THE BERLIN CRISIS OF 1961
The Origins and Management of a Crisis

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Submitted as partial requirement
for the degree of B.A. Honours,
The University of Queensland

1995
I declare that this thesis is my own work and has not been submitted in any form for another degree or diploma at any university or other institute of tertiary education. Information derived from the published or unpublished work of others has been acknowledged and a list of references is given.

David G. Coleman
October 1995
I would like to thank Dr. Joseph M. Siracusa for assistance in the preparation of this thesis. His guidance and insights into United States foreign policy have been greatly appreciated.
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In December 1961, former President Dwight D. Eisenhower reflected that "Berlin is not so much a beleaguered city or threatened city as it is a symbol - for the West, of principle, of good faith, of determination; for the Soviets, a thorn in their flesh, a wound to their pride, an impediment to their designs." He had played an integral part in the development of the German situation, firstly as Supreme Commander of the Allied Forces in Europe, and later as President of the United States. During this period Berlin was one issue around which many others were gathered. From the time of the defeat of Nazi Germany, the 'German Question' was never far from the diplomatic negotiations. As the capital of Prussia it had assumed the symbolism of German aggression and militarism, and as such it was the prize of V-E Day. When relations between the occupation powers became strained Berlin became the 'front line' of the Cold War. While the city was of little material value to either side, both East and West were willing to go to the brink of war in pursuit of its diplomatic symbolism.

The Berlin Crisis of 1961 remains an important example of Cold War crisis management. The following year the contest between East and West assumed a far more sinister character with the serious threat of nuclear war over Soviet missiles in Cuba. The contest over Berlin was as important for its diplomatic confrontation as the Cuban crisis was over its military threat. In 1961, both East and West were trying to secure a German nation sympathetic to their own causes. The Federal Republic of Germany, with its capital in Bonn, was an active member of NATO, while the German Democratic Republic claimed its capital as Berlin and was a signatory of the Warsaw Pact. Berlin enjoyed a 'special status.' All four Occupation Powers still maintained garrisons in the

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city and despite the formation of West Germany in 1949, West Berlin was not incorporated as part of this new German state, but rather was maintained and supervised by the joint occupation of the United States, Great Britain and France. The 2½ million people living in West Berlin were joined by approximately thirteen thousand troops: a mere token when the geographical position of Berlin is taken into account. Situated one hundred and ten miles within Soviet-controlled territory, the city was militarily indefensible. The West’s position was assured only so long as NATO posed a credible threat of going to war over the issue.

While the term ‘Berlin Crisis’ may be applied to the period from 1958 to 1963, 1961 brought the climax. Tensions grew from January to July as the new Kennedy Administration struggled to establish itself while faced with already established problems. In June Soviet Premier Nikita S. Krushchev repeated a demand first specifically made in November 1958 that a peace treaty finally be signed with Germany. In August the East German government erected barricades along sector boundaries. With the erection of the Berlin Wall the Cold War gained its most sinister symbol. Germany and Berlin were officially and visibly dismembered, though this took a form very different from the wartime notion of German partition.

From the time that the Allies seemed to be gaining the upper hand in Europe, tentative plans were made for postwar Europe. These plans were often inconsistent and relegated to a secondary priority after the winning of the war. The ‘German Question’ became a central issue in international diplomacy from the Moscow Conference of 1943 with the establishment of the European Advisory Council. In 1944, Henry Morgenthau Jr.’s proposals were put on the international stage. Various flashpoints such as the airlift of 1948 and the sealing of Berlin in 1961 brought the issue to the forefront. Arms control, national sovereignty, spheres of influence, and German rearmament were all major issues in their own right, and all of these played important roles in the ‘German Question’. Accordingly, Berlin assumed a value far beyond its own merit by being the focus of many other diplomatic issues between East and West.

The agreements reached during the latter stages of the Second World War were designed to be temporary measures to occupy Germany during denazification and demilitarization so that the Germans could never again start an aggressive war. Zonal occupation was introduced for Britain, the United States, the Soviet Union, and later
France. By 1961 these wartime agreements could no longer support the conflict of the Cold War. The Potsdam Protocol was repeatedly quoted in justification of the Western presence, but both sides willingly violated the protocol if it was in their interests.

The Berlin Crisis of 1961 was not an isolated crisis. Consequently, the origins of the 'Berlin problem' are as significant as the crisis itself. The dispute of 1961 was a direct result of the postwar occupation of Germany and was presaged by the Soviet ultimatum of 1958. The first two chapters examine these origins of the Berlin question.

Chapter One concerns the postwar partition of Germany. Initially done in the spirit of Allied cooperation, this partnership soon soured. Consideration of the 'German Question' includes the Allies' insistence upon unconditional surrender, propositions for the postwar treatment of Germany as given by Morgenthau and the Department of State, as well as the conferences of Yalta and Potsdam. Special attention is given to the documents that came out of these conferences, as well as the directive known as JCS 1067. This document, along with the Potsdam Protocol, was originally intended as a temporary directive for the Allied occupation of Germany. Both assumed greater importance with the prolonged presence of Allied troops. The imposition of unconditional surrender upon the Germans was a major factor in the foreign relations of the next several years. Having inherited the 'German Question' from Roosevelt, President Truman found Europe already divided. As the postwar world polarised, Cold War diplomacy dominated foreign policy, prompting the President to develop the Truman Doctrine of containment. In this environment the Berlin Blockade and Airlift of 1948-49 became a major conflict.

Chapter Two focuses on the Eisenhower Administration's relationship with the issues of Berlin. Potential for gathering international opinion was not taken by the United States during the 1953 Berlin riots. After having been relatively quiet for several years, the Berlin issue was again raised by Krushchev in 1958 where he called for a final resolution. He gave six months for this resolution to be found before he would relinquish all control over access to Berlin to East German officials. The issue was allowed to fade in 1959 with the promise of a summit meeting.

Chapters Three and Four examine the Berlin Crisis of 1961, from its development to its resolution. The U-2 incident and the failed summit signalled a hardening of differences between East and West. President John F. Kennedy assumed office in January
1961 and found that to such issues as Berlin and Cuba there was no easy solution. His buildup of conventional weapons and the shoring up of the NATO alliance in anticipation of a crisis in 1961 were attempts at preventing such a confrontation. Kennedy struggled to define the crisis in order that NATO could be faced with a simple decision of what would constitute a sufficient threat to their interests to justify war. Ostensibly, internal issues led to the East German government sealing off the city of Berlin on the 13 August. As such it was not a direct threat to the occupation powers and did not prompt a strong reaction from NATO.

The Warsaw Pact and NATO faced each other in the streets of Berlin. The city was in the unenviable position of being the battle ground for Cold War diplomacy. With its emotional separation of families and loved ones for almost thirty years it was the focus of the international community’s condemnation of the superpower diplomacy. The construction of the Berlin Wall was the most visible representation of Cold War divisions, representing for the free world the oppression of the communist system. As such, its collapse in 1989 signalled the imminent fall of the communist world and the end of the Cold War.
CHAPTER ONE

The Partition of Germany

The nature of foreign policy conducted within the Grand Alliance during the Second World War contributed greatly to the confused and incomplete planning for the postwar world. Diplomacy was a combination of personal understandings and formal agreements were between President Franklin D. Roosevelt, Prime Minister Winston Churchill, and Marshal Joseph Stalin. Having been the first to enter the war with Germany, Churchill maintained a constant and personal series of communications with Roosevelt in the hope that such an informal approach would secure the trust and support of the President, who in turn would be able to manipulate his public into entering the war. Similarly, Roosevelt felt himself able to charm Stalin into line through personal dialogue, even though it was sometimes at the expense of Churchill. Particularly as the war progressed, meetings between these three heads of state became more frequent. At such meetings important policy decisions were often decided through the conflict of three separate spheres of interest and personalities. Resulting policies were usually compromises and open to revision. Such a method of deciding policy led to confused and incomplete planning for the postwar world. Roosevelt often chose not to inform his own Secretary of State about these decisions and frequently failed to instigate departmental preparation of important policies. In his memoirs, Cordell Hull often complains of being left out of many aspects of foreign policy by a president who regarded the State Department as "conservative and rigid," Roosevelt preferred to


make his own decisions and rarely communicated these decisions in any detail to the various relevant departments. This resulted in a confused and *ad hoc* approach to postwar planning. Policy was decided as much on the conflict of personalities between Stalin, Roosevelt and Churchill as they were on political or military expediency.

Very little indication on his vision of future direction was given by President Roosevelt to his administration. Loath to prepare too heavily before victory was assured and Germany secured, postwar strategy was relegated a distant second priority behind the winning of the war. While various proposals were put forward by different instruments of the administration that incorporated some similar themes, on the whole they lacked consistency of either aims or method.

As early as February 1943, Churchill wrote President Roosevelt:

> The peace conference of the victorious powers will probably assemble in Europe while final stages of war against Japan are still in progress. At this conference the defeated aggressor countries will receive directions of victors. Object of these directions will be to prevent as effectively as possible renewal acts of aggression of the kinds which have caused these two terrible wars in Europe in one generation. For this purpose and so far as possible total disarmament of guilty nations will be enforced. On the one hand no attempt will be made to destroy their peoples or to prevent them gaining their living and leading a decent life in spite of all the crimes they have committed.\(^3\)

Such a magnanimous and generous peace was a plan that was injured by ensuing accounts of Nazi atrocities, particularly in relation to the Jewish people. Written soon after the announcement of 'Unconditional Surrender' as one of the primary war aims of the Allies, it was clearly an attempt to avoid the 'Clemenceau peace' that had been imposed upon Germany in the Treaty of Versailles of 1919 and widely believed to be a major contributing factor in the German acceptance of Nazism.

At the Moscow Conference of October 1943 the European Advisory Commission consisting of representatives from Britain, France and the United States, was charged with dealing with the issues of postwar policy planning. Its first formal meetings began in January 1944 in London with Ambassador Winant serving as the American delegate. While Britain was keen to impart upon this body the power to settle

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\(^3\) Churchill to Roosevelt, 2 February 1943. Lowenheim, et.al.(eds), *Roosevelt and Churchill: Their Secret Wartime Correspondence*. p.310
matters during the war, the United States maintained that it was unwise to do so on the basis that Germany was not yet defeated. At the conference Secretary Hull had outlined a State Department memorandum dealing with the postwar treatment of Germany. This memorandum recommended that the instrument of surrender "contains an admission of the total defeat of Germany," and that it "empower the United Nations to exercise all the rights of an occupying power throughout Germany." It continued that future security would best be served through decentralization of the German political structure, through assigning to the federal units control over a wide range of administrative functions, and through encouraging any movement which may emerge within Germany in favor of the diminution of Prussian domination over the Reich.

These broad principles governed much of the subsequent planning for a postwar Germany. They were, however, particularly vague outlines and did not necessarily relate well to the practical aspects of implementation. While the Allies were agreed on these principles, it was the manner of their implementation that proved contentious.

In November 1943, the United States Chiefs of Staff reported that "Germany is now under severe strain, and her general situation is deteriorating....[and] is now on the defensive on all fronts. She has no decisive offensive capabilities. Her military resources are inadequate to meet all of her defensive requirements." Despite this obvious weakening of the Nazi war machine, great effort was still required by the Allies to win the dual conflicts of Europe and the Pacific. Conferences at Cairo and Tehran were primarily military in nature, concentrating on the winning of the war. They were especially concerned with plans for the promised Operation Overlord. At Tehran, the issue of the treatment of postwar Germany received more focus. The President reported that the Soviet Union would have no objection to the breaking up of Germany, and that this would enable the dismemberment into three or five German states, though he objected to the British plan to assign the southern portion to the United States on the

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5 Memorandum by the United States Chiefs of Staff. Ibid. p.214

6 Minutes of the President's meeting with the Joint Chiefs of Staff; 19 November 1943. Ibid. p.253
basis that he did not wish to rely on access through France for communications, but was eventually persuaded to accept this arrangement.

On 26 January 1943, Roosevelt surprised many, including his Secretary of State, Cordell Hull, and the British Prime Minister, Winston Churchill, with his call for the "unconditional surrender" of the German state. This principle drastically altered the outlook of diplomats and politicians who had hitherto not counted on the annihilation of the German government. It was clearly an attempt by Roosevelt to calm Soviet fears that the United States and Britain might make a separate peace with Hitler. He wished to express the message that the American and British commitment would continue until Europe was totally safe from German aggression. It also served the purpose of avoiding the mistakes of the First World War where President Wilson entered into peace negotiations before German surrender and thus compromised the eventual peace treaty.

The call for German unconditional surrender incorporated a major principle that had not previously been a part of State Department planning. Hull opposed the plan for two major reasons: that "it might prolong the war by solidifying Axis resistance into one of desperation," and that the principle "logically required the victor nations to be ready to take over every phase of the national and local Governments of the conquered countries." He concluded that "we and our Allies were in no way prepared to undertake this vast obligation."

Preparation within both the departments of War and State began in earnest for such an obligation in 1943. While Hull publicly stated that "nothing in the way of what we sometimes call a blueprint would be practical except at least to a limited extent until later stages of this war," wide-ranging discussions began to take place dealing with many factors of the postwar situation. Despite this, any specific planning was hampered by Roosevelt's apparent unwillingness to give any directives on his vision for


10 Department of State Press Conference No.26, 22 March 1943, Department of State, Press Conferences of the Secretary of State: Cordell Hull.
postwar Germany. While various bodies within these departments and also under Ambassador to the United Kingdom James Winant were formulating their views on policy, they often found themselves in the situation of being outmoded by new developments in international discussion of which they were not informed or, indeed, attacked directly by the President for any shortcomings. Having formulated the “Handbook for Military Government in Germany,” completed in June 1944, Eisenhower’s Supreme Headquarters, Allied Expeditionary Forces (SHAEF) was forced to substantially revise and eventually abandon it in the face of Presidential criticism prompted primarily from Secretary of the Treasury Henry Morgenthau Jr. Ambassador Winant had also collaborated on a draft of surrender document adopted by the European Advisory Commission in July 1944. In the State Department, Edward R. Stettinius headed a committee consisting of Philip Mosely and Leo Pasvolsky which had developed its own plans. All of these were conducted without direct Presidential participation.

Morgenthau had experienced some of the reality of the war in a visit to Britain and Europe in early August 1944. During this trip he gained first hand impressions of the war, and as a Jew he became horrified the more he learned of the Nazi extermination policies and actions. As an American he was shocked to see the toll the war was taking on their ally, Great Britain, both in the form of destruction and also the material costs of maintaining the military. These impressions jolted an interest in German affairs that led to closer investigation and the eventual completion of the Morgenthau Plan.

Morgenthau was led into the problems of postwar Germany through the areas of reparations, currency and financial controls. When examining these he soon found that these issues “could not be divorced from the broader aspects of what to do with Germany.” He subsequently began developing his proposals which were first voiced during September 1944 in the ad hoc cabinet committee under the chairmanship of Harry Hopkins. In these meetings, Secretary of War Henry Stimson, strongly opposed Morgenthau’s arguments that were put forward on behalf of the Treasury. Hull became


resolute in his opposition to the plan. Initially President Roosevelt and Hopkins favoured
the Treasury’s ideas, which prompted the President to approach Morgenthau with an
invitation to attend the upcoming meeting between Prime Minister Churchill and
President Roosevelt.

Believing that the Quebec Conference of August 1944 between the two heads of
state would be primarily military, Secretary Hull chose not to participate as part of the
United States delegation. Morgenthau, however, did accept the President’s invitation in
the form of a telegram dated 12 September, to attend. At Quebec, Morgenthau was able
to canvass his views on the postwar treatment of Germany that came to be known as the
Morgenthau Plan. Churchill’s reaction was hostile. Morgenthau recorded that:

I had barely got under way before low mutters and baleful looks indicated that
the Prime Minister was not the most enthusiastic member of my audience....I
have never seen him more irascible and vitriolic than he was that night....After
I finished my piece he turned loose on me the full flood of his rhetoric,
sarcasm and violence. He looked on the Treasury Plan, he said, as he would
on chaining himself to a dead German.  

The next day, Lord Cherwell communicated to Morgenthau that the Prime Minister had
changed his views of the previous evening. While there came accusations from Stimson
that agreement had been bought with Treasury credits, Churchill, in his account
Triumph and Tragedy, downplayed the significance of the Plan he “had not time to
examine in detail.” He was lured, however, by the potential for the British economy. By
depressing German industry, demand for British goods would logically increase.
Churchill wrote: “The United Kingdom had lost so many overseas investments that she
could only pay her way when peace came by greatly increasing her exports, so that for
economic as well as military reasons we ought to restrict German industry and
encourage German agriculture.” Despite the retrospective hesitation to associate with
the Morgenthau Plan, Churchill nevertheless dictated a memorandum on the 15
September 1944 that embodied its major themes, stating that:

13 Blum, From the Morgenthau Diaries. p.369
14 Hull, Memoirs. pp.1611-1616; and Pratt, Cordell Hull. pp.760-761
p.138
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The ease with which the metallurgical, chemical and electrical industries in Germany can be converted from peace to war has already been impressed upon us by bitter experience. It must also be remembered that the Germans have devastated a large portion of the industries of Russia and of other neighboring Allies, and it is only in accordance with justice that these injured countries should be entitled to remove the machinery they require in order to repair the losses they have suffered. The industries referred to in the Ruhr and in the Saar would therefore be necessarily put out of action and closed down. It was felt that the two districts should be put under somebody under the world organization which would supervise the dismantling of these industries and make sure that they were not started up again by some subterfuge.¹⁶

Morgenthau’s proposals had been formally submitted to the President as a “Program to Prevent Germany from Starting a World War III.” Working from the premise that “if we really mean to deprive Germany of the ability to make war again within a few years it is absolutely essential that she be deprived of her chemical, metallurgical and electrical industries,”¹⁷ Morgenthau advocated “converting Germany into a country primarily agricultural and pastoral in its character,”¹⁸ because “the German people have the will to try it again” and contrary to some opinions expressed “programs for democracy, re-education and kindness cannot destroy this will within any brief time.”¹⁹ He recommended that France be given the Saar, and that the Ruhr and surrounding industrial areas should be placed under international jurisdiction. To reduce, if not destroy industry within the Ruhr and surrounding area, all industrial plants and equipment would be uprooted and transported to the Allied nations as part of restitution. Morgenthau believed that reparations should not be demanded in the form of future payments, but that “restitution and reparation shall be effected by the transfer of existing German resources and territories.”²⁰

¹⁶ Memorandum of the Quebec Conference, 15 September 1944, quoted in Blum, From the Morgenthau Diaries, p.372

¹⁷ Memorandum by the Secretary of the Treasury (Morgenthau) to President Roosevelt, 10 January 1945, Foreign Relations: 1945, Vol.III. p.376


¹⁹ Foreign Relations: 1945, Vol.III. p.376

²⁰ Morgenthau, “Postwar Treatment of Germany.” p.126
Taking the concept of zones of occupation to the extreme he argued strongly for
dismemberment since "two Germanys would be easier to deal with than one."\(^1\) A
controversial issue in its own right, Morgenthau’s juxtaposition of the formal partition of
Germany and also its “pastoralization” attracted a great deal of opposition. The issue of
dismemberment had been argued for some time. Those who favoured dismemberment
argued that the German ‘nation state’ was an artificial fabrication of Bismarckian
Prussia. Only by weakening the area by division could the militaristic influence of
Prussia be denied the means with which to continue in its aggressive tradition.
Opponents of this plan believed in the power of nationalism and the right of national
self-determination. A plan for postwar dismemberment could only unite the German
people more strongly in their rejection of such a peace and thus unnecessarily extend the
war. The Morgenthau Plan embraced the former of these arguments. Certain areas that
had historically been controlled by such nations as France and Russia should be returned
to these nations and that part of Germany that remained “should be divided into two,
autonomous, independent states.”\(^2\) This division would be a lateral border dividing
north and south. The economies of these two newly formed states would be controlled
closely by the United Nations for a period of at least twenty years.

Upon hearing that Churchill and Roosevelt had been persuaded to endorse
Morgenthau’s proposals, Hull was incensed that such an important aspect of foreign
policy should have been decided without him - especially when it advocated the views of
the Secretary of the Treasury, with whom he strongly disagreed on the treatment of
Germany. Viewed by Secretary Hull and Secretary of War Henry Stimson as “a plan of
blind vengeance,”\(^3\) the Morgenthau Plan was seen to punish the whole of Europe in its
harshness to Germany. Stimson and Hull contended that Germany was vital to the
economy and well-being of Europe, and that attempts to curb Germany’s militarism
should not bankrupt her completely. They pointed to the necessity of a strong European

\(^1\) Morgenthau, *Germany is Our Problem*. p.155

\(^2\) Memorandum for President Roosevelt: “Program to Prevent Germany from Starting a World War

\(^3\) Hull, *Memoirs*. p.1606
pillar as the foundation for reconstruction, and the integral role of the German economy in the whole of Europe; a claim that Morgenthau failed to adequately refute.

When the President returned to Washington Stimson and Hull immediately set about attacking the Treasury proposal, the preparation of which had involved "no experts, no appropriate officials of our Government or that of the President, and no other Governments." It was unrealistic because "seventy million Germans could not live on the land within Germany. They would either starve or become a charge upon other nations," and more bluntly, "only 60 per cent of the German population could support themselves on German land, and the other 40 per cent would die." After the arguments of Stimson and Hull, and some leaks to the press, Roosevelt became less enthusiastic about the Morgenthau Plan and was officially to drop the proposal. Its influence, however, can be seen in the directive to General Eisenhower that was issued as JCS 1067 and the subsequent Potsdam Protocol.

The Crimean Conference on February 1945, despite some early dispute on the locality, brought the somewhat diverging interests of the individual Allies at least temporarily back into alignment. Delegates came away with an overwhelming sense of accomplishment in the 'spirit of Yalta.' The conference did in fact accomplish many important things, but its reputation became seriously tarnished in the following months when its protocol proved to be an unworkable document.

The Big Three agreed that in order to stabilize postwar Europe they would jointly assist any 'liberated' state or former Axis satellite state where they judged a requirement

(a) to establish conditions of internal peace; (b) to carry out emergency measures for the relief of distressed peoples; (c) to form interim government authorities broadly representative of all democratic elements in the population and pledged to the earliest possible establishment through free elections of governments responsive to the

24 See: Morgenthau, *Germany is Our Problem*, pp.30-47. Morgenthau argued unconvincingly that "the notion that German heavy industry is indispensable to the well-being of Europe is a myth sedulously nurtured by German propaganda over many years."


26 Ibid. p.1611

27 Ibid. p.1617
These objectives formed the foundation of the later plans to occupy Germany after its defeat. An amendment was made to the Surrender Terms for Germany whereby the Allies would “take such steps, including the complete disarmament, demilitarisation and the dismemberment of Germany as they deem requisite for future peace and security.”  

While agreement was reached on these general principles, they were open to wide interpretations from the various participants. Stalin saw such governmental supervision with far less idealism than did either Churchill or Roosevelt. By authorizing the ‘liberating’ powers the right to set up an interim government, the Yalta Protocol allowed Stalin to install government officials that were overtly sympathetic with the communist cause in Eastern Europe.

Important policy decisions were taken at Yalta that greatly determined the direction of the document of surrender and the subsequent occupation. Pressure from the United States and Great Britain made France an occupation power with membership of the Allied Control Council that would supervise the denazification and demilitarization of Germany. By encouraging a continental nation to have such power, both Churchill and Roosevelt believed that this would contribute to the peace, though for different reasons. Roosevelt believed that the admission of France as one of the occupational powers would negate the need for a prolonged American presence on the European continent. Secretary of State Edward Stettinius argued that when the United States government wished to withdraw her troops, which Roosevelt had said at Yalta would be after two years, it would be logical to have them replaced with those of France. Apart from alleviating the demands on United States forces this would also comfort the smaller European countries that professed to fear a peace imposed by non-European powers. He concluded:

In the long run this Government will undoubtedly gain more by making concessions to French prestige and by treating France on the basis of

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29 Ibid. p.1569
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her potential power and influence, then [sic] we will be [sic] treating her on the basis of her actual strength at this time.\textsuperscript{30}

Acting Secretary of State Joseph Grew recognised that though it was desirable to obtain full French participation in the peace, it should be conducted in such a way as to “not operate to disturb unduly agreements already reached on a tripartite basis or to result in major revision of policy decisions already reached.”\textsuperscript{31}

Churchill believed an influential France was important to maintain a balance of European power from any potential resurgence of an aggressive Germany. Employing a conventional European view of international relations, Churchill recognized there was a strong possibility that the American public would force a disengagement of their forces in Europe soon after the war. He realized that Great Britain, especially after the ravages of war, could not hope to maintain an acceptable balance in Europe. There was also the added threat of the growth of Russian power. He was thus careful to cultivate the potential for a future ally on the continent. Both Churchill and Roosevelt believed that French participation in the peace was important enough that the French zone would be formed out of the British and American zones. Stalin remained hesitant to allocate a zone to France arguing that if France were given a zone it would be hard to refuse one to other countries with legitimate claims.\textsuperscript{32}

As well as inviting France to participate in the occupation of Germany, the Big Three decided that reparations would be extracted from Germany in the form of existing resources; especially those of a military nature. Using terms similar to those contained in the Morgenthau Plan, the Yalta Protocol facilitated the replacement with kind of that equipment destroyed by the war and would be conducted within a period of two years. Again, the terms of this agreement of reparations were vague. No distinction was drawn between reparations and war booty, which was eventually to lead to tension between the Allies. Despite having officially discarded the Morgenthau Plan, the Allies nevertheless

\textsuperscript{30} Memorandum by the Secretary of State for the President. \textit{Foreign Relations: 1945 - European Advisory Commission; Austria; Germany}, p.164

\textsuperscript{31} Acting Secretary of State to the Ambassador in the United Kingdom (Winant). \textit{Foreign Relations: 1945 - European Advisory Commission; Austria; Germany}, p.178

\textsuperscript{32} Feis, \textit{Churchill, Roosevelt, Stalin}, p.532
Chapter One • The Partition of Germany

GERMANY: THE FOUR ZONES OF OCCUPATION AND BERLIN

GREATER BERLIN: THE FOUR SECTORS

wished to impose severe limitations on German industry, though ultimately no attempt was made to define the level of German industry that would be allowed and exactly which industries would be eliminated.\(^{33}\)

While it was originally hailed as a great diplomatic success, Yalta attracted more negative sentiments when it became clear that the policies agreed upon at Yalta would not necessarily be followed, or at the very least, interpreted very differently. Critics charged that it was hopeless idealism and did not supply sufficient specifics. Retrospective criticism accused Yalta of fostering the environment that led to the beginning of the Cold War. Having attended the Yalta Conference as Secretary of State, Edward Stettinius Jr., wrote:

> The President had no illusions about the Russians before or at the Yalta Conference. He was well aware of the dangers and difficulties that confronted him in dealing with the Soviet Union. He worked in the hope and faith that a stable world order could be achieved. He did not have the illusion, as his enemies have charged, that world peace could be achieved easily or by appeasing the Soviet Union. Hopes and illusions are two different things, and the President was well aware of the difference.\(^{34}\)

This is a sentiment that is echoed in Robert Dallek’s study of Roosevelt’s foreign policy, where he argues that recognizing that the postwar peace was dependent on a Soviet-American accord, Roosevelt was willing to face the realities of Soviet influence in Eastern and Central Europe in order to see such an accord.\(^{35}\)

Entitled “Directive to Commander in Chief of U.S. Forces of Occupation Regarding the Military Government of Germany in the Period Immediately Following the Cessation of Organized Resistance,” JCS 1067 gave detailed instructions on the implementation of a tripartite government on the areas of politics, finance, economics, and relief. It was prepared by the Joint Chiefs of Staff and approved by the Departments of State, Navy and War and then transmitted to Winant to present to the European Advisory Commission. Many of the basic assumptions of the document can be traced to

\(^{33}\) Ibid. p.534


\(^{35}\) Dallek, *Franklin D. Roosevelt and American Foreign Policy, 1932-1945*, pp.532-535
Morgenthau’s proposals to the extent that it considered as “the Morgenthau Plan in military costume.”\textsuperscript{36} Eisenhower was instructed to set up a military government that was “just but firm and aloof.” This military administration was to be aimed toward the decentralization of the German political system. Most importantly, though, the document stated that “pending receipt of directive containing long-range policies your objectives must be of short-term and military character in order not to prejudice whatever ultimate policies may be later determined.”\textsuperscript{37}

The three Commanders-in-Chief would constitute a Control Council which would act as the supreme organ of authority in Germany. While “the administration of military government in each of the three zones of occupation shall be the sole responsibility of the Commanders-in-Chief of the forces occupying each zone,” a conscious effort was to be made “to insure that all policies formulated by the Control Council will be uniformly put into effect throughout Germany.”\textsuperscript{38} Decentralization of the German political structure was to be pursued with greater authority being invested in the local Land officials.

The Allied military governments were to identify those elements of industry that were deemed necessary to a war effort and either closely control them or cease them altogether. Resources and equipment were to be protected from sabotage and dissipation in order that they could later be used for reparations or restitution by the Allied countries. Exports were to be prohibited except for restitution purposes. Being only a temporary directive, JCS 1067 did not go so far as to outline the future economic basis of Germany. It did, however, incorporate several of the themes of the Morgenthau Plan in relation to industry. The document made no allowance for the revitalization of German economy but simply allowed a subsistence standard of living.

JCS 1067 reiterated the hope that a military presence on the continent would not be required for any substantial length of time after securing victory and stability. It stated that:

\begin{quote}
It is envisaged that control or surveillance of Germany will be maintained in some form for a prolonged period, and that military government will, when
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\textsuperscript{36} Frank A. Ninkovich, \textit{Germany and the United States}, (New York: Twayne, 1995) p.26
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\textsuperscript{37} JCS 1067. \textit{Foreign Relations: 1945 - European Advisory Commission; Austria; Germany}. p.379
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\textsuperscript{38} Ibid. p.379
\end{flushright}
practicable, be replaced by other methods of control involving smaller commitment of forces.\(^{39}\)

General Eisenhower planned to transfer the government of the former Axis powers from military to civilian control at the earliest practicable date. Having published this plan on the 31 October 1945, President Truman gave his assent to such a transfer.\(^{40}\) This suggestion reflected Eisenhower's belief that the military's primary responsibility was to ensure the defeat of Germany and her allies and that once this was accomplished, the peace could be much better served by more established and experienced bodies. After having experienced the Allied Military Government for some months, General Eisenhower, in November 1945 was forced to admit that a withdrawal of United States troops was not as practicable as he first thought. While it should still be the aim of the United States government to scale down its military commitment on the European continent, two major factors necessitated a more prolonged presence. Firstly, the shortcomings of the existing four-power government of Germany meant that consensus could rarely be reached on a universally acceptable government. Secondly, dissatisfaction of the German people with the imposed government threatened to invite organized opposition.\(^{41}\)

General Eisenhower was primarily concerned with military strategy and did not believe that the war should be fought on the basis of a potential political contest. Despite the protests of Prime Minister Churchill, Eisenhower chose not to push for Berlin in the closing stages of the war, believing that the Russians would capture the city and for American troops to meet them there would cost unnecessary casualties. Churchill was concerned with the symbolic value of Berlin, arguing that "if we deliberately leave Berlin to them, even if it should be in our grasp, the double event [along with the Russian capture of Vienna] may strengthen their conviction, already apparent, that they have done everything."\(^{42}\) Despite Churchill’s claims that Berlin had certainly not lost its former

\(^{39}\) Ibid. p.380

\(^{40}\) Secretary of War (Patterson) to the Secretary of State. Ibid. p.996

\(^{41}\) New York Times, 1 November 1945.

strategic importance as Stalin had suggested, Eisenhower decided that after isolating the Ruhr, he would direct the thrust along the axis Erfurt-Leipzig-Dresden in order to divide the German army in two.

Suspicious of Soviet designs, Churchill argued that the West’s strategy should incorporate two zones: a tactical zone where the West’s troops would stand on the lines they had reached, and an occupation zone which had been agreed by the Big Three. The armies of Britain and the United States had advanced unexpectedly well into the continent and Churchill was loath to relinquish any bargaining leverage that could help return the Soviets to their zones. He wished to use this tactical zone in the negotiations with Stalin in order to force a similar withdrawal by the Red Army.

The heads of state of the Allies entered Berlin for the first time in July 1945 to attend the Potsdam Conference. At Potsdam it was agreed that “so far as practicable, there shall be uniformity of treatment of the German population throughout Germany,” and Germany would be treated as a single economic unit. It was reaffirmed that the policy of decentralization of the German political and economic structures would be implemented and that a greater emphasis would be placed on local authorities.

Moderated themes of the Morgenthau Plan were contained in the final declaration of the conference. Production of metals, chemicals, machinery, aircraft and sea-going ships would be severely limited if not prohibited. While the Control Council would possess supreme authority, it was decided that German authorities would be required to assume the administration of their country, and “thus is should be brought home to the German people that the responsibility for the administration of such controls and any breakdown in these controls will rest with themselves.” This was somewhat reminiscent of Eisenhower and Roosevelt’s sentiment of letting them ‘stew in their own juice.’ Morgenthau had also wished to impress upon the German people the responsibility for the war and its consequences.

\[43\] Ibid. p.402

\[44\] Prime Minister Churchill to President Truman. Foreign Relations: 1945 - European Advisory Commission; Austria; Germany. p.231


\[46\] Ibid. p.1485
Secretary of State James Byrnes saw that the French, not having attended the Potsdam meeting were “very touchy” about decisions reached by the Allied Control Council and “did not feel themselves in any way obligated by the decisions taken by the three powers there.” Dispute arose among the Allies on the issue of recognition of a French government under Charles de Gaulle.

As the centre of a highly administrative Nazi regime, Berlin was the natural choice for the Allies to make their headquarters. While communications and transport had been severely ruptured by the War, important facilities were at least established. As the recognized capital of Germany, the city’s capture and control by the Allies signalled Hitler’s defeat. Each of the occupation powers had a zone of responsibility in the city, but the whole city was designated a ‘special status’ of quadripartite control. Since the city was situated 110 miles inside the Soviet zone of occupation, an oral agreement for access to the city was reached by the Commander in Chiefs of the zones, but the Allies did not push for formal guarantees for these rights. Three corridors for each of rail, Autobahn and air were established that traversed the Soviet zone of occupation. The vulnerability of these rights were highlighted in the Berlin blockade imposed by Stalin in 1948. The subsequent airlift was a diplomatic success for the the United States and in June 1949 formal agreements were signed between the occupation powers that formalized the rights of access to West Berlin.

The characteristics of wartime planning for a postwar Europe were major contributing factors toward the differences of opinion and aims that developed immediately following the surrender of Germany. Having lost enormous numbers of lives and resources, each of the Allies was concerned with its own interests. Stalin was determined to make Central and Eastern Europe a safe neighbour for the Soviet Union. Churchill believed that traditional balance of power politics would result in a peaceful Europe, while Roosevelt’s hopes were invested in an idealistic peaceful coexistence for the common good. Roosevelt’s death and Churchill’s election defeat did not radically

47 Minutes of Meeting of the Secretaries of State, War, and Navy, 6 November 1945. Foreign Relations: 1945 - European Advisory Commission; Austria; Germany. p.893
change purposes. In time, however, in trying to act upon previous policies, the Truman administration found itself operating in a volatile and inconsistent diplomatic environment. While there were in existence various plans for a postwar Germany, these plans were not able to form a solid foundation for the negotiations when faced with widely divergent national interests. Open to differing interpretations and very reliant upon various administrations, JCS 1067 and the Potsdam Protocol failed in their aim to provide a basis for rebuilding a peaceful, unified Germany. By the end of 1945 Germany was dismembered into four occupation zones. Berlin formed an additional zone with the special status of quadripartite control.
CHAPTER TWO

Eisenhower and Berlin

By the time of President Eisenhower’s inauguration in 1953, the division of Europe between East and West was an accomplished fact. Soviet power had been consolidated in the satellite states, and the Western powers were militarily allied in NATO. The aim of ‘rolling back’ communism was no longer considered viable. German reunification remained a United States aim, but only if it proceeded on the basis of the Bonn constitution. The Soviet presence in Eastern and Central Europe had progressed from being a transitional stage to status quo. The National Security Council (NSC) recognized:

The detachment of any major European satellite from the Soviet bloc does not now appear feasible except by Soviet acquiescence or by war. Such a detachment would not decisively affect the Soviet military capability either in delivery of weapons of mass destruction or in conventional forces, but would be a considerable blow to Soviet prestige and would impair in some degree Soviet conventional military capabilities in Europe.

Soviet advances in military technology had been dramatically displayed with the exploding of the USSR’s first atomic bomb, and later the development of missiles that were considered as superior to those possessed by the United States.

During the Eisenhower Administration Berlin developed into a “brilliant showplace” of the West. It served as a shining light of the free world’s prosperity, not

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only to the Germans in the Soviet zones of occupation, but indeed to all those peoples behind the ‘iron curtain.’ From 1953 to 1959, approximately three million people fled from East Germany to the West. At the same time the production and trade of West Berlin with the world tripled.3

During the war and in the postwar formulation of policy, Berlin was a symbol of Nazism, Prussianism, and by association, Fascism. By conquering Berlin, the Allies were capturing the heartland of their common enemy. Four power occupation of greater Berlin had been agreed upon in the spirit of this symbolism. As the communications and transport centre of a highly administrative Nazi government, it was a natural choice for the headquarters of the Occupation Powers. With the development of the Cold War, Berlin’s symbolism transformed from that of Allied unity and victory, to that of the tension between the Soviet Union and its former Allies. The United States and its NATO Allies found that they could not withdraw their troops as a matter of principle. Although numerically the number of troops was insignificant, their very presence in the heart of the Soviet zone was an important statement of Western determination and capabilities.

Berlin had assumed a ‘special status’ with the establishment of the Federal Republic of Germany under Chancellor Konrad Adenauer in September 1949. While West Germany became an autonomous state with a separate capital in Bonn, Berlin retained its Four-Power occupation status, under the control of the Occupation Powers, rather than the West German government. At the same time it was also considered by the Warsaw Pact as the capital of the German Democratic Republic. The Western powers had made strong commitments to the people of West Berlin that they would not be abandoned in the face of Soviet pressure. On 20 July 1948, Secretary of State George Marshall stated that “the United States is [now] resolved to maintain its position in Berlin and [will]...take all measures necessary for the exercise of its rights, including the fulfilment of supply of the population of its sector.”4 The subsequent Berlin Airlift of 1948-49 had been the most visible aspect of this commitment, but reassurance to the


people of the Western zones was a constant theme of postwar foreign relations. The United States presence in Berlin was as much to do with protecting the rights of the people of Berlin, as it was as a symbol of trust. Eisenhower believed:

The soundest basis for our remaining in Berlin, I felt, was our solemn obligation expressed to the two million Germans of West Berlin and to the entire world to stand by a city that had freely chosen to stay with the West and the cause of freedom. If our word to them would be broken, then no one in the world could have confidence in any pledge we made.\(^5\)

Consequently, the United States led the West in the maintenance of a Western presence in Berlin. While the pressure imposed on the issue had the potential to split NATO, the occupation of Berlin continued. Ambassador to the Soviet Union Charles Bohlen cautioned in 1953: “Berlin will probably be subject to increasing pressures from the Soviets. It is a potentially volatile area and may become more so, since military action might start there at almost any time.”\(^6\)

The issue of Berlin from 1949 to 1958 assumed a relatively low profile in international diplomacy. While the building workers’ riots of June 1953 offered a chance for bringing the issue onto the international arena, this opportunity was not taken. The West’s military presence in Berlin was in the form of “token garrisons.” Being one hundred miles into the territory of Soviet occupation with no enforceable routes of access, the city was militarily indefensible. The Berlin Blockade of 1948-49 had highlighted the precariousness of the Western presence. Any display of genuine resolve on the part of the Soviets would have meant that the West would be placed in the position of choosing between two extremes: abandonment or war. With only thirteen thousand troops in the Western zones, President Dwight D. Eisenhower was very conscious of the fact that “Berlin’s actual defense lay only in the West’s publicly expressed intention that to defend it we would, if necessary, resort to war.”\(^7\)

The Eisenhower Administration’s foreign policy was underpinned by the continual search for a peaceful solution to the Cold War. Secretary of State John Foster

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Dulles maintained an ardent ideological stance against Soviet communism, while Eisenhower was able to be more moderate and advocate a policy of ‘middle of the road.’ Rather than being a passive policy, Eisenhower’s understanding of the term was an active pursuit of United States interests while continuing to search for a stronger, and more peaceful relationship with the Soviet Union. He believed that “the term ‘middle of the road’ [was] acquiring and should continue to acquire a positive and aggressive significance.” Eisenhower’s policy was to persistently press for peace without compromising American interests or democratic ideals. He would try to avoid any confrontation that did not allow a feasible alternative that would not involve losing prestige on either side. When formulating a reaction to the Krushchev ultimatum of November 1958, Eisenhower found “the problem was delicate: We could leave no doubt in the Soviets’ minds of our intentions, yet we could not be provocative.” This principle pervaded much of the Eisenhower Administration’s foreign policy. During the crises of 1958-59, Eisenhower resisted unnecessarily forcing the Soviets to adopt a hard-line stance. In 1959 this attitude paid off when Krushchev allowed the May deadline to pass unnoticed without any apparent back down forced upon him.

Secretary of State John Foster Dulles acquired a reputation for ‘brinkmanship’ in his approach to diplomacy. This was motivated by a basic assumption that when pushed, the Soviet Union would not be prepared to go to war and that therefore United States resilience and determination when facing a crisis would force the Soviets to back down. While espousing strong ideological anti-communism, Dulles was also a pragmatist, “carefully weighing his diplomatic options for feasibility, in terms both of what American power could bear and what the American public would support.” Dulles’ emphasis was with the Atlantic link. While the United States had interests in Asia and the Middle East, Dulles, like President Woodrow Wilson, focussed his attention on Europe where he


believed there could exist an integrated united states of Europe. Toward this end he pursued the notion of a European Defence Community that would incorporate the armies of France and Germany in one collective security agreement.

The Soviet leadership was watched by the American government with intense interest from the death of Stalin in 1953. A period of collective leadership ensued with ambiguity on whether any one person held a dominant position over the others. Georgi Malenkov, Bulganin, and Nikita Krushchev all vied for supremacy. Krushchev’s ascendancy between 1953 and 1956 provided American diplomats with at least some idea of with whom they were dealing, though the view of Krushchev from the White House was somewhat sceptical. Foster Dulles was not convinced that Krushchev’s leadership would last for any substantial length of time. He agreed that “Krushchev had more power than anybody else in Russia but that he was not all-powerful as Stalin had been.” Having dealt directly with the Soviets during the Second World War, Eisenhower also failed to see any of Stalin’s prestige in the new Soviet premier.

A noticeable shift occurred in Soviet diplomacy after Stalin’s death. Initially, the Soviets appeared more willing to reach understanding with the West and inclined to use the forum of high-level international talks to reach this understanding: a strategy cynically labelled by Dulles as a “peace offensive.” The West received the impression that the new Soviet government was more flexible and conciliatory than its predecessor. It appeared as though the Soviets were prepared to break the Cold War stalemate with productive talks on important issues such as Germany and Korea. Ambassador to the Soviet Union Bohlen recognized a more conciliatory approach on the part of the Soviets but warned that the basic assumptions of the Soviet leadership had not changed. While seeking a reduction in tension and seeking to avoid war, the Soviets were, on the other hand, still considering any country not under its control as hostile and not prepared to relinquish control over the satellites or to make any substantial concessions. The

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Soviets publicly tried to secure the West's willingness to participate in major talks, thus attempting to revive these "almost disused weapons of diplomacy." Philip Mosely warned against a relaxation of Western vigilance. By getting the West to agree to the talks, he argued, the Soviet government "has chosen the terrain and the weapons for wreaking maximum damage against the vulnerable joints of the alliances which the West has shored up since 1948 against Soviet acts and threats of peace." He cautioned the West not to accept an over-simplification of Soviet motives: "As in the fable, the Soviet sun has suddenly taken to shining warmly; and the free world wayfarer, having forgotten the north wind, is ready to throw away his cloak and bask in its rays." By 1956, after consolidation of Krushchev's power and his renunciation of Stalinist policy, Mosely saw a very different 'style' of Soviet policy. Three important principles had appeared: "the principle of 'peaceful coexistence' of two systems, the rejection of the 'inevitability' of war, and the approval of various forms of transition to 'socialism'." While these principles were an important step toward a more accommodating relationship between East and West, they were not a renunciation of Soviet interests. In the final analysis it was these interests that determined Soviet policy. The new style of Soviet diplomacy was recognized as somewhat more confrontational, fuelled by an increasing military confidence. Mosely cautioned:

The most novel and alarming aspect of Krushchev's apparent view of nuclear strategy is his conviction that the Soviet leadership is now in a stronger position than the democratic West to force a new crisis close to the brink of war and to compel the other side to flinch from this fateful decision. Instead of bringing to the Soviet leadership a greater sense of power and security, the achievement of nuclear parity, combined with some slight and uncertain margin of missile superiority, has raised the level of risks, stepped up the frequency of crises, and increased the danger of war.

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16 Mosely, "Soviet Foreign Policy: New Goals or New Manners?" Ibid. p.438

17 Mosely, "The New Challenge of the Kremlin," Ibid. p.545
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This confrontational approach resulted from a confidence in Soviet military capabilities as well as Krushchev's own belief that he could force the situations in Berlin and later Cuba to his advantage.

On 11 June 1953 the East German government announced a package of policies that contrasted with their earlier programmes. Prior to this date the “sovietization” of East Germany was progressing solidly. The new policies of June 1953 embodied a slowing of the pace of industrialization and a similar slowing of the build-up of the East German armed forces. At the same time the government announced a ten per cent increase in the expectations of productivity, a move unpopular among workers and prompted some to lodge a protest with GDR officials on 16 June. They were encouraged by the fact that they were not impeded by the police. It became clear that there would be larger demonstration the next day and by the morning of 17 June the Soviets had moved three armoured divisions into East Berlin, comprising three hundred tanks. With military competence the Red Army quashed the protest during the day, without discharging firearms.

While the uprising was suppressed quickly and efficiently by the Soviet army, it was a clear indication of the frustrations that had been building in the areas of Soviet occupation. Approximately 300,000 workers were involved in the uprisings with whole towns taken over. The measures announced on 11 June may well have been interpreted as a sign of weakness on the part of the Soviets. The rioters were calling not only for a reduction in the workers’ norms, but also for free elections, a contentious issue in East-West negotiations since 1945.

Eisenhower was particularly impressed with the rioters’ chant in the Russian sector calling for free elections. He had continually stressed that a solution to the German problem would not be possible without the election of a free all-German

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government - only then could the country be reunified and a subsequent “honourable” peace treaty be signed. This new German Republic that would be created would then be in control of its own internal and external affairs, but would naturally be invited to participate in the European Defence Community.

Eisenhower wrote to Adenauer on the 25 July:

Great historical developments, such as the recent Berlin and East German anti-Communist demonstrations, rarely have single roots...this uprising was not just a momentary flash of desperation. The continuing news of disorders in Eastern Germany indicates a fundamental and lasting determination to be fully and finally free, despite long years of stern Sovietization.20

Along with the constant stream of refugees from the Soviet zone, the riots helped convince Eisenhower that “this increasing contrast between Western and Eastern Germany, the latter with its bankrupt regime and impoverished economy, will in the long run produce conditions which should make possible the liquidation of the present Communist dictatorship and of the Soviet occupation.”21 While this was regarded as the ideal result, in 1953 the Eisenhower Administration resisted playing an overt role in internal affairs. Rather, Dulles and Eisenhower offered support for the plans of the European leaders themselves and maintained that they did not wish to impose an American system on Europe.22

At a June 25 meeting of the National Security Council with the President in attendance, Dulles briefed his colleagues on the recent riots in East Germany and fifteen other places in the Soviet Union. He believed that the riots demonstrated a total failure of the Soviet system and that there was a good chance that the Russians would soon replace the East German government with one that was more conservative. The uprisings of 1953, as well as those in Hungary in 1956 were a clear indication of a “fatal defect”23 in the Soviet system. Most importantly, the significance of the rioters’ catch-cry calling for free elections was not lost. He argued that in any diplomatic exchange the

20 Branyan & Larsen (eds), *The Eisenhower Administration 1953-1961*. p.179
21 Ibid. p.180
22 Ibid. p.174
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Soviets were clearly not in a position to call for such elections now, while the United States was. The Council discussed the merits of the President or the Secretary of State making a public announcement on the subject of the riots, but was very careful not to compromise Chancellor Adenauer’s ratification of the European Defence Community. Dulles recommended that the United States raise the issue in the United Nations; though being wary of turning the United Nations into a propaganda forum. It must qualify as a “good issue” on its own merits, and must have more value than simply for propaganda. If the matter were raised in the United Nations General Assembly it must be done “not to precipitate fruitless armed revolt,” but rather “to help satellite people demonstrate to Soviet leaders [the] impossibility of holding these peoples indefinitely in subjection.”

On 18 June the Psychological Strategy Board had been instructed to examine ways in which the issue could be exploited within the next 60 days. Its recommendations included more emphasis on ‘passive’ as opposed to ‘active’ resistance and to promote U.S. advocacy of “free elections in the satellites and association with the Western European community, with emphasis on economic cooperation and rehabilitation,” as well as “subsequent withdrawal of all foreign troops from Germany, Austria and the Satellites.” These recommendations were approved by the President and circulated as NSC 158.

Secretary Dulles believed that the popular unrest in the Soviet satellites was forcing the “commie rulers” to try to stem the unrest by making concessions to some of the dissidents. The public impression was that the Soviet power structure in Eastern Europe was beginning to disintegrate. Ambassador Wadsworth in Czechoslovakia substantiated these impressions and reported that the new Soviet government seemed more flexible than Stalin, while the ambassadors in Poland, Hungary, and Rumania saw a slowing down of “Sovietization” but did not see evidence either of the discontent assuming a “bolder or overt form” or that the national governments of these countries

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26 The Ambassador in Czechoslovakia to the Dept of State, 7 July 1953. *Ibid.* pp.70-71. Wadsworth reported that the local press had only that day announced the first real relaxation of restrictive measures in Czechoslavakia since the 1948 Communist coup.
Chapter Two • Eisenhower and Berlin

were in immediate danger of collapse.\textsuperscript{27} A memorandum on psychological and political warfare in Europe was prepared by these Ambassadors at a Chiefs of Mission meeting in Luxembourg in mid-September and circulated in the Department of State in late September 1953. Working on the basis that the measure of success was the withdrawal of Soviet troops from Eastern Europe, the document saw that the Soviets would “probably eventually consider it in their interests” to withdraw their troops and that “there is little we can do by political warfare operations to advance the date of such withdrawal.” Rather, “stirring up resistance elements or incitements to revolt might have the long range effect of retarding a Soviet military withdrawal.” Lest resistance elements be “killed off prematurely,” the United States should not actively encourage sabotage or rebellion, but should “confine our efforts to keeping the spirit of resistance alive.”\textsuperscript{28}

Such a passive approach to the Berlin riots was followed in the subsequent months. The United States public reaction to the uprisings of June 1953 was minimal despite its potential propaganda value. Large-scale intervention, either military or economic, was dismissed as unrealistic. A consideration was the uncertainty with which Western diplomats viewed the new Soviet government. If, in fact, the Soviets were willing to be more moderate, then Western interference in domestic affairs could well be counter-productive. Consequently, Eisenhower and Dulles were cautious in their approach and slow in reaction. By 1956, when Hungarians rose up, the Eisenhower Administration reacted with more determination and confidence, having to at least some extent measured up the Soviet government.

The Soviet premier in 1953, Georgi Malenkov, argued that Soviet resilience and staunchness led to the frustration of the provocative venture of the West in Berlin, who “intended to suppress the democratic forces of Germany, to ruin the German Democratic Republic...to turn Germany into a militarist state and to revive a local point of war in Central Europe.” He continued that the outcome was a significant victory for the Soviet cause of peace.\textsuperscript{29} The West was accused of sponsoring and inflaming the

\textsuperscript{27} \textit{Ibid.} pp.71-74

\textsuperscript{28} Department of State Memorandum, 1 October 1953. \textit{Ibid.} pp.81-86


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workers of West Germany in activism, but again the issue was treated quietly in Soviet diplomacy.

At the Geneva Summit of July 1955, Bulganin, Krushchev, Molotov and Zhukov attended as the collective government of the Soviet Union. Zhukov, who had worked with Eisenhower after the war, was quickly dismissed as mere ‘window-dressing.’ Molotov and Bulganin were also dismissed in the minds of the American delegation, and appeals were directed toward Krushchev. At the Summit, Eisenhower made his Open Skies proposal. While Bulganin replied that the idea was interesting and that it would be considered in detail by the Soviet government, it was Krushchev’s quick dismissal of the idea that convinced the American delegation who was, in fact, in charge.

Addressing the forum at the Geneva Summit of July 1955, Eisenhower called for the Big Four to accept their ‘special responsibilities’ toward Germany and facilitate unification. As a united country, Eisenhower argued that “we insist a united Germany is entitled to its choice, to exercise its inherent right of collective self-defense,” but on the other hand “we are ready to take account of legitimate security interests of the Soviet Union.” The Federal Republic of Germany was already making a sizeable military contribution to NATO and had been a potential participant in the European Defence Community. Understandably, the Soviet Union saw the rearming of West Germany as a threat.

On 10 November 1958, Krushchev again called for a resolution to the Berlin issue. It was time for the Federal Republic of Germany to establish communications with the East German government to facilitate reunification. The Western Occupation Powers had dishonoured the Potsdam agreements by allowing the development of a German military and drawing it into “the aggressive military bloc,” NATO. The German Federal Republic already possessed American rockets that could be equipped with nuclear warheads. He played upon European fears by arguing that the German army was already bigger than the French - when considering French global commitments - and potentially bigger than both the French and the British. These countries were also


31 Ibid. p.265

threatened economically by West German ‘imperialism.’ West German rearmament was taking the country down “a road dangerous to peace in Europe and fatal to West Germany itself.” It was time to curtail the growth of this separatist state that was threatening the existence of the East German government. Krushchev called upon West Germany to recognize the East German government and to enter into negotiations with it to establish a unified Germany.\textsuperscript{33}

On the issue of Berlin, the Soviet premier contended that the West had made a “state within a state,” from which they were engaging in subversive activity toward the Warsaw Pact. The artificial situation in Berlin was “beneficial to the Western powers and to none but the Western powers.” Therefore, “the time has evidently come for the powers which signed the Potsdam agreement to give up the remnants of the occupation regime in Berlin and thus make it possible to create a normal atmosphere in the capital of the German Democratic Republic.” In order to do so the Soviets were willing to hand over all of its functions in the city to the East German government, and “let the United States, France and Britain form their own relations with the German Democratic Republic and come to an agreement with it if they are interested in certain questions connected with Berlin.” An ominous warning against resorting to arms was issued. Any attack against East Germany would, he said, constitute an attack against the whole Warsaw Pact and would be treated as such.\textsuperscript{34}

For the United States the most serious aspect of Krushchev’s speech was the danger of the Soviets passing over the supervision of access rights to the East German government. Western access rights to Berlin stemmed from agreements reached by the Allied nations at the conclusion of the Second World War. They were agreements between the United States, the Soviet Union, Britain and France. By handing over supervision duties to the East Germans, the Soviets were effectively relinquishing any responsibilities to uphold these contracts. The East German government would not be under any obligation to allow Allied traffic through its country, thus in effect threatening another Berlin blockade. In order to avoid such a situation through any means apart from force, negotiations would have to be conducted with a government which they

\textsuperscript{33} \textit{New York Times}, 11 November 1958. p.10

\textsuperscript{34} Ibid.
refused to recognize. Such communications would give unquestionable authority to the government of the German Democratic Republic.

The initial reaction from the United States was subdued. The speech was considered by many as mere propaganda and as empty threats. The prevailing view amongst Western diplomats was that there was unlikely to be a crisis on the scale of that of 1948-49.\footnote{New York Times, 13 November 1958. pp.1-2} The United States government considered its position in Berlin to be legally unassailable. At a news conference on 26 November, Secretary Dulles stated that Soviet obligations made at the conclusion of the Berlin Blockade in June 1949 committed the Soviet Union to guaranteeing access to Berlin and that these obligations would be considered binding by the Western Occupation Powers. The United States would not accept a relinquishment of Soviet obligations to East German officials, but they may, however, deal with such officials so long as it did not signify a substitution of the G.D.R. for the existing obligations of the Soviet Union.\footnote{Secretary of State Dulles at a news conference, 26 November 1958. American Foreign Policy: Current Documents - 1958. p.588-589} Countering Krushchev's claims that the Potsdam agreements had been violated by the West by the establishment of a rearmed, autonomous West German state, Dulles stressed that the rights of access to Berlin dated from explicit agreements signed at the conclusion of the Berlin Blockade in June 1949. The argument that Western violation of the Potsdam Protocol therefore relieved the Soviet Union of all obligations he charged as a fabrication of Soviet propaganda.\footnote{Secretary Dulles news conference. Ibid. p.589}

On 27 November 1958 Krushchev sent a lengthy communication to the governments of France, Britain, and the United States, accusing these countries of selectively honouring some obligations, while completely disregarding others. The Potsdam Protocol was designed to ensure against the creation of German cartels or blocs, and to prevent militarism. These particular articles were being ignored by the West, while they were insisting upon the joint occupation of Berlin. Access to West Berlin passed directly through or over, territory of the German Democratic Republic, a state the Federal Republic, France, Britain and the United States refused to recognize.
To help alleviate the strains on the German Democratic Republic that came about from the abnormal situation in its capital, Krushchev proposed making West Berlin a "free city," the affairs of which would be conducted as an independent political unit. They were willing to allow United Nations supervision but would insist upon the withdrawal of western troops. If the proposal proved unacceptable to the United States, then "there will no longer remain any topic for negotiation between the former occupying powers on the Berlin question." "Half a year" would be allowed for these negotiations to proceed, during which time there would be no changes to the existing procedures of military traffic. This effectively set a deadline of 27 May 1959.

Krushchev's pronouncement raised the issue of Berlin "which had remained relatively quiet for more than nine years, into a tinderbox." In the face of the Soviet ultimatum, the President and the Secretary of State "put less credibility in Krushchev's threat to move in the following May than he possibly expected." Eisenhower refused to treat the issue as a crisis, preferring to consider it a logical part of Occupation Power negotiations. Publicly, he all but ignored the Soviet memorandum. By addressing the issue directly he risked forcing both sides to adopt irreconcilable positions. Instead, he preferred to play down the importance of the ultimatum lest the issue gather momentum of its own.

While contingency plans were discussed in the event that Berlin would have to be abandoned, the United States commitment was unwavering. The diplomatic response was quick but non-committal. The Department of State replied that while the concept of a "free city" that included the whole of Berlin would be looked at closely, but so long as the Soviet proposal only applied to West Berlin it was unacceptable. They reiterated the call for all-German free elections in order to solve the German question. More important than finding a particular response was the need to shore up the North Atlantic Alliance. Krushchev's ultimatum tested the Allies in their positions on exactly how far

39 Ibid. p.337
41 Department of State to the Soviet Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 30 September 1958. Ibid. pp.584-587
Soviet provocation could go before the West would go to war. All the Western leaders found that "it would not be easy to explain to the public why a nation would risk war over an issue so seemingly slight as the nationality of the man who stamps the papers as a convoy proceeds through a checkpoint." In Britain, an election was looming for Prime Minister Harold Macmillan. He was therefore more concerned with appearing as a bridge in East-West negotiations rather than taking a staunch line against the Warsaw Pact. Neither the French nor the British were initially convinced of the merits of maintaining the commitment to Berlin at any cost, however President Charles De Gaulle was quickly swayed into supporting the United States position, and while the British were far more hesitant, they too were eventually persuaded to support NATO unity.

In late January 1959, Eisenhower called an informal meeting of the Defense and State Departments to discuss the Berlin developments. Some favoured a direct approach. The Joint Chiefs of Staff advocated engaging an armoured division at the first sign of a truck convoy being stopped, an approach that was also supported by the French. Dulles argued that more important would be a cultivation of international support. World opinion, he argued, was not yet ready for military intervention over Berlin. Eisenhower believed that one division would be too weak to fight its way to Berlin, while at the same time being far more than was necessary for a mere show of force. There was also the strong risk that such a confrontational action would force the Soviets to "put up or shut up." Accordingly, the plan which was approved at the meeting involved several steps which were designed to display determination without forcing either side to steer toward confrontation. The United States would refuse to acquiesce in the replacement of Soviet border officials with East German officials and would begin military preparations on a scale large enough to be detected by Soviet intelligence, but not so large as to create alarm. If transit was restricted after the deadline, then a probe convoy with armed protection would be sent and further decisions would then be made by the United States government. In order that Krushchev

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43 Marks, *Power and Peace: The Diplomacy of John Foster Dulles.* pp.142-143

be given an opportunity to modify his position “without losing face,” endeavours would be made to bring about a foreign ministers’ meeting in the middle of April. Eisenhower was conscious that “possibly we were risking the very fate of civilization on the premise that the Soviets would back down from the deadline when confronted by force.” He also realized that “if we were not willing to take this risk, we would be certain to lose.”

Within days, signals emanating from the Soviet bloc hinted that it was possible that sections of the speech, including the 27 May deadline need not necessarily be taken literally. This was the beginning of a gradual diplomatic backdown on the part of the Soviets. The United States recommended that a scheduled Foreign Ministers’ Meeting was brought forward to April. This would allow Krushchev the opportunity and the forum in which to moderate and negotiate his views that had been put forward on 27 November. Eisenhower’s refusal to take on the issue head-on gave the Soviets a clear display of Western resolve while still leaving acceptable alternatives other than the use of force. Eisenhower observed: “So skillful and subtle was each step backward that its significance was hardly noticed and for this reason the retreat, although absolute, caused scarcely any loss in Krushchev’s public standing.” The passing of the deadline on 27 May 1958 was observed not as an escalation of the crisis, but ironically, as John Foster Dulles’ funeral. Statesmen and diplomats from around the world, such as Winston Churchill and Andrei Gromyko, were in attendance.

The easing of the crisis of 1958-59 did not solve the problem of Berlin. The United States commitment to West Berlin had not diminished, neither had Soviets’ determination to force the West from the unnatural situation within their borders. The central issue of the ensuing crisis was still unresolved - was the United States willing to go to war over Berlin? The gradual withdrawal of the Soviets from their initial position


46 Ibid. p.342


allowed negotiations to be held. Most important among these was a meeting of foreign ministers and a summit meeting promised for 1960 to discuss amongst other things the issue of disarmament. The Soviets had been continually pressuring for more summit talks after 1953, while the United States had been reluctant. Ostensibly because of the U-2 incident, the Summit conference in May 1960 broke down immediately without accomplishing anything. East-West relations were poor, and the arms race was escalating despite the best efforts of Eisenhower to slow defence expenditure. Poor handling of the entire U-2 incident from both sides forced the adoption of two irreconcilable positions: something that had been avoided throughout the Eisenhower Administration. Nearing the end of his term Eisenhower was conscious that there were still many potential problem areas in United States foreign relations; two of the most important being Cuba and Berlin.
John F. Kennedy assumed the office of President in January 1961 determined to maintain the previous Administration’s policy toward Berlin, while at the same time hoping, somewhat idealistically, that a face to face meeting with the Soviets could facilitate a mutual understanding. Initial policy was a combination of Eisenhower’s determination and the clean slate of a new administration. The core attitude toward Berlin remained essentially the same, but the emphasis and motivations were different. Both the President and Secretary of State Dean Rusk reassured that “we are strongly committed to the freedom of West Berlin. We are strongly committed to the freedom of the people of that city, and we expect to sustain our own position in that city as we look into the future.”

Kennedy strove to maintain the status quo in Berlin and resisted renewed calls from the Soviets forcing change in the situation. The Eisenhower Administration had treated the Berlin problem as part of that of the whole of Germany, but had admitted that the position in the city was “abnormal,” and required some sort of solution. Nevertheless, Eisenhower and Dulles maintained that the whole of Berlin must be treated as the problem, and not just West Berlin singled out. Berlin was a city of four-power occupation and each of these occupation powers had rights that extended throughout the whole of the city. West Berlin was ostentatiously omitted from the Federal Republic of Germany in honouring this four-power status, and Adenauer’s government was consequently based in Bonn. Eisenhower had adamantly maintained the

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routine patrols of East Berlin as a symbol of quadripartite responsibilities. Krushchev's 1958 proposal to create a 'free city' of West Berlin was rejected by the Americans because the plan did not apply the whole of the city. The four-power status of the entire city of Berlin was the foundation for the West's legal rights of occupation and they therefore refuted Ulbricht's and Krushchev's claims that Berlin was the rightful capital of the German Democratic Republic. They argued that the four-power status of all of Berlin precluded any claim that the East Germans might lodge. This special status could only be repealed by agreements between all four occupation powers and could not be voided by illegal claims on the part of the Ulbricht regime.

By contrast, it was soon apparent that the Kennedy Administration had in reality accepted the division of Berlin, along with that of the rest of Germany. The West had been forced to accept that since 1947 Eastern Berlin and East Germany had been under the control of the Soviet Union and that four-power control of these sectors was illusory. Public pronouncements by the President, the Secretary of State, as well as other ranking government officials spoke of the problem of "West Berlin." Pledges and reassurances of security were given to the people of West Berlin and it was West Berlin's security that was considered indivisible from America's. No longer was the whole population of the city seen as a joint responsibility, but rather the French, British and American sectors was under de facto jurisdiction of NATO, while the East was allocated to the Warsaw Pact. The Eisenhower Administration had viewed West Berlin as an occupation power responsibility, whereas Kennedy saw it as "an isolated outpost." For Eisenhower Berlin was a symbol of Western rights as derived from the Allies' postwar agreements and responsibilities of the victors. These responsibilities had created and validated important United States interests in Europe, and maintaining an American military presence in Berlin was a key indication of the protection of these newly identified rights and interests. Kennedy on the other hand was more concerned with Berlin's symbolism as it related to American prestige and international credibility. He could not afford to back down lest it signal weakness and incapability to protect world-wide interests. He told the Soviet Ambassador to the United States:

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If we, the United States, agree to leave West Berlin then no one is going to trust Washington’s word anymore, and all our obligations toward other countries will turn into a worthless piece of paper. If we are forced out of Berlin in any way, all our guarantees to Western Europe will lose any sense. And this affects our basic interests, for the alliance with Western nations is the keystone of American foreign policy.3

Kennedy was more concerned with the diplomatic repercussions of a withdrawal for American prestige rather than identifying important existing interests in Europe. American national security was directly linked to diplomatic and military credibility. Anatoly Dobrynin’s assessment of the American position was that President Kennedy would accept the division of Germany into two autonomous states, having “already hinted he might be ready to recognize the German Democratic Republic in three to five years if Berlin receded as an issue,” but he could not under any circumstances accept any change in the status of West Berlin that would involve the withdrawal of American troops.4 Krushchev, however, overlooked President Kennedy’s readiness to reach an agreement over West Berlin, believing that with enough pressure he could force the Berlin situation in the East’s favour; a miscalculation whereby, Dobrynin argues, a tremendous opportunity for both Soviet diplomacy and Cold War detente was missed.5

The American military presence on the continent was subjected to a fundamental re-evaluation early in the new administration. The right of the Allied presence in Germany and Berlin was not questioned. It was the nature and defence of the interests in the region that underwent changes. NATO’s security umbrella had been extended to include Berlin and, according to the North Atlantic Treaty an attack on any one of the Western forces in the city would constitute an attack on the whole NATO alliance. President Eisenhower had invested the military defence of Berlin in an overwhelming strike against any force that attacked Western troops. Based upon similar foundations as


4 Ibid. p.64

5 Ibid.
his Middle East doctrine of Massive Retaliation, his European strategy was reliant upon nuclear weapons to provide security. Both Eisenhower and Dulles had used the threat of an atomic counter-attack as deterrence and the basis of Berlin’s security.

Believing that such a reliance on a nuclear counter-attack lacked credibility and committed the United States to an extreme position, President Kennedy and Secretary of State Dean Rusk pursued a strengthening of conventional forces in Europe with a simultaneous rise in the threshold at which nuclear weapons would be employed. The nuclear deterrent was important, but it should not be the entire defence strategy. Such an extreme reaction could only encourage an extreme crisis. Rusk was critical of Eisenhower’s faith in nuclear retaliation, arguing that “the problems which are likely to arise and have arisen in the past are problems which require great flexibility of means. I think it is the flexibility of means that is important.” President Kennedy was determined that “we intend to have a wider choice than humiliation or all-out nuclear action.” Thus, the United States as part of NATO was strengthening its “capability of placing in any critical area at the appropriate time a force which, combined with those of our allies, is large enough to make clear our determination and our ability to defend our rights at all costs - and to meet all levels of aggressor pressure with whatever levels of force are required.” Nuclear weapons would not be used automatically but would follow the failure of conventional forces. A conflict would be allowed a growth period during which time it was still possible for a nuclear catastrophe to be averted. Military intervention, however, was considered an integral part of diplomacy: “We will at all times be ready to talk, if talk will help. But we must also be ready to resist with force, if force is forced upon us. Either alone would fail.” Kennedy was keen to resolve the Berlin issue through diplomacy, but he maintained a position of strength by reserving a military option.


8 Ibid.

9 Ibid. p.534
President Kennedy had early indicated that he wished to establish a closer relationship with the Soviet government. On 9 March 1960 the U.S. Ambassador to the Soviet Union Llewellyn Thompson delivered a confidential message to Krushchev proposing a summit conference. Kennedy wanted to have a personal meeting with the Soviet premier with the view of furthering mutual understanding and forming the basis for a good, open relationship. The meeting was agreed to by the Soviets in May and set for Vienna in early June, to extend the President’s previously planned trip to France. Kennedy was adamant that the American public not harbour any false hopes for the imminent meeting. He had instructed his press secretary “not [to] build this up into something it isn’t. We’re not likely to accomplish very much over there, and it would be dangerous to stir up false hopes at home.”10 The purpose of the meeting was to create a mutual understanding of aims and motives and thereby allow more lucid judgement. Kennedy was acutely aware that as President, constitutionally the “heavy decisions” must rest with him and that he therefore had a responsibility to make a personal assessment of his opponent. He explained that “in my lifetime I [have] been present, alive, during three world wars [WWI, WWII and Korea] and it is impossible to study the origins of each of these struggles without realizing the serious miscalculations which were made by the leaders on both sides.”11 The subject of avoiding miscalculation was a recurring theme of Kennedy’s presidency. It was constantly stressed that in the nuclear age such misjudgement as had occurred in the past was lethal to millions of lives at once. In Kennedy’s view miscalculation was the direct result of misunderstanding. It was upon this basis that he went to Vienna seeking closer personal ties with the Soviet premier.

The Vienna summit - the only meeting between Krushchev and Kennedy as heads of state - was only six weeks after the Kennedy administration’s credibility was seriously harmed by the failed overthrow of Cuba’s Fidel Castro. Kennedy’s handling of the Bay of Pigs affair bred all of the prerequisites for nuclear miscalculation as he defined it, that he was trying to avoid. The failed invasion of Cuba, executed by Cuban exiles with CIA sponsorship, and the President’s acknowledgement of responsibility,


provided the Kennedy Administration with an enormous diplomatic credibility problem and an image of an erratic, rash and inexperienced President. Kennedy's hesitation in committing U.S. troops to the invasion contrasted vividly with Krushchev's confidence in putting down the Hungarian riots in 1956. American commentators charged that the Bay of Pigs fiasco in April 1961 greatly influenced Krushchev's approach to the new American government. They argue that in June 1961 Krushchev sensed the time was ripe to take advantage of the Kennedy Administration's ebb in international standing to force concessions on the German question, believing the Soviet premier went to Vienna "not to negotiate but to dictate to the young American President"12 - a view corroborated by Dobrynin as "essentially correct."13 Krushchev had outlined his approach to the impending summit in a special Politburo meeting several days before the Vienna meeting where, attending in the capacity of counselor of the Soviet delegation, Dobrynin saw Krushchev's approach was based on the assumption that "under the pressure of Soviet troops in Europe the young and inexperienced American president could be made to concede, in particular on Berlin."14 During the Vienna talks Krushchev adopted an uncompromising and self-assured posture.15 Faced with Soviet intransigence Kennedy was disappointed in his hopes for achieving any kind of rapprochement between the U.S.S.R. and the U.S. The only agreement reached during the talks was concerning Laos; all other issues - most especially Germany - resulted in a hardening of differences.

Kennedy had researched well for the conference and did not allow himself to be baited by Krushchev's "foot-stamping tantrums."16 The conference, after all, was designed for the two leaders to take each other's measure, and not necessarily to reach agreement on any specific issues, though Kennedy's hopes for stronger ties through

13 Dobrynin, In Confidence, p.44
14 Ibid.
16 Salinger, With Kennedy, p.227
personal contact did not come to fruition at Vienna. The proceedings of the talks were “somber,” “sober,” and “grim.”17 “There was no discourtesy, no loss of tempers, no threats or ultimatums by either side. No advantage or concession was either granted or given; no major decision was either planned or taken; no spectacular progress was either achieved or pretended.”18 While differences between the two sides were not materially reduced, Kennedy claimed that very act of opening direct communications would reduce the threat of “dangerous misjudgment on either side.” Kennedy reported to his public that the most somber talks were those on the issues of Berlin and Germany:

I made it clear to Mr. Krushchev that the security of Western Europe and therefore our own security are deeply involved in our presence and our access rights to West Berlin, that those rights are based on law and not on sufferance, and that we are determined to maintain those rights at any risk and thus meet our obligation to the people of West Berlin and their right to choose their own future.19

He considered both impossible and illegal for the Soviet Union to unilaterally announce the end of the occupation “with a piece of paper.”

A detailed account of the Soviet position on the Berlin question was contained in an aide-memoire presented to the President during talks on the 4 June. It repeated the major demands that Krushchev had made of the Eisenhower Administration in 1958 and 1959, though he moderated them slightly in the new note. The aide-memoire called for a peace treaty to be signed with both the Federal Republic of Germany and the German Democratic Republic, or “if the United States is not prepared to sign a joint peace treaty with the two German States, a peaceful settlement could be achieved on the basis of two treaties.” It would be at each government’s discretion as to which German state it would sign. Upon the signing of these peace treaties, the two German governments would be responsible for their own internal affairs, thus ending any occupation power responsibilities lingering from World War Two.20 This incorporated the Soviet view that


18 Ibid, p.992

19 President Kennedy’s Report to the Nation on the Vienna Summit, 6 June 1961. Department of State Bulletin, p.993
the unification of Germany was a matter for Germans to sort out amongst themselves, which contrasted with the United States argument that it was a responsibility of the occupation powers to decide.

Earlier demands were softened in the new proposals. The Soviets no longer required West Germany to immediately relinquish its membership of NATO. Instead, it said “both German States could for a certain period, even after the conclusion of a peace treaty, remain in the military alliances to which they now belong.” Nor did the new proposals require the recognition of the governments of East Germany or West Germany by all the parties of the treaty. This would be up to each government’s discretion.21

West Berlin was seen as “a place where the Bonn revanchist circles continually maintain extreme tension and organize all kinds of provocations very dangerous to the cause of peace.” The city could no longer be allowed to exist as a “dangerous hotbed of tension and international conflicts.” In order to help “normalize” the situation in West Berlin, the notion of a demilitarized, ‘free city’ under United Nations supervision was again put forward, arguing: “The occupation regime now being maintained has already outlived itself and has lost all connection with the purposes for which it was established.” West Berlin should now be put under the control of the United Nations and its internal matters determined by “the freely expressed will of the people.” While the existing United States troop levels would not be allowed to be maintained, there would be “token troop contingents...as guarantors of the free city.” However, it was again pointed out that with the conclusion of a Soviet peace treaty with the German Democratic Republic, existing Allied rights of access would be terminated and it would be necessary to negotiate with Walter Ulbricht’s government new agreements to pass over East German territory. Ulbricht had already declared his willingness to abide by these agreements, but although the Soviets had said that the signing of a peace treaty did not necessarily mean that they demanded recognition for both governments, any government level negotiations between the United States and Ulbricht would be de facto recognition. Attempting to force some urgency for a peace treaty, Krushchev again

21 Ibid.
imposed a six month time limit, saying that it would be impossible for him to delay signing a peace treaty past December.  

The manner of the Soviet premier at the Vienna summit in tandem with the aide memoire confirmed State Department fears that had been growing since January that a crisis was again mounting on the Berlin issue. Krushchev had been pressing the issue with the U.S. Ambassador to the Soviet Union Llewellyn Thompson for some time and since January there was an escalation in the United States presence on the continent and State Department re-evaluation of the American government’s position. Earlier in the year former Secretary of State Dean Acheson had been commissioned for a special analysis of the Berlin issue. An interim report presented in April 1961 found the United States ill-prepared to deal with a crisis that seemed likely to occur later that same year. He identified three basic American objectives: “(1) the freedom of the people of West Berlin to choose their own system; (2) the presence of Western troops so long as the people required and desired them; and (3) unimpeded access from the West to the city across the East German Autobahn, air lanes and canals.” If threats were made to any of these, he argued, the Allies would be divided in their approach and that the military alternatives available were inadequate. Secretary of State Rusk told a NATO Council meeting that he considered their first good indication of how seriously the Soviets were taking their demands on whether or not they published the aide memoire. If it were kept secret then it was to considered a basis for further negotiations, but if they published it the West could assume that the Kremlin had launched another propaganda offensive. Krushchev published the text on 10 June, prompting urgent policy preparation in the State Department “to get all our ducks in a row with respect to German planning.” A special Berlin Task Force was planned, but authority disputes between the departments of State and Defense meant that it was not effectively functioning until after the East Germans sealed the East-West Berlin border in mid-August 1961.

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22 Ibid.  
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Having received a copy of the aide memoire on 7 June, Ulbricht held a press conference on 15 June where he denied any knowledge of an intention to build a wall along the border between East and West Berlin. The flow of refugees escaping from East Germany to the West through Berlin corresponded to the heightening of tensions and uncertainty between January and August 1961. More than fifty percent of the escapees were young people and many of the refugees were skilled. Chances for East German economic recovery were being seriously depleted with the enormous loss of vital labour. The mass exodus was described by Ulbricht as a “human hemorrhage” and requested Warsaw Pact approval and help to stem the flow. He called for a special meeting of the Warsaw Pact’s Political Consultative Committee in late March to secure support where he briefly proposed the introduction of tighter border controls and the erection of a barbed-wire barrier along the boundary between the East and West sectors of Berlin. While his Warsaw Pact colleagues did not rule out preparations for such a move, they did consider such an act at that point in time as too belligerent. They had not yet sized up the Kennedy Administration and had not received the impression of weakness and indecision that was the result of the Bay of Pigs fiasco only a couple of weeks later. West German elections were also looming in September which would prompt Chancellor Adenauer to make more strident reactions than he would otherwise. Despite this, a Soviet note of 17 February stated that the issue could not wait until after these West German elections and that a settlement must be reached as soon as possible.

Pressure from Ulbricht had an important influence on Krushchev in the ensuing crisis. Krushchev was urged to oust the West’s troops from the city that the German Democratic Republic had claimed as its capital. Rather than being a secure and stable position to conduct the business of government, the East Germans saw Berlin as an encroachment on their territorial sovereignty by ‘capitalist imperialism.’ There was the embarrassment of a large proportion of the population and workforce passing through Berlin in their escape from “the workers’ paradise.” Across the sector boundary the economic vitality and opulence of West Berliners contradicted communist doctrine.

26 Ibid. pp.49-50. In his memoirs, Krushchev claims credit for the idea for the “establishment of border control.” He says he communicated the idea to a very receptive Ulbricht and delegated the planning for the construction of the wall to Marshal Yakubovsky who was commander in chief of the Soviet occupation forces in Germany. See: Jerrold L. Schecter & Vyacheslav V. Luchkov (eds), Krushchev Remembers: The Glasnost Tapes. (Boston: Little, Brown & Co., 1990) p.169
attacking capitalist decadence. Krushchev argued that East Germany was at a natural
disadvantage when compared to the West. Not only did the Federal Republic have
greater industrial centres and richer resources, but it was also backed by the rich United
States, a country that "had robbed the entire world and grown fat off the first and
second world wars." The situation in Berlin "was a war for people's minds, not an
armed conflict." While the contest between communism and capitalism that was being
waged in Germany and especially Berlin was a legitimate contest, the odds were not
even. Krushchev recognized that in a competition that was decided "by the shop
windows, by the price of goods, and by wages....we had no chance of competing with
the West." Without a resolution to this very public flaunting of Western opulence,
Ulbricht complained, the East German regime could never pursue the true callings of the
government and create a stable communist state. Rather, by June 1961 the Ulbricht
regime was struggling and was close to collapse. Ulbricht asked Krushchev to provide
a labor force to compensate for this dangerously depleted resource, but Krushchev
refused to send unskilled workers because Soviets doing menial labor in a former enemy
was unacceptable. Denied any chance of actually replacing the workers lost to the
West, Ulbricht's frustration intensified. Something needed to be done urgently to curb
the exodus of skilled labour and to quiet the disruptive influences in Berlin. The problem
had become acute with over thirty thousand refugees fleeing East Germany in the month
of July 1961.

For the Americans the symbolism of Berlin as an "escape hatch" was potent. It
was instrumental in convincing them in their commitment to the people of Germany to
whom they saw a responsibility to protect from the 'scandalous' repression of the
communist regimes. The support of the people of West Berlin gave vital legitimacy to
the United States presence in Germany, though the American government maintained
that officially it neither encouraged nor discouraged the flow of refugees. By securing
popular support within the areas of Allied occupation, the West's diplomacy was served

27 Schecter & Luchkov (eds), Krushchev Remembers: The Glasnost Tapes. p.164
28 Ibid. p.165
30 Schecter & Luchkov (eds), Krushchev Remembers: The Glasnost Tapes. p.169
by the ability to call for free elections throughout Germany to solve the German problem, with confidence that the outcome of such election would be a victory for a democratic government sympathetic to the West. United States diplomacy made much of the popularity of the Western occupation powers and the contrast of the unpopularity of that of the East German government. Popular unrest such as the riots of 1953 and the constant stream of refugees from East to West was visible testament to this. When faced with uncertainty over West Berlin's the State Department and the President were quick to reassure the city's population, along with the rest of the world, that they would not be abandoned.

As tension mounted reassurances became even more frequent. Secretary Rusk saw the necessity of cultivating world opinion in favour of the U.S. position on Berlin, relying on a natural inclination for the United Nations to prefer the status quo "where the status quo is reasonable and should be tolerable to all concerned," to political and military upheaval, Rusk and Kennedy attempted to convince the world that by demanding change the Soviet Union was on the offensive. NATO solidarity was nurtured in anticipation of a crisis. Kennedy had discussed their position on Berlin with French President Charles de Gaulle just prior to his talks with Krushchev at Vienna, and Prime Minister Macmillan received a personal report in London on June 7. The French had maintained a hard line against any negotiations with the Russians over Berlin, while the British, although publicly supporting their NATO allies, pushed for negotiations because war over Berlin was not acceptable to the British economy or people despite the violent press attacks received by the British because of their position of "dragging their feet." The increasing intransigence of France and the United States made Prime Minister Harold Macmillan reflect that "anyone who talks sense is called a coward and a traitor."

It became evident that there would soon be action in Berlin. Chancellor Adenauer reported that the panic was on in East Germany. Widespread speculation that there may be uprisings similar to those in 1953 was encouraged by reports of food

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shortages in East Germany and interference of domestic traffic in Berlin. Secretary Rusk was aware of the possibility "that the doors will close," but thought it more likely "the continued exodus w[ould] build up if anything."\(^{33}\)

Kennedy's plans for meeting the impending crisis primarily involved strengthening NATO forces. Krushchev's announcement of 8 July that he was halting the planned reduction of Soviet forces and an increase in expenditure for the Red Army was met by Kennedy's note to his NATO allies on 20 July expressing that "a peaceful solution of the present controversy depends on the ability of the alliance to convince the Soviet leaders that we are prepared to meet this challenge."\(^{34}\) Without this military credibility any attempt toward negotiations or any other means of settlement would be useless. To dissuade the Soviets from taking action in Berlin the President invested time and money in building up the conventional forces stationed in West Germany to provide a more credible deterrent than the threat of all-out nuclear war. Limited military response was a far more likely reaction to infringements of Western rights in West Berlin. Contingency plans developed during this period centred on the situation of the Soviets or the East Germans blocking the West's rights of access. The success of the 1948-49 airlift was seen as a substantial insurance against a repeat of the sealing off of Western access routes. To further this insurance military credibility was strengthened. The ostentatious build up of NATO forces in the region was an effort to deter such a scenario.

On the 25 July President Kennedy broadcast on television and radio a Report to the Nation on the Berlin crisis. The speech manner was somber but confident. He announced a considerable buildup of conventional forces in central Europe and clearly threatened war if American interests were violated. He attempted to impress upon the American people that a threat to the security and freedom of West Berliners was a direct threat to the security and freedom of the United States. The conflict in Berlin would test America's mettle but it was vital that their resilience prevailed:

For West Berlin - lying exposed 110 miles inside East Germany, surrounded by Soviet troops and close to Soviet supply lines, has many roles. It is more

\(^{33}\) Secretary of State Rusk interview, 23 July 1961. Department of State \textit{Bulletin}. pp.282-287

than a showcase of liberty, a symbol, and island of freedom in a Communist sea. It is even more than a link with the Free World, a beacon of hope behind the Iron Curtain, an escape hatch for refugees. West Berlin is all of that. But above all it has now become - as never before - the great testing place of Western courage and will, a focal point where our solemn commitments stretching back over the years since 1945, and Soviet ambitions now meet in basic confrontation.  

Though there was an immediate threat to freedom in West Berlin, "that isolated outpost is not an isolated problem. The threat is worldwide. Our effort must be equally wide and strong and not be obsessed by any single manufactured crisis." Detailed plans to increase the armed forces were announced to send a clear message to the Soviets of United States determination to maintain their position in Europe. The tone of the speech was a forceful statement of a commitment to defend their rights in West Berlin. He warned: "We do not want to fight but we have fought before."

CHAPTER FOUR

The Berlin Crisis of 1961: Resolution

Shortly after midnight on 13 August 1961 East German troops began erecting a barrier along the 28 miles of border between the Soviet sector and those of France, Britain and the United States. Ulbricht’s plan was put into effect by East German soldiers ostensibly to stem the flow of refugees escaping from the East to the more affluent West. The border was sealed initially with barbed wire and guarded by armed East German troops. This action seemed to justify the mounting Western fears that the Soviets were planning another Berlin blockade as had been experienced in 1948-49. This blockade, however, did not eventuate.

Although NATO contingency plans did deal with a sealing of the frontier, such an action was not identified as a threat in itself. All potential threats identified by the Joint Chiefs of Staff and the State Department involved a violation of the three basic aims that had been identified by the Acheson Review Group. These objectives dominated Berlin policy in the United States government and had grown from earlier crises such as the blockade of 1948-49 and the ultimatum of 1958-59. It was assumed that any potential threat to Western interests in Berlin would involve a similar confrontational form. This assumption led to the development of contingency plans involving a clear menace of military character. The United States was not prepared for the threat posed by the building of the Wall, and indeed, did not initially recognize the action as a threat. The sealing of the border to civilian traffic was initially accepted as part of the East German government’s rights to protect its own interests, and since the restrictions were imposed upon the civilian population of Germany and not on the West’s military access they were not considered serious enough to warrant drastic reaction. In fact, the West’s response was slow. Part of this can be attributed to the need
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to confer amongst the NATO allies, but it can largely be attributed to the failure to identify the sealing of the border as a challenge to Western interests and the consequent lack of a contingency plan - either diplomatic or military - to deal with the limited scenario with which they were presented.

The sealing of the border was not unexpected. Interference with civilian traffic between East and West Berlin had been reported for some time with suggestions that workers living in East Berlin and working in West Berlin were told they should begin working in East Berlin. Identity papers of passengers crossing the sector boundary were often demanded and sometimes confiscated. As harassment increased the rumours that the border may be sealed intensified. Secretary Rusk admitted that there had been reports of efforts made by the East Germans to interrupt civilian traffic between East and West Berlin, nevertheless the number of refugees was still very large. The American government was conscious that one of the first options available to the East Germans to stop the exodus of people was to seal the borders. Chairman of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, Senator William Fulbright remarked in a 30 July television interview, “I don't understand why the East Germans don't close their border because I think they have the right to close it.” The President was similarly aware of such an alternative. Schlesinger reported a conversation between Kennedy and and one of his advisors Walt Rostow where the President observed that Krushchev would soon find it necessary to take action in Berlin,

and that, if he did, we would not be able to do a thing about it. Eastern Europe was a vital interest for Krushchev, and he not could stand by and let it trickle away. But it was not a vital interest for the United States. 'I can get the alliance to move if he tries to do anything about West Berlin but not if he just does something about East Berlin.'

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2 Quoted in: Arthur M. Schlesinger Jr., A Thousand Days: John F. Kennedy in the White House, (London: André Deutsch, 1965) p.356. Interestingly, when news of the sealing of the frontier reached Washington on the Saturday evening, Senator Fulbright reversed his position, saying; “It has been my understanding that free transit between the two parts of Berlin was guaranteed under Four-Power Pact. If this agreement is being broken by unilateral action it could lead to serious consequences.” New York Times, 13 August 1961.

3 Schlesinger, A Thousand Days. p.356
This was precisely the problem presented by the construction of the Berlin Wall. It could not be easily identified as a direct threat to NATO vital interests in West Berlin and consequently there was no pre-conceived plan developed amongst the allies to counter such a move. All contingency plans had assumed that the sealing of the border would be the first step of an escalation of the crisis. Kennedy had decided after the Vienna summit that Western rights in Berlin would be protected at any cost, including the risk of nuclear war. The sealing of the border to German civilian traffic did not present a well defined threat to these American interests as identified by the Acheson Review Group. The American people would not sanction a war of atomic destruction over border restrictions for civilian traffic in Berlin.

The developments of 13 August were initially ambiguous to the NATO governments. East German police and troops had taken control of the majority of the crossing-points along the Berlin border shortly after midnight and installed temporary barricades of barbed wire and rubble. Being a Sunday night, the date and time of the action was seemingly chosen to minimize both domestic and international resistance. It was planned that by the time workers embarked upon their daily cross-border transport to their places of work border restrictions would be established. Ulbricht's regime hoped to present the world with a fait accompli. Some crossing points remained open for some days to civilian traffic, though under East German supervision. Even after the building of the Berlin Wall was begun on 17 August inter-sector movement was still allowed to a limited extent.

Simultaneously, two documents were issued justifying the East German action. The first was a joint declaration from the governments of the Warsaw Pact. It called the sealing of the border “protective measures” to stop the Western powers from misusing the West Berlin border “for their malicious diversionist activity.” This would be

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prevented by a strengthened guard and increased controls along the border. These measures were temporary and would be removed “as soon as a peaceful settlement with Germany is reached.” Significantly, it stressed that “these measures will not affect the prevailing regulations for controlling traffic and lines of communication between West Berlin and West Germany.” The second document was issued by the Council of Ministers of the German Democratic Republic and repeated the main themes of the Warsaw Pact statement. It accused Adenauer of “systematic preparations for civil war against the German Democratic Republic” and the Western powers of engaging in “enticement and diversionist activities.” It made explicit the restrictions that were imposed on traffic and procedures for such movement. West Berliners were allowed access into East Berlin and would not encounter any restrictions on travel abroad through the territory of the German Democratic Republic so long as they presented their identification cards for inspection.

The immediate reaction from the American officials in West Berlin was weak. In fact, when the Berlin Task Force Duty Officer for the weekend of 12-13 August opened the folder designated for the contingency of the division of Berlin he found the folder empty. Having received no directives from their government, Berlin Commandant General Watson and Ambassador Dowling in Bonn were forced to observe and wait. The news of the East German actions began reaching Washington from about seven o’clock on Saturday evening and less than three hours later the border closure was completed. The State Department declined all comment and did not mention whether the Secretary of State and the President had been informed - a first move if the situation is perceived as critical. Seventeen hours after the reports had begun to reach the United States, Secretary Rusk issued a statement outlining the restrictive measures that had been taken which had “doubtless been prompted by the increased flow of refugees in recent weeks.” In order not to aggravate the situation further and thus trigger popular

5 German Democratic Republic Ministry of Foreign Affairs, *Documentation on the Question of West Berlin*, (Berlin: 1964) p.132

6 *Ibid.* pp.133-134


insurrection in East Germany, the tone of the statement which had been approved by the President, was restrained. There was no threat of American military reaction nor even demands to halt the restrictions, but rather it was “almost as if the American government welcomed the East German move.” The reaction from other NATO governments were similarly consoling to the Ulbricht. President De Gaulle and Prime Minister Macmillan chose not to interrupt their holidays and President Kennedy did not deem the action serious enough to cancel his day of sailing. Without NATO backing Adenauer did not pursue any action.

After being subjected to West Berlin Mayor Willy Brandt’s impatient calls for forceful Allied counteraction, the Western Commandants in Berlin sent a protest to the Soviet Commandant on the 15 August labelling the construction of the barricades “a flagrant violation of the four-power agreements concerning Berlin.” Not since the blockade of 1948-49 had such a threat been posed to the freedom of movement within Berlin. The Soviet Commandant rejected the West’s claims, saying that the government of the U.S.S.R. did not interfere with the internal affairs of the German Democratic Republic. Berlin qualified as East German internal affairs on the basis that it was the capital of the German Democratic Republic. Furthermore, he laid blame for provoking the action with NATO. The German Democratic Government, he said, was forced to protect its own legal interests due to the threat posed by “revanchist-militaristic circles” of the Federal Republic and its Western allies.

The United States official reply to the sealing of the border was delivered to the Soviet Ministry of Foreign Affairs by Ambassador Thompson on the 17 August 1961. It protested against the barricades as “a flagrant, and particularly serious, violation of the quadripartite status of Berlin,” asserting that the border between the Soviet sector and the Western sectors was not a state frontier. As a city still legally under the postwar occupation, Berlin technically belonged to no sovereign nation. As such it was “a violation of the solemnly pledged word of the U.S.S.R.” to claim Berlin the capital of

9 Ibid. p.272


11 Ibid. p.396
the "so-called 'German Democratic Republic.'" The United States government held the Soviet government responsible for the "illegal measures" and warned that "this unilateral infringement of the quadripartite status of Berlin can only increase existing tension and danger."12 Again the United States did not call for an immediate halt or threaten military action. The sealing of the boundary was not, in itself, considered an act of war.

The Soviets responded immediately repeating that Berlin had become "a bed of adventurists, rogues, paid agents, terrorists, and other criminals serving the intelligence services of the entire imperialist world" which included the secret intelligence services of its occupation allies France, Britain and the United States. By engaging in subversive activities against the Warsaw Pact and particularly the Soviet Union, the note accused the West of violating occupation agreements, scoffing that "one must have an exceptionally great sense of humor to affirm that the activity carried on in West Berlin corresponds to four-power obligations."13

Initially the Wall was seen in Washington as an internal security measure to prevent the exodus of a large portion of the East German population and not really a 'play against West Berlin.' Secretary Rusk was somewhat relieved to report on the 13 August that the measures taken were aimed at the East Berliners and not toward NATO powers. The United States government publicly explained the Wall as a sign of weakness on the part of the communists. It was unambiguously designed to keep their own citizens from fleeing to the democratic West. Interpreted in this manner, the building of the Wall was not seen as a threat to Western interests, but rather a tribute to them. The Wall stood as "a symbol of the defeat of their policies"14 and by association a victory for democratic ideals. Although the situation in Berlin was "not satisfactory," Kennedy admitted that "communication does exist between East and West Berlin, and that it's possible for those who have official responsibilities, as well as private citizens to pass. It is limited - it is not, in our opinion, in accordance with the agreements; but it does exist."15 Under existing circumstances Kennedy and Rusk believed that their NATO

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12 United States note to the U.S.S.R., 17 August 1961. Ibid. p.397
13 Soviet note to the United States, 18 August 1961. Ibid. pp.399-400
14 Under Secretary Ball interview, 26 October 1961. Department of State Bulletin. p.840
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allies would not go to war over Berlin and had the Americans reacted unilaterally with a show of force, NATO support was not assured. Rusk also found the suggestion that the Soviets would have backed down if faced with a military reaction doubtful: "There was no reason why they should - given the military situation and what Russian intelligence must surely have been telling them about the real attitudes in Bonn, Paris, London and even Washington." A Foreign Ministers’ conference was set for September 14 in order to discuss the Berlin question amongst the NATO governments. A meeting of foreign ministers in early August had called for NATO forces to commit larger forces in the defense of Europe. However, it was not until the September meeting that details of the each member country’s military contribution were expected to be finalized.

Kennedy’s announcement of the increases in defence expenditure contained in Report to the Nation on 25 July had considerably strengthened the American military presence with conventional forces on the continent and had justified a military reaction. In March measures had been taken to enlarge the Marine Corps, expand sea and air lift capabilities as well as stepped-up procurement of weapons and ammunition. He called for a $3¾ billion dollar increase in the Armed Forces appropriations. The total authorized strength of the Army was raised from 875,000 to 1 million men, while the Navy was increased by 29,000 men and the Air Force by 63,000. Many ships and planes that were headed for retirement were to be retained or reactivated and strategic air power was strengthened by the retention of the B-47 bombers. Significantly, half of this increase in expenditure ($1.8 billion) was to be allocated for the procurement of conventional, non-nuclear weapons and ammunition. Despite the economic recession in 1960-61 the United States defence budget was increased by $6 billion dollars between January and July, making a total of $47.5 billion for the year. By flaunting these military increases in a public forum Kennedy attempted to signal United States intentions to use military force as a viable response to any Soviet threat in Berlin. His confidence was bolstered by information related to him by CIA director Allen Dulles several days


16 Secretary of State Dean Rusk, quoted in: Catudal, *Kennedy and the Berlin Wall Crisis* pp.34-35

before the speech. CIA espionage gathered through the U-2 flights and the information supplied by the spy Colonel Oleg Penkovsky had accumulated extensive information on Soviet missile technology as well as strategic intentions.\textsuperscript{18} Despite the public rhetoric it was apparent that the United States did possess a considerable position of strength. The President thus spoke of fall-out shelters and nuclear blast and fire and warned that “if war begins, it will have begun in Moscow and not Berlin.”\textsuperscript{19} The speech clearly indicated to the Soviets that if threatened, the United States would almost automatically enlist a military option to protect its declared interests. Less than a month after making these explicit threats of United States intentions he was faced with Soviet-sponsored action which did not infringe upon these declared interests. A military option was not a credible alternative under existing conditions - partially because, as Secretary Rusk had to admit, the Western garrisons in the Berlin were not strong enough to knock down the barriers even if the decision was made to do so.\textsuperscript{20} As the crisis progressed in the following months the Kennedy Administration shrank back from the use of military force, despite its highly-charged warnings. There were no other similar threats of this magnitude during the Berlin Crisis. They were necessarily reinvented, however, for the Cuban Missile Crisis the following year.

Finding that he could not plausibly act upon his promises of military engagement in reply to the East Germans’ move, Kennedy’s response was dominated by the theme of reassurance. Vice President Lyndon Johnson was despatched to West Berlin to bolster the morale of the population whose faith in the West had markedly deteriorated with the lack of forceful countermeasures. Johnson’s public speeches were emotive and reassuring while conspicuously lacking content. With the Vice President, Kennedy sent General Lucius Clay with whom the Berliners had shared the period of the Berlin blockade and airlift. As an experienced veteran of Berlin affairs, General Clay was given the authority of Ambassador. They went to “see firsthand the effects of this tragic situation as they are translated in human terms.” Johnson drew a parallel between the

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\textsuperscript{19} Ibid. p.538

\textsuperscript{20} Secretary of State Dean Rusk. Quote in: Catudal, \textit{Kennedy and the Berlin Wall Crisis}. p.33
\end{small}
discontent arising from the separation of families and loved ones and the discontent expressed by the East German workers in June 1953, warning that “the more the urge for freedom is suppressed, the more insistently the demand for it grows.”\textsuperscript{21} With the authority of the President, Johnson told the West Berliners that the American people were “determined to fulfill all our obligations and to honor all our commitments. We are not provocative; neither are we frightened. The American people have no genius for retreat; and we do not intend to retreat now.”\textsuperscript{22}

In tandem with the visit of the Vice President Johnson to the beleaguered city, Kennedy sent a contingent of 1500 troops along the Helmstadt-Berlin Autobahn to reinforce the United States garrison in the city. While these troops were militarily insignificant and would not alter the overwhelming ratio of Soviet troops to Western troops in the city, they did serve as a visible sign of the commitment of the American government. In the first days of the building of the Wall the expectation of the Berliners themselves was that the West would send tanks to break the barricade; a demand that was also made by the Republicans headed by Richard Nixon, who argued that 1500 troops was not an effective reaction and accused the government of the appeasement of communism.\textsuperscript{23} The hopes for the destruction of the Wall turned to disillusionment as the days passed without a visible reaction from their Western benefactors. West Berlin Mayor Willy Brandt had written to Kennedy on the 16 August protesting at the lack of a Western response and made it clear “some American reaction more specific than the general military build-up was necessary to sustain the morale of West Berlin.”\textsuperscript{24} In a speech to the West Berlin Parliament Brandt called Berliners to remain calm, but that the East German moves were a serious threat that need to be countered by serious Allied measures. Kennedy used the 1500 troops as well as the visit by Vice President Johnson as a token of the American commitment to Berlin to partially alleviate pressure for forthright action on the part of NATO.

\textsuperscript{21} Vice President Lyndon Johnson’s departure statement, 18 August 1961. Department of State \textit{Bulletin}. p.391

\textsuperscript{22} Vice President Johnson’s arrival statement, Bonn, 19 August 1961. \textit{Ibid.} p.391


\textsuperscript{24} Schlesinger, \textit{A Thousand Days}. p.357
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The deployment of U.S. troops served to more accurately define the situation. Contingency plans developed during the Eisenhower Administration and later recommended by the Acheson Review Group called for the use of a probe force to help define the Soviet actions. If the Red Army attacked the troops it was a clear declaration of war. If the troops proceeded unimpeded it was an indication that the Soviets were unwilling to escalate the crisis to military dimensions. While there was certain nervousness as the 1500 troops sent by Kennedy made their way along the access corridor of East Germany, there had not been a direct threat to Western rights with either actions or words. Neither Krushchev nor Ulbricht had spoken directly of interfering with the West's access and until there was such action or a declaration of intention it had to be assumed that Western troops would be allowed to pass along the established routes. As NATO waited to see the Soviet reaction to the probe Press Secretary Pierre Salinger noted that President Kennedy privately thought the likelihood of igniting World War III was "one in five."25

The legal responsibilities of the Soviet Union toward its World War II allies remained essentially intact. The barricade was illegal in several respects, but the violations did not threaten United States immediate interests. The fundamental objectives identified by the Acheson review group remained secure. The Wall clearly barricaded the people of East Berlin not those of the West; the French, British and American garrisons in the city remained safe; and access to the city was not interrupted. Nor did the Wall question Western rights to be in West Berlin. Krushchev was careful to continue French, British or American troops conducting their established inspection tours of East Berlin that had been agreed upon in 1945.

The erection of the Berlin Wall was conducted by East German troops under the authority of the government of the German Democratic Republic. Not only did France, Britain and the United States refuse to recognize Ulbricht's government and therefore did not consider themselves bound by any resolution or actions conducted on its behalf, but East German government authority in East Berlin violated the 'special status' of Berlin separate from the rest of Germany that had been incorporated into all postwar agreements. The only authority that was legally binding in Berlin was that of the joint

council of France, Britain, the United States and the U.S.S.R. General Clay later criticized United States policy for not engaging a sufficient show of force to require the presence of Soviet troops in the building of the Wall.\(^{26}\) There was extensive Red Army troop movements throughout the Soviet zone in order to dissuade any popular resistance, but the erection of the barricades and the later construction of the Wall solely by East German troops gained important validity for Ulbricht's government. NATO powers were forced to recognize the actions of the government of the German Democratic Republic, even if they refused to recognize the government itself. In reality, it was tacitly conceded that United States responsibility only extended to the people of West Berlin. Having given *de facto* recognition to the division of Berlin between East and West over the previous sixteen years it was difficult to credibly reclaim the position that quadripartite responsibility extended through the whole of Berlin and that consequently each occupation power was jointly responsible for the whole city.

By 20 August the Kennedy Administration had identified the construction of the wall in Berlin as a threat to the West’s vital interests but was still unable to define it in terms that international and domestic opinion would accept. Rather than being the localised conflict that it had originally been portrayed as, it was “one of the great worldwide confrontations between the Sino-Soviet bloc and the free world,” and as such it was “of great importance” that the West’s commitments be made clear. There was no question of war at the existing stage of developments, but the action was seen as very likely to be followed by further developments in the near future.\(^{27}\) Any escalation of the crisis that threatened Western rights in Berlin would prompt a military reaction. These Western rights did not only include official government access. Civilian traffic constituted approximately 95% of the actual traffic into Berlin. Since this was essential for the well-being of the city, any threat to it also constituted a threat to Western interests.\(^{28}\)

As the stalemate in Berlin continued there was no provocation for substantial action from the United States. The situation in Berlin was no more clearly understood at

\(^{26}\) Deane & David Heller, *The Berlin Wall,* (London: Frederick Muller, 1964) p.219

\(^{27}\) Secretary Rusk television interview, 20 August 1961. Department of State *Bulletin.* pp.434-435

\(^{28}\) *Ibid.* p.439
the end of 1961 than it was in August. Feeling that if talks on the issue were now conducted they would not be under duress, President Kennedy began to favour negotiations to “further define the Soviet position.” Allied rights had not been seriously questioned, nor had the Soviets carried out their threat to sign a peace treaty with the German Democratic Republic. Kennedy became willing to participate in talks on the Berlin question with the Soviets, but repeated the view that “no summit between East and West is useful unless the groundwork has been laid beforehand which will insure some success.” Ever careful not to portray panic or over-concern, he instructed his Secretary of State to engage in “exploratory talks” with Soviet Foreign Minister Andrei Gromyko and later employed the “confidential channel” using Robert Kennedy through Georgi Bolshakov and later Soviet Ambassador Anatoly Dobryin.30 The purpose of these informal communications were not so much to find agreement as to reach an understanding of positions so that a way out of the deadlock could be found.

In October the President reported that there was still no progress in the Berlin issue. Careful not to allow the issue to be used as a basis for official negotiations at this stage which would compromise the United States position, he reported that despite several sessions of talks with Gromyko, they were no closer to a resolution. Rather, the talks “did not give us immediate hope that this matter would be easily settled.” In the three talks between Rusk and Gromyko and the one meeting between the Kennedy and Gromyko there had been accounts of the kind of solution that the Soviets wanted, but these had not substantially changed from those presented in the aide memoire in June. Discussions between the Soviets and Americans became stale as each side simply repeated what had been said earlier with no room for compromise.31 While the meetings served as an opportunity to profess a mutual desire for a peaceful accord, “on the


31 Dobrynin provides an illustration of the jaded issue: “Once Rusk jokingly suggested that we could save time in our discussions by assigning a number to each question and each answer for both sides. He explained, “After I say, for instance, ‘I have question number five,’ you would reply, ‘Answer number six,’ and so on. Then you can send home a detailed report, and I can inform the president about the meeting.”’ Ibid. p.63
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substance we are not in sight of land.” The West was still struggling to determine the precise position of the Soviet government in relation to the issues of free access, the ‘free city’ and city boundaries. The crisis was still not well-defined and tensions were still high. The American people were “quite rightfully concerned” about the outbreak of war. The collision of points of view between NATO and the Soviet Union had heightened tensions in what had become “the most dangerous time in the history of the human race.”

During September and October the Kennedy Administration gave hints that it may be softening its approach toward engaging in negotiations on Berlin. Addressing the United Nations General Assembly on 25 September, Kennedy stated that though the commitment of the United States to the freedom of West Berlin was a strong as ever, “we are committed to no rigid formula. We see no perfect solution.” He reported that “the possibilities of negotiations are now being explored.” The crisis over Berlin was “unnecessary,” and there was “no need for a crisis over Berlin, threatening the peace.” If the Russians were willing to display some form of compromise then it was possible that formal negotiations could begin.

The crisis over Berlin quieted in October and November. After Kornrad Adenauer’s re-election as West German Chancellor he visited the United States with members of his government for talks consolidating the NATO policies toward Berlin. The apparent willingness of the West to enter into negotiations led to the alleviation of the crisis. On 12 September a member of the Soviet presidium, Frol Kozlov delivered a speech in North Korea which declared that the Soviet proposals over Berlin were not to be taken as an ultimatum, and that the Soviets were “ready, together with interested countries, to discuss and consider any reasonable amendments to our draft treaty.” Not being followed by any significant action on the part of the Soviets, Kozlov’s speech was not initially seen as significant. Inconsistent statements were issued in the succeeding


33 Ibid.

34 Public Papers of the Presidents: Kennedy - 1961, p.625

fortnight that further confused the West's evaluation of the Soviet position. On the 17 October, during a lengthy speech to the Congress of the Soviet Communist Party, Krushchev allowed his December deadline for a peace treaty that had been imposed in the *aide memoire* to lapse.

The Berlin Crisis of 1961 gradually faded without resolution of any of the issues that had dogged diplomacy since the conclusion of the Second World War. While talks continued between the Soviet Union and the United States, these talks did not accomplish any material gains. As diplomacy stalled the West became increasingly unable to do anything about the existing situation in Berlin but accept it. Neither the Soviets nor the East Germans offered any serious provocation in the ensuing months despite some probing harrassment of Western air corridors. Krushchev did not carry through his long-standing ambitions to sign a peace treaty with the East Germans and thus threaten NATO access. By not enforcing his December deadline Krushchev allowed the crisis which he had fabricated, to lapse. The same issues were carried into 1962 when the Soviet premier attempted to surprise the United States with the presence of nuclear missiles in the Western hemisphere. Not having found a resolution to the outstanding issues over Berlin, this tension was transposed onto a new crisis over Cuba. When faced with the Soviet nuclear missiles within easy reach of the the United States itself Kennedy again threatened war. In the 1962 crisis such warnings carried far greater weight of credibility than they had done over the building of the Berlin Wall.
In characteristically colourful language, Krushchev had once called Berlin the “testicles of the West,” which he could squeeze at will. Soviet military power was dominant in the region with large contingents of the Red Army stationed within and around the city. The surrounding area was controlled by a Soviet puppet regime under Walter Ulbricht. West Berlin was extremely vulnerable and dependent upon its NATO benefactors with its only defence lying in their credible threats of war. The Allied presence in the city was justified by postwar agreements that had been battered by sixteen years of frontline Cold War diplomacy, so that these guarantees were extremely tenuous by 1961. JCS 1067 and the Potsdam Protocol were designed to facilitate temporary measures for the occupation of the defeated country and proved unworkable as the bases for a long-term commitment. By 1961 these documents were essentially outdated and only referred to if either East or West needed propaganda justification for its position. Both sides had blatantly abused major sections of the agreements - the West with its sponsorship of the Federal Republic of Germany and its subsequent rearmament, and the Soviets with its refusal to allow free elections in its zones of occupation and the support of its puppet government.

The Berlin Crisis of 1961 was a culmination of pressure that had been building since wartime discussions between the members of the Grand Alliance against Nazi Germany. The four powers agreed to implement quadripartite occupation of the defeated Germany in order to supervise the demilitarization and denazification of Germany and Berlin in a spirit of cooperation that was never realized as each nation pursued its own national interests. The crisis that was triggered by Krushchev’s declaration in November 1958 of a six month ultimatum for the conclusion of a long-overdue peace treaty with the Germans, was the immediate precursor to the crisis of
Conclusion

1961. The issues raised in 1958-59 remained unresolved at the beginning of 1961 and gave clear indications of possible Soviet moves. While the Soviet demands maintained into the new decade portended a direct confrontation, Krushchev’s gradual backdown after delivering the ultimatum in 1958 was interpreted by the West as a victory - and one that could be repeated with resilience. The Soviets had shown themselves to be unwilling to engage in war for their objectives and since these objectives apparently stayed the same, United States planning assumed that maintaining an unwavering commitment would again be profitable. The inadequacy of this approach to American contingency planning lay in its inflexibility. Soviet methods of 1958 were transposed onto the crisis of 1961 along with the objectives. This did not take into account a change in these methods. The Kennedy Administration did not formulate effective plans to deal with anything other than previously established scenarios. The result was a confused and reactionary approach to the crisis presented to them.

Those contingency plans that were formulated by mid-1961 assumed a blockade or direct attack. As such they provided for the protection of Allied aircraft in the air corridors and for despatching small military probes down the Autobahn. All of these plans dealt with need for a military defence of the city. While Eisenhower’s policies for the defence of the city relied upon a perceived willingness to resort to nuclear war if necessary, Kennedy and Rusk were more concerned with establishing an actual defence. The buildup of conventional forces and the raising of the nuclear threshold was a reaction to the very real and imminent threat they saw to the American position in Berlin.

Associated with inadequate contingency plans was a failure on the part of the United States government to recognize and define the threat to their interests. They did not recognize the sealing of the border between the Soviet zones and the Western zones as a threat to American interests. The flow of refugees from East to West across this border had destabilized Walter Ulbricht’s East German government and it was widely recognized within the NATO alliance that he must take some action to stem the ‘human haemorrhage’ that was crippling the struggling communist government. He enlisted Warsaw Pact support and encouraged a Red Army presence in order to give credibility. While a sealing of the border had been rumoured for some time and NATO and the United States had recognized it as a probable action to be taken, it was considered only
a first step in an escalation of the crisis. The primary fear within NATO was that Krushchev would try to force another Berlin blockade, similar to that of 1948-49 that seriously challenged the Western presence in Berlin. The military option was reserved to deal with this escalation that had been threatened by several six-month deadlines.

Western reaction to the news of the construction of barricades on the 13 August was slow and ambiguous. The subdued replies from the governments of the United States, Britain and France gave an impression at the very least, of acceptance, and possibly were even interpreted by Ulbricht and Krushchev as tacit approval. While criticizing the East Germans' “restrictive measures” the West conspicuously failed to call a halt to the building of the Wall that began on the 17 August. Calls to deploy tanks to knock it down were dismissed by the U.S. government. Unilateral reaction of this magnitude by the United States could well have provoked a war in which their NATO allies were not prepared to fight.

The need to consult amongst NATO allies before any response was made meant that decisions and replies were slow - something that President Kennedy found frustrating. The delay of over a month for an official response to the Soviet aide memoire sent a signal of indecisiveness at a time when American diplomacy could least afford any misinterpretation. Advance planning had not taken into account the existing scenario, and the threat to NATO interests was not clearly defined or identified. Western policy was made as the crisis unfolded in front of them. This policy was reactionary and meant that they were unable to wrest the initiative from Krushchev. After attempts at pre-emptive warnings failed, NATO was left the decision as to what constituted a sufficient threat to warrant a military response, especially when any military action could easily escalate to nuclear devastation. Given the differences of opinion that had developed amongst the allies on this point over the several preceding years, such a decision was not easily to be reached.

Kennedy had raised the threshold at which he would risk the nuclear devastation of his nation. The three objectives identified by the Acheson Review Group indicated the position of the American government throughout the crisis years of 1958-1962. A violation of these objectives would constitute an infringement of United States basic rights and as such would be defended with military force. Krushchev’s promise to sign a peace treaty with or without the United States by December 1961 was never fulfilled.
Conclusion

Kennedy’s management of the crisis had not prevented the permanent division of Berlin but it did prevent the escalation of the crisis. Calm and restraint during a highly emotional issue meant that he did not trigger war where war was unnecessary. Western rights of quadripartite control were permanently withdrawn but, in that the objectives of the American government were largely maintained and the crisis did not escalate, Kennedy succeeded in suppressing a volatile situation. The status quo was essentially maintained and West Berlin remained free.

The sealing of the border was not initially seen as a threat partly because it seemed to conform to the publicly expressed objectives of the United States government. From January Kennedy had sought to maintain the status quo in Berlin. This purpose was served by the sealing of the frontier. In effect, the East Germans’ action formalized something that had been recognized and accepted by the occupation powers for the previous sixteen years. Berlin, like the rest of Germany, was divided between the Warsaw Pact and NATO. The erection of the Wall simply recognized this fact. It also removed the destabilizing refugee situation that was as potentially volatile for the West as it was for the East. While East German popular dissent might well have toppled the Ulbricht regime no one believed that Krushchev would accept such a situation. While publicly flaunting the prosperity of West Berlin and its capitalist allies, the United States was careful not to overtly instigate popular unrest that could only increase tensions in the area.

The anticipation that built from January to July culminated in something of an anticlimax in so far as American policy was concerned. Expecting an onslaught on Allied rights in the beleagured city, Kennedy’s administration was ill-prepared for the eventual action taken by the East German government. Once the sealing of the border was completed and the Berlin Wall was built, the United States and her NATO allies found that they had in fact accepted the permanent division of Berlin. This imposed division was never seriously questioned during the months where a United States reply would have held credibility.

Neither side wanted war over Berlin, but nor could they accept what they perceived as a threat to their national interests. The crisis was fabricated by Krushchev using opportunities that had compounded since 1945. In his memoirs he said that the Soviet Union did not want to use military force to pursue their aims and would be
forced to do so only if the Americans first used force. He said: "We didn't want a military conflict. There was no necessity for one. We only wanted to conduct a surgical operation."\(^1\) The closing of the border and the construction of the Berlin Wall served several purposes for Krushchev. Having closely observed Kennedy's handling of the Bay of Pigs aftermath Krushchev saw a clear opportunity to probe for advantage in the Cold War. His forceful behaviour at Vienna and after was an attempt to intimidate his young and apparently indecisive opponent. Kennedy's response to the challenge over Berlin was ambiguous though not weak enough for Krushchev to push for further concessions. In 1962 Krushchev fabricated another challenge, over nuclear missiles in Cuba.

The Berlin Wall that was built in August 1961 was a tragic symbol of Cold War conflict. The contest over Berlin was for a symbolic prize - a prize which neither side 'won.' Krushchev failed to evict NATO troops from within the communist bloc and the West failed to generate free elections in a unified Germany. Neither side gained advantage in the Berlin Crisis of 1961. The building of the Wall simply consolidated the status quo that had been developing since 1945 and now resulted in the recognition that Germany consisted of two autonomous states. The division between East and West was formalized and remained so until the collapse of the Berlin Wall in 1989.

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