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CRISIS OVER BERLIN

American Policy Concerning the Soviet Threats to Berlin,
November 1958-December 1962

Part VI

Deepening Crisis Over Berlin: Communist Challenges and
Western Responses, June-September 1961

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FOREWORD

This is Part VI of a comprehensive study, to be issued in eight parts, which, when completed, will cover American policy concerning the Soviet threats to Berlin, November 1958-December 1962. Each part is separately bound. Also separately bound is an Introduction which covers in broad sweep the developments between the final phase of World War II and the outbreak of the Berlin crisis in November 1958.

The study was requested by Martin J. Hillenbrand for the Berlin Task Force and the Bureau of European Affairs. The research and writing were done by Arthur G. Kogan.

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Chapter I

WESTERN ACTIONS AND PREPARATIONS IN RESPONSE TO THE NEW SOVIET ULTIMATUM

A. The Reply to the Soviet Aide-Mémoire

1. Continuous Communist Propaganda Offensive

If the West wanted to respond vigorously to the new diplomatic offensive which the Soviet Union had launched at Vienna, it had to begin by issuing an effective reply to the Soviet aide-mémoire of June 4, the more so as a continuous barrage of Soviet and East German propaganda kept up the momentum of the Communist offensive.

On June 8 the Soviet Union protested to the three Western Powers and to the Federal Republic against a meeting of the Bundesrat, the second chamber of the West German parliament, scheduled for June 16. In its communication to the United States, the Soviet Union referred to this scheduled meeting as well as to past sessions of Bundestag committees in West Berlin as a "major provocation" against the Soviet Union, the GDR, and other "Socialist" countries and accused the three Western Powers of tolerating West German "intrigues" in that city "which is located on the territory of the GDR".¹ On June 10 the Soviet Union made public the text of the aide-mémoire of June 4 and thus committed itself publicly to the position set forth in that document. In an address of June 15 reporting on his meeting with President Kennedy, Khrushchev declared that conclusion of a peace treaty with Germany could not be postponed any longer and that a "peaceful settlement in Europe must be attained this year." Khrushchev also threatened that any country crossing the border of another be it "ground, air or water" would receive a "proper rebuff." This

¹From Moscow, tel. 3065, June 8, 1961, confidential; to Bonn, tel. 2208, June 8, unclassified; British Cmd. 1552, Germany No. 2 (1961): Selected Documents on Germany and the Question of Berlin, 1944-1961, p. 447.

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was the first time that Khrushchev had undertaken a commitment in public to conclude a peace treaty before the end of the year.¹

Even more ominous were the statements made in a press conference of the same day (June 15) by Walter Ulbricht, Chairman of the State Council of the East German regime. Ulbricht warned that those who wanted uninterrupted communications between West Berlin and other countries ought to support "early negotiations", and declared in reply to questions that those entering the GDR by water, land, or in the air "will be subject to our control." He further indicated that establishment of a free city of West Berlin as demanded in the Soviet aide-mémoire would result in the closing down of Tempelhof airfield and that such a free city would not be "disturbed either by occupation forces or by agents' centers, or by radio stations of the organizers of the cold war". Finally, Ulbricht considered it "a matter of course" that the "so-called refugee camps in West Berlin" would have to be closed down.²

In an address delivered on June 21, the twentieth anniversary of the German attack on the Soviet Union, Khrushchev again stated explicitly that a peace treaty with the GDR would be signed "at the end of this year." The need for the signing of a German peace treaty before the end of the year was also emphasized in a message sent to the East German leaders on June 27 jointly by Khrushchev and Leonid Brezhnev, Chairman of the Presidium of the Supreme Soviet. On June 28 Khrushchev again called for a peace treaty between the countries of the anti-Hitler coalition of World War II and the "two German states", without, however, stating, as he had on June 15 and June 21, that a peace treaty would be signed before the end of the year. But he emphasized in his address of June 28 that the Soviet Union could not be deterred from concluding

¹Documents on Germany, 1944-1961 (Print of Senate Committee on Foreign Relations, 87th Cong., 1st sess.), pp. 660-663.

²Ibid., pp. 652-660; Dokumente zu Berlin-Frage, 1944-1962 (Munich, R. Oldenbourg Verlag, 1962), pp. 417-423).

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a separate peace treaty by threats of economic sanctions, breaking off of diplomatic relations, or military measures.¹

Soviet truculence was expressed not only in public statements but also in statements conveyed through other channels. On July 2 Khrushchev availed himself of the opportunity of an encounter with British Ambassador Sir F. Roberts at the Bolshoi Theater to voice the threat that the Soviet Union would go to war if the Western Allies tried to force their way through to West Berlin; that ten nuclear bombs could destroy France or the United Kingdom; and that it would be ridiculous for two hundred million people to die for the sake of two million Berliners. When Ambassador Roberts suggested that negotiations might be taken up at the point where matters had been left at the Geneva Conference of 1959, Khrushchev replied that negotiations were indeed desirable but not on the basis of the 1959 conference, which, he said, was no longer applicable to the situation. (The British Ambassador and the Foreign Office interpreted this statement to mean that an interim agreement on Berlin was no longer acceptable to Khrushchev.)

In this conversation with the British Ambassador, Khrushchev also maintained that he was unimpressed by threats of Western countermeasures such as the announced move of a French division from Algeria to France or the reported return of American bombers to French bases. Most significant, however, was Khrushchev's statement that the East-West conflict was not so much over the German issue as such but over questions of prestige. The Soviet Union's own prestige was involved, he said, as it could not tolerate that the Western Powers should, in effect, prohibit the Soviet Union, on pain of military countermeasures, from regularizing its relations with the GDR by a peace treaty. In fact, if the Soviet Union should take any different position on this question it would be an intolerable blow to Soviet prestige. When the British Ambassador observed that the Western Powers could not prevent a separate peace treaty but that they were mainly concerned about its effect on Western rights, Khrushchev declared that a peace treaty would terminate Western rights of access to Berlin and, strictly speaking, Western rights in Berlin as well since that city was on GDR territory.

¹Ibid., pp. 663-666, 671-674.

Any Western attempt to push troops or aircraft through without agreement of the GDR would be regarded by the Soviet Union as an act of war, and the Soviet Union would support the GDR in resisting such acts by force.

In briefing the American Embassy in London about the British Ambassador's conversation with Khrushchev, the British Foreign Office commented that Khrushchev's characterization of any Western attempts to force ground or air access to Berlin as "acts of war" was much more categorical than previous statements on that subject.¹

Walter Ulbricht, Chairman of the State Council of the East German regime, declared in the course of an address to the East German People's Chamber (Volkskammer) that the East German regime intended to exercise full control over the land, water, and air routes to Berlin, and that the Western Powers would have to negotiate with the East German regime if they wanted to preserve their rights of access to Berlin. Ulbricht also emphasized that he wished to leave no doubt that the character of West Berlin "as a potential core of a new war" would be eliminated and that the solution of the West Berlin question had been put "on the agenda of history in 1961." On the other hand, however, Ulbricht felt it necessary to stress--presumably to calm the growing fear and panic among the East German population--that "there will be no shooting, but negotiations" and that "everything will proceed peacefully."²

On July 8 Khrushchev, addressing the graduates of the Soviet Military Academy, denounced the Western talk of "firmness" as "obstinate unwillingness to heed the demand of the times" and announced that, in view of the growing military budgets of the NATO countries, the Soviet Union had decided to suspend temporarily the reduction of its armed forces planned for 1961 and

¹From Moscow, tel. 23, July 4, 1961; from London, tel. 53, July 6; to Bonn, airgram A-12, July 7; all secret.

²From Berlin, airgram A-10, July 8, 1961, official use only; memorandum from Tyler (EUR) to the Secretary, July 6, no classification indicated.

to increase defense spending in the current year by 3.144 billion rubles (equivalent to 3.4 billion dollars), thereby raising total Soviet military expenditures in 1961 to 12.399 billion rubles.

Khrushchev asserted that the Western resort to a "language of threats and intimidation", as exemplified by recent speeches of de Gaulle and Macmillan, provided not a business-like atmosphere for negotiations. Thus, the conclusion of a peace treaty with the GDR, "with all the attendant consequences, may prove to be the only way out of the obtaining situation." Yet, as the Department's Bureau of European Affairs pointed out in a memorandum of July 11, this address, despite its threats and bluster, seemed to represent a bid for negotiations, for it included an appeal to President Kennedy, President de Gaulle, and Prime Minister Mcmillan urging them "to display wisdom in the solution of the German problem" and "to attend a conference together with other peace-loving states, and to conclude a peace treaty." The memorandum noted that this was the first time since the Vienna meeting that Khrushchev had alluded to the possibility of a summit meeting.¹

2. Preparation of a Reply to the Soviet Aide-Mémoire

Alleged "Delay" in Replying to the Aide-Mémoire. While the Soviet Union and East Germany in an ever-increasing flow of statements continued to insist on the urgent need for a German peace treaty and a change in the status of Berlin, the Western Powers issued no fundamental statement of their position, either by way of reply to the Soviet aide-mémoire or in response to the revived Soviet campaign regarding Berlin, until July 17. Although Western leaders such as Secretary of State Rusk on June 22, Prime Minister Macmillan on June 27, and President Kennedy on June 28 went on record to assert Western rights in Berlin, to reaffirm the determination to defend them, and to denounce the Soviet campaign as a threat to peace,² there

¹The Soviet Stand on Germany: With a Letter to the American People from Nikita S. Khrushchev (Crosscurrents Press, New York, 1961), pp. 74-92; memorandum from Tyler (EUR) to the Secretary, "The Khrushchev Speech of July 8 to the Soviet Military Academy Graduates," July 10, 1961, confidential.

²Documents on Germany, 1944-1961, pp. 666-671, 674-675; Selected Documents on Germany and the Question of Berlin, 1944-1961, p. 448.

developed speculation that a Western reply to the Soviet aide-mémoire was delayed for six weeks (June 4-July 17) as a result of lack of American determination and also of disagreements and disarray in the Western camp.¹ Yet a chronology of the preparation of the American reply to the Soviet aide-mémoire, which the Department sent to the White House on July 13, showed that the drafting of Western responses to Soviet communications was a time-consuming process "involving, in addition to internal US procedures, the long and laborious process of full consultation with the other eleven NATO allies." Moreover, it was stressed that the delay was not unusual by comparison with previous exchanges with the Soviet Union.²

First American Drafts; British Suggestions. Actually, a draft reply in the form of a point-by-point refutation of the Soviet aide-mémoire was drawn up as early as June 7. It remained the basis for the reply even though it underwent a number of changes in the process of achieving agreement on a text. On June 8 the draft was revised in accordance with instructions that it include the suggestion that the legal issue should be referred to the International Court of Justice. Accordingly, it was stated in the draft that there existed an international dispute between the United States and the Soviet Union on legal issues affecting peace and security and that therefore "the issues posed regarding the status of the respective parties in Germany and Berlin, and the effect of any separate treaty on such status, should be submitted to the International Court pursuant to Article 36 of the Charter of the Court."³ This draft was sent to the White House on June 8 with a request for agreement in principle so as to provide a basis for further discussions within the American Government and with the allies.

On June 9 the British handed to the United States a memorandum pointing out that the Soviet aide-mémoire might have

¹For an interpretation based on such speculations, see Jean Edward Smith, The Defense of Berlin (Baltimore, 1936), Chapter 12.

²Memorandum by Battle (S/S) to Bundy (White House), with enclosure, "Chronology of Preparation of United States Reply to Soviet Aide-Mémoire of June 4", July 13, 1961, secret.

³Draft replies of June 7 and 8, 1961, secret.

considerable appeal for public opinion in the uncommitted countries and that it was therefore urgent for the Western Powers to agree on "publicity themes" which could be used in setting forth the case for the West. The British suggested that use might be made particularly of the themes that there was no need for a crisis, but if one should develop it would be artificial and "made in Russia" and that beneath the apparent reasonableness of the Soviet proposals there was a calculated plan to usurp essential Western rights and to deprive 2-1/2 million people of their only effective guarantee of freedom.

The British also suggested that, in addition, the theme should be developed that Khrushchev was playing with fire and would, if he persisted, bring about a nuclear war that would affect all nations of the world; all nations, therefore, should realize the issues involved and leave Khrushchev in no doubt regarding their feelings. Finally, the British proposed making use of the theme that the Soviet position on Germany was imperialistic while the West supported self-determination for all Germans.¹

The British proposals were endorsed by the United States and forwarded to NATO.

On June 14 the Department prepared a revised draft with two alternative endings. "Variant A" contained the suggestion taken over from the earlier draft that the legal issue should be submitted to the International Court. "Variant B" proposed that, pending German reunification, Greater Berlin should be administered as an indivisible area with freedom of the city and access thereto guaranteed by the four powers, which would continue to be entitled to station troops there. The United States and its British and French allies, it was stated, were prepared to submit detailed proposals regarding such an arrangement. A subvariant of Variant B suggested that the proposal for the reunification of Berlin adopted by the Western Foreign

¹Memorandum from the British Embassy, June 9, 1961, confidential.

Ministers on May 1, 1960 as part of the pre-summit Working Group Report (see ante, Part III, pp. 86-87) could be used as a basis for such an all-Berlin solution.¹

3. Discussion of Draft Reply with the Allies

The revised United States draft reply--as well as other matters relating to Berlin--was taken up in a series of bilateral, tripartite, and quadripartite discussions held in Washington June 14-17. Assistant Secretary Kohler and other high officials of the Department participated on the American side; on the allied side the discussions were attended not only by representatives of the Embassies but also by Deputy Under Secretary Shuckburg of the British Foreign Office and Minister Laloy of the French Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Although these discussions were not binding on the governments, they represented a useful exchange of views which helped the development of an agreed position regarding the reply to the Soviet aide-mémoire.

After circulating the American draft reply, Kohler explained the reasoning underlying the proposal for referring the issue to the International Court. While the Soviet Union, he said, would certainly not accept jurisdiction of the International Court, there would be time for exchanges on this subject during which the allies could take preparatory military measures in accordance with contingency plans. Furthermore, after Soviet rejection of the American proposal, the United States would go to the Security Council seeking a "cease and desist" order as well as a request by the Council for an advisory opinion from the Court on the legal issues involved. If the Soviet Union, as anticipated, vetoed the request, the West might then consider going to the UN General Assembly, where the Soviet veto did not apply. During this period the Western Powers would have enormous opportunities for making propaganda and winning world-wide support for their position in Berlin. The main objective in all this would be to keep the Soviet Union on the defensive. Moreover, as it had to be expected that some country would bring the Berlin issue into the United Nations once a critical point was reached, the proposed course of action would enable the Western Powers to keep control of

¹"Draft U.S. Reply to Soviet Aide-Mémoire on Germany and Berlin", June 14, 1961, secret.

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of the situation by having the problem raised in the United Nations on their own terms. Kohler emphasized throughout his presentation that the Court would not be asked to adjudicate the fact of the Western rights in Berlin but rather the Soviet claim that these rights could be extinguished by unilateral Soviet action.

Deputy Under Secretary Shuckburg of the British Foreign Office concurred in the view that the Berlin issue might come before the United Nations whether the Western Powers liked it or not and that it was therefore preferable to have it done on their own terms. Shuckburg said that the issue would be put before Prime Minister Macmillan after which the British would take a more definitive position.

Minister Laloy of the French Foreign Ministry admitted that he was speaking against the background of President de Gaulle's "allergy" toward the United Nations but stated that he could appreciate the rationale of the suggested approach. Laloy expressed doubt, however, about its possible effect on Khrushchev and wondered if the proposed action might not precipitate the crisis rather than delay it. He felt that the West should think twice before embarking on a course that might bring about the very situation which it was trying to avoid.

West German Ambassador Grewe also expressed doubts about the proposed course of action. He questioned whether the Western Powers could actually be sure of their case if it should come before the International Court. Grewe also wondered whether the effect of the proposal would be that the West's ammunition would be fired too soon.

Commenting on the observations made by the allied representatives, Kohler declared that there was a rather strong feeling in Washington that this time the Western Powers were moving toward a real confrontation with the Soviet Union on Berlin and that the Soviet aide-mémoire was the opening gun in the campaign. Since the abortive summit conference, Kohler said, the Western Powers had kept relatively quiet in the face of an almost continuous Soviet campaign for a peace treaty and a free city of West Berlin. This time, however, they had to adopt a more positive position in the political and propaganda field as well as with respect to deterring the Soviet Union.

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There was general agreement among the representatives of the four powers that, with respect to the two alternative endings of the draft reply, attention should be focused on the proposal relating to the International Court rather than on the proposal for an all-Berlin solution. It was also agreed that the "publicity themes" suggested by the British should be incorporated in the reply.¹

As a result of further discussions among the Western Powers, however, the proposal on Berlin was eliminated from the draft reply as was the suggestion that the legal issue be referred to the International Court of Justice. Objections to the latter idea, partly based on misgivings that this course of action would involve the United Nations in the Berlin issue, were raised primarily by the French and West Germans. But the British also began to have grave doubts in this matter and in meetings of the Four Power Working Group held on June 26 and June 28 it was agreed that a new draft, without these two proposals, should be prepared. It was also decided that the United States, Britain, and France should send three substantially identical but separate notes in reply to the Soviet aide-mémoire.

While a new American draft was prepared on the basis of these discussions, the French submitted their own draft reply and suggested that it should be used as the basic reply with the American draft as an annex. The United States pointed out, however, that the framework of the two drafts was too dissimilar to make such a combination possible. The American draft included a number of points not covered in the French draft and also dealt in much greater detail with the legal points raised in the Soviet aide-mémoire.²

¹Draft telegram to Bonn, London, and Paris, June 17, 1961, secret; memorandum by Day (GER) of meeting of Four Power Working Group on Germany and Berlin, June 17, secret.

²Memorandum by Hillenbrand (GER) of conversation among Rusk, Grewe, and others, June 24, 1961, secret; memorandum by Tyler (EUR) of conversation among Rusk, Alphand, and others, June 24, secret; memorandum by Mautner (S/O) dated June 29, of meeting of Four Power Working Group on Germany and Berlin, June 26, secret; memorandum from Hillenbrand (GER) to Kohler (EUR), June 28, secret.

On June 30 the Four Power Working Group agreed, at the request of the French, on sending three separate communications with identical "operative" language. The same day a new draft was sent to the White House.

4. Suggestions by the President: Agreement on a Reply

On July 3 Theodore Sorensen, Special Counsel to the President, transmitted to the Secretary a memorandum containing a number of suggestions by the President for consideration in the drafting of the reply to the Soviet aide-mémoire. One of these suggestions was in the form of a "constructive proposal" which might serve as the basis for reconsideration, and inclusion in our reply of a "positive suggestion to refer certain questions to the International Court of Justice." The President felt that such a proposal should be made "particularly in view of the lack of any other positive proposals in our reply." The President also wanted the document to be shorter, "less defensive in tone", and to place less stress on German reunification.¹ These were the first reactions to the draft from the White House.

On July 5 the Secretary met with the representatives of the four Western Embassies and discussed the new version of the reply with the changes suggested by the President. He explained that these changes would result in simplifying and shortening the text so as to bring out the issues more clearly. One major change was that a Presidential Statement of position would be released at the time of the publication of the American reply.²

After further consultation among the four Western Powers and NATO, agreement was reached on the texts of the three notes and the Presidential Statement as well as on a simultaneous date of delivery. It should be mentioned in this context that most of the quadripartite meetings dealing with the reply to the Soviet aide-mémoire of June 4 also took up the subject

¹Memorandum from Sorensen (White House) to the Secretary, July 3, 1961, secret.

²Memorandum by Mautner (S/O) of meeting of Four Power Working Group on Germany and Berlin, July 5, 1961, secret.

of the German reply to the Soviet memorandum of February 17 addressed to the Federal Republic (see ante, Part V, Chapter I, section A). Bonn's reply, it was decided, was to be handed in on July 12, and thus it preceded by a few days the American, British, and French notes in reply to the Soviet aide-mémoire of June 4 which were delivered on July 17.

5. The American Reply to the Soviet Aide-Mémoire

United States Note of July 17. In its reply to the Soviet aide-mémoire of June 4, the United States concurred with the Soviet Government that a peace settlement was overdue but reminded the latter that progress toward this goal, in spite of Western efforts, had been blocked by the Soviet Union.

The United States made it clear that it would defend its legal rights in Berlin "against attempts at unilateral abrogation", not in order to perpetuate its presence but because the freedom of the people of West Berlin depended on the maintenance of these rights. The United States also emphasized that the all-Berlin solution proposed at Geneva in 1959 demonstrated that it was not "wedded to one particular arrangement for Berlin" and that it had accepted the possibility of practical arrangements to improve the situation in Berlin until an overall solution of the German problem could be achieved. But the United States also declared that it supported the "clearly expressed" wish of the Berliners that no change be made in the status of their city which would expose them to the domination of the East German regime.

The United States expressed regret over Soviet rejection of the Western Peace Plan of 1959, a plan intended as a practical "step-by-step approach to the problem of a Central European settlement, based on the principle of self-determination, to which the Soviet Union professes to adhere, but which is conspicuous by its absence in Soviet proposals."

One of the key points of the American note was the re-assertion of four-power responsibility for a solution of the German problem and denial of a Soviet right to ignore quadripartite arrangements to conclude "unilateral arrangements with one part of Germany." Therefore, the United States rejected the Soviet position that a "separate treaty" with the East German regime could terminate Western rights in Berlin. The United States again reminded the Soviet Union that the

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right of access to Berlin was inherent in the right of the Western Powers to be in Berlin and that procedures for the exercise of these rights had been defined in numerous agreements among the four powers and confirmed by the Soviet Union in the Paris agreements of June 20, 1949, on the termination of the Berlin blockade.

Referring to the war-time agreements on the occupation and administration of the Berlin area, the United States rejected the assertion that Berlin was situated on the territory of the "German Democratic Republic." The United States also reaffirmed its opposition to the establishment of a "free city" of West Berlin, access to which would be under the control of the East German regime. The United States pointed out in this connection that Ulbricht's statements of June 15 regarding the closing down of the Tempelhof airfield and of the refugee centers in West Berlin made clear "the degree to which this regime intends to interfere in West Berlin." The United States denied that the current status of Berlin was a threat to peace and declared that Soviet efforts to destroy this status were "certain to jeopardize gravely the very peace in the name of which the Soviet action is taken." Regarding the Soviet goals in Berlin, the United States pointed out that it was significant that "the Soviet Union having previously occupied East Berlin and violated its four power status by establishing there an alleged 'GDR' government now proposes that its troops will be among those stationed in a 'free city' of West Berlin. The Soviet Union would thus seek to extend its postwar empire by the absorption of the Eastern sector of Berlin and to shift the Four Power principle from all of Berlin to the Western part of the city alone."

The United States expressed its willingness to consider "a freely negotiated settlement of the unresolved problems of Germany" but it declared that such a settlement must be "in conformity with the principle of self-determination". The United States emphasized that it had "never contemplated confronting the Soviet Union with a fait accompli" and that it hoped that "for its part the Soviet Government will renounce any idea of taking such action", which would have "unforeseeable consequences."

Finally, the United States confronted the Soviet campaign in favor of a "free city" with the argument that a city did not become free by calling it free but by giving its people

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the opportunity to make their own choice and to live their own lives, a freedom which the people of West Berlin enjoyed. Similarly, the United States met the Soviet campaign for a "peace treaty" by pointing out that there was peace in Germany at this time even though the situation was "abnormal" and that a peace treaty that adversely affected the lives and rights of millions as well as "the solemn commitment of three great powers" would not bring peace with it.¹

The American note was handed to Gromyko on July 17. In a brief discussion following delivery of the note, Ambassador Thompson declared that it was clear that "we were heading into a dangerous and difficult situation". Gromyko agreed, but asserted that the situation had been brought about by the West and that it suited the Western Powers and NATO to heat it up. He further stated that, in the opinion of the Soviet Union, the question should be settled among the United States, the Soviet Union, and other interested powers. Thompson thereupon drew Gromyko's attention to the fact that, while the American note was firm, "it did not slam the door on the discussion of the problem."² Neither in this conversation nor in the American note was any suggestion made to refer the issue to the International Court of Justice.

Presidential Statement, July 19. As agreed among the Western Powers, following publication of the reply to the Soviet aide-memoire President Kennedy issued a statement intended to convey to the American people and the world the "basic issues which underlie the somewhat more formal language of diplomacy."

The President emphasized three basic facts: 1) if peace in Berlin and Germany were destroyed by unilateral actions of the Soviet Union, its leaders would bear "a heavy responsibility before world opinion and history"; 2) West Berlin was already a "free city"--free to select its own leaders and to enjoy fundamental human rights; 3) the continued presence of

¹Documents on Germany, 1944-1961, pp. 681-687.

²From Moscow, tel. 166, July 17, 1961, confidential.

the Western Powers in West Berlin "is by clear legal right, arising from war, acknowledged in many agreements signed by the Soviet Union, and strongly supported by the overwhelming majority of the people of that city." The freedom of these people was dependent "upon our exercise of these rights", an exercise which was thus a "political and moral obligation as well as a legal right."

The President supplemented the note of firmness by stating on the other hand that the United States recognized the desirability of a change in Germany and Berlin provided it was a change "in the direction of greater, not less freedom of choice for the people of Germany and Berlin." The President emphasized that "our objective is not to perpetuate our presence in either Germany or Berlin" but rather "the perpetuation of the peace and freedom of their citizens."¹

B. U.S. Review of Planning Regarding Berlin

1. Discussions with the Allies on the Status of Contingency Planning

As noted earlier in this study, President Kennedy had ordered a review of all aspects of the Berlin problem soon after he had come into office. A significant role in conducting this review was assigned to former Secretary of State Dean Acheson, whom the President had given the task of developing studies and plans regarding the fundamental military and political aspects of the Berlin problem. Certain tentative conclusions reached by Acheson were discussed with the British during Macmillan's visit to Washington in April (see ante, Part V, Chapter II, section A).

Under the impact of the new Soviet challenge this review of the Berlin problem by the United States was further refined and greatly accelerated. In the process of the review the nature of the assumptions of Western contingency planning underwent a searching re-examination at the highest levels of the United States Government as a result of which a number of concepts were clarified, especially with regard to the use of

¹Documents on Germany, 1944-1961, pp. 687-689.

force in case of blockage of access. In the end, a system of contingency planning emerged in which political, military, and propaganda elements were more closely coordinated and also integrated into the general strategy of the Western alliance.

Until the United States had finished its deliberation of the problem, however, no high-level decisions concurred in by the Allies could be expected, and Berlin contingency planning by the Western Powers proceeded within the existing frame of reference along lines of policies already established.

As a result of the Kennedy-Khrushchev meeting, the question of the status of contingency planning was again raised among the Western Powers. The discussions between the United States and the other Western Powers regarding the reply to the Soviet aide-mémoire provided an opportunity for taking up the subject of contingency planning with the British and French, who were again informed that the subject was under "intensive review" in the United States Government, which hoped to come up with fairly specific proposals to heighten the effectiveness of the Western deterrent in the Berlin situation. The United States reiterated the view expressed to the British and French on previous occasions that the probes contemplated under existing contingency plans were on too small a scale to prove anything and that the action to reopen access required greater commitment of Western forces as well as firm decisions by the Governments regarding the planning and execution of this course of action. The British pointed out that LIVE OAK did not represent an adequate mechanism for bringing to bear the views of the British Chiefs of Staff and that it was impossible for the British Government to make the political decisions required, as the British Chiefs of Staff seemed to differ with the United States in their evaluation of the basic facts involved, such as the feasibility of an airlift and the implications of ground action. The British therefore suggested that the French and British Chiefs of Staff send high-level representatives to Washington to discuss matters directly with the U.S. Chiefs of Staff.¹

¹Draft tel. to Bonn, June 17, 1961, secret; US, UK, French Tripartite Planning Group, Berlin Contingency Planning, Record of Meeting, June 17 (BERCON R-13, June 27), secret.

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The Germans, who did not participate in these tripartite discussions on contingency planning, were dissatisfied at receiving information on this subject only within the framework of NATO. On June 24 Ambassador Grewe handed to the Secretary an aide-mémoire and on June 27 he transmitted to Kohler a letter from Foreign Minister Brentano addressed to the Secretary. In both of these documents it was urged that the Federal Republic be more closely associated with contingency planning and that it participate in the work of the Ambassadorial Steering Group in Washington.¹

2. The Acheson Report

Review of the Berlin problem by the United States reached a crucial stage when former Secretary of State Acheson submitted his report to President Kennedy on June 28. The Acheson report and the related plans and studies, by re-examining the assumptions underlying Western plans for dealing with a Berlin crisis, succeeded in giving new direction and precision to this planning and in defining more specifically the areas where high-policy decisions had yet to be made.

The Nature of the Issue. The Acheson Report started from the premise that the significance of the issue over Berlin lay in the fact that it involved a test of resolution between the United States and the USSR the outcome of which would determine world confidence in the United States. Until this conflict of wills was resolved, it would be dangerous to attempt to settle the Berlin issue by negotiation. Until it was demonstrated to the Soviet Union that its objective was unattainable, no negotiation could accomplish more than to cover "with face-saving devices" submission to Soviet demands.

Khrushchev's pressure over Berlin indicated, the Report stated, that the effectiveness of the American nuclear deterrent had declined, presumably for the reason that the Soviet Union doubted American willingness to go to war over this issue. Thus, the problem was to restore the credibility of the deterrent,

¹Memorandum by Hillenbrand (GER) of conversation among Rusk, Grewe, and others, June 24, 1961, secret; memorandum for the record by Kohler (EUR) of conversation with Grewe, June 27, confidential; airgram G-570 to Bonn, June 27, top secret; letter, Brentano to Rusk, June 27, no classification indicated.

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i.e., to cause Khrushchev to revise his appraisal of American willingness to go to nuclear war rather than submit to Soviet demands. To convince the Soviet Union that we were in earnest about Berlin, "we must be in earnest". Therefore, military, economic, and political measures should be begun immediately and be increased over the period of time available. To be effective, these measures must be wholly authentic and real and not be influenced by psychological considerations designed to impress the Russians. Furthermore, the measures should be neither dramatized nor concealed and should be announced "in low key". These preparations should be accompanied by constant education of the Allied public as to the nature of the Berlin crisis and by assertion of continued Western readiness to discuss the issue with the Soviet Union.

Stages of Preparatory Action. Preparations should take place in three stages extending over a period from the beginning of July to the German elections of September 17, then to the signing of the USSR-GDR treaty, and finally to the moment of the actual assumption of control over Berlin access by the GDR. By the end of this period, the United States, having improved the readiness of its forces and having completed the education of the public at home and abroad regarding the nature of the Berlin issue, would be ready to conduct political moves and diplomatic negotiations should the preparations suggested have the desired effect.

Military Preparations. Military preparations should be of three types:

1) Preparations for substantial use of military forces on the ground and in the air in Europe, and on the high seas. This should involve measures to bring up reserves to battle readiness, to bring US forces in Europe up to full strength, to move US air force units to Europe, to build up stocks of combat supplies in Europe, and to increase stocks of non-nuclear ammunition. The measures would also include a tightening of SACEUR's physical custody and control over nuclear warheads to prevent premature escalation into nuclear war.

2) Preparations designed to increase our ability to engage in countermeasures on the high seas, including measures enabling US naval forces to force Soviet Bloc ships to return to Bloc ports, and to increase the Navy's readiness to engage in combat actions that might ensue.

3) Preparations relating to the possibility of getting ready for general nuclear war. This would involve placing SAC in a suitable state of readiness as well as taking civil defense measures "including, possibly, construction of fall-out shelters."

Non-Military Pressure. Preparations for non-military pressure on the Soviet Union would be of vital importance as they would be more credible than preparations for military actions and might have a substantial effect on Soviet intentions. They would be of the following kinds:

1) Political Measures

Request by the President to the Congress for funds and authority to carry on the military preparations. The President might make clear that there was a program to meet the immediate threat to Berlin as well as to take long-range steps to increase the size of the US defense establishment so as to enable it to cope with a period of prolonged Soviet Bloc pressures if a full-blown crisis over Berlin should develop. It would be useful to remind the Soviet leaders that a Berlin crisis might result in a lasting rise in American defense expenditures as had happened as a consequence of the Korean war.

2) Economic Measures

Preparations for economic countermeasures would have a considerable deterrent effect. The measures would be designed to be executed at the time the East Germans began to block ground access to Berlin. They might include cutting off trade between NATO countries and the Soviet Bloc; preventing Soviet Bloc ships from entering NATO ports and Soviet Bloc aircraft from touching down in NATO countries; denying Soviet Bloc nationals and goods the right to transit NATO countries and to be transported by NATO carriers.

3) Measures Affecting Eastern Europe

The United States should try to convince the USSR that in the event of a Berlin crisis it could and would stir up dissidence in Eastern Europe and East Germany.

4) Measures to Influence World Public Opinion

The Soviet Union believed it could take greater risks because the West would be inhibited by adverse world public opinion from taking effective counteraction. Thus, consideration should be given to staging an intensive and continuous campaign, domestically and internationally, to bring out the fact that Khrushchev was committing an action of far-reaching aggression in the very name of peace by negotiating and putting into effect a so-called peace treaty.

Role of Negotiations. As long as Khrushchev believed that the balance of power was inclined in his favor, negotiations would fail. During this period negotiations should be regarded purely from a propaganda point of view, with the emphasis put on the all-German issue rather than on the Berlin problem and with the Western position clearly based on the principle of self-determination.

However, if the preparations suggested in the foregoing should convince Khrushchev of Western firmness, genuine negotiations would be useful and would enable Khrushchev to retreat more easily.

Some proposals regarding such negotiations were not promising. The previously suggested "interim" agreements, whatever the type, would impose a term of Western presence in Berlin, and they would buy time only if a crash program designed to improve the West's power position were mounted immediately upon conclusion of the temporary agreement.

This would leave as the most promising possibility "Solution C" providing for an exchange of Western, Soviet and East German declarations prior to the signing of a separate peace treaty. In these declarations it would be affirmed that existing access procedures would not be changed, except to allow for the substitution of East German personnel for Soviet personnel. "Solution C" would hardly represent any gain for the Soviet Union and therefore would not be negotiable without some added features such as Western declarations that espionage and subversive activities would not be permitted in West Berlin, that no nuclear arms would be introduced into the city, and that Western forces would not exceed the level of their current combat strength. Moreover, UN observers might be stationed in West Berlin and on the access routes to inspect the fulfillment of the declarations referred to above.

An agreement along these lines would still be a major defeat for the USSR. If Western bargaining strength was sufficient to save Berlin but not to avoid more concessions to the Soviet Union, one might add to "Solution C" a declaration by the Western Powers recognizing the Oder-Neisse boundary. Such a declaration would be in the West's interest in any event as a means of weakening Soviet-Polish ties.

Thus, negotiations could only play a limited role in averting a crisis. If other measures had deterred Khrushchev, negotiations could offer him an "out" in the form of an "optical change" in Berlin. If, however, Khrushchev remained as confident and determined as he was at this time, negotiations could not solve the problem and the United States would have to meet his physical challenge.

East German Control Over Access to Berlin. If the Soviet Union announced its intention to proceed with a separate peace treaty, the danger of a collision with the Western Powers would be minimized if the latter made clear the position they would adopt when the East Germans assumed control over access to Berlin.

Current contingency plans contemplated that the Western Powers would only identify their traffic to the East Germans, but would not allow them to stamp papers as the Soviet Union was currently doing. A showdown over the issue of stamping papers, however, was politically not feasible for a number of reasons, such as British reluctance to go along, lack of support by European public opinion, and anticipated Soviet exploitation of Western disunity on this issue. Therefore, the Western Powers should simply announce, prior to conclusion of a peace treaty, that they would allow the East Germans to perform the same functions as the Russians--but no more. If the East Germans should react by stating that procedures would have to be determined by negotiations between them and the Western Powers, the latter would of course refuse such negotiations without, however, falling into a Communist trap by breaking with the Communists over the issue of dealing with the GDR rather than that of the freedom of Berlin. The Western Powers might simply say that they were willing to negotiate with the Soviet Union about the Berlin situation following a peace treaty and that, if these negotiations failed, they would inform the GDR of the procedures which they would follow. Thereupon the East Germans might continue to insist

on negotiations with the GDR and announce that, failing such negotiations, they would allow Western military traffic to move only if it conformed to procedures which the GDR had unilaterally specified. If these procedures were identical with the previous ones the traffic would move under the policy set forth in the Report. But if the procedures differed, the Western Powers would not accept them. For, if they allowed the East Germans to perform functions hitherto successfully denied the Soviet Union, they would find it hard to arrest their subsequent descent "down the slippery slope."

Initial Blockade. Refusal of the Western Powers to abide by new procedures proposed by the GDR would result in blockage of their military traffic to Berlin. The Allies should then move their military traffic by air, which would require only a slight increase in military flights. Simultaneously, they should begin to apply non-military countermeasures and proceed toward a further build-up of the permanent American defense establishment. At this point, the Communists would have to choose between four courses of action:

- a) Negotiate for resumption of access.
- b) Permit military airlift to go on indefinitely.
- c) Shoot down Western aircraft. In this case we would fight back in the air on a scale of non-nuclear violence corresponding to that of the Communists, who would have to bear the onus for the initial use of force. If the Soviet Union intervened in full strength with the obvious intention of bringing about a Western defeat in the air, the West would abandon the air effort and prepare for large-scale use of ground force.
- d) Cutting off by the GDR of civil ground access to Berlin. The Western Powers would then move civil traffic by air as there would be little political support for a large-scale use of force to move goods and persons on the ground rather than by air. Simultaneously with the civil airlift, the West would start all-out application of economic countermeasures and a full-scale US defense build-up. Moreover, Western naval vessels would begin shadowing, delaying, and harrasing Soviet Bloc shipping preparatory to a naval blockade.

If the Soviet Union should resort to passive counter-measures to prevent the civil airlift from keeping Berlin's economy fully functioning, Allied naval forces would immediately blockade the Baltic, Black Sea, and Soviet Pacific Coast and force Soviet Bloc vessels to leave these areas and to return to port. The purpose of this exercise would be to demonstrate Western determination to apply immediate military pressure on the USSR, even before there was a substantial use of force on the ground, in order to influence Soviet political decisions. If the Soviet Union, nevertheless, continued passive interference with the civil airlift, the latter would become ineffectual since the Allies would be limited to visual flights which would not suffice to keep Berlin supplied. In that case the Western Powers would have to resort to the use of substantial force on the ground to restore access.

Use of Force to Restore Ground Access. The use of force to reestablish ground access should begin with a sizeable probe of battalion strength to establish the fact that access to Berlin was physically blocked. As a next step, an operation involving a substantial non-nuclear force should be staged. It would not have the military purpose of defeating the opposing Soviet forces, which would not be feasible, but a political purpose.

This political purpose would be to induce the Soviet Union to negotiate a resumption of access by giving the most convincing demonstration possible that the Western Powers would not submit to Soviet demands and would use whatever force was necessary, up to and including general war, in resisting them. The Western force therefore should be large enough to demonstrate to the Soviet Union that conflict involving this force would, if not terminated by negotiations, get out of control and escalate into nuclear war. For this reason, the force should not be susceptible of being defeated by the GDR; the Joint Chiefs of Staff believed that 7 divisions and 4 air wings would accomplish this end. This force should be able to defend itself with non-nuclear weapons until it was plain that the political purpose could not be achieved and that nuclear weapons would have to be used. Employment of such a force, however, would give the Soviet Union time to appreciate the risks involved in the course on which it was embarking.

After a period of 1-2 weeks this allied force would need further reinforcements, depending on the strength of the opposing Communist force. At this point or somewhat later

a judgment would have to be reached that everything feasible had been done to convince Khrushchev that the United States would have to use nuclear weapons "to preserve its army, its allies, and itself." Thus, the last stage of deterrence would have been reached, if previous preparations and uses of force had not produced an acceptable settlement of the issue.¹

3. The President's Directive of June 30

The National Security Council discussed the Berlin problem on the basis of an oral presentation by Acheson on June 29. On this occasion the Council also noted that the President had instructed the Special Assistant for National Security Affairs "to assign to appropriate departments and agencies specific studies and recommendations to be presented at a Council meeting within two weeks."² On June 30 Bundy communicated to the Secretaries of State, Defense, and Treasury the President's request that the following papers be submitted in time for a National Security Council meeting on June 13:

1) The Secretary of Defense should prepare recommendations regarding the timing and nature of the preparations to be taken to prepare a capability for:

a) a garrison and civilian airlift (QBAL) by October 15.

b) naval harassment and blockade of Soviet Bloc shipping by November 15.

c) Large-scale non-nuclear ground action within four months of such time after October 15 as it may be ordered, with tactical air support, on the assumption of an appropriate use of force and reinforcements from the United States as necessary to permit the use of from two to twelve divisions for the purpose stated in the pertinent section of the Acheson report.

¹Memorandum from Acheson to the President, June 28, 1961, secret.

²Record of Actions by the National Security Council at its 486th meeting, June 29, 1961 (National Security Council Action No. 2432), secret.

d) keeping the Strategic Air Command (SAC) in a state of maximum readiness for flexible use over a prolonged period of crisis, "without degrading its effectiveness."

These preparations should include only steps directly related to the military purposes set forth above and should not include measures primarily designed for psychological effect. The cost of these preparations and the number of men needed should be examined and information provided concerning the funds and the authority which would have to be obtained from the Congress.

2) The Secretary of Defense was asked to submit recommendations regarding the magnitude and character of a permanent increase in the size of the US defense establishment to be carried out if Soviet actions regarding Berlin appeared to foreshadow a long period of heightened tension. The Secretaries of Defense and State should make recommendations as to how the prospects of such an increase might be brought to the attention of the Soviet Union for deterrent effect.

3) The Secretary of State in consultation with the Secretaries of Treasury and Commerce should submit recommendations regarding preparations to ensure that execution of the actions described above would cause a minimum dislocation to the economy and balance of payments of the United States.

5) The Secretary of State and the Director of CIA should submit joint recommendations regarding preparations to create a capability for inciting "progressively increasing instability in East Germany and Eastern Europe" at such time after October 15 as ordered. Recommendations should likewise be submitted regarding bringing this capability to the attention of the Soviet Union before it makes its critical decisions on Berlin.

6) The Secretary of State and the Director of USIA should submit recommendations as to steps to be taken "to place our case regarding Berlin and Germany before the American public and the world" and to gain support for the preparations set forth above.

7) The Secretary of State should submit recommendations regarding our negotiating positions with respect to Berlin and Germany prior to the signing of a peace treaty, and concerning

the posture which the Allied Powers should adopt toward the appearance of East German personnel along the access routes following a peace treaty. These recommendations would be discussed at a meeting of the National Security Council subsequent to the July 13 meeting.

The Secretary of State was given general responsibility for coordinating the various studies covered in this directive and for developing an "integrated timetable" intended to achieve maximum deterrent effect with respect to the Soviet Union as well as the agreement and maximum cooperation of our allies. The instrument for this purpose would be the Interdepartmental Group on Berlin Contingency planning re-designated as the Interdepartmental Coordinating Group on Germany and Berlin, which would be chaired by the Secretary or a representative designated by him.¹

4. The Work of the Interdepartmental Coordinating Committees in Response to the President's Directive of June 30

The Interdepartmental Coordinating Group on Germany and Berlin² met on July 5 for the purpose of developing procedures for carrying out the President's directive. Secretary Rusk stated at the meeting that a working group under the chairmanship of Assistant Secretary Kohler would give full attention to the Berlin problem. Following the departure of the Secretary

¹National Security Action Memorandum No. 58 from Bundy (White House) to the Secretaries of State, Defense, and Treasury, June 30, 1961, secret.

²The Interdepartmental Coordinating Group on Germany and Berlin did not meet from December 1960 to June 16, 1961, when it re-convened to receive a report from Kohler on East-West developments affecting Berlin during the preceding months, as well as a presentation of Acheson's thoughts on contingency planning. (Memorandum from Kohler (EUR) to Johnson (G), June 12, 1961, secret; memorandum from Hillenbrand (GER) to Kohler (EUR), June 16, secret.)

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and the other Cabinet members, this working group proceeded to discuss the mechanics of the work to be completed.¹

In a memorandum of July 12 to the Secretary, Deputy Under Secretary Johnson aptly characterized the studies assembled by the Interdepartmental Coordinating Group in response to National Security Directive No. 58 as a "rather formidable package". He also pointed out on this occasion that the studies did not purport to represent final and fully concerted views on the subjects covered.²

The paper contained a covering report consisting of a "Summary of Development of the Course of Action", and a section entitled "Imminent Decisions", followed by ten annexes (A-J) representing recommendations and specific studies by various Government agencies in accordance with the request expressed in NS Directive No. 58.

The "Summary of Development of the Course of Action" projected a development for a period from July 17 to January 1. The period was divided into three phases, each of which corresponded to a predicted evolution of Soviet policy. The first phase extended from July until the beginning of a period during which a call for a peace conference by the Soviet Union could be anticipated, presumably at some time after the West German elections of September 17 and related in timing to the Congress of the Soviet Communist Party in mid-October. During this period the West had to demonstrate its determination to defend its vital interests by setting in motion a program of military and civil defense preparedness calculated to enable it to undertake military action at the end of phase III. Simultaneously, the West would have to prepare for economic warfare on a NATO-wide basis and make plans for psychological warfare. During this phase the West would also have to make every effort to obtain the support of world public opinion for its position on Berlin and Germany. But it was not assumed that the West

¹Memorandum by Mautner (S/O) of meeting of Interdepartmental Coordinating Group on Germany and Berlin, July 5, 1961, secret.

²Memorandum from Johnson (G) to the Secretary, July 12, 1961, secret.

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would wish to negotiate with the Soviet Union at this stage when its measures of preparedness had not yet sufficiently advanced.

The second phase would extend from September 17 to the signing of the Soviet-East German peace treaty, which for planning purposes could be assumed to have taken place by December 1. This phase would be characterized by the increased pace and scope of overt Western preparations. If the Soviet estimate of Western determination seemed to have changed by the end of that period, it might be desirable to initiate negotiations. In this phase there should be overt indications of Western intentions to take large-scale economic countermeasures at a later stage, while economic countermeasures of lesser scale and intensity would be introduced gradually.

Phase III would extend from the signing of the peace treaty, assumed to be December 1, until the actual take-over of control over access to Berlin by the GDR. In this phase the Western Powers would have to assume the increasing likelihood of the Soviet Union's pursuing its policies to the point of a show-down over access to Berlin. Western military preparations would have to be brought swiftly to completion, including evacuation of dependents. Western propaganda would have to be concentrated more directly on the problem of access so as to make Western military action appear logical and justified. Psychological warfare would be stepped up so that it became of concern to the Soviet Union in determining its next moves. Preparation for large-scale military measures should be made so evident that their execution upon any interference with Western access could be assumed by the Soviet Union to be virtually automatic.

The part of the covering report labelled "Imminent Decisions" dealt with the decisions that would have to be taken soon to launch the course of action described in the report. It was pointed out at the outset, however, that underlying these specific decisions was a more fundamental one, namely, whether the course of action outlined in the report should be accepted as a basic approach to the Berlin problem. The areas where such imminent decisions would have to be taken were as follows:

In the field of military preparations a decision would be needed as to whether and in what degree a progressive

mobilization of US resources and man power ought to be undertaken. Arguments on both sides of this issue would have to be considered. The choice between these alternatives might not be clear-cut but one of degree. It would have to be based on a systematic analysis of the political and military implications of alternative levels of early mobilization and of concomitant actions which it would be desirable to have taken by the Allies. A specific point to be covered in any decision was whether an additional 3-5 billion dollars should now be requested for the Department of Defense budget for the fiscal year 1962. This might be desirable even if immediate large-scale mobilization was not decided on.

Although the Department of Defense had not yet completed its recommendations regarding a permanent increase in the size of the US defense establishment as set forth in the directive, the concept of a permanent post-Berlin increase in the budget of the Defense Department was believed to be sound.

With regard to covert actions, the basic approach of a CIA paper submitted among the annexes and containing proposals for creating unrest in East Germany and Eastern Europe was approved.

With regard to the recommendations in the field of defense mobilization and civil defense submitted by the Office of Civil Defense Mobilization, it was held that these had to be first coordinated with the Department of Defense before they could be discussed.

Since inter-allied planning for economic countermeasures was well underway, no new decisions were required at the moment. However, once this planning had produced results, Presidential decisions would be sought.

It was proposed that decisions regarding introduction of economic controls be postponed until the scale of the military preparations had been decided on. Early, large-scale, and dramatic military preparations could lead to hoarding and price increases, while a modest military build-up might not result in an inflationary crisis.

It was suggested that decisions on alternative U.S. negotiating positions, outlined in a separate annex, could be postponed until serious negotiations seemed more imminent than

they did at the moment. Indeed, it would even be undesirable to freeze Western negotiating positions at an early stage.

The problem of the Western attitude toward East German personnel along the access routes to Berlin was analyzed in an annex. According to this analysis, the issue was whether (as recommended by Acheson) the Western Powers should allow the East Germans to continue the same procedures which the Soviet authorities were currently carrying out or whether they should maintain the existing contingency plans, which provided for a new procedure, less favorable to the East Germans, in case the Soviets left the checkpoint. An early decision was required, as the British were pressing for a clarification of the American position on this point.

Finally, it was stated that such issues as Allied reaction, timing and manner of a possible UN involvement in the Berlin crisis, and Congressional consultations had not been dealt with in the report. These issues would be studied further or be considered after decisions on the specific issues outlined in the foregoing had been taken.¹

C. Further American Review of Policies Regarding Berlin

1. National Security Action Memorandum No. 59 of July 14

On July 13 the National Security Council discussed the various studies and recommendations for approaches to the Berlin problem which had been submitted by the Interdepartmental Coordinating Group. From this meeting resulted another set of instructions from the President to the appropriate departments and agencies of the Government, namely, "to prepare evaluations of alternative course of actions and specific recommendations for the implementation of such actions" in preparation of the National Security Council meeting on July 19.² Accordingly, on July 14 McGeorge Bundy, Special

¹Interdepartmental Coordinating Group on Germany and Berlin, "A Study Regarding Berlin Prepared in Response to NAC Directive No. 58 of June 30, 1961", July 12, 1961, top secret.

²Record of Actions by the National Security Council at its 487th meeting, July 13, 1961 (National Security Council Action No. 2434), secret.

Assistant for National Security Affairs, communicated to the responsible officials of the Government the President's request that the following specific reports be submitted:

1) The Secretary of State should prepare a report evaluating two alternative courses of action from the standpoint of their effect on American international political objectives (with the Defense Department contributing an evaluation of the military implications of these alternatives). One alternative (A) envisaged a request, to be made in 2-3 weeks, for an appropriation of \$4-5 billion, with necessary taxes, stand-by economic controls, and other legislation, as well as a declaration of National Emergency. The second alternative (B) provided for an immediate request for \$1-1.5 billion without controls, taxes, etc., and for a further request later, if necessary. This evaluation should include an estimate of the effect of each course of action upon American fighting capability, Soviet intentions, Allied unity, and prospects for foreign assistance. It should likewise include a discussion of the tactics toward America's Allies appropriate to each course of action.

2) The Secretary of State in coordination with the Secretary of the Treasury should prepare a report on the economic sanctions which the United States would ask the Allies to apply if access to Berlin was blocked, and on the likely Allied reactions to this American approach.

The Director of CIA should prepare an estimate of the likely effect of such sanctions on the Soviet Bloc, from both an economic and strategic viewpoint, and their impact on Soviet intentions.

3) The Secretary of Defense should present a report concerning a plan for military operations for use if Western access to Berlin was blocked; also, a report on the military contributions which the United States would require of its Allies and on the preparations which would enable the latter to make these contributions. At the same time the Secretary of State should provide an evaluation of the likelihood of the Allied military contributions and preparations.

4) The Secretary of State should prepare a political timetable which would suggest the following:

a) The timing of various deterrent measures before the signing of a Soviet-East German treaty.

b) What further measures should be adopted after the signing of such a treaty and before any blocking of access had occurred; what position the Western Powers should adopt with respect to the signing of a treaty and how they would deal with East German personnel along the access routes following the signing of the treaty.

c) The timing of economic, political, and military pressures on the Soviet Bloc after Western access was blocked.

d) Timing and nature of Western negotiating positions at each of the stages indicated above.¹

2. The Response to National Security Action Memorandum No. 59

As in the case of the National Security Directive of June 30, the studies requested were prepared by the government departments and agencies concerned and assembled by the Inter-departmental Coordinating Group which had the responsibility for placing them before the National Security Council for the meeting to be held on July 19. At this point a brief discussion of these studies may suffice since the decisions taken on the basis of them will be treated further on in this paper.

With respect to the evaluation of the alternative courses of action requested in section 1) of Directive 59 of July 14, the following conclusions were submitted:

From the standpoint of Soviet intentions, course B, the immediate lesser request, would presumably be the better approach. It would convey to the Soviet Union at an early stage concrete evidence of American intentions to resort to force, if need be; it would better enable the West to bring political pressures to bear against the Soviet Union; and it would leave the door open for a "possible defusing of the Soviet threat."

¹National Security Action Memorandum No. 59, July 14, 1961, top secret.

Although both possible courses would produce strains on Allied unity, course B would be more desirable from the standpoint of the greatest possible unity among the allies. It would strengthen NATO's cohesion in the face of an impending crisis and give the Allies the comforting feeling that the United States had taken the lead, without giving them such a shock that the result would be public disunity and an "early, precipitate dash toward negotiations and appeasement."

After the paper containing the foregoing recommendations had been completed, the Defense Department indicated that a figure of \$3 billion would be preferable to the lower figure of \$1-1.5 billion for a lesser request, i.e., a program not involving a massive and early mobilization of reserves. It was assumed, however, that the comments with respect to course B as set forth above would, in general, be applicable to the \$3 billion program.

With regard to economic sanctions the recommendations were these: The Secretary of State should seek agreement from the three Western Powers, and thereafter from the entire NATO group, to a severance of economic relations with the Soviet Bloc if access to Berlin was blocked. The Secretary should also seek Allied agreement to expedite quadripartite efforts to develop specific economic sanctions, in coordination with military, psychological, and political measures, in the event of harrassment or interference with access to Berlin prior to blockage. Furthermore, the United States should press the Allies immediately to take the necessary legislative and administrative dispositions which would enable them to act promptly with regard to the foregoing economic measures. Finally, the Secretary of State in cooperation with appropriate United States agencies should institute studies of the problems involved in the sharing of burdens that might arise in connection with economic countermeasures.¹

3. The "Outline on Germany and Berlin"

A document which was submitted to the President on the eve of the National Security Council meeting of July 19 but

¹Interdepartmental Coordinating Group on Germany and Berlin "Documents Prepared in Response to NSC Action Memorandum No. 59 of July 14, 1961", July 18, 1961, top secret.

which was not part of the study assembled by the Interdepartmental Coordinating Group on Germany and Berlin in preparation for this meeting contributed significantly to the development of the United States position on Berlin and Germany as it emerged from the review of these problems at the highest level. This was an "Outline on Germany and Berlin" drafted by the Secretary, Assistant Secretary Foy Kohler, and Martin Hillenbrand, Director of the Office of German Affairs.

United States Interests. The point of departure of this paper was an analysis of the interests of the United States in the problem of Germany and Berlin. The vital interests of the United States in the matter were defined as follows:

- 1) The presence and security of the Western forces in West Berlin.
- 2) The security and viability of West Berlin.
- 3) Physical access to West Berlin.
- 4) The security of the Federal Republic against attacks from the East.

Apart from these "vital" interests, the United States also had important political interests and goals in Germany which had not yet been realized. They could be summarized as the application to all of Germany of the principle of self-determination, and the intimate association of a unified Germany with the West. It had, therefore, been consistent American policy since the early post-war years that the United States could not accept reunification at the price of the "neutrality of Germany."

There were aspects of the situation with regard to Berlin and Germany which were not politically acceptable and not likely to be changed in the near future. Among these aspects, which, provided no occasion for a resort to force by the West, were the de facto division of Germany and the de facto absorption of East Berlin into East Germany.

Certain elements of the problem of Germany and Berlin were of little national interest to the United States and provided room for concessions, as, for example, recognition of the Oder-Neisse line as the German-Polish frontier.

A major American interest cutting across all these issues was the maintenance of Allied unity and the strengthening of NATO.

Soviet Objectives. Next, the paper proceeded to an analysis of Soviet objectives. It appeared that the resumption of Soviet pressures against the status quo in Germany and Berlin was aimed at:

A. Consolidation of the Communist position in Eastern Europe and East Germany which was a matter of concern to Khrushchev, especially with regard to East Germany.

B. Freezing of the division of Germany and development of the GDR as a base from which to mount the campaign to communize West Germany.

C. Political steps to meet a growing Russian concern over the revival of the Federal Republic and its rearmament.

D. Dilution of the Western position in West Berlin looking toward its absorption into a Communist East Germany.

E. The weakening or dissolution of NATO.

F. A blow to Western prestige as part of the general strategy of the Sino-Soviet Bloc.

Political Problem. According to the paper, the central political problem was to protect the vital interests of the United States, as defined in the foregoing, without war, if possible, and to put the West in the best possible position if war should become necessary. This would require the following:

A. Action on a broad front to convince Khrushchev of American and Western determination to defend these vital interests at all costs.

B. National unity based on clear public recognition of the issues involved but also based on confidence that every reasonable action had been taken to defend vital interests by measures short of war.

C. Allied unity based upon recognition by the Allies of their own vital interests, not only readiness to follow the leader. Allied unity must also be based upon confidence that the Allied position was reasonable and that the aggressor was forcing the issue beyond a tolerable point.

D. Maximum support of world public opinion so as to make aggressive moves by Khrushchev as costly as possible in other areas.

Actions to be Taken. The foregoing analysis of the problems facing the United States and the Western Alliance suggested the following actions to be taken partly before and partly after September 17:

A. A significant build-up of American and Allied military strength in such a way that it could be continued for a protracted period. This should include, in the United States, additional military appropriations at this time of approximately 3 billion dollars and authority to call up Reserve and National Guard elements as needed. Substantial civil defense measures were also needed, but they should be accomplished, if possible, without the atmosphere of National Emergency or mobilization.

B. To strengthen the position of West Berlin by enabling it to sustain an interruption of access. This involved plans for an airlift and for stockpiling.

C. To seek Allied consideration of proposals to be made to the Soviet Union that the legal question be submitted to the International Court of Justice. (The Allies had vetoed incorporating this suggestion in the reply to the Soviet aide-mémoire of June 4; see ante, Chapter I). Also, to explore with the Allies the possibility of a Western initiative to convene a Big Four Foreign Ministers meeting in early October to prepare a peace treaty for Germany, with the Germans to be invited as in 1959. The Western proposals would be based on the principle of self-determination along the lines of the Western Peace Plan.

D. Rapid Allied review of Berlin contingency plans in the light of the United States program.

E. Rapid completion of Allied plans for imposition of a wide range of non-military countermeasures, including economic sanctions, upon interruption of access to Berlin, and for their more limited use in early stages to serve as warning and deterrent.

F. Special propaganda and covert activities aimed at the Russian people, Eastern Europe, and East Germany.

G. To decide whether the Western Powers should take the initiative in presenting their case to the United Nations in order to head off possible UN action by neutral countries and to maintain control of the situation.

H. To undertake informal discussions with the Soviet leadership, through the American Ambassador in Moscow, to probe the Soviet position, to warn of the consequences of their position with reference to the Allied military build-up, and to use every opportunity for moving toward an arrangement that might be acceptable to the United States, such as Solution C, after the signing of the Soviet-GDR peace treaty.

I. Continuous consultation with the Allies in the Four Power Working Group, and at higher levels, as appropriate, regarding a negotiating position on Berlin and completion of Berlin contingency plans.

J. To initiate and maintain consultation with Congressional leaders.

The actions to be taken after September 17 as suggested in this paper were mainly related to the question of whether the Soviet Union would issue a call for a peace conference. First of all, the Allies must be ready if the Soviets should agree to a Big Four Foreign Ministers Conference, and they should also be ready to take an initiative in the UN General Assembly, if this was the decision, after it convened on September 19. If the Big Four Foreign Ministers Conference took place, a basis for an arrangement on Berlin might or might not emerge. In any event, it would be prudent to assume that the Soviet Union would proceed with calling for a peace conference.

In that case, the steps which had been agreed upon with the Allies as a response should be carried out. These steps included an intensified political and propaganda campaign involving representations to be made to the countries invited to the conference as well as to the Soviet Union. Furthermore, if the covert program had been approved, covert and semi-covert action should be started designed to cause instability in East Germany and other Eastern European countries.

If the Soviet Union, despite break-down of a Four Power Conference, did not call for a peace conference, the decision would have to be made whether the time was propitious for serious East-West negotiations in the light of indications that the Soviet Union might now be receptive to such negotiations. If the Soviet Union should call a peace conference, the decision would then have to be taken whether the United States should proceed with the mobilization of reserves and other measures proposed in alternative A of the NSC Action Memorandum of July 14.

Schedule of Allied Consultations. In its final section the paper proposed a schedule for the various stages of consultation with the Allies.

As soon as the United States had made its decisions, their general purport should be conveyed to President de Gaulle, Prime Minister Macmillan, and Chancellor Adenauer in letters from the President. These decisions would be communicated in greater detail to the French, British, and West German Governments through the Ambassadorial Steering Committee in Washington. Discussions would begin and directives on a tripartite or quadripartite basis would be sought to re-activate and guide the work of (1) the Allied working groups in Washington on general aspects of the question, non-military countermeasures, and psychological and propaganda programs; (2) the (Bonn) quadripartite group on economic countermeasures; (3) the LIVE OAK group in Paris under General Norstad on military measures.

Following these initial consultations, beginning July 27 or 28, intensive tripartite and quadripartite consultations would be undertaken at a senior official level with experts, probably in Paris, to survey and coordinate the entire range of political, military, economic, and psychological measures. The Western Foreign Ministers would meet in Paris August 4-8,

as appropriate, on a tripartite or quadripartite basis to review the state of preparations, settle outstanding problems, and issue directives for future work. About August 8 the Western Foreign Ministers would make an interim report to NATO and seek the views of other member countries on the state of preparations, while the senior officials would stay in session for a few more days to carry out the directives of the Foreign Ministers.

Further special consultations could be arranged as determined by the Ambassadorial Steering Group in Washington. Depending on developments in the crisis, a Western Heads of Government meeting might be desirable on a tripartite, quadripartite, or NATO basis.¹

4. Establishment of High-Level Steering Group

On July 17, two days before the crucial meeting of the National Security Council from which the decisions on the American position were to emerge, President Kennedy discussed the Berlin situation with his closest advisers. At the close of the meeting the President discussed the organizational framework of the work with respect to Berlin and announced that, while the Interdepartmental Coordinating Group under Assistant Secretary Kohler would be responsible for day-to-day operations and detailed planning, it would henceforth report to the President through a steering group under the chairmanship of the Secretary of State. Additional members of this steering group would be the Secretaries of Defense and Treasury, the Attorney General, the Directors of CIA and USIA, the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, the President's Personal Military Aide, General Maxwell Taylor, and Special Assistant McGeorge Bundy. One of the duties of this group would be to clarify items to be discussed at the fortnightly meetings of the National Security Council.²

¹"Outline on Germany and Berlin", July 18, 1961, secret.

²Memorandum by Bundy (White House) of meeting on Berlin, July 17, 1961, top secret.

Chapter II

AMERICAN AND ALLIED DECISIONS ON MEETING THE THREAT TO BERLIN

A. The Substance of the American Decisions

1. Communication of the Decisions to the Allies

Principles of Proposed Policies. On July 19 the National Security Council discussed alternative courses of action for dealing with the Berlin problem, on the basis of the reports prepared in response to the assignments given in National Security Action Memorandum No. 59 of July 14. Following this meeting the President had Special Assistant McGeorge Bundy issue instructions to the responsible heads of departments and agencies of the Government summarizing the decisions reached.¹

Summaries of the decisions reached were also communicated in messages sent by the President on July 20 to Prime Minister Macmillan, President de Gaulle, and Chancellor Adenauer, and in instructions of July 21 directing the American Ambassadors in all NATO capitals to inform the respective NATO Powers.² The most detailed statement of the American position, however, was contained in a memorandum, with several attachments, which the Secretary handed to representatives of the Embassies of Britain, France, and the Federal Republic on July 21.³

The memorandum stated at the outset that the United States had "reached certain conclusions as to the course of action which it believes ought to be followed."

¹Record of Actions by the National Security Council at its 488th meeting (NSC Action No. 2435), July 19, 1961, secret; National Security Action Memorandum No. 62, July 24, top secret.

²To London, tel. 335, July 20, 1961; to Bonn, tel. 154, July 20; to Paris, tel. 422, July 20; to Ankara, tel. 73, July 21, sent also to all other NATO capitals; all secret.

³To Bonn, tel. 170, July 22, 1961, secret.

First of all, the United States believed that the USSR was in earnest regarding its stated intention to sign a separate peace treaty with East Germany in the course of the year, a treaty which in the Soviet view would end Allied rights in Berlin. Likewise, the United States felt that a key factor in this Soviet policy was the belief that in the end the West would not fight to defend its position in Berlin.

Therefore, in the view of the United States, Western policy should consist of two principal elements: 1) a clear demonstration of Western determination to defend the Allied position in Berlin; 2) an active diplomatic program including negotiations with the Soviet Union, designed to provide the Soviet leadership with an alternative course of action which did not endanger Western interests in Berlin.

Creation of a More Effective Deterrent. With respect to the first element of Western policy, i.e., the establishment of a more effective deterrent and of capability for military action, the United States proposed (according to the memorandum) to begin immediately a series of measures aimed at increasing its armed strength, with due regard, however, to the dangers of an armament race.

As a first step the United States proposed to take measures that would initiate a long-run build-up of military strength which would not be of so dramatic a nature as to exacerbate the crisis. Specifically, on July 26 the United States Government would send to the Congress a request for a supplementary defense budget of 3.2 billion dollars to be added to a supplementary request for 3 billion dollars made earlier. This would give the United States a capability for moving an additional six divisions to Europe at the end of the year or at any time thereafter, depending on Allied decisions. The United States would also have available supplementary units of tactical and transport aircraft as well as increased naval strength, especially in the field of anti-submarine warfare. Furthermore, the United States would take immediate action to increase by fifty percent the number of its bomber aircraft on ground alert status. Finally, the United States also intended to undertake substantial measures in the field of civil defense, such as construction of shelters and recruitment and training of the necessary personnel.

In addition, the United States held that the following precautionary and planning measures should be undertaken within the next few weeks:

- a) Strengthen West Berlin's ability to sustain an interruption of access by reviewing and improving air lift procedures as well as the situation with regard to stockpiles.
- b) Review Berlin contingency planning in the light of the current situation.
- c) Complete Allied plans for use of non-military countermeasures, including economic sanctions, upon interruption of access to Berlin or earlier, as a warning and deterrent.

In view of the great importance of maximum support by world public opinion for the Western position and policies, the United States had begun an active world-wide public information program to this end and was proposing to expand this program in cooperation with the Allies. There had already been agreement on a preliminary quadripartite paper based on propaganda themes suggested by the British (see ante, Chapter I, A), and further steps in the development of such a program were suggested.

The United States considered it to be of the utmost importance that the response to the Soviet threat be a joint undertaking by the NATO alliance and it hoped, therefore, to be joined by its Allies in all aspects of this endeavor. The United States believed in particular that all NATO members should make an effort comparable to its own in the military field notwithstanding the cost and sacrifice involved. A clear willingness on the part of all the Allies was essential to convince the Kremlin of Allied determination. Such a joint endeavor would require closest consultation at every step of the way, and the United States was prepared to work out jointly with its Allies a military program to this end.

Anticipated Effects of Western Military Build-Up. An attachment to the memorandum given to the Western Embassies showed how the strengthening of the Allied military capability to cope with a threat to Berlin would affect NATO's general military posture with respect to the Soviet Bloc so that Berlin contingency plans would henceforth become closely linked to NATO's general strategy.

It was argued in this paper that the only action possible with currently deployed Allied strength, in the event of a blockage of access to Berlin, was a gradual series of probes which, if repulsed, would force the West to accept humiliation or to initiate nuclear action. Meanwhile, the NATO front would be vulnerable to sudden penetration by Soviet forces. Thus, the proposed American and Allied military build-up would open "wider options" for NATO military action and help to reverse misconceptions about NATO's weakness; and it would make much more credible the capability of the Western Alliance to take actions leading to a situation which the Soviet Union could no longer control and which would therefore be dangerous to its basic interests. The completion of American and Allied military programs would make possible the deployment along NATO's crucial central front of about forty allied divisions (about 1-1/2 million men), including a substantial strategic reserve, prior to a probe along the Autobahn. These divisions would be supported by substantial Allied air power and nuclear power generally superior to that of the Soviet Union. Even under the assumption of a deployment of a maximum force on the side of the Soviet Union, the latter would not have the margin necessary to assure it of rapid offensive success with non-nuclear weapons. Thus, the West would have the option of initiating a large-scale ground action which the Soviet Union could not throw back with conventional means.

The most important results of the Western military build-up, however, would be felt in the phase that preceded a ground probe. This was particularly important, since it was desirable to delay a ground probe until all other reasonable alternative courses had failed, in view of the fact that military actions after an initial ground probe tended to pass beyond the control of either side. It made, therefore, a big difference with respect to the effectiveness of these alternative courses whether they were undertaken against a background of growing military strength or against a background of continued non-nuclear weakness. That is to say, economic countermeasures, an airlift, or naval harassment and blockade would be more meaningful and less likely to lead to enemy countermeasures and retaliation if undertaken against a background of growing military strength rather than against a background of unchanged strength.

Active Diplomatic Program. With regard to the second element of Western policy, namely, an active diplomatic program,

the United States indicated in its memorandum that it foresaw several possible courses of action which should be the subject of further discussions among the allies. Even at the present stage, however, the United States favored indicating in general terms what it might wish to propose later in greater detail. At this point the memorandum referred to the possibility of early informal talks with the Soviet leadership through the Western Ambassadors in Moscow, as suggested in the "Outline on Germany and Berlin" submitted to the President by the Secretary on July 18 (see ante, Chapter I, C). Thereafter, it might be desirable to explore opportunities for Western political initiatives at an appropriate time. The timing of such initiatives would depend, among other things, on the likelihood at any particular time that the Soviet leadership might be sufficiently impressed by Western deterrent efforts to be willing to settle for solutions acceptable to the West.

Allied Consultations. Finally, the United States suggested in its memorandum a schedule of allied consultations as set forth in the "Outline on Germany and Berlin" of July 18. Thus, following initial consultations by the Ambassadorial Steering Group, allied consultations at a senior officer level would take place in Paris for a week beginning July 28. This would be followed by a meeting of the four Western Foreign Ministers in Paris, who would subsequently report to NATO. If necessary, the group of senior officers could remain in Paris for a few days longer to carry out the instructions of the Foreign Ministers.¹

When Secretary Rusk handed the memorandum to the Ministers of the British and French Embassies and to West German Ambassador Grewe on July 21, he did not review its contents but expressed hope that this memorandum and its annexes would receive careful study by the Governments concerned and that they would provide a basis for a continuing discussion of the Berlin problem. The Secretary also confirmed a schedule and program of the forthcoming Allied consultations which had already been outlined to the three Embassies by Assistant Secretary Kohler of July 20.²

¹"Memorandum on Measures for Dealing with the Berlin Situation", July 21, 1961, secret.

²To Bonn, tel. 165, July 21, 1961, and tel. 170, July 22, both secret.

2. President Kennedy's Report to the Nation on the Berlin Crisis, July 25

President Kennedy announced the conclusions and decisions reached on the Berlin problem in an address to the American people carried over radio and television on July 25. Its purpose was not only to give the American people a dramatic presentation of the situation confronting them and of the burdens which they would have to shoulder but also to make clear to friends, neutrals, and foes in the international arena the position and the goals of the United States in the face of this crisis over Berlin.

The President told his audience that Khrushchev's threat to Berlin had prompted a series of decisions by his administration as well as consultations with the Allies as a result of which it had become clear what needed to be done. The President stressed that the steps to be taken would require sacrifice on the part of many citizens and that even more would be required in the future. But he was hopeful that peace and freedom would be sustained if the United States and its allies acted out of strength and unity of purpose with calm determination and steady nerves, "using restraint in our words as well as in our weapons."

The President warned that it would be a mistake to look upon West Berlin, because of its location, as a tempting target, emphasizing that Berlin was not isolated because "the United States is there, the United Kingdom and France are there, the pledge of NATO is there, and the people of Berlin are there". The President declared that the United States "cannot and will not permit the Communists to drive us out of Berlin either gradually or by force." As long as the Communists insisted that they would unilaterally end Western rights in Berlin and Western commitments toward its people, the President said, the West had to be prepared to resist with force. But it would always be willing to talk "if talk will help."

Announcing the preparations to be undertaken, the President mentioned that a long-term military build-up of American strength had been under way since January 1961 and that as a result of supplementary defense appropriations requested in March and April the United States had already begun moving toward its goal in the field of defense. It was necessary to

speed up these measures and to take others as well. But it was even more important to have the capability of placing in a critical area at the appropriate time a force which, in combination with the forces of the Allies, was large enough "to make clear our determination and ability to defend our rights at all costs and to meet all levels of aggressor pressure with whatever levels of force are required." The United States, the President stressed, intended "to have a wider choice than humiliation or all-out nuclear action."

The President announced that he would now take the following steps. He would request of the Congress: an additional appropriation of 3.247 billion dollars for the armed forces; an increase in the Army's total authorized strength from 875,000 to approximately 1 million men; an increase of 29,000 men in the active-duty strength of the Navy and 63,000 men in that of the Air Force.

To fulfill these manpower needs, draft calls would be doubled and tripled in the coming months; authority would be requested of the Congress to call into active duty certain reserve units and individual reservists; and, under that authority, the President would also order to active duty a number of air transport squadrons and Air National Guard tactical air squadrons to provide airlift capacity and needed air protection.

The President also stated that ships and planes once headed for retirement would be retained or reactivated, thus increasing American airpower as well as airlift, sealift, and anti-submarine warfare capacity. Strategic airpower would be further increased by delaying the deactivation of B-47 bombers. Finally, the President informed his audience that some 1.8 billion dollars--about half of the total amount requested--would be needed for procurement of non-nuclear weapons, ammunition, and equipment.

All these requests, the President declared, would be submitted to the Congress the next day.¹ Subsequent steps

¹On August 1 President Kennedy signed a bill passed by both houses of Congress the previous day which gave him authority to call up 250,000 reserves. On August 10 the House and Senate passed a defense appropriation bill of \$46.6 billion, signed by the President on August 17, which included the additional funds he had requested.

would be taken to suit subsequent needs and comparable efforts for the common defense were being discussed with the NATO allies.

President Kennedy also discussed the "sober responsibility" of civil defense measures against nuclear war, announcing that the next day he would submit to Congress a request for new funds for the following immediate objectives: To identify space in existing public and private structures to be used for fall-out shelters in case of attack; to stock these shelters with food, water, and other minimum essentials for survival; to increase their capacity; to improve air raid warning and fall-out detection systems; and to take other measures that would be effective in saving millions of lives at an early date.¹

The President made it clear that the new defense expenditures would not require new taxes at the moment but that a request for an increase in taxation would be made the following January should the events of the next few months make this necessary.

Reiterating that the choice was not merely between resistance and retreat, "atomic holocaust and surrender", the President declared that the American response to the Berlin crisis would not be only military or negative. The United States, he said, had previously indicated its readiness to remove "actual irritants in West Berlin." But the freedom of that city was not negotiable, and the United States could not negotiate with those who said, "what's mine is mine and what's yours is negotiable." Yet the United States was willing to consider any arrangement or treaty in Germany consistent with the maintenance of peace and freedom. Moreover, the United States recognized the Soviet Union's "historical concerns about their security in central and eastern Europe" and it believed that arrangements could be worked out which would meet these concerns.

¹When Prime Minister Macmillan replied on July 23 to President Kennedy's message of July 20, which had given him and the other Allied leaders advance notice of the contents of the President's address to the American people, he asked if the President could avoid "emphasizing too much the need for air-raid shelters." Letter, Macmillan to Kennedy, July 23, 1961, secret.

The President emphasized that what was abnormal was not the freedom of West Berlin but the situation in divided Germany. If anyone doubted the legality of the rights in Berlin, the United States was ready to have it submitted to international adjudication. Likewise, he said, the United States was prepared to submit the question whether its presence was desired by the people of West Berlin to a free vote in Berlin and among all the German people. The President declared that the world was not deceived by the Communist attempt to label West Berlin as a hotbed of war. The source of world trouble and tension, he said, was Moscow, not Berlin, and if war should begin it would have started in Moscow, not in Berlin.

The President pointed out that the Soviet challenge was not only to the United States but to all free nations and particularly to the Atlantic Community and that "today the endangered frontier of freedom runs through divided Berlin." The Soviet Government alone could "convert Berlin's frontier of peace into a pretext for war." But the steps which the President had indicated in his address were aimed at avoiding that war.

Finally, the President declared that he would sum up the central meaning of this crisis and of the policy of the American Government with these words: "We seek peace, but we shall not surrender."¹

B. Allied Consultations at Paris, July 28-August 8

1. Four Power Working Group Report: Political Questions

In accordance with the program proposed by the United States and accepted by Britain, France, and the Federal Republic, the first of the scheduled allied meetings took place in Paris, July 28-August 3. This was the meeting of the Four Power Working Group, which produced a report that was to be reviewed by a subsequent meeting of the four Western Foreign Ministers.

¹Documents on Germany, 1944-1961, pp. 694-701.

Soviet Motives and Intentions. The report first analyzed Soviet intentions and motives in terms similar to those of the internal American documents previously discussed.

Tactics. The Report then turned to the matter of Western tactics. They should be aimed at bringing about within the next few weeks a change in the position of the Soviet Union so that it would accept negotiations.

The Working Group held that the question of a Western initiative regarding negotiations would depend on the development of the Soviet position. It should be avoided that the Soviet Union interpreted a Western initiative as a sign of weakness. Circumstances, however, might force the Western Powers to consider an initiative at an early stage--for instance, an impending action by some country to bring the Berlin question into the United Nations or a Soviet reply to the Western notes of July 17 inviting negotiations on terms which the West would find difficult to refuse. The situation in East Germany could likewise precipitate matters. (It is noteworthy that an annex to the Report dealing with the implications of the deteriorating economic situation in East Germany ended with the conclusion that the Communists seemed to be creating enough difficulties for themselves without the Allies taking a hand and that the Allies "should do nothing to exacerbate the situation.")

The Working Group recommended that, prior to receiving a Soviet reply to the Western notes of July 17, the Western Powers should adhere to the line set forth in these notes. The Working Group also considered the possibility of more limited Western initiatives, such as an early approach through the Ambassadors in Moscow and discussions with the Soviet leaders at the Geneva Conference on Laos or in New York at the UN General Assembly. It was agreed, however, that any Ambassadorial approach in Moscow should not precede the Soviet reply to the Western notes of July 17. It was also stated that it would be desirable in principle that a negotiation with the Soviet Union take place before the USSR had acted unilaterally in convening a peace conference. In any event, it was felt that the question of the date of a Western initiative was a very delicate one, and that the ideal condition would be to take advantage of a Soviet overture.

The Working Group preferred a Western initiative to be aimed first at a conference of the Foreign Ministers of the three Western Powers and the Soviet Union, even though a summit meeting might eventually become necessary to achieve a meaningful discussion of basic issues. The German delegation indicated that German public opinion would not object to a discussion of the German question by the four Powers without German participation. The question was, however, whether the Soviet Union would agree to a conference without German participation. Despite the disadvantages of the Geneva formula of 1959, the Working Group concluded that it might be necessary to adhere to this formula providing for participation of West and East German "advisers" in order to achieve a conference.

Regarding the agenda of such a ministerial meeting, the Working Group believed that it should not focus on Berlin alone but, at the least, cover Germany and Berlin. Inclusion of other subjects such as "East-West relations" might also be considered. If there should be a summit meeting, each head of Government would obviously have the right to introduce any subject he wished.

Substantive Political Questions. The Working Group lacked time to elaborate a complete Western negotiating position. It attempted, however, to assess certain proposals, including those advanced by the West earlier.

With regard to Germany, the Working Group felt that the Western Powers would have to raise at a Foreign Ministers conference the issue of German reunification on the basis of self-determination. The Working Group considered the Peace Plan of 1959 still a good basis for negotiations but suggested that the Plan should be reviewed with the object of presenting it in a more "striking" manner to public opinion, suppressing disarmament features no longer corresponding to the situation, and adding features which would make it more difficult for the Soviet Union to reject the Plan. After discussing the possibility of a special status for a reunified Germany, the Working Group concluded that the Western Powers should adhere to the position taken in the Peace Plan, namely, that a reunified Germany should be free to opt either for joining a security pact or for staying neutral.

The Working Group also agreed that the security provisions of the Western Peace Plan ought to be the basis for any further study of the subject. It was recommended, however, that the provisions of paragraph 16 of the Plan (measures against surprise attack) might be made the subject of a study by military and political experts.

With respect to Germany's eastern frontiers, the Working Group concluded that concessions should be offered only if the West received a suitable quid pro quo. But if hostilities over Berlin seemed imminent, it might become important to counter Soviet propaganda concerning the Oder-Neisse line. The Working Group warned, however, not to have any illusions that Khrushchev would accept a satisfactory Berlin arrangement merely in exchange for recognition of the Oder-Neisse line. The German delegation observed that any final definition of the eastern frontier should be linked with a solution of the German problem, and there was general agreement that any proposal regarding the Oder-Neisse line should not be advanced as a separate initiative.

The Working Group also agreed to recommend to the Foreign Ministers that the possibility of an all-German plebiscite along the lines of the Working Group report in preparation for the summit meeting of 1960 (see ante, Part III, Chapter II, A) be reviewed and the language of the recommendation re-examined.

As for Berlin itself, the Working Group agreed that no arrangement was acceptable that did not secure these three essential objectives: 1) Maintenance of the presence and security of Western forces in West Berlin; 2) maintenance of the freedom and viability of West Berlin; 3) maintenance of the freedom of physical access to West Berlin. The Working Group considered that the defense of these objectives implied the preservation of the existing status of Berlin and that all other solutions would result in such a profound transformation of the status of the city and of the conditions of access that the basis of Allied policy in Europe would be endangered.

The Working Group considered two different hypotheses in examining the problem of negotiations on Berlin with the Soviet Union: 1) negotiation with the USSR before signature of a separate peace treaty; 2) a situation resulting from the signature of a separate treaty.

Under hypothesis 1), the Western Powers could advance an all-Berlin proposal which should be linked to the reunification of Germany. Subsequently, the Western Powers, as in 1959, could present proposals aiming at a modus vivendi in Berlin on the basis of the current status. The proposals put forward at Geneva on July 28, 1959, as revised in April 1960 in preparation for the summit conference, still represented a generally acceptable solution and, therefore, could be re-examined. Finally, the Western Powers, faced with a probable failure of negotiation and with the prospect of imminent signature of a separate peace treaty, might consider under what conditions the Soviet Union, while signing the treaty, might enter into practical arrangements safeguarding in fact the existing system of access. This was envisaged under the formula of "Solution C".

Under hypothesis 2), the Working Group considered that, once a separate treaty had been signed, acceptable modalities of access could be established resulting either from parallel measures taken by the two parties or from negotiation. The formula of "Solution C" could also be envisaged in this case.

But this search for practical arrangements safeguarding access should be subject to one major condition, namely, that the Western Powers could accept neither direct negotiations with the GDR regarding their access rights nor subordination of their traffic to GDR control.

The Working Group also agreed that the possibility of a plebiscite in West Berlin regarding the position of the Western Powers in that city should be examined. The German delegation indicated that it wanted to consult West Berlin authorities before expressing further views on this subject.

2. Four Power Working Group Report: Military Build-Up and Contingency Plans

Strengthening the Forces of the Alliance. The four delegations fully endorsed the policy set forth in the American memorandum of July 21 regarding the progressive build-up of the strength of the Alliance. In view of the fact that the nuclear capacity of the West had already reached a high level, it was agreed that the required efforts should be made mainly in the field of conventional armaments so that the Alliance in a given situation could respond with appropriate means,

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either conventional or nuclear. The Working Group felt that the dangers threatening the West and peace would be considerably increased if the Soviet Union had grounds to believe that the West had no other choices than to react either with limited forces or, at the outset, with nuclear arms.

The British representatives stated that their government was considering the most effective action it could take and that the Foreign Secretary would make pertinent statements at the Foreign Ministers meeting. The French declared that their contribution was likewise under study and that the measures undertaken or anticipated were closely in line with those anticipated in the American memorandum. The representatives of the Federal Republic stated that their government would endeavor to fulfill the goals foreseen in NATO planning, and they expressed the hope that a total of nine divisions would be assigned to NATO by the end of 1961. Moreover, the Federal Republic intended to take all necessary measures to assign two further divisions to NATO in the course of 1962.

Review of Berlin Contingency Plans. In reviewing Berlin contingency plans, the Working Group first considered the implications of the American memorandum of July 21 with regard to ground access procedures. The Working Group agreed to recommend that the Foreign Ministers instruct the Ambassadorial Group in Washington as follows:

a) To undertake a review of existing Allied contingency plans with a view to providing for Allied acquiescence in execution by East Germans of the current Soviet procedures regarding Allied ground access to Berlin.

b) To redraft the note to be addressed to the Soviet Government when signature of a peace treaty appeared imminent, and to redraft the public statement to be made by the three Western Powers as well as the instructions to Allied personnel.

c) To develop a rationale, in the pertinent documents referred to in b), for the acquiescence in the execution of current procedures by East Germans. The Western Powers would make clear in these documents that no document signed by the USSR and the GDR could affect their rights with respect to Berlin and access thereto;

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that they would insist on undisturbed physical access to Berlin; that as long as this continued under current procedures it was a matter of indifference to them who executed these procedures; and that they would continue to hold the Soviet Union responsible for maintenance of their rights with respect to Berlin, including those of access.

d) To study the possibility of extending the scope of arrangements now governing civilian traffic to Berlin by having East and West Germans at the "technical level" agree on procedures governing all traffic to Berlin, including allied military traffic.

The Working Group explained its recommendations by pointing out that the concept underlying the Allies' contingency planning, by precipitating an immediate showdown, allowed little elasticity for diplomatic and political maneuvering. In order to allow more time for this and also for the necessary deployment of military forces, it might be desirable in the initial stages to resort to a garrison airlift. The Working Group, furthermore, declared that existing contingency plans would make difficult any approach to a modus vivendi on access along the lines of "Solution C". The Working Group, finally, expressed doubt as to the political feasibility of adhering to the present "peel-off" procedures in view of public opinion, especially among the Allies, and it pointed to the dangers of Allied disunity over an essentially procedural question.

On the other hand, however, the Working Group asked the Foreign Ministers to consider the disadvantages of the proposed change in procedure. It would greatly increase the hold of the GDR over Allied access and enable it to employ "erosive" tactics that might paralyze any forceful reaction by the three Powers. Furthermore, even though the suggested procedure applied only to land access, it might encourage the GDR to extend it to air access, which would endanger civil access to Berlin.

With regard to the military aspects of contingency planning, the United States delegation presented to the Working Group a paper on "Military Planning and Preparations toward a Berlin Crisis" which included also draft instructions to the military authorities of the three Western Powers. The Working Group

agreed that it would not be possible to establish governmental positions regarding the U.S. delegation's paper and the draft instructions prior to the meeting of the Foreign Ministers and suggested that Secretary Rusk might start a discussion of these issues by presenting these two papers to the other Foreign Ministers.

The Working Group recommended that the Foreign Ministers ask the Ambassadorial Group in Washington to study the following topics:

a) Means for concerting and coordinating the planning and execution of military measures beyond the competence of LIVE OAK.

b) Means of assuring continuity of military control during transition from tripartite Berlin measures to control by established NATO mechanisms, if and when necessary.

c) Means of effecting coordinated political guidance and control of military activity world-wide during a Berlin crisis.

The Working Group, finally, recommended that the Foreign Ministers consider the need for new directives for LIVE OAK and other military authorities.

Economic Countermeasures. The Working Group also submitted recommendations with regard to economic countermeasures. As these were substantially revised as a result of the review by the Foreign Ministers, they will be taken up in the context of the discussions and decisions at the meeting of the Foreign Ministers.¹

3. Tripartite Foreign Ministers Meeting, August 5

Prior to the review of the Working Group Report on a quadripartite basis, the Foreign Ministers of the United States,

¹Ministerial Consultations on Berlin, Paris, August 4-9, 1961; Report of the Four-Power Working Group on Germany and Berlin, Paris, July 28-August 4, 1961, Aug. 4, 1961, secret.

Britain, and France met on August 5 to discuss certain topics before the Germans joined the deliberations.

There was general agreement with the American proposal that the Germans should be associated more closely with planning regarding Berlin and that they should become full-fledged partners in the Work of the Ambassadorial Steering Group in Washington.

French Foreign Minister Couve de Murville stressed that he preferred to discuss in the absence of the Germans how important the Berlin question was to the future of the Federal Republic and its attachment to the West. The West, Couve de Murville said, must avoid anything that could alter this attachment and lead to German neutralism. At stake was the future of the Atlantic Alliance.

The discussions of the three Foreign Ministers then turned to the question of the timing of any negotiations with the Soviet Union on Berlin and it became apparent that there was a basic disagreement over this question, between the United States and Britain on one side and France on the other.

Secretary Rusk, supported by British Foreign Secretary Home, took the position that the Western Powers should take an initiative prior to the convening of the UN General Assembly, September 19, to bring about a Foreign Ministers meeting with the Soviet Union without, however, revealing the substance of the Western position. The Secretary emphasized that, if the Western Powers did not proceed in this manner, their friends and Allies would be unwilling to support either a military build-up or economic and propaganda measures. Moreover, it should be avoided that, when the UN General Assembly met on September 19, other countries would take an initiative for negotiations which might be disadvantageous for the Western Powers.

Couve de Murville stated that before offering negotiations the Western Powers should realize that the Soviet Union would only want to negotiate about Berlin. A substantive agreement acceptable to the Soviet Union would have to satisfy the latter's demand for an end to West German political activities in Berlin and for control by the GDR of all German traffic, including that of refugees, between the Federal Republic and Berlin which was now proceeding under the protective "camouflage"

of Allied military rights. Thus, the Allies should realize that any agreement was bound to change the status quo regarding access to Berlin.

The French Foreign Minister declared that he did not see the problem of tactics and of public opinion in the same light as Secretary Rusk. The essential fact in the situation was the West's relationship with the Soviet Union. In the center was a trial of strength and it was important not to show weakness. For the West to take an initiative toward negotiations as proposed would merely indicate that fear of war was "at the bottom [of] our hearts." Since Khrushchev was saying all the time that the West would not fight and would eventually accept the Soviet position, it would be wrong to give him the impression that he was right.

Addressing himself to Couve de Murville's argument that a trial of strength was the issue, Secretary Rusk declared that strength had many components and that the West should not discount the importance of world reactions to Khrushchev as well as to the West. The Soviet Union had extensive objectives in many parts of the world and would have to take it into account if the West succeeded in showing up the Soviet position regarding Berlin. On the other hand, if the Western Powers were unable to convince most of the members of the United Nations that their position was reasonable, a great deal of pressure might be brought to bear on them which could create much difficulty. Finally, if the democratic countries should ask their people to assume the risk of nuclear war, they must make it clear that every effort was being made to achieve the objective by other means.¹

4. Quadripartite Foreign Ministers Meetings, August 5-6

In view of the divergences of opinion at the tripartite meeting with regard to the tactical approach to negotiations, it is perhaps not surprising that when the Foreign Ministers met on a quadripartite basis they decided to take up the section on tactics of the Working Group Report only at a later stage in their meetings held August 5 and 6.

¹From Paris, tel. SECTO 8, Aug. 5, 1961, secret.

Soviet Motives and Intentions. In discussing the section on "Soviet motives and intentions", the four Foreign Ministers dealt with the explosive situation in East Germany resulting from the mass exodus of refugees (see post, p. 77). West German Foreign Minister Brentano emphasized that the situation could easily become dangerous if the "Berlin door" were closed. The four Foreign Ministers decided to approve the report and also to instruct the Washington Ambassadorial Group to keep the situation in East Germany under constant review.

Strengthening the Forces of the Alliance. In taking up the "strengthening of the forces of the alliance", the Foreign Ministers discussed at some length the military build-up of their individual countries. Brentano declared that the Federal Republic would take the necessary measures to ensure the build-up of its forces as set forth in the Report but that no measures should be taken before the West German elections of September 17. The Foreign Ministers unanimously endorsed the policy of a progressive build-up of the Alliance, as proposed in the American Memorandum of July 21, agreed that it should be "Alliance-wide and have an organized follow-up", and also agreed that the problems of military preparations should be discussed in NATO.

Economic Countermeasures. Accepting with some amendments a Working Group paper on economic countermeasures, the Foreign Ministers 1) acknowledged the important auxiliary role of economic countermeasures; 2) agreed to the imposition of a total economic embargo against the Soviet Bloc in the event "military and civilian access, air or ground, to West Berlin is blocked"; 3) agreed to consider whether a total embargo should be imposed if only Allied traffic to Berlin was blocked or substantially interfered with; 4) directed that studies of possible measures other than total embargo be undertaken by the Four Power Working Group under the guidance of the Ambassadorial Steering Group; 5) undertook to seek agreement of all NATO members to these principles and to initiating the necessary legislative and administrative actions required to carry out the concerted measures should the contingencies arise.

In the course of their discussions the Foreign Ministers also agreed that an embargo was essentially an economic measure while a blockade was essentially of a military nature and that both should be considered by the Ambassadorial Group.

Berlin Contingency Planning. In dealing with the Working Group paper reviewing Berlin contingency planning, the Foreign Ministers approved, without much discussion, the recommendations regarding ground access providing for acquiescence in East German execution of existing Soviet ground procedures. Couve de Murville and Brentano, however, raised questions with respect to paragraph d) of the recommendations, which provided for a study of a proposal to have procedures governing Allied traffic to Berlin agreed upon by East and West Germans at a technical level.

Secretary Rusk pointed out that, while the Allies would not want to talk with the East Germans about Allied military traffic to Berlin, they would not wish to go to war to avoid talking to the East Germans. Since it would increase East German prestige if the Allies entered into discussions with them, it would be preferable, in a certain situation, to have the West Germans talk with the East Germans about Allied military traffic; the more so as the two sides already dealt directly with civilian traffic to Berlin, which was 95 percent of the whole traffic.

Brentano expressed doubts as to the desirability of letting Germans handle Allied traffic on this basis. He felt that it would be dangerous to broach the subject with the East Germans and to imply that they had a right to be consulted about Allied traffic.

In the end, the Foreign Ministers agreed that the study proposed in paragraph d) of the Working Group recommendations on contingency planning should be undertaken.

In the discussion of the military aspects of contingency planning, Secretary Rusk specifically endorsed the Working Group recommendation that the Ambassadorial Group in Washington be given broad responsibility for planning for action on a world-wide basis. He also stressed that the Ambassadorial Group might have to be strengthened by the addition of more military advisers and that there was need for better liaison between the Group and LIVE OAK. The Secretary, furthermore, drew attention to the problem raised in the American military papers circulated in the Working Group as to whether existing NATO machinery was suitable for control of operations at a time when events might move into an actual military phase.

After some discussion of the Working Group Report and of the problems raised in the American military papers--which, according to Foreign Secretary Home, were being studied by the British Chiefs of Staff--the Foreign Ministers approved the recommendation of the Working Group and directed the Ambassadorial Group in Washington to carry them out. The Foreign Ministers, furthermore, agreed to expedite instructions to their representatives on the Ambassadorial Group to draft new directives for LIVE OAK and other military authorities. Finally, the Ministers agreed that the Ambassadorial Group should put into precise form the sequence of governmental decisions required in the course of a developing crisis over Berlin, "including economic sanctions, airlift, et cetera."

Tactics. The four Foreign Ministers had left the sections of the Working Group Report on "tactics" and "substantive political questions" for discussion in the last phase of their deliberations. While the latter subject did not require major changes in the Report, the discussion of tactics indicated even more clearly than the outcome of the tripartite Foreign Ministers meeting that there was substantial disagreement with respect to the question of an early Western initiative for negotiations with the Soviet Union.

Secretary Rusk, using arguments similar to those which he had put forward at the tripartite meeting, stated that the Soviet Union had put proposals before the world and that there would have to be negotiations at some point. The Secretary said that the United States favored a Foreign Ministers meeting as the most suitable forum for consultations with the Soviet Union since the United States was dubious regarding other suggested approaches, such as Ambassadorial explorations in Moscow or the raising of the Berlin issue in the United Nations. Although he admitted that there were differences even within the American Government regarding the timing of the initiative, he believed that the best solution would be a meeting scheduled to take place after the Soviet Communist Party Congress in October which would be made known to the public at an earlier date. Thus, some time in early September the Western Powers should suggest a Foreign Ministers meeting to take place in late October or early November.

Foreign Secretary Home expressed complete agreement with the Secretary. He warned that the Soviet position, with its emphasis on a peace treaty, might become plausible to the

outside world, while the present Western stress on a military build-up might make it appear that the Western powers were moving toward a warlike solution. Accordingly, Home favored an early initiative toward negotiations. He suggested, in this connection, that the Western Powers might make the offer of negotiations in their replies to the Soviet note of August 3 (see post, Chapter III) and dispatch these replies before the meeting of the UN General Assembly.

West German Foreign Minister Brentano admitted that the Soviet Union might be psychologically successful with its emphasis on a peace treaty and a free city of Berlin and that there was pressure in favor of direct negotiations. But, in view of the Soviet attitude, he feared that negotiations could only lead to a worsening of the status quo. Brentano therefore advocated that the Western Powers should not offer negotiations but not refuse them if the other side made the offer.

Couve de Murville reaffirmed the position which he had taken at the tripartite meeting. He argued that the Soviet Union would not engage in discussions of a German settlement but would talk only about West Berlin and accept nothing that would improve the Western position there. He considered it irresponsible for the Western Powers to propose negotiations without knowing what they were prepared to do. He suggested, therefore, that the West merely indicate willingness to discuss all problems at issue without pre-conditions. The Western Foreign Ministers might then meet again in September before taking final decisions and study in the meantime what was negotiable.

A compromise proposal by Secretary Rusk that the Western Powers, while indicating their willingness to negotiate in notes to the Soviet Union, might also suggest a meeting with Gromyko during the UN General Assembly session in New York was opposed by Couve de Murville and Brentano, who pointed to the danger of creating the impression that the West was considering bringing the Berlin question into the United Nations.

Thus, the Foreign Ministers, unable to agree on the timing of the Western initiative for negotiations, decided that this question should be taken up by the Governments through diplomatic channels.

In summarizing the discussions on tactics, Secretary Rusk stressed that the Foreign Ministers had achieved substantial agreement and were not too far apart, even with respect to the timing of negotiations. They had agreed on instructing the Ambassadorial Group to work on possible negotiating positions, and there was likewise agreement that the negotiations with the Soviet Union should be conducted at the level of the Foreign Ministers. It was even understood that the negotiations would probably take place in mid-October or early November. The only outstanding question to be solved was under what conditions and when such negotiations ought to be sought.

Substantive Political Questions and Other Matters. The Working Group Report on "substantive political questions" was approved without much discussion by the Foreign Ministers, who decided that these questions should be further studied by the Ambassadorial Group. At the request of the Germans, however, there was added in the section on Berlin a reference to the "essential conditions" for a Berlin settlement as set forth in the Supplementary Working Group Report on April 21, 1960 and approved by the Foreign Ministers at Istanbul on May 1, 1960 within the context of the preparations for the summit conference (see ante, Part III, Chapter II, A).

The Foreign Ministers also discussed the possibility of a plebiscite in West Berlin on the question of the presence of Allied forces in that city. Although Couve de Murville expressed concern that such a plebiscite might cast doubt on the validity of Western rights, the Foreign Ministers were favorably disposed toward the idea. They delayed a final decision, however, until further details, particularly regarding the attitude of the West Berlin authorities on the subject, had been furnished by the Federal Republic.

The four Foreign Ministers also approved the report submitted by the quadripartite Working Group on Information, which advanced proposals for rapid harmonization of the information policies of the four Western Powers regarding Berlin and recommended that a special information effort be made with respect to the uncommitted countries.

Finally, the Foreign Ministers agreed to brief the North Atlantic Council on August 8 and to discuss with this body the problems of the military build-up.¹

5. Rusk-de Gaulle Meeting, August 8

Although the meeting of the four Western Foreign Ministers had resulted in a good measure of agreement among them regarding the tasks facing the Western Alliance, it had also revealed the existence of a rather significant divergence of views between the French--and to a lesser degree the Germans--on one side, the United States and Britain on the other, with respect to the timing of negotiations with the Soviet Union. This disagreement was defined even more sharply in a conversation between Secretary Rusk and President de Gaulle on August 8.

Secretary Rusk reaffirmed the position which he had taken in the Foreign Ministers meetings, i.e., that the Western Powers ought to indicate publicly in early September that they wanted to negotiate with the Soviet Union in October or early November. Rusk emphasized that President Kennedy was much concerned about this matter and felt that the West could not postpone for too long the announcement that negotiations would take place. A great deal was being asked of the people in the Western countries and they were anxious that their governments engaged in negotiations before they were faced with the prospect of war.

President de Gaulle stated that he understood the view that the United States must negotiate with the Soviet Union to satisfy its public opinion. France had no objections if the United States went on probing Soviet intentions; and if

¹From Paris, tel. SECTO 11, Aug. 6, 1961, secret; tel. SECTO 15, Aug. 6, top secret; tel. SECTO 17, Aug. 7, 1961; tel. SECTO 18, Aug. 7; both secret; Report of the Four Power Working Group on Germany and Berlin as Revised in Light of Ministerial Consultations, Paris. Aug. 5-6 (BCD V. 1.), secret; Ministerial Decisions on Report of the Four-Power Working Group on Germany and Berlin, July 28-August 4, 1961 (BCD V 2.), Aug. 11, secret; memorandum by Achilles (S/O) to Acting Secretary, "Status Report on Paris Foreign Ministers Meeting", Aug. 8, secret.

something worthwhile developed France would be ready to join the United States. But France did not like the idea of starting negotiations without knowing what the negotiations were about. There were various ways to handle the Berlin question, de Gaulle said; the West could tell Khrushchev plainly that it would not change the status of Berlin or tolerate interference with legitimate Western rights there and would reply by force if Khrushchev should change this status by force. The French President also declared that the United States, while being much concerned about Berlin, was not as immediately or directly involved as were the Europeans.

Secretary Rusk stressed that the United States did not intend to negotiate without knowing what it would be negotiating about. He pointed out that the positions of the United States, France, and Britain were not too far apart and that a common approach could be worked out during the month of August. But the Secretary believed that it was necessary to have some kind of a schedule as otherwise matters could be delayed indefinitely, with the result that the West might have to face an acute Berlin crisis without a plan. The Secretary also declared that the United States had no intention of withdrawing from Berlin and that he wanted to remove any other impression which President de Gaulle might have in this respect.

President de Gaulle adhered to the position that, if one wanted to reach agreement with Khrushchev, one would have to give up something. Moreover, it would be clear that the West was only negotiating because Khrushchev had raised the threat of a separate treaty with the GDR. De Gaulle in this context asked how anyone could negotiate with Khrushchev, who insisted that whether or not talks were held the end result would still be the same. When Secretary Rusk pointed out that Khrushchev's proposals did not need to be the basis for the West's proposals, de Gaulle replied that it would still be true that negotiations had started "because Mr. Khrushchev has whistled."

Throughout the conversation President de Gaulle stressed that he understood the American desire to establish contact with the Soviet Union but that so far he saw no reason for doing so.¹

¹Memorandum US/MC/13 by Lyon (Embassy Paris) of conversation between Rusk and de Gaulle, Aug. 8, 1961, secret.

6. NATO Council Meeting, August 8

Secretary Rusk's Presentation. On August 8 Secretary Rusk presented to the NATO Council the views of the United States, making it clear at the same time that he was taking account of the discussions of the four Western Foreign Ministers which had just been concluded. He outlined the quadripartitely agreed program regarding the military build-up, economic measures, psychological and propaganda efforts, and diplomatic negotiations, asking the NATO countries to cooperate in the three fields named first and to engage in an exchange of views with respect to diplomatic negotiations.

The Secretary emphasized the dual purpose of the military build-up, namely, to help obtain a peaceful solution but also to improve readiness if a conflict should break out. The immediate objective was to bring NATO forces to the level anticipated in NATO planning and to bring first echelon forces into combat readiness. The measures to be taken would give the alliance a greater number of military alternatives and would restore the proper balance between NATO's nuclear and conventional forces. Berlin contingency planning would be brought under SHAPE and would be closely coordinated with the planning for NATO as a whole. The Secretary stated that the four Foreign Ministers were in general accord with this program, and he urged all members of the alliance to consider how they could best participate. He asked the North Atlantic Council to develop procedures to expedite common or parallel action.

The Secretary also emphasized that, since force was the last resort, other instruments such as economic countermeasures were also necessary. Under certain circumstances, such measures were useful and perhaps essential. The crux of the matter lay in a clear decision that, in the event that military and civilian access to Berlin was blocked, economic countermeasures amounting to a total blockade would be imposed by NATO. Readiness to do this would prepare the way for taking lesser and partial measures in that field. It was essential to have legal and administrative machinery ready to move speedily. The Secretary emphasized the responsibility of the alliance as a whole to take these measures in view of the fact that it would be involved as a whole in military measures if the other measures should fail.

The Secretary, furthermore, stressed the importance of creating a favorable public opinion in the NATO countries and in the uncommitted world and then called on the diplomatic resources of the alliance to exert an influence with respect to the Berlin problem in other areas of the world where the efforts of the Soviet Bloc could be discredited.

In advancing the view that a Foreign Ministers conference with the Soviet Union would be the best forum for negotiations, the Secretary took the opportunity to cast doubt on the idea of referring the Berlin issue to the United Nations at an early date. He pointed out that the United Nations tended to reach a compromise somewhere in the middle of the road and emphasized that the margin of compromise with the Soviet Union in this matter had been virtually used up. The Secretary indicated that the question of the timing of the negotiations required further consultations and stated that the views of the members of the NATO Council on this issue were being sought.

Discussion and Communiqué. In the discussions the NATO members generally supported the approach and the program set forth by the United States. Individual countries expressed views on certain subjects.

Italy advised against waiting for a peace treaty before engaging in negotiations and suggested that the West should negotiate after the German elections of September 17 and before the Soviet Communist Party Congress in October. Italy also felt that the West, while increasing its military strength, should avoid provocative measures. Finally, Italy suggested that the element of human freedom should be emphasized in the context of Berlin rather than Western juridical rights.

Belgium also stressed the need to avoid provocations. Belgium, furthermore, suggested that the timing and substance of negotiations should be discussed in the North Atlantic Council and expressed itself in favor of early negotiations in view of the German elections on September 17 and the opening of the UN General Assembly on September 19.

Turkey expressed full support for a policy of firmness before entering negotiations and promised to make its best efforts with respect to a military build-up. Similar views were expressed by Greece.

Denmark stressed that it was necessary to be prepared to deal with the matter of Berlin in the UN General Assembly and warned that military measures by themselves were no solution. Denmark also felt that the West should not freeze its position since the point had almost been reached at which prestige was engaged to such an extent that neither side could retreat.

The Dutch believed that negotiations should carefully be prepared and that the West should also be ready in the event that the issue was taken to the United Nations, without, however, its taking an initiative in this direction. The Dutch were in favor of building up military strength for negotiations and reported briefly on certain steps already taken, or under consideration, to strengthen their defense.

Norway expressed general support for the position taken by Belgium and stressed that the West should distinguish between vital interests on which it could not yield and other issues on which it could. Norway expected that the issue of a Berlin settlement would come up soon in the negotiations and suggested that thought should be given to a new arrangement that would not involve giving up basic rights. NATO should consider carefully how to deal with the question of recognition of the GDR, which would surely come up in the negotiations.

Canada noted that it had successfully met its military goals in accordance with NATO planning. Emphasizing that the stronger the West became militarily the more willing it ought to be to engage in negotiations. Canada advocated full use of diplomatic channels since public declarations had had as well as good effects.

The United Kingdom, France, and the Federal Republic briefly indicated the military measures which their governments had already taken or were planning to take.

In his concluding remarks, Secretary Rusk said that the next urgent task was to deal with the substance of the forthcoming negotiations. He agreed with many of the NATO countries that the West must be prepared for discussion of the problems of Germany and Berlin in the United Nations and once more urged all NATO governments to contribute their ideas on how to deal with the problems facing the Alliance.

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In the communiqué issued on August 8, the NATO Council noted with regret the lack of progress on German reunification and reaffirmed that a peaceful and just solution of the problems of Germany and Berlin could be found only on the basis of self-determination. The Council also reasserted its position, as expressed in its declaration of December 16, 1958, with regard to Berlin and a separate peace treaty signed by the Soviet Union (see ante, Part I, p. 33).¹

¹From Paris, tel. SECTO 50, Aug. 9, 1961, secret; Documents on Germany, 1944-1961, p. 715.

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Chapter III

FURTHER INTENSIFICATION OF THE CRISIS: THE WALL

A. Soviet and East German Actions and Statements
Prior to August 13

1. Communist Reaction to Western Policies

The reaffirmation of Western determination in the face of the Soviet challenge expressed by the Western notes of July 17 and by the announced Western military measures, especially in President Kennedy's speech of July 25, did not deter the Soviet Union from continuing with its pronouncements regarding the early conclusion of a separate peace treaty which had been issued, with increasing frequency and belligerence, since the Kennedy-Khrushchev meeting in Vienna. Moreover, the Western expressions of firmness and the announcement and beginning implementation of preparatory military measures impelled the Soviet Union to resort to even more aggressive threats and boasts in retaliation for alleged Western "war psychosis" and "hysteria." It was, however, a characteristic of the Soviet Union's political style in the Khrushchev era that the most outrageous threats, intimidation, and bluster alternated with appeals to reason and offers of negotiation even though closer scrutiny of these offers gave little room for hope that genuine negotiation would be possible in the near future.

Statements by Gromyko. When the memorandum of July 12 by the Federal Republic (see ante, chapter I, p. 12) was handed to Gromyko, the Soviet Foreign Minister, according to reports from Embassy Bonn, told West German Ambassador Kroll that, if no agreement was reached between the Soviet Union and the Western Powers regarding a peace treaty, the Soviet Union would conclude a peace treaty with the GDR. Following conclusion of such a peace treaty, Western rights arising from Germany's surrender would expire; Soviet troops would be stationed at appropriate places along the border between the Federal Republic and the GDR; and if the Western Powers undertook to use force they would be answered with force. Gromyko was also reported to have said that, if the Western Powers and the Federal Republic should dare to force war on the USSR, they would have that war with all its consequences.

Reference has already been made to Gromyko's remarks upon receiving the American note of July 17 (see ante, chapter I, p. 14) namely, that the West was responsible for the existing difficult and dangerous situation and that it suited the Western Powers and NATO to heat up the situation. When the three Western Ambassadors and Ambassador Kroll on July 18 compared notes on their respective conversations with Gromyko upon delivery of the notes of July 17 (in Kroll's case, delivery of the West German memorandum of July 12), they found that Gromyko had ended his conversation with each of them by stating that it was now up to the West whether the Berlin problem was exacerbated or settled by agreement.¹

Khrushchev's Reaction to the President's Speech of July 25. The United States Government received a first-hand account of Khrushchev's reactions to the President's address of July 25 from the President's adviser on disarmament, John J. McCloy, who had gone to Khrushchev's summer residence at the Black Sea to discuss disarmament with the Soviet leader. Apparently Khrushchev was eager to use this opportunity to convey his position to the United States Government at this tense moment of a mounting crisis over Berlin.

When Khrushchev talked to McCloy on July 26, he had not yet seen the text of the President's speech. At this meeting Khrushchev promised to consider any proposal the West would make, offered to accept a Western proposal for guarantees of the freedom and independence of Berlin, and even praised the President's restraint and dignity in the matter of Berlin. Meeting McCloy the next day (July 27), Khrushchev, having read the President's address, thought it appropriate to give his interlocutor a display of his wrath. The Soviet leader termed the President's speech a "declaration of preliminary war" and asserted that he had no choice but to treat it as an ultimatum. He vowed that he would continue his policy, sign a peace treaty, and prepare for war. This war, he said, would be a nuclear war, and the

¹From Bonn, tel. 95, July 14, 1961, confidential; to Moscow, airgram A-10, July 15, confidential; from Moscow, tel. 179, July 18, secret.

Soviet Union would survive it as would the United States. But America's allies in Europe would be destroyed, hundreds of millions of people would die, and many more would be contaminated. All this to preserve the freedom, which was not threatened anyway, of 2½ million West Berliners. Moreover, even the American people would not tolerate a capitalist system which had brought on such a catastrophe and they would destroy imperialist monopoly capitalism.

Notwithstanding these stark threats and apocalyptic visions which Khrushchev obviously wanted to convey to the President, he also told McCloy that no real issue was dividing the Soviet Union and the United States, except Germany, and close cooperation between the two countries might still ensue if that problem were settled.¹

Soviet Note of August 3. On August 3 the Soviet Union replied to the notes of the three Western Powers of July 17. The Soviet reply to the American note asserted that "war psychosis" was putting "an increasingly marked stamp on all atmosphere in the United States" and stated that the "language of threats," if applied to the Soviet Union, could only lead to opposite results.

As the Soviet reply to the Western notes was received at the moment when the Western Powers were engaged in quadripartite meetings in Paris, it was made the subject of an analysis by the Working Group which was subsequently endorsed by the Foreign Ministers. According to this analysis, the Soviet reply did not contain any new element and could not be interpreted as an indication that there had been an evolution in the position of the Soviet Union. The Working Group felt, nevertheless, that certain aspects of the Soviet note deserved to be emphasized.

First, some of the legal and psychological arguments used in the Western notes seemed to have embarrassed the Soviet Union. This was particularly true of the argumentation regarding

¹From Moscow, tel. 323, July 28, 1961, confidential; memorandum by McCloy of conversation with Khrushchev, July 31, 1961, eyes only/confidential.

self-determination, the defensive character of NATO, and the limitations imposed on the Federal Republic in the military field. Moreover, the Soviet Union felt apparently compelled to defend itself against the charge that it was perpetuating the division of Germany.

Second, points made in the Soviet aide-mémoire of June 4 and in subsequent speeches by Khrushchev had not been repeated, as, for instance, the time-limit for signing a peace treaty. Also, the statement that Western rights deriving from the surrender of Germany would come to an end as a result of a separate peace treaty was made implicitly rather than explicitly.

Third, the Soviet note continued to make the early conclusion of a peace treaty with the "two German states" the only objective of negotiations, and to threaten the Western Powers, if they refused to sign such a treaty, with a separate Soviet-East German peace treaty.

A similar point was made by the Secretary in a telegram sent to the Department from Paris with reference to that passage in the Soviet note to the United States which stated that, by refusing to participate in a peace settlement, "the United States Government would place itself in a position where the West Berlin question would be settled without it, with all consequences for the rights of the Western Powers based on Germany's surrender." The Secretary stressed that this formulation eliminated the idea of negotiations on a "free city" of Berlin after the signing of a peace treaty and made a "free city" status for Berlin the automatic result of a peace treaty.¹

Khrushchev's speeches of August 7 and 11. At the beginning of August, Khrushchev increasingly conjured up in his speeches the spectre of nuclear war. Ostensibly this was done to respond to the threat allegedly implied in President Kennedy's

¹Documents on Germany, 1944-1961, pp. 704-714; from Paris, tels. SECTO 12 and SECTO 13, Aug. 6, 1961, both secret.

speech of July 25 that the West would make war on the Soviet Union unless the latter desisted from concluding a peace treaty with the GDR. The real aim of Khrushchev's "strategy of terror" was, however, to frighten the Western peoples and their governments, particularly the European allies of the United States, and thus to attempt to divide the Western alliance.

The successful completion of the orbital spaceflight of Soviet cosmonaut Gherman Titov provided Khrushchev with the setting for the strongest threat he had uttered so far. In an address to the Soviet people delivered on August 7, he accused President Kennedy of resorting to threats and of presenting the Soviet Union with "something in the way of an ultimatum" in reply to the Soviet proposals for a German peace treaty. Khrushchev denounced "military hysteria" in the United States and warned that, if war came, it would not end until both sides had used all the weapons "including the most destructive ones." If war broke out, he threatened, the Soviet Union had at its disposal the means "not only for striking a crushing blow at the territorial United States," but also "to render harmless the aggressor's allies and destroy American military bases throughout the world." War would also come to the American people, who "since the time of their own Civil War have not known hostilities on their territory." In a somewhat lower key Khrushchev indicated that the Soviet Union might have to increase the numerical strength of the army along its Western orders and possibly call up part of its reserves. He asserted, however, that the Soviet Union was considering taking such measures only in reply to the "mobilization measures" of the United States and its allies.

As on previous occasions, Khrushchev combined the aggressive stance with a posture of reasonableness by appealing to the three Western Powers to "meet at a round table conference." But he offered no new proposals for negotiations and merely continued to insist that, if the Western Powers persisted in their refusal to sign a German peace treaty, this problem would have to be settled without them.¹

¹The Soviet Stand on Germany, pp. 108-132.

In a speech delivered on the occasion of a meeting with a Rumanian Government delegation on August 11, Khrushchev again reverted to the subject of alleged threats by all the NATO countries to unleash a war if the Soviet Union should sign a separate treaty and, for his part, he threatened that the Soviet Union would strike "not only at the territories of the principal countries, but also at the military bases located on the territories of other countries belonging to the North Atlantic alliance." Khrushchev told his audience, in this connection, that he had recently advised the Greek Ambassador that his country should withdraw from NATO, that he had made it clear to him that the Soviet Union would not hesitate to strike at the NATO bases in Greece, and that the responsibility for this would rest on those "who exposed cities, peoples, and historic monuments to such a blow." Khrushchev also urged Western leaders not to give in to "war hysteria" and warned them that the "flywheel of military preparations" might acquire such speed and momentum that they would be unable to stop it and thus push their peoples "into the abyss of thermonuclear war." But, although Khrushchev also expressed hope for a peaceful settlement and referred to "clear-cut Soviet proposals", he had nothing to offer but the old slogans of a "free city" of West Berlin and a German peace treaty.¹

2. Developments in East Germany: American Concern

The steady stream of Soviet pronouncements threatening action to change the status of West Berlin and raising the spectre of nuclear war succeeded in raising the level of tension all over the world and in creating an atmosphere of crisis and alarm. In East Germany and East Berlin, however, the very threat of a Soviet-East German peace treaty resulting in a change of the status quo in Berlin, even without the prospect of a subsequent military conflict, led to a dangerous aggravation of the chronic crisis of Ulbricht's regime, the weakest member of the Soviet Bloc. It was somewhat ironical that the Soviet psychological offensive aimed at undermining the morale of the Western alliance had merely succeeded in intensifying the crisis of the East German regime which the

¹Documents on Germany, 1944-1961, pp. 716-721.

Soviet Union had hoped to relieve by precipitating a crisis over Berlin.

Ambassador Dowling's Analysis of the Situation. As early as July 12 Ambassador Dowling reported on the growing uneasiness of the East German population. The most conspicuous manifestation of this uneasiness was the rising tide of refugees making their escape through West Berlin. While the unrest, in the Ambassador's opinion, could be attributed partly to economic difficulties, the basic cause of the existing level of tension was the belligerent tone of Soviet and East German propaganda with respect to a separate peace treaty and a new status for West Berlin.

Dowling considered it very likely that, if Khrushchev continued to build up tension and make it appear that a separate treaty was imminent, the refugee flow might develop into an actual flood "unless additional, harsher restrictive measures are taken against travel from the Zone into East Berlin and thence across the Sector border." But if such restrictive measures should be introduced under the existing strained conditions, Dowling anticipated "the real possibility of an explosion" despite the belief existing heretofore that the East German population would not move against the regime in the absence of an encouragement from the West.

Ambassador Dowling therefore proposed that consideration be given to the attitude which the United States ought to adopt in the event of another East German popular uprising. He put forth his own view that "for us to remain on the sidelines in the event of another June 17 [uprising] would mean the end of our prestige and influence in Germany, even were the Federal Republic and population in West to follow our precept."¹

Ambassador Dowling's report about the unrest in East Germany was confirmed by much other information which related this unrest also to the unsatisfactory economic conditions,

¹From Bonn, tel. 76, July 12, 1961, secret.

especially food shortages, which had even resulted in demonstrations in Potsdam and Henningsdorf (northwest of Berlin). As for the refugee flow, intelligence sources confirmed that the reason for the current increase seemed to be the hard Communist line regarding Berlin, which created fear that the near future might offer the last chance for escape under relatively easy travel conditions.

The Department's Position. On July 22 the Department replied to Ambassador Dowling's comments on the unrest in Germany and the mounting tide of refugees. On the basis of a review of the available information on the subject, the Department believed that either of the following two contingencies could arise.

First, and more likely, the East German regime might take measures to control the refugee flow. This could be done by tightening controls over travel from the Soviet Zone to East Berlin "or by severely restricting travel from East Berlin to West Berlin."

Second, the situation in the East Zone could deteriorate sufficiently to lead to serious disorders.

The Department believed it to be Soviet policy, at least for the moment, to tolerate the refugee flow while pressing toward a decision on Berlin. But if Khrushchev became seriously concerned over the situation in East Germany, he could either precipitate a showdown over Berlin or ease pressure so as to enable the East German regime to put its economic house in order.

The Department felt that the United States was faced with a dilemma concerning the situation in East Germany. While it would like to see unrest that could cause the Soviet Union to slacken pressure on Berlin, it would not like to see a revolt break out at this time. Nor would the United States like to see drastic measures taken to stem the refugee flow as this might merely fan the flames in East Germany. The Soviet and East German leaders were creating enough difficulties for themselves in the Soviet Zone without the United States' taking a hand. The United States therefore planned to do at this time nothing which would exacerbate the situation (for incorporation

of this recommendation in the Quadripartite Working Group Report adopted at Paris see ante, chapter II, p. 49). This did not preclude the United States from advertising these facts about East Germany to the world, however, "in such a manner as not to encourage the East Germans to revolt or to expect US assistance if they do."

The Department stated that it would consider plans on meeting the contingencies mentioned earlier. If the GDR should tighten travel controls between the Soviet Zone and East Berlin, the United States could not do much more than help advertise the facts. If the GDR should restrict travel within Berlin, the United States would favor countermeasures, at least with respect to Temporary Travel Documents (TTD's) and perhaps also in the economic field. Finally, in the case of an East German uprising, the United States would decide its course of action in the light of the circumstances at the time.¹

3. The Refugee Tide

Background. In July and in the early part of August 1961, the tide of refugees from East Germany reached such proportions that it became the principal aspect of the crisis of the East German regime. The Communist decision to treat it as their number one problem, requiring solution without delay, created one of the contingencies anticipated by American officials and ultimately brought about a permanent change in the Berlin situation.

Yet the mass exodus from East Germany in the summer of 1961 was only the climax of a development which had gone on for many years, practically since the inception of the East German regime. Particularly since the brutal suppression of the East German uprising of June 1953, flight from East Germany was the only effective way in which the suffering population could demonstrate its opposition to the hated Ulbricht regime. The existence of a free German state in

¹Memorandum by Ausland (GER) to Hillenbrand (GER), July 18, 1961, secret; to Bonn, tel. 172, July 22, secret.

the West, in combination with the opportunity provided by the West Berlin "escape hatch", worked like a powerful magnet on the oppressed population of the Soviet Zone.

According to West German registration figures for refugees from the Soviet Zone which had been assembled since September 1949, the total of refugees rose from 129,245 in 1949 to a record high of 331,390 in 1953, the year of the East German uprising. The annual figure then dropped to 184,198 in 1954, rose again above 200,000 in the years 1955-1958, and then dropped to 143,917 in 1959. In 1960 the refugee total once more practically reached the 200,000 mark (199,188). Until 1957 a considerable proportion of these refugees entered the Federal Republic by way of regular interzonal travel. Subsequent legislative, administrative, and propaganda measures by the East German regime to prevent the "flight from the Republic" (Republikflucht) severely restricted interzonal travel for East Germans, and as a result West Berlin became the gate to freedom for a large majority of the refugees. In 1961 the number of refugees rose again, to reach 103,159 by the end of June. As the Soviet Union stepped up the Berlin crisis in the wake of the Vienna meeting, 14,279 refugees arrived in Berlin during the first half of July. This figure exceeded the arrivals during the whole month of July in any previous year, except 1953 and 1956.

It was not only the size of the exodus which alarmed the East German regime but also its quality. The percentage of young people between the ages of 18 and 25 among the refugees was 25.7% in 1960 and rose to 27.2% in the first six months of 1961; the share of the 25-45 age group was 23.4% in 1960 and 23.9% in the first half of 1961. Moreover, the share of gainfully employed persons in the refugee total was 60.7% in 1960 and 61.8% in the first six months of 1961.¹

¹Bundesministerium für Gesamtdeutsche Fragen, Die Flucht aus der Sowjetzone und die Sperrmassnahmen des kommunistischen Regimes vom 13. August 1961 in Berlin (Bonn and Berlin, 1961), pp. 15-18; from Berlin, tel. 61, July 18, 1961, official use only.

East German Countermeasures. To stem the rising tide of refugees, the East German regime tightened controls at the zonal and sector boundaries and also introduced new measures. Most of these were directed against the so-called border crossers (Grenzgänger), i.e., some 50,000 East Germans and East Berliners who were employed in West Berlin. The purpose was, of course, to divert the border crossers, who were mostly skilled workers, into employment in East Germany and thus to alleviate the critical manpower shortage caused by the refugee flow. On July 7 the regime began to enforce a hitherto dormant law of 1953 which required those working in West Berlin to obtain permission from the East Berlin Magistrate. On July 11 the East German regime decreed that all purchasers of scarce durable goods, such as automobiles, motorcycles, boats, TV sets, washing machines, and refrigerators, had to present certificates indicating that they were working in East Germany or East Berlin. Border crossers were also declared ineligible to obtain low-cost housing. On July 14 the East German regime announced that henceforth border crossers would be required to pay for goods and services either in West German currency or to present proof that their East German currency had been exchanged at the legal rate of 1 to 1 rather than at the unofficial rate of 5 to 1. On July 19 the regime instituted a "census" of interzonal vehicle traffic which provided for the checking of documents and interrogation of travellers.

By the end of July the total of refugees for the entire month had risen to over 30,000 and the daily average to 1,100. On August 1 it was announced that measures would be taken in interzonal traffic allegedly to protect the East German population against a polio epidemic in the Federal Republic. On August 3 the Mission in Berlin report that East German police were harassing border crossers by confiscating their identity cards and refusing to return them until their holders gave up working in West Berlin. On August 4 East Berlin authorities issued a decree forcing the border crossers to register in East Berlin and also to pay East German rents, utilities, and public fees in D-marks.¹

¹Bureau of Intelligence Research, "Current Developments on Berlin and Germany," Aug. 9, 1961, secret; from Berlin, tel. 39, July 12, 1961; tel. 136, Aug. 3; tel. 143, Aug. 4; all official use only.

On August 3 the three Western Commandants protested the measures taken against border crossers and urged the Soviet Commandant to end the restrictions placed on East Berliners working in West Berlin.¹

Crest of the Refugee Tide. By August 5 the daily refugee total had reached the figure of 1,500, and on August 9, two days after Khrushchev's bomb-rattling speech (see ante, p. 73) the daily total had risen to 1,926. Twenty-nine percent of all the refugees registering in West Berlin were border crossers. On August 11 West German Minister for All-German Affairs Lemmer declared in a speech that, if the refugee flow continued at the current rate, the figure of 200,000, which was the total for the entire year 1960, would be reached by the end of the summer.²

But it became apparent that the Communists were about to take action to prevent the further depletion of their manpower and that such action would have greater significance and scope than harassment of border crossers.

From August 3 to August 5 a conference of the First Secretaries of the Central Committees of the Communist parties in the Warsaw Pact countries was held in Moscow. It issued a communiqué which stated, in its concluding passage, that the meeting had ordered all the officials concerned "to take all the necessary measures in the economic field and in foreign policy, which will assure the conclusion of a German peace treaty and observance of its provisions including those concerning West Berlin as a free city."³ It was believed, however, that this conference also discussed measures to curtail the refugee flow.

¹From Berlin, tel. 131, Aug. 3, 1961, official use only.

²From Berlin, tel. 165, Aug. 10, 1961, and tel. 172, Aug. 12, both official use only; from Berlin, desp. 72, Aug. 7, confidential.

³Historical Office, "Chronology on Berlin, January 1957-June 1962," January 1963, official use only.

On August 10 Marshal Ivan Konev, one of the Soviet Union's top military leaders in World War II, was appointed Commander of Soviet forces in Germany. On August 11 the People's Chamber (Volkskammer) of the East German regime, according to the East German press, "unanimously approved" statements by Foreign Minister Bolz regarding a peace treaty and by Prime Minister Stoph on the problem of refugees and border crossers. The People's Chamber authorized the East German Council of Ministers to take all necessary measures. The same day East German Volkspolizei began a complete check of all S-Bahn passengers en route from Potsdam into West Berlin and also began to apply rigorous controls at other S-Bahn crossings into West Berlin. Nevertheless, by the close of that day (August 11), 2,290 refugees had entered the Marienfelde reception center in West Berlin, thus setting an all-time record for a single day.¹

B. The Division of Berlin

1. The Closing of the East Berlin Sector Borders (August 13-23)

The increasing harassment of travel between East Berlin and West Berlin in the second week of August foreshadowed the action which the Soviet Union and its East German satellite had decided on in order to stop the mass exodus from the Soviet Zone. In the early morning hours of August 13, units of the East German army and Volkspolizei began to seal off the border between the Soviet sector and the Western sectors of Berlin by erecting barbed wire barriers and other obstacles, digging trenches, and tearing up the pavements.

These were only the most conspicuous among a series of measures taken in accordance with decrees adopted by the East German regime on August 12 and published on August 13. According to the text of these decrees, they were issued on the basis of a declaration of the Warsaw Pact states of August 12, published simultaneously, proposing to the government and people of the GDR that they "establish an order on

¹From Berlin, tel. 174, Aug. 12, 1961, official use only.

the border of West Berlin which will seriously block the way to the subversive activity against the socialist camp countries, so that reliable safeguards and effective control can be established around the whole territory of West Berlin, including its border with democratic Berlin." Accordingly, the East German regime decreed the introduction of new controls on the East German borders, "including the border along the Western sector of Greater Berlin."

Henceforth East Berliners and East Germans would need special permits for going into West Berlin. Border crossers were no longer allowed to work in West Berlin. Direct subway and elevated traffic between East Berlin and West Berlin was halted. Finally, only 13 crossing points between the Soviet sector and the Western sectors remained open compared with about 80 prior to August 13. But the decrees did not prevent West Berliners from entering East Berlin provided they showed their identity cards; nor did they affect foreign nationals and diplomats.

In the days following August 13, the East German army and police units along the sector border were heavily reinforced, and armored troop detachments also made their appearance. On August 15 special permits were required for West Berlin vehicles entering East Berlin. Barge traffic was also halted. The number of crossing points was further reduced with the closing of the Brandenburg Gate on August 14. Gradually the barriers erected on August 13 were reinforced, and on August 18 there began the construction of a six-foot-high concrete wall topped by barbed wire along some portions of the Soviet sector boundary. To isolate East Berlin further, the Communists walled off the entrances of houses in the Soviet sector which faced West Berlin; by August 21 they began to remove East Berlin residents from houses at the sector border and to barricade the houses to prevent further occupancy. On August 23 the East German regime decreed further measures to complete the sealing-off of East Berlin. West Berliners were henceforth required to obtain permits to enter the Soviet sector, and the number of crossing points was reduced to seven. Four of these were specifically assigned to West Berliners, two to citizens of the Federal Republic, and one to foreign nationals including diplomats and members of the Western military forces. At the same time the regime warned the

population, in the interest of their own safety, to keep a distance of 100 meters on both sides of the sector border.¹

As a result of these measures, what had been a refugee tide before August 13 became a mere trickle after that date. Though more than 2,400 refugees had entered West Berlin on August 12, the last day before the closing of the East Berlin sector borders, only 492 actually crossed the sector borders between August 13 and 18. The total figure of refugees who had fled the Soviet Zone between January 1 and August 15, 1961 was 159,730.²

2. Allied Reaction to the Border Closing

Secretary Rusk's Statement. The first official American reaction to the closure of the East Berlin border came in a statement issued by Secretary Rusk on August 13. It is significant that the Secretary stressed that the measures taken thus far were aimed at residents of East Berlin and East Germany "and not at the Allied position in West Berlin or access thereto." The Secretary made it clear, however, that the limitation of travel within Berlin was a "violation of the four-power status of Berlin" and of the "right of free circulation throughout the city" and that restrictions on travel between East German and Berlin were "in direct contravention" of the Paris four-Power agreement of June 20, 1949. He declared that these violations would be made the subject of "vigorous protests through appropriate channels."³

¹From Berlin, tels. 176, 177, 178, Aug. 13, 1961; tel. 282, Aug. 23; all official use only; tel. 283, Aug. 23, confidential; Documents on Germany, 1944-1961, pp. 721-725; Die Flucht aus der Sowjetzone, etc., pp. 33-36.

²Die Flucht aus der Sowjetzone, etc., pp. 15, 33; "Berlin Chronology and Second Access Problem," Berlin Task Force files.

³Documents on Germany, 1944-1961, pp. 725-726.

Allied Protests. On August 14 the three Western Commandants in Berlin agreed on a draft letter of protest to the Soviet Commandant with regard to the East German actions. The Mission in Berlin urged that the letter be approved and delivered as soon as possible in view of the "restiveness of West Berlin's population." The letter of protest was handed to the Soviet Commandant on August 15. In it the Commandants declared that the illegal measures of the East German regime designed to turn the boundaries between the Western sectors and the Soviet sector of Berlin into an "arbitrary barrier to movement of German citizens resident in East Berlin and East Germany" were a "flagrant violation" of the four-Power status of Berlin. The Commandants also pointed out the illegal character of the presence of military and paramilitary units in East Berlin to carry out these illegal measures. Furthermore, they declared that prohibiting East Berliners and East Germans from continuing their occupations in West Berlin denied to the working population the elementary right of "free choice of place of employment."¹

Two days later, on August 17, notes of protest by the three Western Allies were handed to the Soviet Foreign Ministry. These notes were coordinated in the Quadripartite Ambassadorial Steering Group, which had been charged by the Western Foreign Ministers at their Paris meeting of August 5-8 (see ante, Chapter II, Section B 4) with formulating and planning responses to anticipated Soviet moves on Berlin. The Western Powers, as the three Commandants had done earlier, denounced the violation of the quadripartite status of Berlin by the East Germans. They also stated that they expected the Soviet Union to end these "illegal measures" and noted, in this connection, that the declaration of August 13 by the Warsaw Pact Powers indicated that these countries were "intervening in a domain in which they have no competence."²

¹From Berlin, tel. 188, Aug. 14, 1961, confidential; Documents on Germany, 1944-1961, p. 726.

²To Moscow, tel. 438, Aug. 15, 1961, and tel. 441, Aug. 16, both secret; Documents on Germany, 1944-1961, pp. 726-727.

The Soviet Commandant on August 18 rejected the Western Commandants' protest as being "entirely out of place" and stated that the East German measures were "entirely within the competence of the Government of the German Democratic Republic" in fulfilling the "normal rights of each sovereign nation to protect its legal interests." The same day the Soviet Union used similar arguments in its reply to the American note of August 17. It also stated that it supported the actions of the East German regime which established "effective control on the border with West Berlin" in order to bar "subversive activity carried out from West Berlin against the GDR and other countries of the socialist community", and that it "categorically rejected" the American protest.¹

Reasons for the Initial American Reaction. The Department's instruction of July 22 to Bonn referred to earlier indicated that closing of the East Berlin border was one of the contingencies anticipated by the United States in connection with the East German refugee crisis. But this instruction likewise shows that the Department was aware that the mass flight from the Soviet Zone might confront the United States with other problems as well, such as an East German uprising and a precipitated showdown over Allied rights in West Berlin.

This is the background against which must be seen the undoubtedly cautious initial American reaction as reflected in the Secretary's statements of August 13 and in the limiting of the Allied response to protests.

The rationale of the American position in the initial stages of the crisis emerges quite clearly from a meeting of the high-level Steering Group, established by the President in July 1961, held on the morning of August 15. After Assistant Secretary Kohler had described the Allied protests that had been issued or were about to be issued, Secretary Rusk observed

¹Documents on Germany, 1944-1961, pp. 728-729, 735-740.

that, while the closing of the East Berlin border was a most serious matter, the probability was that, in realistic terms, it would make a Berlin settlement easier. The Secretary also pointed out, however, that the immediate problem was the sense of outrage that existed in Berlin and Germany, accompanied by a feeling that the West should do more than merely protest. But the Secretary felt that it was not easy to know just what could be done.

It is worth noting that the prevailing opinion expressed in the subsequent discussion was that economic countermeasures would be inappropriate, that they would either be too trivial or might start a chain of challenges and responses which could effect the West's deepest interest, namely, access to Berlin for goods and persons. The specific countermeasures to which objections were raised included those which were soon to be adopted, as shown below, by the Quadripartite Ambassadorial Steering Group. There was more support for one proposed step, namely, the reinforcement of the West Berlin garrison, although the Secretary of Defense expressed the view that such a step, meant as a gesture, was not desirable. But the meeting indicated its agreement with Secretary Rusk's statement that "we must keep shooting issues and non-shooting issues apart" and also agreed with the further proposition that the closing of the East Berlin border was not a shooting issue, and that the problem was therefore one of propaganda.¹

3. German Reaction

Criticism of the Allied Response. Secretary Rusk had correctly identified the "sense of outrage" in Germany as the most immediate problem facing the West following the closing of the East Berlin border. Eventually this sentiment had to be taken into account and, as a result, American policy underwent certain adjustments.

¹Memorandum by Bundy (White House), "Minutes of the Meeting of the Steering Group on Berlin, August 15, 1961," Aug. 16, 1961, secret.

The closing of the East Berlin sector borders produced a wave of indignation and fury among the people of West Germany and West Berlin. The situation was further complicated by the fact that the crisis occurred in the last weeks of a bitter electoral campaign in which Chancellor Adenauer's Christian Democratic party was facing the challenge of the Social Democratic opposition led by West Berlin's Governing Mayor, Willy Brandt. While the governing party did not wish to over-emphasize the crisis and thus to create a feeling of panic, it was nevertheless forced to respond to the challenge from Brandt and to the mood of public opinion in the Federal Republic. There was indeed growing criticism of Secretary Rusk's statement of August 13 emphasizing that Allied access to Berlin was not affected by the East German decrees, and of the alleged lateness and inadequacy of the Commandants' protest.¹

West German Proposals for Countermeasures. At the instruction of Foreign Minister Brentano, who had already urged on August 14, in a meeting with the three Western Ambassadors in Bonn, the adoption of countermeasures, West German Ambassador Grewe proposed in the Ambassadorial Steering Group in Washington a complete ban on the issuance of Temporary Travel Documents (TTD's). These documents, issued by the Allied Travel Office (ATO) in West Berlin, were required for East German travel to NATO countries. The United States representative in the Ambassadorial Group, Assistant Secretary of State Kohler, referred to the suggested measure as "picayune" and said that his Government was thinking in terms of more effective steps such as increasing the Allied garrisons in Berlin and speeding up the planned military build-up of NATO forces. Other retaliatory measures, such as a cut-off of trade and cultural exchanges with the Soviet Block, were also discussed, but there was general agreement within the Ambassadorial Group that trade countermeasures should be reserved for "more serious developments". The French agreed with the Germans, however, that a complete ban on TTD's should be imposed, while the British favored a selective ban. Against the background of a rising

¹From Bonn, tel. 335, Aug. 15, 1961, official use only; tel. 343, Aug. 16, confidential.

disappointment in Germany and at the urging of the Federal Republic for speedy action, the United States eventually accepted a British proposal for a selective ban on the issuance of TTD's with the aim of precluding travel beneficial to the East German regime while permitting East German travel if Western interests or sympathies suggested such a course. NATO concurrence, which was essential to the implementation of the measure, was obtained at the end of August.¹

A complete boycott of the Leipzig Fair was another proposal made by the Germans in the Quadripartite Ambassadorial Group on August 24. After the United States had explained that it could not legally prevent participation in this event but that efforts were being made to discourage American and British exhibitors, agreement was reached that the NATO representatives of the four Western Powers should press for a complete boycott of the Leipzig Fair by the NATO countries. But a German proposal for imposing selective restrictions on the Federal Republic's trade with the Soviet Zone met with a reserved attitude on the part of the United States. The latter suggested that the whole relationship between interzonal trade and rights of access to Berlin should be studied and also pointed out that these restrictions should be reserved for use in the event of more serious violations of access rights.²

"Crisis of Confidence" in West Berlin. The cautious attitude displayed by the United States in the Ambassadorial Group with regard to countermeasures against the closing of the East Berlin sector borders was thoroughly consistent with the American position taken up to then. The United States

¹To Bonn, tel. 350, Aug. 14, 1961, and tel. 356, Aug. 15, both secret; tel. 390, Aug. 21, confidential; to Paris, tel. 1004, Aug. 21, secret; from Bonn, tel. 363, Aug. 17, secret; tel. 423, Aug. 25, confidential; from Paris, tel. POLTO 247, Aug. 31, confidential; to Moscow, tel. 460, Aug. 17, secret.

²To Paris, tels. 1050 and 1077, Aug. 24, both secret.

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believed that the East German measures, although in violation of the quadripartite status of Berlin, did not affect the essentials of the Western position in Berlin as defined in the three principles, i.e., presence and security of Western forces in Berlin, security and viability of West Berlin, and physical access to West Berlin; that the real test, therefore, was still to come; and that the main Western goal at the moment was to deter the Soviet Union from carrying out its threat, by strengthening the credibility of the Western non-nuclear deterrent while at the same time showing a willingness to engage in serious negotiations. But initial American reaction to the sealing-off of East Berlin, which was based on this general position, had produced a serious policy divergence between the United States Government and the Government of West Berlin.

From the very beginning, the citizens of West Berlin had reacted most strongly to the new East German challenge and to the alleged Allied failure to respond quickly and effectively. As early as August 13, Governing Mayor Willy Brandt had called for vigorous steps and had asked the Allies to insist that the illegal measures imposed by the East German regime be nullified and freedom of movement within Berlin be restored. He emphasized that mere protests would not suffice. This admonition was reiterated to the three Western Commandants by Mayor Amrehn on behalf of the Berlin Senate on August 14. Referring to the growing disappointment of the people of West Berlin over Allied failure to take immediate steps, Mayor Amrehn said that the Berlin Senate was under heavy pressure to take local measures, such as steps against the activities of the Communist party (SED) in West Berlin and a ban on the propaganda displays of the East German regime in the S-Bahn stations. The Department quickly authorized complying with the latter request of the Berlin Senate on the understanding that it would not result in any public incidents.¹

¹From Berlin, tel. 187, Aug. 13, 1961, secret; tel. 197, Aug. 14, confidential; to Berlin, tel. 122, Aug. 15, confidential.

As criticism of the Allies and even of the Government of the Federal Republic for alleged failure to act continued in West Berlin, the U.S. Mission felt that the people of the city, for the first time since the blockade of 1948, were in the grip of a real "crisis of confidence." Ambassador Dowling was likewise much disturbed over the crisis of confidence in Berlin, and he endorsed in a telegram of August 17 a suggestion advanced by the Director of the USIA, Edward R. Murrow, that the "psychological climate" in West Berlin should be "corrected". In a telegram of August 16 from Berlin, Murrow had proposed a series of steps which "need not necessarily affect the substance of our position" but which would "evidence our interest and support". He had emphasized that the Allies were not being asked to do anything unreasonable as everybody was aware of the "ring of Soviet military forces" around Berlin.¹

Mayor Willy Brandt made himself the spokesman of the discontent which had spread among the people of West Berlin. In a letter of August 16 to President Kennedy, Brandt declared that the East German measures had destroyed the remnants of the four-Power status in Berlin while the Allied Commandants had limited themselves to a "delayed and not very vigorous step".

Brandt warned that inactivity and a mere defensive posture could bring about a crisis of confidence with regard to the Western Powers and, on the other hand, could boost the self-confidence of the East German regime. He proposed that the Western Powers, while insisting on re-establishment of four-Power responsibilities, should proclaim a three-Power status for West Berlin. They should also reiterate the guarantee of their presence in West Berlin and, if necessary, have this supported by plebiscites in West Germany and West Berlin. Brandt furthermore suggested that the Western Powers should on their own initiative bring the Berlin problem before the United Nations on the grounds that the Soviet Union had violated human rights by its actions in Berlin. Brandt

¹From Berlin, tel. 210, Aug. 15, 1961, and tel. 217, Aug. 16, both confidential; from Bonn, tel. 354, Aug. 17, secret.

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conceded that the steps suggested by him could not produce any significant material change in the situation but stated that it was all the more important to demonstrate political initiative. Finally, Brandt declared that he would welcome a strengthening of the American garrison in Berlin.¹

4. Allied Steps to Bolster Berlin Morale

Reinforcement of the Garrison: The President's Letter. To prevent further deterioration of morale in Germany, particularly in Berlin, and to demonstrate Western determination, the United States and its Allies put into operation a number of measures some of which had been under consideration in the Quadripartite Ambassadorial Group. The United States announced on August 18 that it would send a battle group of 1,500 men to strengthen the garrison in West Berlin. The British informed the United States that they would send 18 armored vehicles and 16 armored cars to Berlin so that they would arrive by the night of August 18, but that announcement of this step would be made in connection with the British military build-up in West Germany. President Kennedy also decided to send Vice President Lyndon B. Johnson as his personal representative to Berlin, accompanied by General Clay and Ambassador Bohlen. Mayor Brandt received advance information of these measures and was also told that the Vice President would bring along a reply by the President to Brandt's letter.²

In his letter the President told Brandt that "this brutal border closing" represented a basic Soviet decision "which only war could reverse," and that nobody had ever supposed "that we should go to war on this point." The President

¹Letter, Brandt to Kennedy, Aug. 16, 1961, sent as tel. 223 from Berlin, Aug. 16, confidential. Although the letter was to be confidential, it was published in the German press through indiscretion.

²To Moscow, tel. 460, Aug. 17, 1961, secret; to Berlin, tel. 135, Aug. 17, secret.

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declared that the situation was too serious for inadequate responses and that most measures proposed, including those in Brandt's letter, were "mere trifles compared with what had been done." The President believed that a significant reinforcement of the Berlin garrison was the best immediate response as it would underline that the Allies would not be removed from Berlin. Of even greater importance would be an accelerated build-up of Western military strength. The President also declared that proclamation of a three-Power status for West Berlin as proposed by Brandt would imply a weakening of the four-Power relationship "on which our opposition to the border closing depends" and that the Allies should not take such a double-edged step. The President agreed with Brandt, however, that the Western guarantee for West Berlin should be affirmed and expressed himself in favor of an "appropriate plebiscite" demonstrating West Berlin's link with the West. Finally, he reminded Brandt that, painful as the violation of West Berlin's ties with the East was, nevertheless the life of that city ran primarily in the direction of the West, economically, morally, and in the field of military security.¹

Idea of a Tripartite Declaration on Berlin. When the President in his letter to Brandt of August 18 expressed himself in favor of reaffirming the Western guarantees for Berlin, he was actually engaged in an attempt to bring this about. On August 17 President Kennedy had sent similar messages to Prime Minister Macmillan and President de Gaulle pointing out that the West Berliners had been "badly shaken" by recent events and proposing that the three leaders issue a joint declaration. Attached to the message was a draft of such a tripartite declaration, stating that the three Western leaders felt it necessary "to issue a solemn warning concerning the determination of their countries to maintain and preserve at whatever cost their fundamental rights in Berlin and their obligation to those under their protection." According to the draft text, the three leaders would also

¹Letter, Kennedy to Brandt, Aug. 18, 1961, secret.

"reaffirm their will and commitment" to defend the people of West Berlin against any East German or Soviet attempts to infringe and impair the rights and liberties of the people of West Berlin, including those of "access to and from the West."¹

President de Gaulle replied on August 18 that he would be glad to join in such a declaration but that he found it hard to understand what point there would be in "in undertaking at present negotiations with Moscow on Berlin since our position is going to be so categorically fixed and publicly stated." The French President therefore wished to submit his own draft text, which, he said, differed but little from the one proposed by President Kennedy. De Gaulle's draft contained a final paragraph, however, stating that, while the problems of Germany and Berlin might one day be taken up in negotiations at a time of a genuine relaxation of East-West tensions, the Allied leaders considered that "initiatives such as those which had just been taken in the Eastern sector of Berlin prevent any attempt at settlement."²

De Gaulle's reaction to the President's letter reflected, of course, the growing disagreement regarding the proper moment for East-West negotiations on Berlin, which had developed since the Paris Foreign Ministers meeting of August 5-8 and which will be further discussed later on. As neither President Kennedy nor Prime Minister Macmillan was willing to agree to a tripartite declaration encumbered with a ban on negotiations, the idea of such a declaration with the aim of reassuring the West Berliners had to be abandoned.

¹To London, tel. 817, Aug. 17, 1961; to Paris, tel. 933, Aug. 17; both secret.

²From Paris, tel. 907, Aug. 18, 1961, eyes only, secret.

The Vice President's Visit to Germany. During his two-day visit to Bonn and Berlin August 19-20, Vice President Johnson and his party met with an enthusiastic response by the people as well as the leaders of West Germany and West Berlin.

In Bonn, Vice President Johnson told Chancellor Adenauer that his presence in Germany as representative of President Kennedy--who was unable to leave the country--indicated the President's concern over the recent disturbing developments. Pointing to the fact that the President had asked General Clay to accompany him, the Vice President emphasized that it was well known that General Clay would not advocate a retreat. General Clay himself spoke to Chancellor Adenauer of his firm commitment to the freedom of Berlin and said that the American people were entirely firm regarding Berlin.¹

In Berlin, the Vice President and his party were received in an atmosphere of tremendous popular enthusiasm and emotion which was heightened by the arrival of the 1,500 men of the US battle group on August 20.

In several speeches Vice President Johnson reiterated the determination of the United States to honor its commitments on Berlin. Particularly significant was his address before the West Berlin House of Representatives on August 19 when he declared that "to the survival and creative future of this city we Americans have pledged, in effect, what our ancestors pledged in founding the United States: 'our Lives, our Fortunes and our sacred Honor'".²

¹Memorandum by Cash (GER) of conversation among Johnson, Clay, Adenauer, and others, Aug. 19, 1961, secret.

²From Berlin, tel. 271, Aug. 21, 1961, official use only; Documents on Germany, 1944-1961, pp. 740-744.

The great boost in German morale as a result of the Vice President's visit and the arrival of the US battle group was noted in the reporting of the Embassy in Bonn. It was emphasized that the visit, though not changing the facts of the situation created since August 13, was the beginning of a Western psychological counteroffensive. Moreover, the United States had graphically demonstrated to the people of Berlin that the new barriers between East Berlin and West Berlin did not signify the beginning of a period of capitulation to Communist demands.¹

Speaking for the people of West Berlin, Mayor Brandt expressed his thanks to President Kennedy in a letter of August 22 for the decisions that the President had taken and for having "reiterated the American pledges for Berlin in such an unmistakable way." Brandt expressed the same sentiments in an address broadcast over RIAS the same day, praising particularly the arrival of the US battle group and parallel British and French measures to reinforce their garrisons.²

It should be noted in passing that there was an aspect of German domestic politics to the crisis of confidence which affected West Germany and West Berlin in the wake of the closing of the border of the Soviet Sector. The Embassy in Bonn expressed the view on August 21 that Chancellor Adenauer and the CDU were irritated that "Brandt had stolen the headlines during the last few days" and that the Chancellor resented anything that distracted the voters from what he considered the main issue, namely, the choice between his leadership and that of the leader of the Social Democratic opposition, Mayor Willy Brandt. In a retrospective comment a few weeks later, the Embassy also noted that at the height of the crisis the Berliners

¹From Bonn, tel. 387, Aug. 21, 1961, confidential; tel. 388, Aug. 21, official use only.

²Letter, Brandt to Kennedy, sent as tel. 297 from Berlin, Aug. 23, 1961, official use only; from Berlin, tel. 274, Aug. 22, official use only.

were no less critical of Adenauer than of the Western leaders and that they resented particularly "his failure to appear in Berlin."¹

5. Further Expressions of Allied Determination

Actions Against East German Provocations. By the time the Vice President and his party left Berlin, the crisis of confidence had been largely overcome and the wave of indignation over alleged Allied failure to act gradually subsided. The three Western Powers, too, had realized the importance of quick and dramatic action even if the basic facts of the situation could not be changed. This was clearly demonstrated on August 22 and 23 when the East German regime, anxious to restrict demonstrations along the sector border after completing its series of measures to seal off East Berlin, warned people to keep a distance of 100 meters on both sides of the sector border. The three Commandants, in addition to issuing a protest, decided to deploy Allied military units, including armor, on the Western side of the sector border. The Western Commandants also gave their approval when the Berlin Senate expressed the desire to retaliate against the East German regime by taking various local measures. Such measures provided for the closing of travel offices which the East Germans had newly set up at the S-Bahn stations for the purpose of issuing permits for entry into East Berlin; controlling the entry of "undesirables" (i.e., SED party officials) into West Berlin; and closing SED offices in West Berlin.²

¹From Bonn, tel. 387, Aug. 21, 1961, confidential; tel. 606, Sept. 13, secret. For a more detailed account of West German sentiment during the August 1961 crisis and its relation to the campaign for the elections to the Bundestag, see the study by the Historical Studies Division entitled "West German Reaction to the Berlin Wall and to the American Response, August 1961," Research Project No. 655, December 1963, secret.

²Documents on Germany, 1944-1961, p. 753; from Berlin, tel. 285, Aug. 23, 1961, official use only; tel. 295, Aug. 23, confidential; tel. 339, Aug. 26, confidential.

Nevertheless, an atmosphere of tension continued to exist along the border of the Soviet sector, especially since the East German police became increasingly aggressive against the West Berliners who continued to demonstrate on the Western side of the closed sector border. According to the U.S. Mission in Berlin, the East German police attempted to "enforce a 100 meter no man's land" on the Western side of the border, and there were several instances when Volkspolizei fired tear gas grenades, water cannons, and even warning shots at persons approaching the border on the West Berlin side. Ignoring orders by the West Berlin police to withdraw, the Communist police even pointed their submachine guns at them. The use of loud speakers on both sides contributed to the growing crowds of demonstrators, but the West Berlin police, supported by Allied forces, was able to prevent serious incidents.¹

The tense situation at the sector border was discussed in the Ambassadorial Steering Group on August 28. It was agreed that the Department of State would instruct its missions in Bonn and Berlin to raise this question with the British and French. Accordingly, the Department asked its representatives in Berlin and Bonn to take up with the Allies the following recommendations for action:

1) The Soviets and East Germans had no right to order establishment of a cleared strip along the West Berlin side of the sector boundary. 2) Shooting water cannons, tear gas, etc. across the sector border must cease and, if continued, should be met by counterfire from the Western side. 3) It ought to be made clear to the Soviet Union that the tactics referred to above could only exacerbate an already "dangerously tense situation" and that the West would determine the nature of an appropriate response.

The United States believed that an approach along these lines should be made to the Soviet Commandant by the three Western Commandants. At the same time, however, every effort

¹From Berlin, tel. 351, Aug. 28, 1961, confidential.

should be made by Allied forces and West Berlin police to prevent West Berliners "from throwing objects across the boundary", even though "verbal insults" could not be prevented.¹

Appointment of General Clay. As a result of the events that shook Berlin in August 1961 and in view of the continued tense situation facing this city, President Kennedy decided to appoint General Clay as his "Personal Representative, with the rank of Ambassador, on temporary assignment to Berlin."

In his letter to Clay of August 30, the President expressed the hope that Clay would be able to take up his duties by September 15 and to serve through the immediate period of crisis which seemed to be ahead. President Kennedy explained that General Clay would be the senior American official in Berlin and would communicate directly with the Secretary of State and the President. The President made clear, however, that the regular military chain of command and the political responsibilities of Ambassador Dowling as Chief of Mission in Berlin would not be affected by General Clay's appointment. Yet the President stated that he expected to authorize General Clay to carry out special tasks and to exercise authority as indicated by the President. General Clay, the President further stated, would be free of routine responsibility, and a particularly important aspect of his work would be to interpret American policies to the leaders of West Berlin as well as the latter's attitudes to the United States. Finally, the President expressed the expectation that he would have General Clay's "prompt counsel in the consideration of anticipatory actions and effective responses to any sudden Soviet or Communist moves in the Berlin area."²

¹To Bonn, tel. 478 (to Berlin, tel. 209), Aug. 28, 1961; tel. 479 (to Berlin, tel. 210), Aug. 28; both secret.

²Letter, Kennedy to Clay, Aug. 30, 1961, no classification indicated.

6. Coordination of Berlin Planning

The crisis of August 1961 resulting in the closing of the East Berlin sector border and in the intensification of the threat to the Allied position in West Berlin speeded up further coordination of planning regarding Berlin within the U.S. Government as well as among the four Western Powers.

Establishment of the Berlin Task Force. It has been described earlier in this study how the Interdepartmental Coordinating Group on Berlin and Germany set up in 1959 was reactivated, after a period of quiescence, in June 1961 under the impact of Khrushchev's challenge at Vienna and became responsible for coordinating the studies undertaken within the U.S. Government which provided the basis for the decisions taken by the President in July 1961. Soon it became evident that a more concentrated effort would be required, and the creation of a special task force was ultimately decided upon when, in early August 1961, Secretary Rusk and Secretary of Defense McNamara agreed that such a step should be taken.

Secretary Rusk designated Assistant Secretary Foy Kohler as Director of the Berlin Task Force, with Martin Hillenbrand, Director of the Office of German Affairs, serving as his deputy. The core of the personnel of the new task force was drawn from the Office of German Affairs; officers from other areas of the Department were also assigned to participate in the work of the new task force, often on a part-time basis. The key officials representing other Departments of the Government were Assistant Secretary of Defense for International Security Affairs Paul Nitze and Major General David Gray of the Office of the Joint Chiefs of Staff.

A nucleus of the Berlin Task Force was assembled shortly before Assistant Secretaries Kohler and Nitze went to Paris in connection with the Foreign Ministers meeting held August 5-8. Within a few days after the return of the American delegation from Paris, the Communists sealed off East Berlin. Several days later, on August 17, the first meeting of the Berlin Task Force was held.

The primary function and responsibility of the Berlin Task Force was to serve as the focal point within the United States Government for political, economic, and military planning designed to cope with any contingencies which might arise as a result of Soviet or East German actions against the Allied position in Berlin.

The Quadripartite Ambassadorial Steering Group. If the Berlin Task Force was the instrument for coordinating planning regarding Berlin within the U.S. Government, the most important organ for the coordination of Berlin policies among the four Western Powers was the Quadripartite Ambassadorial Steering Group in Washington. This Group, as shown earlier, was established by the four Western Foreign Ministers at their Paris meeting in August 1961, and it took over the functions of the former Tripartite (US-U.K.-French) Ambassadorial Group and to a large extent those of the Quadripartite Working Group on German and Berlin. Barely a week after the adjournment of the Paris Foreign Ministers Meeting, the Ambassadorial Quadripartite Group was already engaged in coordinating Allied policies with regard to the closing of the East Berlin border. To cope with the work load, the Ambassadorial Group soon proceeded to establish a number of sub-groups, such as a military sub-group, a political sub-group (later called the Contingency Coordinating Group), an East German sub-group (which was to deal with the possibility of an East German uprising), and an economic sub-group (to prepare plans for economic countermeasures).¹

C. Soviet Threat to the Berlin Air Corridors

The dramatic closing of the East Berlin sector border in August 1961 did not end, of course, Soviet and East German pressure for a change in the status of West Berlin, which had been building up steadily since the President's meeting

¹Henry B. Cox, "The Berlin Task Force--An Innovation in American Diplomatic Practice," Department of State News Letter, No. 20, December 1962, pp. 20-21; Senior Seminar in Foreign Policy, 1964-1965 Session, John C. Ausland, Six Berlin Incidents, 1961-1964, secret; statement by Martin J. Hillenbrand, American Minister, Embassy Bonn, in conversation with the writer held in Washington, Sept. 15, 1965.

with Khrushchev in June. Regardless of the possible long-range effects of the closing of the East Berlin border on Communist policies, which had been taken into account in the development of American policy toward the sealing off of East Berlin, the immediate effect of the events of August 1961 was an aggravation of tensions along the sector borders resulting from the daily confrontations between the West Berliners and Allied forces on one side and the East German Volkspolizei and troops on the other. In this situation the Soviet Union appeared to be ready to face the Western Powers with a serious challenge to free access by air to West Berlin.

1. Soviet Note of August 23: White House Reaction

On August 23 the Soviet Foreign Ministry handed notes to the three Western Ambassadors in Moscow requesting the three Governments to take immediate measures to end the "unlawful and provocative activities" of the Federal Republic in West Berlin. The Soviet Union denounced the use of the air corridors to transport "revanchists, extremists, saboteurs, and spies, and declared that such actions represented a "flagrant breach" of the agreement under which the air corridors were set aside for the Western Powers "on a temporary basis, to insure the needs of their garrisons, not for the subversive and revanchist purposes of West German militarism."

It was believed that the immediate occasion for this Soviet statement was the Tag der Heimat, the annual meeting in Berlin of expellees from the territories east of the Oder-Neisse line. The previous year's meeting had already provided the Communists with a handy opportunity for threats and harassments against West Berlin's communications with the Federal Republic (see part IV, chapter I,

In an instruction to Bonn of August 23, the Department put forth the view that the Soviet Note might be a prelude to an attempt to prevent delegates to the gathering from travelling to Berlin by either ground or air. In the latter case, the West would be faced with a serious challenge to its right of access to Berlin.

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The United States Government immediately reacted to the Soviet note through a White House statement issued on August 24. It said that the "scarcely veiled threat of aggression" against Allied air routes to Berlin had to be taken seriously and warned that any Soviet or East German interference with free access to West Berlin would be an aggressive act.¹

2. Discussions in the Ambassadorial Group: Western Notes of August 26

After discussing the legal situation involved, the Quadripartite Ambassadorial Group on August 24 decided on a joint Allied reply to the Soviet note of August 23. The United States, Britain, and France agreed that they could not accept any Soviet or East German control over the passengers which their planes were carrying to Berlin, but they felt that it would be unfortunate if the issue were joined over the Tag der Heimat. They therefore believed that it might be desirable to avoid transporting participants in the meeting by limiting air transportation to those having "official need". It was also suggested to Ambassador Grewe that the Federal Republic might persuade the sponsors of the meeting to hold it elsewhere rather than in West Berlin.²

On August 25 the Ambassadorial Group agreed on the text of an Allied note which was handed to the Soviet Government on August 26. Rejecting all accusations contained in the Soviet note of August 23, the Western Powers, for their part, cited the unilateral violations of four-Power agreements through the East German actions since August 13. Insisting on their "unrestricted right of air access to Berlin" as guaranteed by the four-Power decisions in 1945, they again

¹Documents on Germany, 1944-1961, pp. 753-755; to Bonn, tel. 416, Aug. 23, 1961, confidential.

²To Paris, tel. 1077, Aug. 24, 1961, secret

warned against any interference with that right.¹

On August 30 the Ambassadorial Group dealt again with the possibility of Soviet or GDR action against civil flights to Berlin, possibly in connection with the Tag der Heimat to be held the following weekend (September 2). The United States therefore presented a paper examining possibilities for Allied reaction to such interference. The primary focus of the decisions among the Ambassadors was on the most significant of the suggested possibilities, namely, the immediate substitution of military transport aircraft for civil aircraft. Since this contingency was covered by tripartite plans which, however, required governmental decision to be implemented, the Ambassadors agreed to request their Governments to decide that substitution of military aircraft for civil aircraft should be made with minimum delay.²

3. American Decisions: Allied Reactions to Them

On August 31 the United States told the Allied representatives in the Ambassadorial Group that it had taken certain decisions with regard to Soviet or East German interference with civil flights to Berlin which, it hoped, would form the basis for Allied policy. The substance of these decisions was as follows:

a) If civil aircraft ceased to fly, the United States would immediately use military transports. b) If either a civil or a military flight were forced down, the United States would send in military transports with fighter escort. At the same time the United States would take the problem to the UN Security Council and would also favor countermeasures against

¹To Paris, tel. 1114, Aug. 25, 1961, secret; Documents on Germany, 1944-1961, pp. 756-757.

²To Bonn, tel. 505, Aug. 30, 1961, secret; memorandum by Kohler (EUR) to the Secretary, Aug. 30, top secret.

Soviet bloc civil aircraft. The United States would also make preparations so that countermeasures could be proposed in the North Atlantic Council on short notice, provided approval by the three Western Governments had been received.

On September 1 Ambassador Caccia informed the Ambassadorial Group that the British Government agreed with the American proposals. Ambassador Grewe said that the Federal Republic would accept any tripartite decision in the matter but that his Government wondered whether a warning should not be issued before fighter escorts were resorted to.¹

Although the Tag der Heimat affair, held on a much reduced scale September 2-3, passed without incident, Allied discussions on meeting immediate threats to civil air access continued.

The French Government's position on the American proposal was outlined by Ambassador Alphand in a meeting of the Ambassadorial Group on September 4. France was in basic agreement with the American position regarding the substitution of military transports for civil aircraft and the use of fighter escort, if either civil or military transports were shot down. The French, however, suggested that, 1) in order to establish with certainty that an intentional Soviet interference with aircraft was involved, a "probe" by an unaccompanied military transport might be conducted first, and 2) before sending in fighter escort, a statement of warning should be issued, followed by a pause.

Assistant Secretary Kohler declared that the United States had no objection to a statement of warning but that it was concerned over the possibility of an undue delay as a result of a pause.²

¹To Bonn, tel. 525, Sept. 1, 1961; tel. 530, Sept. 1; both secret.

²To Bonn, tel. 561, Sept. 4, 1961, secret.

On September 5 the United States informed its Allies of an instruction which the U.S. Joint Chiefs of Staff had sent to General Norstad in his capacity of U.S. Commander-in-Chief in Europe regarding procedures for the substitution of military for civil aircraft and subsequent response in case of Soviet and East German harassment. The British and French said that they would refer the matter to their Governments for purposes of coordination with the United States measures. Later that day Alphand received instructions from his Government indicating that the French no longer recommended a pause but now favored the issuing of a statement at a time when military aircraft was substituted for civil aircraft. Such a statement, the French believed, would announce the substitution but would not delay it, and would also provide a warning to the Soviet Union. Alphand felt that the closeness of their positions would permit speedy coordination among the three Western Allies.

The United States instructions to General Norstad were along the lines of the American position as set forth in the Ambassadorial Group. If U.S. civil air traffic was stopped by Soviet or East German action, military air transport would be substituted without fighter escort if the interference was administrative, and with authority to use fighter escort if interference was by military action. If such military interference involved ground-to-air action, new instructions should be requested from Washington. The pilot of an unescorted military air transport that was being harassed would determine whether to proceed on course, return to a West German or West Berlin airfield, or land on an East German airfield. But the pilot should make every effort to continue on course despite harassment since the important principle of the American right to free access to West Berlin was involved.

The "Rules of Engagement" which formed part of the foregoing instructions stipulated that U.S. military aircraft under Soviet or East German air attack in the Berlin air corridors could take aggressive protective measures against the attacking force, including immediate pursuit into hostile airspace. Such immediate pursuit, however, should not include prolonged pursuit deep into hostile air space; nor were the commanders authorized to organize a pursuing force "deliberately and systematically". Immediate pursuit, these

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instructions stated, was solely authorized for the protection of U.S. fighter and transport aircraft, and the pilots were not to persist in the attack once the hostile aircraft had withdrawn and the safety of U.S. personnel and aircraft was assured.¹

4. Further Exchanges with the Soviet Union Regarding the Air Corridors

In addition to preparing for actual interference in the air corridors, the United States and its Allies continued to assert their right of free access to Berlin by air in exchanges with the Soviet Union.

On September 1 the Department of State made public a Soviet document of 1947 in support of the Western position that Allied rights regarding air access to Berlin were confirmed by quadripartite discussions and agreements, that the latter had created "rights of unrestricted flight by Allied aircraft in the corridors", and that this was "fully understood by all concerned." The Department likewise emphasized that the Soviet document did not refer to the air corridors as being provided "temporarily" or draw any distinction between military and civil air traffic.

On September 2 the Soviet Union, replying to the Western notes of August 26, rejected the Allied claims to unrestricted air access to Berlin as well as the Western position that the ties between West Berlin and the Federal Republic were not incompatible with the four-Power status of Berlin.

Following coordination by the Ambassadorial Group, the Western Powers on September 8 sent notes to the Soviet Union and reminded it, by referring to quadripartite agreements of 1945, 1946, and 1947, that it had recognized from the earliest days that the air corridors were to be used "by aircraft of

¹To Bonn, tel. 576, Sept. 5, 1961, top secret; tel. 577, Sept. 5, secret.

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the Four Allied Nations with full freedom of action." Again the Western Powers refused Soviet assertions that a Soviet-East German peace treaty could "somehow alter the status of West Berlin" and repeated "in the most solemn terms" earlier warnings against any interference with flights in the air corridors to West Berlin.¹

D. American Concern over Other Possible East German Infringements of Western Rights in Berlin

I. Access to East Berlin and to Steinstuecken

Although the threat to the air corridors was the most serious contingency anticipated by the Western Powers in the tense days following the closing of the East Berlin sector border, there was also considerable concern over other possible infringements of Allied rights in Berlin. Primarily envisaged were 1) further restrictions on Allied access to East Berlin, especially by the closing of the Friedrichstrasse control point, the last remaining authorized Allied point of entry under the East German decree of August 22, and 2) harassment of access to the Steinstuecken exclave of the American Sector of Berlin, an area of twelve hectares with a population of about 170, seven miles southwest from the center of Berlin.

Regarding further restrictions of access to East Berlin, there was an exchange of views between the Department, the Embassy in Bonn, and the Mission in Berlin in the course of which various forms of protest were considered as well as measures of retaliation, such as placing restrictions on Soviet entry into West Berlin, harassment of Czech and Polish military missions in West Berlin, and giving the Commandants authority for small-scale harassment. Forcing a crossing of the East Berlin border was likewise discussed. The Mission in Berlin believed that it would be dangerous to attempt a crossing by force at one of the control points closed since August 22 but that every effort should be made to keep open the Friedrichstrasse crossing point. The Mission felt that

¹To Bonn, tel. 587, Sept. 6, 1961, and tel. 604, Sept. 7, both secret; Documents on Germany, 1944-1961, pp. 775-779, 784-787.

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whatever force was necessary to enter East Berlin should be employed but that use of force should be discontinued if Soviet armed forces intervened.¹

Meanwhile, the American Commandant received instructions through military channels on coping with various forms of resistance in maintaining American access to East Berlin. According to these instructions, a United States vehicle could move ahead if its passage was not cleared within reasonable time, provided this could be achieved without knocking down any of the persons blocking access. Otherwise, the vehicle should withdraw. The instructions also stipulated that the United States vehicle should withdraw if it encountered obstacles too heavy to be removed without the use of bulldozers, tanks, or demolition charges or if East Germans mobs or troops blocked the passage way.²

Representatives of the British and French Embassies in Bonn told the American Deputy Chief of Mission on August 30 that their Governments were not likely to approve the use of force to maintain Allied access to East Berlin through the Friedrichstrasse crossing point, and that in any event such use of force could be authorized only by the Governments.³

There was not much inter-Allied discussion regarding the harassment of access to Steinstuecken, except that Assistant Secretary Kohler expressed his concern over the situation there in the meeting of the Ambassadorial Group on September 6.⁴

¹From Berlin, tel. 344, Aug. 27, 1961; to Bonn, tel. 415, Aug. 23, and tel. 507, Aug. 30; all secret.

²JCS to USCINCEUR, message 1265, Aug. 26, 1961, top secret.

³From Bonn, tel. 462, Aug. 30, 1961, top secret.

⁴To Bonn, tel. 487, Sept. 6, 1961, secret.

2. American Decisions Regarding Friedrichstrasse Checkpoint and Steinstuecken

On September 13 recommendations drawn up by the Berlin Task Force regarding possibilities of harassment or blockage of access to Steinstuecken and of a closing of the Friedrichstrasse control point were submitted to the President. On September 14 the President took the following decisions with respect to these two problems:

1) In case of a blocking of access to Steinstuecken or any other interference with U.S. rights there, the U.S. Commandant was authorized to establish Communist intentions by dispatching to Steinstuecken a vehicular-mounted or helicopter-borne military police patrol. This patrol would not use force in discharging its mission. If force was necessary to re-establish American rights of access, instructions had to be obtained from Washington.

2) In the event the Friedrichstrasse crossing point was closed, additional military forces could be sent to the sector border if the U.S. Commandant judged this action to be useful. At the same time all Soviet personnel would be barred from West Berlin, except personnel assigned to the Berlin Air Safety Center (BASC) and to the Spandau prison. These measures, however, were subject to tripartite approval. For the rest, the instructions issued through military channels on August 26 regarding the closing of access to East Berlin continued to be in effect.¹

¹Berlin Task Force documents, BQD-MU 3 and BQD-MU 4, Sept. 13, 1961, both secret; National Security Action Memorandum No. 94, Sept. 14, 1961; to Berlin, tel. 330, Sept. 14; both top secret.

On October 18 the President's decision of September 14 was supplemented by another Presidential directive approving the following course of action: If the Friedrichstrasse crossing point was closed either due to unacceptable demands for documentation by the GDR or by erection of a barrier, the United States would send two or three tanks up to the checkpoint

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to demolish the barrier and then withdraw the tanks and station them nearby inside the Western Sector. The Western Chairman Commandant would then make a protest to the Soviet Commandant, demand a meeting with him, and also release a statement explaining that the Allied forces had destroyed an illegal East German barrier and that a protest was being made to the Soviet Commandant. The Chairman Commandant would also make it clear that this was a problem to be solved with the Soviet Union, which continued to bear full responsibility for the situation. If access continued to be denied to the Western Powers, they would state that the Soviet Union had violated existing agreements and that they would take appropriate countermeasures. This course of action was subject to approval by the British and French. National Security Action Memorandum No. 107, October 18, 1961, secret.

~~TOP SECRET~~

Chapter IV

WESTERN CONSULTATIONS AND DISCUSSIONS,
AUGUST-SEPTEMBER 1961A. The Work of the Ambassadorial Group in
Allied Contingency Planning

Under the pressure of the deepening crisis over Berlin in August and in early September, the Western Powers proceeded to carry out the decisions taken by the Foreign Ministers at their Meeting in Paris in August with respect to the formulation and coordination of Allied policies in that crisis. The principal instrument in carrying out these decisions was the Quadripartite Ambassadorial Group in Washington. Although this Group, as described above, was forced to deal with several suddenly arising problems such as the closure of the East Berlin sector border and immediate threats to the air corridors, it was, nevertheless, able to engage in long-range substantive planning for Allied measures in the political, military, economic, and propaganda fields. The Ambassadorial Group made good progress in the last three fields but met with considerable difficulties in resolving existing disagreements on the most important political issue, that of negotiations with the Soviet Union.

1. Surface Access Procedures in Case of Soviet Withdrawal
from Control Functions

The Ambassadorial Group and its pertinent subgroups reviewed the problem of surface check point procedures. As a result, new instructions for procedures to be followed in Allied highway and railroad traffic to Berlin in case of Soviet withdrawal from the check points were drafted and approved by the four Governments. These instructions superseded those of September 22, 1959 (see ante, Part II, Chapter V, section C) and reflected the basic quadripartite policy as expressed in section VI of the Four Power Working Group Report approved by the four Western Foreign Ministers at their Paris meeting in August (see ante, chapter II).

Autobahn Travel. According to the new instructions, the Allied traveler (military convoy or vehicle commander, driver of a private vehicle bearing a U.S., British or French military license plate, or any other driver authorized by appropriate authorities) should present to the East German officials the same documents formerly shown to Soviet personnel, i.e., movement orders and identity documents; permit the East German officials to check these documents and, as Soviet officials had done in the past, stamp the movement orders to indicate place, date, and time of passage; and proceed as usual if the East Germans did not attempt to exercise other forms of control. If the East Germans sought to impose additional controls such as inspection of vehicles, customs and currency controls and Autobahn tolls, or if they offered special documentation for convoys and vehicles and visas for their occupants, the Allied traveler should refuse to submit and insist upon passage as a matter of right. If this was not granted, he should turn back and report the matter at the U.S. (British, French) checkpoint.

Similar procedures governed the conduct of the Allied traveler who arrived at the checkpoint at the exit from the Autobahn in the Soviet Zone or who was required to submit to control while transiting the Autobahn. The Allied traveler should present to the East German officials the documents already checked and should proceed as usual. If the East Germans tried to impose additional controls, he should refuse to submit and insist upon passage as a matter of right. If passage was not granted, the Allied traveler should remain where he was and try to communicate with allied (U.S., British, or French) headquarters or checkpoints. The driver of a vehicle in which there were passengers other than male Allied military or civilian personnel could, after a minimum waiting period of eight hours, submit to the East German demands under protest and leave the Soviet Zone. If only male Allied military or civilian personnel was involved, the Allied traveler should not submit to the East German demand but wait for and comply with specific instructions from Allied (U.S., British, or French) military headquarters.

Train Travel. Parallel procedures regarding identification to East German personnel applied also to travel by military train. If East German officials at the East German checkpoints tried to impose additional controls or if they tried to board the train, the train commander should refuse to submit, bar entry to the East German officials, and insist upon onward passage as a matter of right. If passage was not granted, the train commander's action would depend on whether the train was travelling eastwards to Berlin (just entering the Soviet Zone) or westwards from Berlin (about to leave the Soviet Zone). In the former case, the train commander should demand that the train be turned back and report the matter to U.S. (British, French) military authorities. In the latter case, he would remain where he was, attempt to contact U.S. (British, French) military authorities by radio, and wait for and comply with specific instructions from U.S. (British, French) military headquarters.

The train commander was instructed to proceed in similar fashion if required to submit to East German control at other points than the checkpoint in the Soviet Zone. If passage was not granted as the military train was stopped upon entering the Soviet Zone from Berlin, the commander would demand that the train be turned back and would report the matter to U.S. (British, French) military authorities. If the train was stopped inside the Soviet Zone and passage was refused, the train would remain where it was and the train commander would contact U.S. (British, French) military authorities by radio and then wait for and comply with instructions from the respective military headquarters.¹

¹Report of the Four-Power Working Group on Germany and Berlin, Washington, September 11-13, 1961; Berlin Quadripartite Document BQD 4, "Surface Access-Checkpoint Procedures," Aug. 30, 1961, secret. A revised version (BQD 4, Second Revision) issued Nov. 30, 1961 differed from the earlier text in that it included an additional section at the beginning of the document which dealt principally with the eventuality that a transfer of access functions to East German personnel might take place without any warning.

2. Note to Soviet Government and Public Statement in Case of Soviet Withdrawal from Access Control Functions

At the same time as the Ambassadorial Group drafted the new instructions for surface access procedures, which were subsequently approved by the Governments, it also agreed on the text of a note to be sent to the Soviet Government by the three Western Powers and of a public statement to be issued at an appropriate time when it had become clear that East German personnel had replaced or was about to replace Soviet personnel in the functions with respect to Allied access to Berlin.

In the note, each of the three Governments would inform the Soviet Union of the steps it would take to assure orderly movement of traffic to and from Berlin and would declare that no unilateral Soviet action could affect the rights and responsibilities of the Western Powers. The note summarized the procedures that had developed over the past fifteen years with respect to Allied traffic to Berlin by road, rail, and air, and declared that the three Powers would continue to hold the Soviet Union responsible for carrying out its responsibilities with respect to Berlin and Western rights of access to Berlin. If East German personnel should carry out "without modification" the procedures now performed by the Soviet Union with respect to rail and highway traffic, the three Powers would, "while continuing to hold the Soviet Union responsible for their free access to Berlin, take the same steps to make possible the carrying out of these procedures as they now take with respect to Soviet representatives."

With regard to the withdrawal of Soviet personnel from the Berlin Air Safety Center (BASC), the Western Allies would state in the note that that body would continue to serve the purpose for which it was created, "with the Three Powers acting in the absence of the Soviet Representative." Moreover, they would continue to "look for the Soviet Union to assure the safety of all Three Power aircraft in the Berlin corridors and the Berlin Control Zone" and would "hold it responsible for any interference with the safety of these aircraft." The three Western Controllers would continue to

exchange flight safety information among one another in BASC. Flight information would be broadcast using the appropriate facilities and would also be sent to Soviet headquarters at Karlshorst and to Air Traffic Control at Schönefeld airport outside of East Berlin. The three Western Governments assumed that this information would be passed on to appropriate Air Traffic Controls "so that other aircraft flying in East Germany can be kept clear."¹

The public statement covered the same ground as the note to the Soviet Government but was less detailed.²

3. LIVE OAK Planning

In accordance with the Directives issued by the Western Foreign Ministers at Paris, the Ambassadorial Group on August 28 sent General Norstad a new directive calling for revision of existing LIVE OAK military plans and preparation of certain additional plans.

¹Berlin Quadripartite Document BQD 5, "Draft Note to the Soviet Government," Aug. 30, 1961, secret. This text was replaced by a revised version (BQD 5, Revised), issued December 11, 1961, containing the text of an additional statement by the three powers. It stated with reference to the presence of East German personnel at the checkpoints that "freedom of access must be unimpaired" and that the three powers were determined to "preserve this freedom from being impaired." Moreover, "any impediment to that freedom, any interference with transportation, any unilateral attempts to impose restrictions would therefore be considered unacceptable." It was furthermore stated that the situation resulting from such East German or Soviet actions would be "extremely dangerous" and that the Soviet Government would bear the responsibility for "any consequences that might ensue."

²Berlin Quadripartite Document BQD 6, "Draft Public Statement," Aug. 31, 1961, secret.

The purpose of the planning instructions which were being sent was stated to be the modification and amplification of the terms of reference given the military authorities of the three Powers on April 4, 1959 (see ante, part I, chapter IV, E.) within which tripartite planning was currently conducted under the general supervision of General Norstad as United States Commander in Europe.

General Considerations. The following consideration should underlie the preparation of plans:

a. Military actions within the competence of the Supreme Allied Commander, Europe (SACEUR) would have to be integrated into a general, over-all strategy applicable on a world-wide scale and comprising political, diplomatic, economic, psychological, military, and paramilitary measures. Selective application of these measures both world-wide and in Europe would contribute to the achievement of a settlement of the Berlin problem while making the Soviet Union progressively aware of the danger of general war.

b. Allied military measures to restore access to Berlin should be graduated but determined, applying increasing pressure which would demonstrate to the Soviet Union the enormous risks involved in continued denial of access to the Western Allies. But these measures should also leave the Soviet Union as many opportunities as possible to pause and reassess the desirability of continuing a dangerous course of action.

c. The risk of rapid escalation and pre-emptive enemy action was involved in any military operation. Therefore, while the immediate objective of all actions would be to induce the Soviet Union to re-open access, military plans must take account of and be consistent with current defensive concepts of NATO strategy. The plans, therefore, must retain the survival of the Western Allies as a central consideration and not commit capabilities to the prejudice of the over-all capacity to defend NATO territory. The magnitude of the resources committed in Allied operations in reaction to Soviet moves would depend on the results of the Allied build-up as well as on the circumstances existing at the time.

d. While the Alliance stood ready for nuclear action at all times, planned recourse to nuclear weapons in these operations could be envisaged only in three circumstances: 1) Prior use by the enemy. 2) Necessity to avoid defeat of major military operations. 3) A specific political decision to employ nuclear weapons selectively in order to demonstrate the will and ability of the Alliance to use them.

Revision of Existing Plans

a. Existing tripartite plans and agreements should be modified as necessary and kept current. These included the following:

1) Plans for small-scale ground probes to determine Soviet intentions (FREE STYLE).

2) Plans for more extensive use of ground forces (TRADE WIND).

3) Plans to implement airlift operations (JACK PINE I AND QBAL PLAN).

4) Plans to utilize tactical air forces to support arilift operations as appropriate (JACK PINE II).

5) Berlin Defense Plan (Ops Instruction No. 7, Allied Staff Berlin).

6) Agreements related to the preparation and tactical control of the forces involved in these plans.

b. Because of the immediate threats to air access in the light of the recent Soviet notes, examination of airlift plans should receive priority.

Additional Military Plans. In order to provide the greatest possible choice of supplementary alternatives, General Norstad was asked to prepare and submit for governmental approval additional military plans covering broader land, air, and naval measures within the purview of his command. It was

understood that execution of the approved plans would be the subject of separate political decisions to be taken at the time.

It was requested in particular that recommended plans to provide for the following be submitted:

- 1) Expanded non-nuclear air operations.
- 2) Expanded non-nuclear ground operations, with necessary air support.
- 3) Selective use of nuclear weapons to demonstrate the will and ability of the Alliance to use them.

General Norstad would also be kept informed in connection with naval planning of studies under way in Washington regarding a worldwide blockade and lesser measures.

Questions of Organization and Competence. The instructions also directed General Norstad to consider certain questions of organization and competence. He was asked to arrange for permanent liaison with the Ambassadorial Group in Washington and also to make recommendations regarding means of assuring continuity of military control during the transition from tripartite Berlin measures to control by established NATO mechanisms. Finally, he was informed that the governments concerned would take steps to effect coordination with NATO authorities concerning those provisions falling within NATO competence.

Following the dispatch of this quadripartite directive to Norstad, a meeting of the Ambassadorial Group with NATO Secretary General Stikker was held on September 9. It was agreed that the Permanent Representatives of the four Western Powers in the North Atlantic Council would be requested, in consultation with Stikker and Norstad, to prepare a presentation to the Council with a view to securing NATO

association with the planning as outlined in the quadripartite directive to Norstad.¹

4. Other Planning

Economic Countermeasures. The Ambassadorial Group also approved a detailed report prepared by the Four Power Working Group on Economic Countermeasures and forwarded it to the NATO Governments for their consideration. This report represented the conclusions and recommendations of the Working Group with respect to the specific decisions on economic countermeasures adopted by the four Western Foreign Ministers at the Paris meeting in August.²

Information Activities. The Ambassadorial Group also established a mechanism to coordinate information activities among the four Powers and also established links with NATO in this field.³

5. Review of Allied Planning by the Western Foreign Ministers

General Result of the Review. The Western Foreign Ministers meeting held in Washington, September 14-16, was convened primarily (as will be shown in a subsequent section of this study) to deal with the question of negotiations with the Soviet Union, but it also provided an opportunity for a review of Allied efforts in carrying out the decisions of the meeting of the Foreign Ministers in Paris in August. The Foreign

¹Report of the Four Power Working Group on Germany and Berlin, Washington, September 11-13, 1961, secret; to Paris, tel. 1152, Aug. 28, 1961, and tel. TOPOL 318, Sept. 10, both top secret.

²Report of the Four Power Working Group on Germany and Berlin, Washington, Sept. 11-13, 1961, secret; Report of the Four Power Working Group on Economic Countermeasures (BQD-E-11), Sept. 11, secret.

³Report of the Four Power Working Group on Germany and Berlin, Washington, Sept. 11-13, 1961, secret.

Ministers examined the work of the Ambassadorial Group and the various subgroups with regard to military measures, economic countermeasures, air access, and information policy. They also discussed the possibility of an East German uprising, the military build-up, and contingency planning. Rather than taking any new decisions in these matters, the Foreign Ministers directed that the work in progress be continued.

It appears to be worthwhile to deal briefly with some of the discussions among the Foreign Ministers regarding the matters mentioned above, especially in the matter of the military build-up, air access, economic countermeasures, and a naval blockade.

Discussion of the Military Build-Up. In the matter of a military build-up, the Germans announced that, by retaining present draftees under the colors along with additional call-ups, German armed forces by October would amount to 380,000 men. Moreover, the cabinet had decided, after the elections of September 17, to extend compulsory service from 12 to 18 months and to prepare for an increase in the defense budget of roughly 3 billion DM's. Foreign Secretary Home referred to various British public announcements regarding fulfillment of Britain's military commitments and pointed out that nearly 500,000 men were available for call-up if Britain had to go on a war-footing. The French declared that their plans, which had already been communicated to the other NATO members, provided essentially for the return of two divisions from Algeria to France and the strengthening of French forces in Germany. The question of bringing back a third division from Algeria was left open. Finally, Secretary Rusk said that the United States would shortly announce the call-up of four divisions to replace those which might be sent to Europe. The Secretary suggested that it would be very helpful if the other three major Allies could announce similar steps and if they would support the United States in encouraging other NATO members to take similar action.¹

¹Ministerial Decisions on Report of the Four-Power Working Group on Germany and Berlin, September 14-16, 1961, Sept. 18, 1961, secret; to Paris, tel. TOPOL 377, Sept. 19, confidential.

Discussion of Air Access. Problems of air access to Berlin were first discussed by the three Foreign Ministers of France, Britain, and the United States on September 14. The deliberations of the Foreign Ministers that day acquired a special sense of actuality as a result of incidents involving the air corridors, such as the buzzing of two Pan-American airliners by Soviet fighters and the landing of two West German F-84 fighters (which had strayed off their course) at Tegel airport in the French sector of Berlin. The latter event subsequently resulted in a strong Soviet protest over "violation" of "GDR air space" combined with threats that in the future such "intruder war planes" would be "destroyed with every means, including missiles."¹

Assistant Secretary of Defense Nitze told the Foreign Ministers of the tripartitely agreed decisions regarding the substitution of military for civil air craft, if civil airlines should refuse to fly, and the introduction of fighter escorts if a military or civilian plane had been shot down or forced down. Furthermore, according to Nitze, General Norstad had authority from the United States and Britain to have fighters scrambled at the West German end of the air corridor for extricating action if military planes were threatened in the corridors. Finally, General Norstad had requested but not yet received authority for sending fighters to attack anti-aircraft installations situated in the air corridors or immediately adjacent to them which were firing at Allied planes.²

¹For the exchanges between the Soviet Union and the United States regarding the two German F-84 fighters, see Documents on Germany, 1944-1961, pp. 801-803, 811-813.

²For internal American discussions of this problem, see Berlin Quadripartite Document BQD MU-1, "Tripartite Air-To-Ground Retaliatory Actions in Berlin Air Corridors", Sept. 13, 1961, top secret. The Department of State recommended that the British, French, and West German Governments be informed that the President had approved General Norstad's recommendations subject to their tripartite implementation. The

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In the discussion, the British noted that there was no tripartite agreement on the matter of attacking anti-aircraft installations, nor on the precise moment for the introduction of fighter aircraft, nor on the timing of the imposition of countermeasures in case air access was blocked. With regard to the contingency of a blockage of air access, the fact emerged that Prime Minister Macmillan wished to be consulted before any tripartite instruction was issued to General Norstad authorizing shooting on East German territory. There was also some doubt expressed whether it would be possible to resume flights once there had been a temporary cessation.

Quadripartite discussions of Allied planning which began on September 15 took as their point of departure the work of the Ambassadorial Group in the matter of air access.

West German Foreign Minister Brentano urged imposition of countermeasures against Soviet bloc aircraft at an early stage. He felt that stoppage of Western civil air traffic due to harassment would be a decisive point and that Western failure to do more than substitute military for civil aircraft might have unfortunate psychological effects in Berlin. He warned against accepting a new de facto situation unfavorable to the West in which for a protracted period only military traffic would move.

Secretary Rusk and French Foreign Minister Couve de Murville supported Brentano's stand in favor of countermeasures at an earlier stage. Secretary Rusk suggested that an interruption of civil air traffic might be brought into the UN Security Council while at the same time other countermeasures might be applied to show how seriously the Western Powers viewed such a development.

Department also recommended that Norstad be told that he was not authorized to undertake the requested measures on a unilateral U.S. basis pending tripartite consideration. The Joint Chiefs of Staff, however, proposed that the President authorize General Norstad to implement his proposals on a unilateral U.S. basis and that the three Western Governments be informed that the President had approved Norstad's recommendations and was seeking tripartite concurrence in this decision.

British Foreign Secretary Home expressed the view that countermeasures against Soviet bloc aircraft should be imposed at the second stage, i.e., when military aircraft was harassed. He agreed, however, with Secretary Rusk that at the termination of civil air operations the Western Powers might take the matter to the Security Council. Couve de Murville did not take a position regarding such action with the United Nations.

Secretary Rusk suggested that a possible formula might be to impose economic countermeasures after some time had elapsed following the Allied protest and after it had become clear that the Soviet Union did not intend to end the harassment which had caused civil airlines to cease operations. When Home stated that he still felt that economic countermeasures should be reserved for the second stage, Secretary Rusk stressed that if the first Western reaction were indecisive the Soviet side might try some more harassment. He feared that the Western Powers, by flying only military aircraft in the corridors, would, in effect, have abandoned the right to operate civil airlines in them. The Foreign Ministers then agreed to think the matter over further.

In the quadripartite Foreign Ministers meeting on September 16, Foreign Secretary Home informed the other Foreign Ministers that he had received a reply from London in the matter of an attack by escorting fighters on anti-aircraft installations firing on Allied aircraft in the air corridors. According to Home, the British Government did not like the idea and believed that the political consequences of shooting at ground targets were too great. Therefore, the British Government did not want the local commander to have discretion in this matter. Home stated, however, that he would further discuss the matter with his Government.

Discussion of Economic Countermeasures. In the course of a discussion of economic countermeasures, Secretary Rusk expressed concern that the other NATO countries did not have the same sense of urgency regarding Berlin as the four Powers had. This sense of urgency, he felt, ought to be conveyed to NATO. A refusal to take economic countermeasures would not make sense when a point was reached at which the Alliance was about to take military measures.

Foreign Secretary Home noted that, in the case of certain extreme contingencies, the British favored the imposition of a total embargo against the Soviet Bloc. But he said that a study of measures to be taken at an earlier stage indicated that only those taken against the GDR would have much effect. Home also pointed to the possibility of serious negative effects of any extensive countermeasures against the Soviet Bloc on the position of the sterling and the general economy of Britain.

Discussion of a Naval Blockade. In the course of the meeting on September 16, the four Foreign Ministers received a briefing on a report on the matter of a naval blockade which was prepared by a United States group with supplementary work done by a quadripartite committee. Subsequently, Secretary Rusk noted that a naval blockade was a severe step and remarked that the principal question was whether the Western Powers should take such a measure without bracing for Soviet military action in Europe or for a Soviet decision to engage in all-out war.

Foreign Secretary Home said that the actions set forth in the report constituted the first act of war and were actions to take when war was almost inevitable. In that situation, he said, it might perhaps be desirable to take these actions, and they might also be preferable to a land war.

Foreign Minister Brentano expressed the Federal Republic's approval of the report and noted that such measures gave the West an arsenal of weapons of a varying degree of severity and had the advantage of being at the same time flexible and not irrevocable. The Foreign Ministers finally agreed to send the report to the Quadripartite Military Subcommittee.¹

¹Memorandum by Holloway (GER) of tripartite Foreign Ministers Meeting, Sept. 14, 1961, secret; memorandum by Hillenbrand (GER) of first quadripartite conference of Foreign Ministers, Sept. 15, secret; to Bonn, tel. 719, Sept. 15, secret; tel. 734, Sept. 17, top secret; tel. 735, Sept. 17, secret; to Berlin, tel. 344, Sept. 16, secret.

B. Allied Discussions Regarding Negotiations with the Soviet Union

1. French Opposition

At their meeting in Paris in August, the Foreign Ministers had been unable to come to an agreement on how and when to initiate negotiations to "defuse" the crisis over Berlin, owing to considerable differences of opinion between France and the other Western Powers. Subsequently, the matter was taken up in the Ambassadorial Group as well as in the U.S.-French bilateral discussions, including exchanges between President Kennedy and President de Gaulle, until finally a compromise in this question was achieved.

The disagreement between France and its allies with respect to the timing and nature of negotiations with the Soviet Union focused first on the question of a Western reply to the Soviet note of August 3 (see ante, Chapter III, p. 71).

In meetings of the Ambassadorial Group in Washington held August 23-25, the French indicated that they were unwilling to accept an American proposal supported by Britain that the reply to the Soviet note should include the suggestion that possible arrangements for negotiations be discussed by the Foreign Ministers in New York in connection with the UN General Assembly session in September. The French expressed their reluctance to engage in negotiations in the face of threats and without an agreed negotiating position. The Germans supported generally the British-American proposal but tried unsuccessfully to find some middle ground between the position of France and that of the United States and Britain. The Germans also were instructed to insist that the question of an all-German plebiscite to determine which Germany should sign a peace treaty be taken up in the reply to the Soviet note of August 3.¹

¹To Paris, tels. 1050 and 1077, Aug. 24, 1961, and tel. 1114, Aug. 25, all secret.

The different approaches of France and the United States to the problem of negotiations with the Soviet Union were brought out sharply in a meeting between the Secretary and French Ambassador Alphand on August 24.

Referring to the serious developments in the Berlin situation, including the most recent Soviet threat to Allied rights of air access, Alphand declared that, first, decisions regarding countermeasures had to be applied immediately and that, secondly, an Allied *démarche* ought to be made with the Kremlin. Alphand presented a draft suggesting an approach which stressed that the actions of the Soviet Union were creating an intolerable situation and which asked the Soviet Union whether it desired an East-West showdown. If this was not the case, the draft stated, the Soviet Union should abandon unilateral actions and create an atmosphere of relaxation in which discussions could take place. Alphand emphasized that the suggested language was the only one which the Soviet Union understood. The latter would interpret a willingness to negotiate as a sign of weakness and merely step up its threats.

Secretary Rusk said that what was involved was merely a question of the possibility of negotiations and that the Western Powers should be ready for this by the time the UN General Assembly convened. The Secretary stressed that if the West did not show a willingness to negotiate there would be increasing pressures within the alliance and in much of the world as a result of a belief that diplomacy had made no effort to find out if a disastrous course of events could be halted.

Ambassador Alphand stated that the Western Powers had agreed over the years that they must hold firm on Berlin, that they did not have to take an initiative, and that the current status of Berlin was better than anything they would be able to get in negotiations. He wondered why the United States had changed and whether "suddenly something had happened."

Assistant Secretary Kohler pointed out that the West had given a demonstration of firmness and determination and was convincing the Soviet Union through acts that it was not weak. On the other hand, an appearance of disunity as a result of an unbending French attitude was likely to give a demonstration of weakness.

After Alphand had stated once again that the French did not want to be associated with a meeting of Foreign Ministers as suggested by the United States, Secretary Rusk declared that France was virtually isolated in NATO on this issue and that the disunity of the alliance would not fail to make an impression on Khrushchev.¹

2. Kennedy-De Gaulle Correspondence

President Kennedy's Letter of August 25. In an attempt to persuade France to modify its stand, President Kennedy dispatched a personal letter to General de Gaulle on August 25.

The President told de Gaulle that he shared his view that the Western Powers must avoid giving an impression of material or spiritual weakness. But the President believed that a two-fold approach was needed, namely, a quiet but evident development of strength and a posture of willingness to negotiate upon a reasonable basis. These two, he said, must go together. The progressive strengthening of the Western military posture, the President said, carried a message which the Soviet Union understood. But for most of the Allies, for all of the uncommitted world, and for "vital sectors of American opinion", the necessary complement to the military build-up was a clear willingness to negotiate. For this reason, the President was certain of the importance of a prompt public statement, and the arrangement proposed in the American draft reply was the best one available to the West. The President emphasized, however, that, while it was now

¹Memorandum by Brown (WE) of conversation among Rusk, Kohler, and Alphand, Aug. 24, 1961, secret.

important to announce Western readiness to arrange negotiations, these negotiations themselves should not be begun until the Western Powers were more fully prepared and the moment more suitable.

The President said that he was aware of de Gaulle's serious reservations on this subject but that he felt that he had to appeal to de Gaulle directly because a prompt proposal for negotiations was "evidently necessary for most of your partners." It was clearly best to act in unison rather than indicate to the world by separate action that there was disunity "even on the relatively minor issue of timing."

Finally, the President expressed the hope that the replies to the Soviet note could be delivered and published in advance of the opening of the meeting of uncommitted nations in Belgrade on September 1.¹

De Gaulle's Letter of August 26. President de Gaulle's reply, which was dispatched the next day (August 26), brushed aside President Kennedy's concern over what de Gaulle referred to as "the approval of the states 'of the third world', that of the participants in the coming conference at Belgrade, that of certain sections of American public opinion, and that of the average NATO members." De Gaulle believed that, while the opinions of these various elements were not without importance, they did not bear the real responsibilities in the question which confronted the United States, Britain, and France.

De Gaulle stated that the President was now contemplating that the three Western Powers should promptly enter into negotiations with the Soviet Union, whatever threats it hurled at them and whatever acts it committed in violation of agreements. Moreover, the Soviet Union would continue to make use of the many advantages which the geography of Berlin offered to apply pressure on the population and the Western Powers as public negotiations were taking place. Finally, in the situation of strength in which the Soviet Union was already

¹Letter, Kennedy to de Gaulle, Aug. 25, 1961, secret.

placed, the scope, basis, and results of negotiations could only be those which it had ceaselessly proclaimed and which it would insist upon more and more strongly as soon as it was engaged in negotiations on Berlin before the whole world.

Thus, de Gaulle declared, the opening of negotiations in the existing circumstances would be immediately regarded as a prelude to the gradual abandonment of Berlin and as a notice of Western surrender. This would be a grave blow to the Atlantic Alliance and its consequences would rapidly follow as the allies of the West would hurry to make their arrangements with the Soviet Union.

The French President stated that France desired a broad and real international détente which could only come about as a result of acts by the Soviet Union and which one day would permit the opening of four-Power discussions on all problems of the world, "notably that of Germany." France would restate this position in its reply to the Soviet note of August 3 and strengthen its defenses in Europe in the meantime. But in the present state of affairs with respect to Berlin, brought about by Soviet violations of agreements, acts of violence, threats, and demands, France, for its part, insisted on not engaging in the negotiations demanded by Moscow.

Referring to his talk with Secretary Rusk on August 8 (see ante, Chapter II, pp. 63-64), de Gaulle indicated that he could not object if the United States considered it useful to try to induce the Soviet Union "to define in a precise manner by the normal diplomatic channels their claims" and thus to determine if the "elements of a positive and honorable negotiation" existed. If it should appear, as a result of this exploration, that such a negotiation was possible, France would reconsider its position. De Gaulle finally stated that he was sure that the reasons set forth above would make it clear why the French note to the Soviet Union could not include the proposed passage regarding examination of the possibilities of negotiations by the Foreign Ministers at New York in September.¹

¹Letter, de Gaulle to Kennedy, Aug. 26, 1961, secret.

3. Further French-American Talks

There was some further discussion of this matter when Ambassador Alphand handed de Gaulle's letter to Secretary Rusk on August 26. After considering various courses, Secretary Rusk mentioned the possibility of abandoning the idea of a reply to the Soviet note and also indicated that a Western Foreign Ministers' meeting might be held prior to the UN General Assembly session and to any talks with Gromyko.

On August 27 Secretary Rusk met again with Ambassador Alphand and declared that the United States now believed that no reply should be made to the Soviet note of August 3 in view of the events that had since taken place, such as the East German actions of August 13 and the East-West exchange in the matter of the Soviet threat to the air corridors. The Secretary instead proposed that an announcement should be made of a meeting of Western Foreign Ministers in Washington on September 14, prior to the opening of the UN General Assembly. The Secretary said that the United States, in addition, proposed that an announcement be made saying in effect that it had been agreed in consultation with the British and French Governments that the United States would undertake explorations with the Soviet Government regarding the possibility of a serious and constructive negotiation; and that it was anticipated that exploratory conversations might be held between Secretary Rusk and Soviet Foreign Minister Gromyko at the opening of the UN General Assembly in New York as well as through normal diplomatic channels.

The Secretary said in reply to Alphand's questions that any result of this exploration would, of course, be subject to consultation and review but that it was essential that the United States would not be in the position of acting apart from its allies.

The Secretary and Alphand agreed that in case it was decided that the suggested explorations were to be carried out a working group meeting in Washington a week before the Foreign Ministers meeting should consolidate Western negotiating

positions. They also agreed that there should be consultation with the NATO Council.¹

4. Agreement on a Western Foreign Ministers Meeting

In the meeting of the Ambassadorial Group on August 28, the British and Germans agreed to the procedure regarding negotiations which the Secretary had outlined to Alphand the previous day. The French did not receive their instructions until later that day when Alphand called on Assistant Secretary Kohler to tell him that France demanded the elimination of the introductory phrase, "in consultation with the British and French Governments", from any statement regarding exploratory talks. But the French Government was willing to state that it had no objections to the United States' proceeding in this manner. Kohler tried to impress upon Alphand that the United States had shown willingness to pay a high price for preserving a public impression of Allied unity and suggested that the French at least indicate that it was a matter of an agreed procedure. The French could not be persuaded but were willing to have the Foreign Ministers agree on a line to be taken in the exploratory talks so that these would take place within an agreed framework.²

Secretary Rusk himself discussed the proposed announcements on the Foreign Ministers meeting and the exploratory talks with the Ambassadorial Group on August 29. He suggested that one should hold off with the announcements under discussion until it was known whether Gromyko would attend the UN General Assembly but that a firm date for the Foreign Ministers meeting be agreed upon. After agreement was reached on the date of September 14 for the opening of the Foreign Ministers meeting, the French again stated that they did not oppose exploratory talks although

¹Memorandum by Kohler (EUR) of conversation between Rusk and Alphand, Aug. 26, 1961, secret; to Paris, tel. 1130, Aug. 27, 1961, secret.

²To Bonn, tel. 479, Aug. 28, 1961, secret; memorandum by Kohler (EUR) to the Secretary, Aug. 28, secret.

they did not want to be associated with them. It was up to the United States whether it wanted to publicize the talks.¹

5. German Attitude: Adenauer-Kennedy Exchange

While supporting substantially the American position on the timing of negotiations with the Soviet Union, the Germans, nevertheless, tried to bridge the gap between France and its allies. This tendency was also reflected in a letter which Chancellor Adenauer sent to President Kennedy on August 29.

The Chancellor said that he understood de Gaulle's concern that any initiative to negotiate might be interpreted as a sign of Western weakness. Adenauer was confident, however, that the Allied Governments in the weeks to come would preclude any such misunderstanding and he declared that he was pleased with the prospective Foreign Ministers meeting in Washington.

Chancellor Adenauer voiced his concern that further unilateral Soviet or East German actions might take place before or during the envisaged negotiations, and he stressed that there could not be any acquiescence in further acts of force "of the kind that occurred in Berlin on August 13 and after." It was therefore indispensable that a fresh examination be made of non-military countermeasures, especially in the economic field.

Ambassador Grewe discussed these principal points of the Chancellor's letter in the meeting of the Ambassadorial Group on August 30 and pointed in this connection also to the "overly defensive" approach of the Western press, which, he said, emphasized the possibility of Western concessions.²

¹To Bonn, tel. 494, Aug. 29, 1961, secret.

²Letter, Adenauer to Kennedy, Aug. 29, 1961, confidential; to Bonn, tel. 505, Aug. 30, secret.

President Kennedy dealt with the questions raised in the Chancellor's letter in his reply, which was dispatched on September 4. Pointing to the increased military effort which the West was undertaking with the intention to impress Khrushchev with its determination, the President declared that he did not share the view that the Western Powers should be reluctant to negotiate because it might be interpreted as a sign of weakness. The President stressed that the West had given Khrushchev no cause to indulge in illusions "that we are sueing for negotiations" as a result of his pressures. But the President, at the same time, drew attention to the fact that "both public opinion and the sheer logic of thermonuclear war" demanded that every effort be made to find a peaceful solution "consistent with the preservation of our vital interests."

The President, furthermore, said that the Western Foreign Ministers meeting in September would discuss not only tactics and procedures leading to negotiation but also factors bearing on the Western negotiating position. The President said, in this connection, that he wanted to convey to the Chancellor his concern that the Soviet Union might be informed about "these vital and secret matters" by leaks to the press of the free world, and he urged that all necessary measures be taken to assure the "highest possible degree of discretion" in the months ahead.

The President stated that the Foreign Ministers would also review the planning of countermeasures against further Soviet encroachments and expressed agreement with the Chancellor's view that the West should respond vigorously to Communist harassments. The problem was to find countermeasures which were appropriate and effective in a given situation, especially with a view to the advantages which geography gave to a "resourceful and ruthless opponent" in the case of Berlin. The West therefore would have to "carefully prepare a series of selected responses to various harassments." In addition, the West should make it abundantly clear to Khrushchev that any interference with Western access to Berlin on the ground or in the air was a "vital matter" to the West and would be considered by it as an act of aggression.¹

¹Letter, Kennedy to Adenauer, sent to Bonn as tel. 560, Sept. 4, 1961, secret.

6. Announcement of Western Foreign Ministers Meeting and of Exploratory Talks with Gromyko

President Kennedy's Statement. The public announcement of the related matters of a Western Foreign Ministers meeting and exploratory talks with Soviet Foreign Minister Gromyko came finally in the context of a White House statement issued on September 13 at the conclusion of a visit of President Sukarno of Indonesia and President Keita of Mali on behalf of the Conference of Nonaligned Nations which had met in Belgrade at the beginning of September. The President, referring to the dangerous situation in Berlin and to his earlier assurances that the position of the West and of the West Berliners would be defended, declared that he had also made it clear that the United States was ready to discuss these matters with other governments, "including the Government of the Soviet Union", and to search for the means "to preserve an honorable peace." If that was the purpose on all sides, there was no need to resort to force.

The President announced that "the Ministers of the Western Powers are meeting in Washington tomorrow" and that the Secretary of State would head the United States delegation to the UN General Assembly. The President further stated that "we understand that Foreign Minister Gromyko will also be there" and that this would "provide an opportunity for serious talks about Germany and other problems if the Soviet side proves willing."

Soviet Announcement. On September 14 the Soviet Foreign Ministry issued a statement which referred to President Kennedy's announcement and to the "positive attitude" taken by the British Government toward the President's proposal as expressed in a statement by the British Foreign Office. The Soviet Foreign Ministry then announced that Foreign Minister Gromyko, who would head the Soviet delegation to the 16th session of the UN General Assembly, was "ready to enter into a relevant exchange of opinions with Dean Rusk, the Secretary of State of the United States." The statement also indicated that the Soviet Government proceeded on the assumption that "the sides will display a serious attitude to the talks and will jointly search for a solution of the problem of the conclusion of a German peace treaty and a settlement on its basis of the situation in West Berlin."¹

¹Documents on Germany, 1944-1961, pp. 795-796.

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PART VI: Deepening Crisis Over Berlin: Communist Challenges
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June 14, 1967

Dear Mr. Hillenbrand:

I am very pleased to send you finally Part VI of my study, the last major portion of the draft manuscript which I was able to complete. Much of the basic research and writing had actually been finished last year, but it took until now to get this draft into shape for a review by you. As on all previous occasions I am most anxious to have your comments and criticisms.

Since this part of the study covers the most eventful and dramatic phase of the crisis, I would not be surprised if quite a few questions were raised with respect to content as well as to organization. For instance, a very legitimate question could be asked as to why the manuscript ends at a particular point. My reply in this case would be that I might very well have organized the various parts of the story differently and selected another terminal date for Part VI if I had been able to work through the files of the subsequent period. But as I had to wind up this phase of my work suddenly when I was asked to take over my new function in the Historical Office and as the manuscript was getting rather lengthy anyway, I decided to carry this part of the story not beyond the middle of September of 1961 and to end it on the eve of the talks with Gromyko.

With all good wishes,

Sincerely yours,

Arthur G. Kogan
Historical Office

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