

The TV Producer - Tunnel 29 Part 4

Thousands of miles away in New York, a hotshot TV producer named Reuven Frank was thinking about how to tell the story of Berlin. He'd been there when the wall went up and wanted to explain what was going on beyond the headlines.

He was one of the most powerful figures at the US news network NBC. One morning he had an idea: What if he could find an escape story that was happening right now?

They could film it in real time, every twist and turn, not knowing how it would end. It could revolutionise TV news.



Reuven Frank

Frank took his idea to the NBC correspondent in Berlin, Piers Anderton, who loved it and began making enquiries.

It was not long before Anderton's search for tunnellers brought him to the charming engineering student Wolf Schroedter, who was trying to raise money for the diggers.

"We brought him to see the tunnel," says Schroedter. "He was really impressed. He told us he wanted to film it. And that's when we told him our conditions - if NBC wanted to film it, they would have to pay us."

Anderton relayed all this to Frank who agreed straight away. NBC would pay for tools and materials, "and in return we would have the right to film," says Frank.

And with that, Frank had just made one of the most controversial decisions in the history of TV news - a major US news network had agreed to fund a group of students building an escape tunnel under the Berlin Wall.