

APPROVED FOR RELEASE 1994
CIA HISTORICAL REVIEW PROGRAM

18 SEPT 95

TITLE: March Crisis 1948, Act II

AUTHOR: William R. Harris

VOLUME: 11 ISSUE: Spring YEAR: 1967

STUDIES IN INTELLIGENCE



A collection of articles on the historical, operational, doctrinal, and theoretical aspects of intelligence.

All statements of fact, opinion or analysis expressed in Studies in Intelligence are those of the authors. They do not necessarily reflect official positions or views of the Central Intelligence Agency or any other US Government entity, past or present. Nothing in the contents should be construed as asserting or implying US Government endorsement of an article's factual statements and interpretations.

*A Soviet deception operation fails,
and U.S. intelligence relapses into
departmentalism.*

MARCH CRISIS 1948, ACT II

William R. Harris

While U.S. intelligence agencies hammered out unanimous no-deliberate-war estimates on March 15 and 16, 1948, thus laying to rest the scare raised by General Clay's "blockbuster" cable of March 5 and closing down the first act of the "crisis," the Soviets were nearing the operational stage of a deception plan on which they had been working since at least December 1947. Not many facts are known but some inferences can be made about this planning for what became the crisis' second act.¹

The Preparation

It is known that since at least April 1947 the Soviets had been toying with the idea of ousting the Western powers from Berlin. After the breakdown of the London Conference of Foreign Ministers in December 1947, if not before, they made the definite decision. The ouster was evidently planned to follow the coup in Czechoslovakia that was duly effected in late February and more immediately the one in Finland that aborted prematurely in mid-March, and it was to precede and exert influence on the Italian elections in April which Togliatti hoped to win. Detailed planning was presumably done in a series of conferences in Moscow to which some key figures were recalled in January: Valerian A. Zorin from Prague, at about this time appointed Deputy Foreign Minister and Deputy Chairman, subsequently Chairman, of that experiment in intelligence organization called the Komitet Informatsii; Minister Aleksandr N. Abramov, on the pretext of illness, from Helsinki; and Marshal Sokolovskiy from Berlin. Major General P. M. Malkov, deputy to the commander, Lt. Gen. L. A. Malinin, of the MVD (Interior Ministry) security forces in Germany, had already been recalled, late in December; when

¹ For Act I and reference to sources, see *Studies X 4*, p. 1 ff.

he returned to Berlin in March it would be with operational orders for his troops.

The Soviets expected to drive the Western powers out by a staged show of arms—troop maneuvers and redeployments, coupled with alarming indications for the benefit of Western intelligence—to create a war scare and demonstrate their readiness to enforce crippling restrictions on access to Berlin. In January they tested their ability to halt Allied surface transportation to the city, demanding inspection of a U.S. military freight train entering their zone on the 6th and then forcing the removal of German passengers aboard a British military train on the 24th. Also in January, General Zhukov arrived, presumably to oversee the military preparations. He would stay in Germany, except for quick visits to Moscow, until the troops began to move at the end of March.

By early February the Soviets had centralized their intelligence organization in Germany under the control of Colonel General B. Z. Kobulov, former head of the MGB (State Security) Foreign Intelligence Directorate. While MVD and Red Army troops, assisted by German police forces, would execute the field operations planned for March, it was probably Kobulov who was in charge of deceptive indications, alarming reports, and false confirmations for Allied intelligence. It is possible that one of the brains behind the Soviet deception plan was an MGB colonel in his late 30's, a tall and lanky Armenian named Ivan Ivanovich Agayants who in more recent years has built an entire *dezinformatsiya* department in the KGB; but no definite evidence of his involvement has turned up. Topside coordination may be seen in the visits made to Berlin in March by Zorin, hiding the flush of his Czech triumph under the cover name "Witte," and by Beriya himself.

In the aftermath of Prague, the March curtain-raiser, the Finnish coup, failed. On the 9th "flying squads" of communists canvassed Helsinki newspaper offices warning them not to print anti-Soviet remarks, in a variation on the flying-squad tactics so successful in Prague the month before. The coup may have been planned for the time when many of the more prominent non-communist Finns would be in Moscow signing a "Friendship Treaty," March 22 or shortly thereafter. But on March 19 the patriotic communist Yrjo Leino, Minister of the Interior, disclosed the plot to General Sihvo, Chief of the General Staff, who placed the Finnish Army on alert and brought reliable troops into Helsinki. The failure, for which Central Com-

mittee Secretary A. A. Zhdanov and his subordinate A. A. Kuznetsov would in good time be publicly blamed, thus came one day before the first sign of a new crisis in Germany.

The Berlin operation was going to have to be a poor man's deception—no expensive movement of new troops and materiel into Germany. It had to simulate preparations for an assault on Western Europe during a period which long-range plans had designated for an over-all reduction in Red Army strength on the order of 4%, 100,000 men. Although figures on order of battle at the time are far from certain, they suggest that the contradiction was solved as follows. The Army forces in Europe suffered their share of the cut in February, from about 503,000 to about 483,000 men; but the distribution was uneven. Possibly more than 40% of the troops in Eastern Europe, excluding frontal Germany-Austria-Czechoslovakia, transferred back to the Soviet Union for demobilization or awaited assignment to the frontal areas. Over 20% of the Air Force complement left the European theater, but none of it from Germany, Poland, or Austria until after March. And nearly 20% of the Navy personnel left Eastern Europe, some returning to the USSR and others shifting to Austria.

Meanwhile, perhaps 20,000 Army troops, including selected Mongols, Kalmucks, Tartars, and Siberians, were readied for transfer to the well-observed frontal areas. In addition, some 12,000 MVD troops were shifted from the USSR to Germany, so as to increase border security and obstruct the work of Allied intelligence. In short, while the Soviet armed forces in Eastern Europe declined by more than 50,000 men, those in the frontal areas increased by over 30,000. Thus net Soviet strength in Europe was reduced by about 20,000 men in a manner suggesting mobilization for war.

First Action

On March 18, immediately after Sokolovskiy returned from Moscow, along with Generals V. M. Sharov and P. M. Malkov, deployment orders were issued to German police, Red Army, and MVD troops. The directive to all commissars of the German police in the Soviet Zone read as follows:

Until 30 April 1948, the entire police force, especially in the border area, will be reinforced to a regular police combat force which will be able to strike out in case of any emergency, no matter what power will attempt to oppose it.

~~SECRET~~

March Crisis II

The assignment of new personnel to individual stations will be ordered and carried out by the SMA [Soviet Military Administration in Germany]. . . .

All police personnel are subject to the command of the Soviet Occupation Forces effective the day of this announcement The assignment of all new personnel to individual stations will be carried out by the Soviet Armed Forces up to 28 March 1948. . . .

/s/ Marshal Vasily D. Sokolovskiy

The MVD and Army deployments were also designed to reach full strength on March 28.

These orders were of course not known at the time to the Western powers, but two days later, March 20, the figurative first shot was fired, when Sokolovskiy and the entire Soviet delegation walked out of the Allied Control Council. Western officials were not completely surprised, having been tipped off before the session that the Russians had prepared no post-meeting snack, a three-year caviar and vodka tradition. Later U.S. intelligence learned that the disruption of the Council had been decided on by March 10 and that after the break Soviet Commandant Major General A. G. Kotikov remarked, "The battle for Berlin has begun."

On March 22, it was later learned, several of the more trusted members of the German party's Central Secretariat were briefed at the private residence of Wilhelm Pieck by Pieck and Ulbricht, who in turn had been briefed, apparently too reassuringly, by Zhdanov. Pieck said the Soviet Union "would carefully avoid being frightened into war by the aggressive policies of the U.S."; Ulbricht deprecated the Soviet war of nerves as "childish" and ineffectual—"petty diplomatic chicanery."

On March 24, under authority of Marshal Sokolovskiy's order of the 18th, Red Army, MVD, and German troops commenced the field exercises and border activities planned. German policemen of experience and known political reliability were placed on Alert Status III, the highest stage of readiness, and sent to border regions, while less trusted recruits replaced them in their villages and towns. General Malkov of the MVD declared that the entire border would be tightly closed as of April 1, 4,000 new combat troops having joined his men already on duty on the zonal boundaries. The Soviet troops established guard posts at 100-yard intervals all along the U.S. and U.K. zone frontiers. The German border police were now placed under newly-arrived Soviet officers; all were armed. At the Austrian zonal border Soviet reinforcements restricted international transit, and along the border between Czechoslovakia and the U.S. zone of

Germany there was "a heavy increase" in the number of border patrols, "in many cases armed, for the first time, with automatic weapons." Travel by Germans within the Soviet zone had been curtailed by new regulations on March 10; these and new restrictions now imposed on General Hess and his officers at the U.S. Military Mission in Potsdam reduced the flow of dependable intelligence about Soviet military activities.

Dezinformatsiya

Besides trying to reduce the flow of independent Allied intelligence, the Soviets utilized their knowledge of Allied intelligence practices to feed deceptive information into the system. It was hardly a secret, for example, that the Gehlen Organization headquartered in Pullach kept a careful watch on military activities in the Soviet zone, and it was generally known that in times of trouble the U.S. Army's CIC increased the frequency and vigilance of border patrols. Among the more ostentatious border activities arranged for the benefit of such intelligence collectors during the two weeks after March 26 were the following:

A thorough survey of troop billeting facilities within five miles of the bizonal borders, including all schools, hotels, and dance halls in the border region.

Warnings to local Germans that Soviet troops should be expected to require particular buildings; 500 troops would have to be accommodated in each border village, it was reported at Mannsbach, for example.

Systematic daily kidnapping of German civilians from up to 100 yards within the U.S. zone for intensive interrogation on U.S. troop strength, personnel, and disposition, followed by release at the zonal border.

An increase in the number of intelligence agents sent illegally into the U.S. and British zones, bringing various planted reports.

Encouragement of war rumors among the German civilians and wholesale flights to the Western zones inconsistent with the intensified Soviet border security, so that the number of refugees known to have entered the U.S. zone during March rose to 22,078, more than twice the average for the preceding year and exceeding the February count by some 42% and that for April by 81%.

The issue of weapons to all border personnel; issues of full field equipment, blankets, and several days' supply or rations.

Much later, a Eucom intelligence review recalled the situation

. . . during the latter part of March and the first of April. Much publicity and ballyhoo was given to the requisitioning of private homes and public buildings throughout the Zone . . . with particular emphasis on the border area of Saxony and Thuringia. A review of the areas . . . has failed to indicate any substantial increase in troop strength. In some instances, . . . billets which were requisitioned during this period . . . were eventually returned . . . without having been occupied. The utter disregard for security, the advance notification of the expected arrival of troops, and the publicity given to this wholesale requisitioning of billets [caused] . . . some apprehension on the part of Allied intelligence agencies, when rumors spread quickly of imminent war between East and West.

The alarming manifestations in the border regions commenced on March 28 and continued through the first week in April; troop movements increased in magnitude from the 28th through April 1 and were probably held at peak capacity through April 4. The main targets of the deception were thus the Allied military intelligence systems, whose standard patterns of operation would be especially transparent in the German situation, where either side could procure large numbers of local agents at low cost—in money, cigarettes, or coffee. The border activities would have been designed mostly for collection by CIC and the British intelligence patrols, and troop movements through Berlin and Potsdam mostly for the regular G-2 system, General Hess's Military Mission at Potsdam, and the clandestine networks operated by General Gehlen. Although the British were subjected to some of the provocative border displays, it would appear that most of these were concentrated against the United States, which formed the backbone of the Allies' stand in Germany.

The Soviets' stimulation of alarming reports was more successful than their effort to choke the normal flow of Allied intelligence by trebling the number of border troops. Herein lay a fatal weakness in the deception operation, for the alarming material was inconsistent with order-of-battle, logistic, and other intelligence which continued to filter through the Soviet security system. Many of the alarming reports, to be sure, concerned future events—that dependents vacationing in the Soviet Union, including children whose school had closed on Good Friday, the 28th, would not return to Austria or Germany, that reinforcements were due from the USSR, or from Poland, or from Czechoslovakia, that new aircraft were coming from the USSR, that requisitioned houses, hotels, dance halls, and schools would soon be occupied by newly-arrived troops, that civilian traffic had been ordered off arterial highways in Eastern Europe to make

way for military convoys about to move to the west. But most of these future events should have had current antecedents, antecedents inconsistent with reports that the situation in Poland remained static with 125,000 men in the Soviet forces there, that movements of materiel westward through Poland were actually declining, that some of the forces in Eastern Europe were being demobilized, that port activities in the Baltic remained at normal levels, that no troop movements from Czechoslovakia to Germany could be confirmed, that no major training programs were under way in the Soviet home or Far East commands.

In addition to planting these reports that reinforcements were due from the east, the Soviets utilized what forces they did have in Central Europe so as to create the impression that they were more numerous than they actually were, and they grouped them in as threatening a manner as possible. In these efforts they were at least partially successful. During the middle weeks of March Marshal Zhukov traveled along the frontal areas of the Soviet zone accompanied by his headquarters staff. After concentrating his inspection near Eisenach, where any rail or autobahn convoys from the U.S. zone would pass, he moved on to Magdeburg, through which any from the British zone would pass. About the 25th of March he was seen replacing a captain with a colonel at the border town of Wartha and was scheduled for a northward inspection trip to Schwerin, near the U.K. zonal border in Mecklenberg. On March 26 or 27, as Soviet troops moved into the border staging areas, he flew back to Moscow, possibly accompanied by Beriya.

Between March 24 and April 1, in conjunction with the movement to staging and maneuver areas close to the zonal borders, the Soviets moved many of their troops past the Allied intelligence vantage points in Berlin and Potsdam. They apparently even used the old trick, according to some G-2 officials, of recircling troops to march past known observers in slightly altered formations. Eucom's transportation intelligence officer had a flurry of reports of westbound troop trains; he sensed something peculiar about them at the time, but it was not until he made a detailed analysis a month later that he came to the only explanation consistent with traffic patterns and rolling stock supplies: the trains were being circled too. G-2 was at least temporarily convinced that the Soviets had moved some 35,000 troops into their zone of Germany when in fact they had moved only 5,000 or 5,500. All 24 of their divisions in Germany were on alert status, some deployed to forward areas where they maneuvered to-

gether as divisions in, according to G-2, "a marked departure from the usual small-unit training phase prescribed for the winter months."

By Easter Sunday, March 28, Soviet intelligence undoubtedly had feedback on the mounting alarm in the West; the U.S. Air Force and some of the Scandinavian armed forces had been put on alert. On Monday the 29th a high Soviet official—rumored to have been Foreign Minister Molotov—arrived in Berlin with new instructions for Marshal Sokolovskiy. The next evening Sokolovskiy's deputy, General Dratvin, sent his Western counterparts a notification that all Allied traffic through the Soviet zone would be required, effective at midnight on March 31, to submit to Soviet inspection. This was the climax to a month of mounting tension in Moscow's *nervenkrieg*.

Disquiet in the West

Meanwhile in Washington, the agreed estimates of March 16, in SE-27 and IM-21, that Moscow was not about to launch a new war had not dispelled all nervousness.

On that day Secretary of Defense Forrestal recorded in his diary:

Papers this morning full of rumors and portents of war. . . . The fact is that this country and its government are desperately anxious to avoid war. It is simply a question of how best to do it. If all Europe lies flat while the Russian mob tramps over it, we will then be faced with a war under difficult circumstances, and with a very good chance of losing it.

It is inconceivable that even the gang who run Russia would be willing to take on war, but one always has to remember that there seemed to be no reason in 1939 for Hitler to start war, and yet he did, and he started it with a world practically unprepared. Our effort now is to try to make the Russians see the folly of continuing an aggression which will lead to war, or, if it is impossible to restore them to sanity, that we at least have a start which will enable us to prevent being caught flat-footed as we were in 1941.

Army Director of Intelligence General Chamberlin continued to emphasize the estimate's "nevertheless" clause allowing for an accidental conflagration. On the 16th he sent all Army commands the weekly G-2 survey of the international situation:

Heightened tension in world capitals past week probably results [from] cumulative reaction to Communist seizure of Czechoslovakia and Soviet demands on Finland. . . . overt manifestations of fear and distrust between East and West continue to increase. Possibility therefore enhanced that mischance or miscalculation might provoke hostilities.

Secretary of the Army Royall suggested to President Truman and Secretary of State Marshall that the agreed turnover of the German

occupation to the State Department on July 1 next should be postponed indefinitely; this suggestion was later adopted, on March 22.

In Germany, General Clay continued to advocate stout nerves. In a telecon with Washington on March 17 he said:

Received your subject notice, re flow of dependents. From strictly military viewpoint, stoppage of flow and gradual reduction here is logical and can not be argued against.

Nevertheless now that dependents are here believe stoppage and reduction would be politically disastrous . . .

For instance, withdrawal of dependents from Berlin would create hysteria accompanied by rush of Germans to communism for safety. Withdrawal from zone first would create panic in dependents in Berlin.

This condition would spread in Europe and would increase communist political strength everywhere and particularly Italy unless as we withdraw dependents, we concurrently brought in new military strength . . .

There was little in the way of military indications, but

General Hess does report large concentration near Eisenach which commands approach to Dresden-Frankfurt autobahn and what may have some significance first report of heavy pontoon bridge train south-east of Berlin.

Also on March 17, the Foreign Ministers of the United Kingdom, France, and the Benelux countries gathered in Brussels for the signing of the fifty-year mutual defense treaty known as the Brussels Pact. According to Sir Ivone Kirkpatrick, who accompanied Foreign Secretary Bevin to the conference, "One of the [Foreign] Ministers said that the Russians would be in Paris by August, an opinion in which the French Chief of Staff [General Revers] concurred."

President Truman, addressing a joint session of Congress that day, was more reassuring. Although he reported "a critical situation in Europe today" and advocated rearmament, UMT, and selective service, he declared that war was avoidable.

Two days after the Soviet delegation disrupted the Allied Control Council, General Chamberlin, on March 22, sent a crypto-destruct alert throughout his military attaché system:

As normal precautionary measure desire you verify availability destructive means and proper instruction of using personnel to insure prompt destruction all cryptographic material your possession in case emergency. Acknowledge receipt.

The alert was not a matter of routine, but sending it did not mean that General Chamberlin now disagreed with the no-deliberate-war estimate in which he had concurred eight days before. As he explained

in the weekly summary of the international situation he sent to all military attachés and army commands the next day,

Russians walked out Allied Control Council meeting and have since refused attend Coordinating Committee and Directorate meetings. Eventual significance this premediated action not clear but may be another move in attempt oust other powers Berlin. Doubted Soviets prepared terminate four power rule Germany at this time.

CIA's last estimate on the Berlin situation, SE-23 of the preceding December 22, had predicted the Soviets would try to oust the Allies from Berlin—"will probably use every means short of armed force to compel these powers to leave the city." This view was still current within CIA's Office of Reports and Estimates, and within its Berlin station.

A State Department intelligence officer in the Office of the Political Adviser in Berlin, Brewster H. Morris, writing on March 22 a memo on "The Soviet-Communist Campaign for Berlin," noted that the campaign "has entered a new phase of intensity" and continued:

... Some local observers believe such an ultimatum [demanding Western withdrawal] may be forthcoming in the next few weeks, to be followed, if the Western Powers reject it, by direct interference with their lines of communications between Berlin and the Western Zones. Following the March 20th meeting of the Control Council, it seems probable that this will in fact be the course of events, except that no actual ultimatum may be given. What is obvious is that the Soviets have now cleared the decks for further action by their statement that the Control Council is "no longer the supreme organ of Government in Germany."

On the policy-making side, a telecon was held on March 23 by Secretary Royall, General Bradley, and civil affairs chief General Noce with General Clay in Berlin:

[Secretary Royall:] ... There have been many changes in the international situation the last sixty days. ... I hope, and General Bradley joins me in this hope, that you will stay on the job at least through the present calendar year. You are urgently needed there.

[General Clay:] I had made a partial commitment. ... However, I am an army officer as long as the Department feels I am needed. I do want to retire as soon as I can and the Army agrees. I owe too much to the Army not to remain with it if it feels I am needed. ...

In summary, it was the consensus among intelligence officials that war was unlikely but that we could expect trouble in Germany and an effort to oust the Allies from Berlin. It was the consensus among policy-making officials in Washington that, expecting trouble, we had best keep General Clay, with his experience and judgment, in charge.

Western Reaction to Border Moves

When the unusual Soviet border activities began on March 24, the CIC initiated an around-the-clock border alert which would last into April. In Wiesbaden, some of the Air Force intelligence officers feared that the Soviets were planning either trouble in Scandinavia or an attack on Western Europe. In Scandinavia itself, rumors of the attempted coup in Finland and reports of Soviet troop movements in Mecklenburg, just south of the Danish border, led Danish Minister of Justice Niels Busch-Jensen to alert security forces against a possible coup, and thereafter all military leaves in Copenhagen were cancelled. By mid-March selected Army units were alerted in Finland, and immediately after Leino's warning on the evening of March 19, the Finnish Chief of Staff alerted additional military units. Following Soviet political pressure and alarming reports from Finland, some Norwegian forces were alerted by March 25. The status of forces in Sweden is not known.

On the morning of the 25th General Clay held a news conference following his monthly Eucom staff meeting at Frankfurt. When asked whether he anticipated Soviet interference with U.S. or British supply routes to Berlin, he replied that he did not, and when asked whether he thought war likely, he said, "I am not expecting any conflagration to break out tomorrow or the next day, by any means."

In Washington that same day, Secretary of the Army Royall told the Senate Armed Services Committee in his testimony on UMT:

I would not—and do not—suggest that war is imminent. I have an abiding faith that in some honorable way we can avoid it. On the other hand, under present world conditions we cannot risk the entire safety of our country—or fix our military requirements—either on the assumption that war will not come at all or that it will be deferred for any particular number of years.

. . . My judgment is that war is not imminent, but there is enough possibility that we must provide for that contingency.

Considering the pessimism of the French Chief of Staff on the 17th and rumors of war that emanated from Paris in late March, one might suppose that elements of the French armed forces were alerted at some time in the last week of March, but no confirmatory documents are available. It is known that a special, restricted-attendance session of the French cabinet took place on Good Friday, March 26, the subject being "the German situation."

On that Good Friday General Carl S. ("Tooney") Spaatz decided that key elements of the U.S. Air Force should be placed on an immediate alert. At 2:37 p.m. Air Force officers in the Pentagon held a telecon with the Alaskan Air Command, for example:

1. It is the decision of the Chief of Staff that your aircraft control and warning system operate twenty-four hours a day continuously, commencing at once. Although there is no evidence to indicate that an air attack against Alaska or the United States will occur in the near future, such a possibility repeat possibility does exist and will continue to exist for at least the next sixty days.

2. General Spaatz desires immediate and vigorous action to provide the best radar warning screen on a continuously operating basis by 4 April 1948.

3. This item should be read by General Twining and General Atkinson. Please acknowledge receipt and full understanding of this item.

G-2 in Washington that day received an unruffled assessment from Colonel Robert A. Schow at Eucom Intelligence:

This office continues to receive reports of movement of Soviet dependents from Germany . . .

A review of Soviet military strength along the US-USSR Zonal boundary in Thuringia indicates the possibility of a small increase . . . Observers . . . who have had personal contact with the Soviet troops report that their attitude is suspicious and unfriendly, but not aggressive. . . . Total Soviet military strength in Germany remains at 332,500.

On the 26th and 27th Red Army reconnaissance units along the Werra river attracted the attention of Allied intelligence with a rather ostentatious performance—photographing the construction and testing the load capacity of bridges on east-west roads and wading about in the river at possible fording points. Mongolian troops were observed near the interzonal border, and there were reports of possible reinforcements from the east.

On Easter Sunday, the 28th, Secretary of State Marshall talked at the Shoreham hotel with Bernard M. Baruch, down from New York for this purpose a day before his UMT testimony on the Hill. Asked for his advice, Baruch said he thought the Soviets still unprepared for war, he considered it unwise for the United States to be scared into an atomic war, and he believed that with calm and patience war might well be avoided. As Marshall left Washington that evening for four weeks at the inter-American conference in Bogota, he probably shared Baruch's view that war was unlikely.

On the 29th, Eucom Intelligence published its bimonthly "Intelligence Summary":

War rumors flooding the United States Zone are considered to be too numerous and in some cases too fantastic to be included within the scope of this summary. . . .

ORE 22-48: The First Round

As the tension mounted, DeForrest Van Slyck of CIA and a small interdepartmental team of analysts were drafting an estimate on the "possibility of direct Soviet military action during 1948." This paper, like its predecessors SE-27 and IM-21 of March 16, had its origins in that extraordinary "meeting of the IAC Directors" called by General Chamberlin on March 12 to discuss General Clay's March 5 "war warning," followed by President Truman's three clipped questions to Admiral Hillenkoetter about the likelihood of war. The two questions covering Soviet intentions over the next sixty days had been answered in SE-27 and IM-21, but the third, "Will the Soviets deliberately provoke war in 1948?" remained before Van Slyck's working committee. Their pace on this longer-range estimate had been slow, in part because there was less urgent pressure for it and in part because the machinery for channeling information to the committee was new.

By now it had become apparent to Van Slyck that the answer to this question too would be "no," but it was also apparent that there would be considerable difficulty in producing another joint estimate. Colonel Riley F. Ennis of G-2 and Colonel James H. Walsh of A-2 were rather frank in objecting that a flat "no" might be misconstrued as implying that neither UMT nor a supplemental military appropriation for FY 1949 was really necessary. Van Slyck, William Ballis of State, and ONI's Lawrence Healey, on the other hand, believed that an intelligence estimate unencumbered by other considerations was essential.

During the last week in March each of the intelligence services represented on the ad hoc committee submitted its own draft estimate of Soviet intentions and capabilities for 1948. Colonel Ennis reiterated General Chamberlin's desire that the joint estimate make some mention of UMT; Colonel Walsh spoke for General MacDonald in favor of a paragraph emphasizing that a Soviet surprise attack in 1948 was distinctly possible. The Van Slyck, Ballis, and Healey drafts all declared that war was unlikely in 1948 except through miscalculation or accident.

~~SECRET~~

March Crisis II

A session of the committee to reconcile these differences and produce, if possible, a joint estimate was held on Tuesday, March 30. Van Slyck presented a second draft which served as a basis for the text that emerged from the meeting, the final joint draft. Van Slyck, Ballis, and Healey agreed to specify that a "possibility" of war existed; Colonel Ennis agreed to drop the UMT matter; Colonel Walsh thought that the mention of the possibility of war would satisfy his chief's requirement. Thus while Soviet troops maneuvered at the division level in Germany and reconnaissance units were creating alarm along the East-West border, the working committee unanimously approved ORE 22-48, dated March 30.

POSSIBILITY OF DIRECT SOVIET MILITARY ACTION
DURING 1948

Report by a Joint Ad Hoc Committee

CONCLUSIONS

The preponderance of available evidence and of considerations derived from the "logic of the situation" supports the conclusion that the USSR will not resort to direct military action during 1948.

However, in view of the combat readiness and disposition of the Soviet armed forces and the strategic advantage which the USSR might impute to the occupation of Western Europe and the Near East, the possibility must be recognized that the USSR might resort to direct military action in 1948, particularly if the Kremlin should interpret some US move, or series of moves, as indicating an intention to attack the USSR or its satellites.

DISCUSSION

1. The Soviet military forces are estimated to have the current capability of overrunning all of Western Europe and the Near East to Cairo within a short period of time.

2. Soviet military forces along the frontiers of Western Europe and the Near East are estimated to be combat ready and generally so disposed that they could launch an immediate offensive.

6. The determination at this time of whether or not Soviet leaders intend to employ their military capability rests, in the last analysis, essentially upon logic rather than upon evidence. We have no access to the thinking or decisions of the Kremlin and little contact with lower echelons of Soviet officialdom. . . . Since the Czechoslovakian coup there have been some reports suggesting that Soviet leaders may intend shortly to resort to military action but these have been from unevaluated sources and can logically be interpreted as attempts by Soviet or anti-Soviet elements to exploit for their own purposes the fear psychosis prevalent throughout Europe as a result of the timing and rapidity of the Czech coup. . . .

~~SECRET~~

That evening General Chamberlin sent out a consonant assessment in his weekly survey of the international situation, to 28 major Army commands:

Soviet actions past week present no clear pattern . . . some evidence Soviets tightening border security opposite US Zone Germany. . . . No conclusive evidence impending Soviet military action on any front. . . .

ORE 22-48 represented so far only the views of the working group which had prepared it. It was not until Friday, April 2, that final concurrences could be obtained from the intelligence services and the estimate be formally distributed to policy makers. During the three intervening days Washington passed through the peak of the March crisis, and a series of key decisions involving the possibility of war with the Soviet Union were made.

March 31, 1948

About 4 a.m. Washington time on March 31, Secretary of the Army Kenneth C. Royall awakened to the persistent ringing of his telephone. Standing in his pajamas by the telephone in his Mayflower hotel suite, he looked out at the street lights still burning along Connecticut avenue while the G-2 duty officer apologized for interrupting his sleep and advised him of indications just reported from Germany that hostilities might be imminent in central Europe. General Bradley had already been informed. Royall notified the White House, dressed and went out to the Pentagon for a full briefing, then paid an early morning visit to the President. The President consulted Hillenkoetter about the likelihood of war and was reassured by him, according to reports in the press.

Curiously, it has not been possible to establish the precise cause for this alarm. The climactic Dratvin letter announcing restrictions on access to Berlin had been delivered to the Western deputy commanders the previous evening; but the U.S. copy was all morning in translation, and Washington, as we shall see, did not learn of it until about five hours after the G-2 call to Secretary Royall. Probably G-2 was reporting some particularly threatening development in the Soviet troop maneuvers. It is General Bradley's recollection that "We were afraid," as alerted Soviet divisions headed for the inter-zonal border, "that they wouldn't 'blow the recall.'" There were also some mistakenly alarming reports generated by the tenseness in Germany: Gehlen's Berlin network, for example, reported a trainload of oil heading from Berlin to Magdeburg as though in support of a

westward pushoff; later in the day it was revealed the train had arrived, but with only a few cars of oil for the normal supply of the Magdeburg region.

Also, General Clay's G-2, Major General Robert Walsh, presumably having some advance knowledge of the Dratvin letter while it was being translated, was apprehensive. According to General Clay's deputy in Berlin, Lt. Gen. George P. Hays, General Walsh suggested, as the tension mounted during the last days of March, that the Russians "would do something to make us start war"; he may have concluded from the letter that they had hit upon a means of causing us to fire the first shot, and soon. He is still convinced that we then came "within a hair's breadth of war" but "Stalin changed his mind." He recalls having communicated directly with G-2 in Washington but does not recall any specific message on the morning of the 31st.

Although General Walsh thought for a while that war was imminent, his OMGUS intelligence staff, housed in separate quarters and under Colonel Peter P. Rodes, recalls having viewed the Russian troop movements as "bluff, pure and simple" or as defensive: "They were afraid of an attack from the West." Eucom Intelligence retrospectively considered the possibility of deliberate Soviet scare tactics:

. . . Coupled with these troop movements were reports of the arrival of reinforcements from the USSR which were associated (*coincidentally or otherwise*) with the critical international situation and gave rise to rumors of immediate conflict between the East and West . . .

and later:

The coincidence of extensive maneuvers with the recent Berlin 'crisis' has had the effect of providing a flood of reports and rumors, many of which have suggested a considerable military build-up in the Soviet Zone and some of which have described even more active preparations for an offensive against the Western Powers. *It is not known whether this timing was by accident or design*, but the fact that troops have moved to maneuver areas prior to and during a period of extreme local political tension has undoubtedly had the result of giving rise to many of the exaggerated reports which have been received.

CIA's Berlin station housed divergent views also, but the consensus was that the Russians were seeking political rather than military objectives. Some of the Naval Intelligence agents in Berlin, natives of eastern Germany, thought that the moment might have come to regain their homelands, but there is no sign that such thinking affected the generally calm judgment of ONI officials in Washington.

General Chamberlin remembers the Washington G-2 attitude as follows:

... I recall frequent "war of nerves" shows the Russians put on; just when these occurred are hazy. I felt generally that before a war was started that large movements of both men and supply would move westward from the interior of Russia. Since all routes west had to traverse Poland, I thought we would learn something of that location. Merely to move about in the front areas without large movements behind did not seem too important. We had a large and skilled Military Attaché unit in Poland and it was not too much restricted in movement. There was no news of importance—certainly not of heavy movements of men & supply from that locality. I do not recall that I was extremely uneasy around March 31. I have no recollection of ever being in communication with Mr. Royall at night.

In the hours before it had the Dratvin letter, official Washington seems to have reached a state of wait-and-see. Except for the special units already alerted, U.S. armed forces continued their normal pace of activity.

The Dratvin Letter

When General Dratvin's letter arrived at General Hays' office on Tuesday evening, Hays was in Frankfurt, at Eucom headquarters, and the letter was referred to General Clay. Its translation was somehow delayed until late Wednesday morning. On reading it, General Clay was actually relieved. Although it left him just over half a day before its midnight deadline to counter the Soviet inspection demands, Clay now knew that he faced a challenge to the Allied presence in Berlin rather than the threat of war which he had feared earlier in the month.

General Hays also, when he learned, in Frankfurt, of the Soviet inspection demands, considered them a confirmation of his view that the Soviets would use only means short of war to oust the Allies from Berlin. He proposed to Clay by return cable that he himself command a special armored train run forthwith from Frankfurt via Helmstedt to Berlin to force the Soviets to rescind their inspection orders. In anticipation of approval he gave orders for mounting machine guns on both sides of a special railroad car and making a diesel engine ready for the run. General Clay's initial reaction was unenthusiastic; he thought the Russians would switch the armored train to a siding, electrically, without having to fire a shot. He told his deputy to hold off until 6 p.m. and await orders. Although he agreed that the Russians were only bluffing and a test train would be a quick way

to call the bluff, he thought this move would be merely a prelude to the real test—an armored convoy along the autobahn.

While his staff worked on a reply to the Dratvin letter, General Clay, who was to have a routinely scheduled telecon with Washington at 3 p.m., prepared a cable for General Bradley to permit prior discussion of this new development in Washington. Because Clay's cable was top secret, however, transmitted through General Walsh and ASA in "our deepest code," it took over two hours to reach General Chamberlin in the Pentagon, arriving at 9:13 a.m. Washington time, 12 minutes after the telecon began. When it was delivered to him, General Bradley interrupted the telecon, saying, "Recent message from you just brought in. Collins, Wedemeyer, and Chamberlain [sic] have joined me. Please wait."

General Bradley and the group around him read Clay's cable:

General Clay requests immediate delivery and immediate acknowledgement of following message:

1. Eyes Only and Personal for Bradley

Have received a peremptory letter from Soviet deputy commander requiring on 24 hours notice that our military and civilian employees proceeding thru Soviet zone to Berlin will submit individual documentation and also will submit their personal belongings for Soviet inspection.

2. Likewise a permit is required from Soviet commander for all freight brought into Berlin by military trains for the use of our occupation forces.

3. Obviously these conditions would make impossible travel between Berlin and our zone by American personnel except by air. Moreover it is undoubtedly the first in a series of restrictive measures designed to drive us from Berlin.

4. I propose to have Soviet deputy commander advised today that we are prepared for our train commandant on arrival at entry points to furnish to the Soviet representatives a list of passengers together with their official orders, and that likewise we are prepared to present a manifest covering freight shipments in our trains when they arrive at entry points. However the right of free entry into Berlin over the established corridors was a condition precedent to our evacuation of Saxony and Thuringia, and we do not intend to give up this right of free entry. I propose further to advise Quatvin rpt Stratvin [sic: Dratvin] that the military guards on our passenger and railway freight trains have been advised accordingly.

5. I am having telecon with Noce at 311400 Z [3 p.m. Berlin/9 a.m. Washington] today. I hope that if there are any doubts in the minds of anyone in Washington as to this course of action you can advise me at 1400 Z as it will be necessary for me to take action today. I regard this as a serious matter because it is my intent to instruct our guards to open fire if Soviet soldiers attempt to enter our trains. Obviously the full consequences of this action must be understood. Unless we take a strong stand now, our life in Berlin will become impossible. A retreat from Berlin at this moment

would, in my opinion, have serious if not disastrous political consequences in Europe. I do not believe that the Soviets mean war now. However, if they do, it seems to me that we might as well find out now as later. We cannot afford to be bluffed.

General Clay continued the teleconference: "Soviet threatened action becomes effective tomorrow and our train leaves Frankfurt in three hours," and General Bradley told him "Reply to your message must be taken up with JCS and others. Delay train until you hear from me. . . ."

General Clay's description of the Dratvin letter caused many officials to suppose that the letter was more blunt and truculent than it was; as a result, there were lingering doubts that it might herald war rather than merely trouble in Berlin. Top mobilization experts and Air Force planners hoping to ready the Strategic Air Command held meetings with President Truman in the White House.

At 11:40 a.m. a committee of principals gathered in Secretary Forrestal's office: the Secretary of Defense; Secretary of the Army Royall; Secretary of the Air Force Symington; Acting Secretary of State Lovett; Mr. Clark M. Clifford of the White House staff; the JCS, Admirals Leahy and Denfeld, Generals Bradley and Spaatz; Generals Wedemeyer and Norstad, the Army and Air Force "DepOps"; General Gruenther of the Joint Staff; General Eisenhower, former Chief of Staff; and others. There was general agreement that the Dratvin note was part of an effort to oust the Allies from Berlin, but it was not yet clear that it might not also be a prelude to war. Preliminary discussion ended in time for the Army contingent to assemble at the telecon room for a 1 p.m. session with General Clay:

. . . .
Royall: . . . What does statement mean that British will not permit search. Will they resist by shooting? Will they run trains?

Clay: . . . British reply means at moment they will run trains. I think their decision relative to shooting will depend almost entirely on our own. I doubt if they will shoot although [British Military Governor] Robertson has agreed to do as we do.

. . . .
Clay: . . . We could supply ourselves and meet passenger needs by airlift for a while but not Germans in city. Moreover, this action would be most damaging to our prestige and would be met by new acts. I believe this a bluff but do not wish to bluff back as British may be doing unless we mean it.

Royall: . . . Realizing that any incident involving shooting or other heavy violence might precipitate war, some consideration has been given here to the President sending an immediate note to Stalin informing him that require-

ments of Berlin Commander is [sic] violation of existing agreements and stating that traffic will continue to move. . . . Another suggestion is that traffic trains move but that in no event shall there be shooting. What do you think of this? . . .

Clay: . . . Any weakness on our part will lose us prestige important now. If Soviets mean war, we will only defer the next provocation for a few days. For that reason, I do not think either [a protest note to Stalin] or [continuing trains "but in no event shall there be shooting"] realistic. I do not believe that this means war but failure to meet this squarely will cause great trouble. I realize [how] our train resistance would be taken. I am convinced it is only possible course of action.

Royall: . . . If you had to choose between [these two] courses which would you prefer?

Clay: . . . I would prefer to evacuate Berlin and I had rather go to Siberia than to do that. However, [protest to Stalin] would be better of two but I think it should await our own test. If Soviets do open fire, perhaps U.S. and U.K. governments could close certain world trade routes under our control until normal condition restored here.

Clay: . . . Koenig and Robertson awaiting me at home for dinner. Will break away and return for telecon [at 4 p.m. Washington/10 p.m. Berlin]. I am sure that a strong stand here now is essential and will win issue. Please believe this my sincere conviction.

Meanwhile, Acting Secretary Lovett held a luncheon consultation with some of his assistants in the State Department. After lunch he returned to the Pentagon, bringing along Jacob Beam and Llewellyn Thompson, chiefs of his Central European and Eastern European offices, for the reconvening of the discussion broken off for the telecon with Berlin. At 2:10 the meeting resumed.

As noted in Secretary Forrestal's diary,

The following suggestions were considered:

1. That the President send a message to Stalin pointing out that implementation of the Russian proposal might create an incident which might be provocative of war.
2. That he call into conference the majority and minority leaders of the House and Senate.
3. That instructions be sent to Clay indorsing his proposed action, with a qualification that he be told that his guards would not use their weapons except in self-defense.
4. It was also suggested that immediate communications be had with the British to see whether they had taken action identical to ours and given similar instructions to their train guards.

While the phrasing of a protest note to Stalin was being discussed, the Air Force Chief of Staff, General Spaatz, scrawled his version on a scrap of paper and passed it first to Symington, then to Lovett: "Stalin, you crazy S.O.B., what do you think you're doing?" Mr. Lovett retorted, Mr. Symington recalls, "General, you should know better than to call the head of a sovereign state crazy."

In a more serious vein, it was Lovett who quashed this whole proposal. According to Mr. Forrestal's note,

At Mr. Lovett's suggestion the proposal to have the President address a communication to Marshal Stalin was discarded because it would add disproportionate emphasis on this incident and might convince the Russians that they had secured precisely the effect they were after.

It was now generally agreed among the key policy-making officials assembled in Secretary Forrestal's office that the Soviets did not want war but did wish to augment the war scare, and that the Allied response should be conceived with this in mind. There was a tactical difference of opinion: Symington, Spaatz, and others wished to give our soldiers some discretion to use their weapons should attempts be made to board U.S. military trains; the majority favored orders allowing them to shoot only if shot at.

After the meeting adjourned, Messrs. Forrestal, Lovett, Clifford, Royall, and others drove to the White House for consultation with President Truman.

Intelligence and Policy

General Clay, reflecting on his March 5 cable, the intelligence estimates of mid-March, and Washington's rejection of his proposed forcible convoy, first on the railroad and later on the autobahn, has observed that although intelligence analysts gauged Soviet intentions correctly, policy makers in Washington failed to act on the basis of these estimates when they refused to approve convoys in March, April, June, and July 1948. Rightly or not, both Clay and his then Political Adviser, Robert Murphy, believe that Washington's failure to support their riskier proposals in March and April encouraged the full Soviet blockade in June and that the failure to take similar risks in June 1948 and the months thereafter encouraged Stalin on the course leading to the Korean war.

Two questions arise: First, was there really a gap between the intelligence analysts' assessment of Soviet intentions and the corre-

sponding policy makers' assessments? Second, if there was no significant gap, why were General Clay's proposals rejected or deferred?

In answering the first question, it is necessary to distinguish Soviet intentions irrespective of Allied countermoves from Soviet intentions—and possibly inadvertent incidents—in case of Allied convoy movements to Berlin. There appears to have been no significant gap between the intelligence consensus and policy makers' consensus about premeditated Soviet military attack in the spring of 1948. The consensus in both groups was that the Soviets would not take this course. As for probable Soviet responses to forcible convoys, it should be noted that the SE-27, IM-21, and ORE 22-48 estimates were not directed to this contingency. There was a gap here in formal intelligence advice; there was no "consequences paper" on the matter. Nonetheless, General Chamberlin (G-2), Mr. Armstrong (INR), General Cabell (A-2), and most of the members of the ad hoc estimating group chaired by Van Slyck held the personal view that armored convoys to Berlin might precipitate Soviet actions resulting in war. None of these men considered it proper to offer such views unless asked, and only a few policy makers asked, informally, for such opinions prior to decision making. Most policy makers who did so ask, most of those who did not, and most of the intelligence officials shared a belief that armored convoys would probably reach Berlin but that reliance on such convoys would increase the likelihood of war. In Berlin, both General Clay and Ambassador Murphy held this same view. In conclusion, there appear to have been shades of difference but no significant gap between intelligence analysts' and policy makers' assessments of Soviet intentions, including no significant gap in assessing the consequences of armored convoys.

Why then were General Clay's proposals rejected or deferred? The decisions of policy makers in Washington, with responsibilities far broader than those of their intelligence advisers, may have reflected consideration of many factors outside the competence of intelligence officials. But differing policy views by responsible officials in Berlin on the one hand and in Washington on the other appear more consequential than whatever shades of difference there were between intelligence advisers and policy makers. For example, both General Clay and Ambassador Murphy seem to have attached greater importance to the impact of a quick, firm stance in Berlin than officials in Washington did. Moreover, the images of World War III as later

conveyed by both Clay and Murphy were of an experience somewhat less painful, somewhat more successful than most such images later constructed by high Washington officials. These, and many other assessments within the scope of policy decision-making may help to explain decisions reached on the basis of far broader considerations than those derived from intelligence channels.

When, therefore, President Truman reviewed the afternoon deliberations of March 31, he acted on the counsel of Cabinet members and trusted personal advisers who, though influenced by intelligence advice, also provided independent considerations for decision. The President agreed with Mr. Lovett's recommendation against a protest note to Stalin, and he decided against any act in Washington that might exacerbate the war scare. According to Mr. Forrestal's notes,

The President on his own initiative decided against calling in Congressional leaders because:

1. It would become immediately known, and
2. It would add unnecessarily to the creation of a war hysteria.

He approved the decision to send trains into Berlin, ordering our troops to fire only if fired upon.

The British Response

On the basis of fragmentary documentation and occasional interviews, it is possible to present a rough sketch of developing attitudes in London.

Appreciation papers of 1948 estimated that the Soviets were unready to launch a war, but noted that European economic recovery and the beginnings of joint European defense planning made the next few years relatively more dangerous than the distant future. Viewed through Eurocentric eyes, the Soviet actions in March appeared to be a reminder of Soviet land power to the countries that had negotiated the Brussels Pact between March 4 and 12 and signed it on the 17th. This interpretation on the part of British defense intelligence officers, however natural it seemed, now appears to have been erroneous, for we have shown that the March activities were in active preparation as far back as the CFM breakdown in December 1947.

Unlike some of their American opposites, almost all top British intelligence officials sought to explain the troubles in Berlin and troop movements in Germany as politically rather than militarily inspired.

An appreciation paper produced after the tension subsided related the March activities both to the pressure on Finland and to the forthcoming elections in Italy. Sir Francis Pakenham (now Lord Longford), then Chancellor of the Duchy and the Foreign Office official responsible for German and Austrian affairs, recalls the troop movements as "just part of a political squeeze in Germany."

Air Marshal Sir John Slessor, speaking before the U.S. Air War College on April 12, reflected on the recent crisis:

I wonder if I am wrong in feeling that we are in some danger of drifting into a condition of near-panic which is not really justified by the facts and which may even, if we are not careful, land us in the thing we are all—including Russia—most frightened of, i.e., war.

. . . I do not myself believe the Russians would allow this [Berlin] issue to come to open war; they will no doubt put on their war paint (they are now digging trenches on the autobahn) and utter blood-curdling war cries and threats, like the savages they are. But I can't see them marching into Bizonia on this issue. If they do—well, the assumption is that our governments have decided that Berlin is vital to us and we must therefore face up to war now; if we don't, if we give way here without a fight, then it only makes total war more certain sooner or later.

When the ultimatum was delivered to General Brownjohn's office on the 30th, top British officials in Berlin expected local difficulties rather than war. General (now Lord) Robertson agreed with General Clay that the trains should continue and that Soviet inspection demands should be resisted, but he saw no reason for his guards to open fire unless fired upon. Nor did the British cabinet.

After President Truman's decisions at the White House, the ticker from London announced that the British did not propose to stop their trains and that they would maintain armed guards aboard them.

Armed Forces Alerts

Another decision undertaken in London by perhaps 9 p.m. (4 p.m. in Washington) on the 31st was the alerting of British armed forces units. Buried on the fourth page of the *Times'* morning edition on April 2, possibly the casualty of a D-Notice, was an Air Ministry announcement of an RAF Bomber Command alert, Mosquito night fighter patrols, and Army anti-aircraft operations which lasted four hours in the course of "an air defense exercise over the southern half of England."

That morning in Washington, General Bradley left the meeting in Secretary Forrestal's office knowing that government policy required a firm stand in Berlin, even though the issue of instructions to train guards about shooting remained unsettled. About noon, the Chief of Staff asked General Timberman of the Plans and Operations Division to coordinate an alert with the Intelligence Division, the Air Force, and the Navy. Not until White House clearance of the Berlin decisions and transmittal of instructions to General Clay were the coordinated alerts dispatched.

At 7:17 p.m. Washington time, as military trains began their runs into the Soviet zone of Germany, General Spaatz alerted the Alaskan Air Command:

. . . the concern of the Chief of Staff stems from belief that next 60 to 90 days are critical period. The Italian elections, their aftermath, the Finnish situation and our present weak military position, particularly in air defense, are the principle [sic] points on which this view is based. Since the Air Force has clear responsibility for air defense, he is giving you the best air defense means available . . . it is his desire that the Air Force do the best it can . . . to prevent being caught by surprise in the event of another Pearl Harbor . . .

An Army alert over General Wedemeyer's signature but in General Chamberlin's handwriting informed all major commands of the stance in Berlin at 8:26 p.m.

The Soviet authorities in Eucom have introduced restrictions pertaining to travel of Americans through Soviet occupied zone to and from Berlin. Our government is taking firm stand and incident could result. This information is disseminated with a view to insuring that field commanders themselves are alert to situation that might develop. Inform appropriate Navy and Air Commanders. Navy and Air concur.

At 9:14 p.m. General Chamberlin alerted his G-2 network in Eastern Europe, the military attachés at Helsinki, Warsaw, Prague, Bucharest, Budapest, Sofia, Belgrade, and also Rome:

Personal for Military Attaché from Chamberlin

Soviet authorities in Eucom have introduced restrictions pertaining to travel of Americans through Soviet occupied zone and to and from Berlin. Our government is taking firm stand and incident could result. This information is given to insure that you may be alert to possible developments.

As originally composed, the last sentence read, ". . . to insure that you may be on the alert to possible developments," but the G-2 did not wish to create undue alarm, and deleted the prepositional phrase.

End of the Crisis

Late on the evening of the 31st, the first Allied military train, under U.S. command, left Wannsee station in Berlin for Frankfurt with the MP guard doubled—thirty men armed with carbines and machine guns. Within earshot of the press, the commander remarked to his men, "There will be no shooting tonight." The train reached the Marienborn checkpoint on the western border of the Soviet zone after midnight, but no Soviet guards demanded on-board inspection; it crossed over to Helmstedt and went on to Frankfurt.

Then a British military train under Wing Commander Galloway took the same route from Charlottenburg station in the British sector. It met no trouble upon entering the Soviet zone, but when it reached Marienborn the signals were red and the track switched open. On the platform a group of Soviet officers waited with 30 or 40 German policemen. One of the officers politely asked to come aboard for inspection, and Commander Galloway offered to show papers through the carriage windows or on the platform. The Russian said that on-board inspection was essential, and the British officer replied that it was contrary to his orders. The train was switched to a siding and later returned to Berlin.

A British passenger train and then two U.S. passenger trains eastbound to Berlin were also halted at Marienborn and returned to their stations of origin. An eastbound French military train waited for instructions in Helmstedt. Paris finally told its commander to allow the on-board inspection, breaking ranks with the British and Americans; but on the following day, when it was clear that the Soviets did not intend war, Paris reversed its position and joined the other Western powers in halting the trains rather than submit to boarding.

On April 1 Generals Clay and Robertson initiated a small military airlift, and General Clay asked Washington to consider an armored convoy along the autobahn. These events were prelude to the blockade in June when even civilian trains were halted and the Allies organized their spectacular airlift to supply the population. But by April 1 it was clear to almost everyone that the Soviets had no intention of initiating war. As CIA's *Review of the World Situation* would observe a week later:

... recent Soviet conduct in Germany is fundamentally the consequence of decisions taken months ago, although its timing is related to recent events.

The general purpose of simultaneous threats in Germany and toward Scandinavia, Greece, and Iran is evidently to develop and exploit the panicky apprehension of further Soviet aggression. . . .

Effective resistance to direct Soviet political aggression inevitably involves risk of a collision the accidental consequences of which might be war. It is still improbable that the USSR has any present intention of provoking war. Its most provocative conduct, that in Germany, is actually evidence that war is not intended. If early military aggression in Europe were planned, devious efforts to compel Western withdrawal from Berlin would be pointless.

ORE 22-48: Estimating for the Record

At a meeting of the IAC on April 2, the estimate which the interdepartmental working group had agreed on on March 30 received unanimous endorsement. With the tensions in Europe subsiding, all of the IAC Directors considered the compromise satisfactory, and ORE 22-48 went to the printer on Friday afternoon. But that same day, General Chamberlin and General McDonald collaborated on a joint G-2/A-2 estimate of the Berlin situation and disseminated it to their networks. It had a different tone:

. . . There is no change in the Soviet capability of initiating operations practically without warning and overrunning Western Europe and important portions of the Middle East. It is believed that the Soviet economy is not yet adequate to support a protracted general war. However, the Soviets may resort to war, whether ready for a protracted general war or not, when they themselves decide that Western rearmament and resistance are a threat to their security, which latter may, in their minds, include thwarting the attainment of their short-range objectives.

If pursued, the latest Soviet action in Berlin will unquestionably cause some counteraction on our part. . . . Any action taken by us henceforth which is adequate to stop the Soviet advance by their present methods may cause the Soviets to resort to war.

Then over the weekend some of the top A-2 officers took another look at the joint estimate in which they had concurred on Friday, especially its key prediction ". . . that the USSR will not resort to direct military action during 1948." On Monday the A-2 telephoned Theodore Babbitt of ORE to say that the Air Force wished to dissent from the April 2 estimate. Upon learning that A-2 wished to reopen ORE 22-48, ONI officers decided to articulate their own dissatisfaction, in the opposite sense, with it.

~~SECRET~~

March Crisis II

So a two-page ditto prepared on the 5th accompanied the printed and bound ORE 22-48 estimate:

The Director of Intelligence, USAF, does not concur in the conclusion that the USSR will not resort to military action before the end of 1948. Although . . . occidental logic militates against war, it is not agreed that a preponderance of factual evidence exists to support such a conclusion. . . . Lack of reliable evidence precludes the formation of any sound conclusion at this time regarding Soviet intentions to resort to direct military action beyond the forthcoming sixty days.

General Cabell, the Deputy A-2, later recalled that top Air Force staff officers thought that ORE 22-48, as published on April 2, might be misinterpreted, thereby harming Air Force chances for a supplemental appropriation. A-2 had supported the no-war estimate when it was needed to defeat Soviet political pressures in Europe; now with the March tension ended, domestic concerns required closer attention.

ONI's dissatisfaction concerned the introductory wording to the possibility-of-war provision: "However, in view of the combat readiness and disposition of the Soviet armed forces and the strategic advantages which the USSR might impute to the occupation of Western Europe and the Near East" The DNI believed this gave the incorrect impression that the Soviets were poised to invade Europe and capable of sustaining a war to occupy Europe and the Near East. He recorded his preference that the phrase about the combat readiness, disposition, and possible USSR strategic advantages be deleted so that the Conclusions should read:

The preponderance of available evidence and of considerations derived from the "logic of the situation" supports the conclusion that the USSR will not resort to direct military action during 1948.

However, the possibility must be recognized that the USSR might resort to direct military action in 1948 if the Kremlin should interpret some US move, or series of moves, as indicating an intention to attack the USSR or its satellites.

These estimates for the record terminated in a formal sense the crisis which had ended in fact by April 1. Elaborate Soviet plans for political conquests in Scandinavia and Germany had failed. And while the first round in the battle for Berlin had ended in a draw, there was no panic among the Allies to dishearten their partisans in the Italian elections several weeks later. Internally, the intelligence community had created a mechanism for combined estimates that worked while there was critical need for it; externally, it had helped guide policy makers through a difficult time.