlift recalled the close monitoring of these flights: "The radar coverage from the ground was incredibly accurate. If our airplane crept up or fell back, even a few feet, on the aircraft preceding us, radar would warn us to adjust our airspeed by a minuscule knot. We couldn't believe it was possible to fly this accurately....Viewed from the radar screen on the ground, the aircraft appeared as individual green pearls, as perfectly spaced as on a woman's necklace, all moving with metronome regularity to Berlin." (50) Turner described the flight pattern into Berlin after the crossing of the Fulda range station: "From there on it was a straight flight up the corridor, chugging along at 170 miles per hour. Over Berlin the pilot turned left at a beacon a few miles on the right side of Tempelhof, proceeded directly across the airport at right angles to the runway, and started making his descent. He made three right turns, flying a box flight pattern, simultaneously lowering down to fifteen hundred feet. He would now be lined up with the runway and would come in at 120 miles per hour, lowering slowly until he was at four hundred feet. If the ceiling was over four hundred feet and visibility a mile or better, he would come in." Any weather below those minimums would require the pilot to return to his home station, via the center air corridor which was used only for returning flights, without delivering the transported supplies. (51)

Once on the ground at Berlin the aircraft was brought into an unloading area. Turner noted on his first visit to Tempelhof that there was a lot of dead time on the ground. Although air-

planes were being unloaded swiftly by ground personnel, the aircrews spent a great deal of time in the operations office, at the snack bar, or learning about weather or other issues. He acted quickly to get airplanes turned around faster: "On the thirty-first of July, the third day on the job, I put out an order to the effect that no

Coal-hauling C-54s (below) based at Fassberg in the British Zone unload at Tempelhof in the early morning. Coal residue was swept into piles and re-bagged; none was wasted. (USAF photo)



crew member would leave the site of his airplane at Tempelhof and Gatow...

Even as an incoming pilot was cutting off his engines after taxiing to the unloading ramp, a big truck with an unloading crew aboard was walking up to the cargo door to transfer the load. As the pilot got down from the plane, an operations officer roared up in a jeep and handed him his clearance slip. If there was anything at all the pilot should know--an accident at the other end of the corridor, for example--the Operations officer passed along this information with the clearance slip. Then the weather officer came up in his jeep, to