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Berlin & the Origins of Detente: multilateral & bilateral negotiations in the Berlin Crisis, 1958-1963

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BERLIN & THE ORIGINS OF DETENTE:
MULTILATERAL & BILATERAL NEGOTIATIONS
IN THE BERLIN CRISIS, 1958-1963

A Dissertation

submitted to the Graduate Faculty of the
Louisiana State University
and Agricultural and Mechanical College
in partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the degree of

Doctor of Philosophy
in
The Department of History

by

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Preface

I became interested in a longer range interpretation of the Berlin crisis while researching a seminar paper for Dr. Guenter Bischof at the University of New Orleans. I was familiar with the Wall and the Airlift, but hadn't understood that the crisis began in 1958 with Nikita Khrushchev's demands for a 'free city' (without Western troops) and a German peace treaty. The fact that Khrushchev suspended his deadline, once Geneva negotiations were in session, seemed an important progression from containment and diplomatic estrangement towards détente. For my thesis, I argued that the US leaders had to balance alliance problems with pragmatic understanding of the limits of forceful response, which included possible use of nuclear arms. They pragmatically chose negotiated resolution. I learned that period only concluded the first visible arc of a much longer diplomatic experience.

While collecting source material from the National Archives and reading good authorities like Marc Trachtenberg's *A Constructed Peace*, John Lewis Gaddis's *Now We Know*, William Taubman's *Khrushchev*, and Hope Harrison's *Driving the Soviets up the Wall*, I saw that Khrushchev used his demands as leverage for a peace conference that ostensibly could be used to discuss disarmament. Clear connections were apparent between the Khrushchev's 1959 visit, the Paris 1960 summit and the Berlin problem. I found a strong link between the Berlin problem and arms control and test-ban issues. Berlin also catalyzed differences between the US and its European allies, who wanted more control of nuclear deterrence but were unwilling to make conventional force commitments. Berlin became a transitional issue for US-Soviet relations, heavily influencing the first heads of state summits in many years.

These impressions were even clearer after reading recent published Khrushchev-era narratives like Aleksandr Fursenko and Timothy Naftali's *Khrushchev's Cold War*, Sergei Khrushchev's *Creation of a Superpower* and Vladimir Zubok's *A Failed Empire*. These authors had been able to work in the Soviet archives, which provided new insights into Kremlin decision making. They showed how important an issue Berlin was for Khrushchev, both as a potential threat to the Soviet Union and its Eastern European hegemony and a source of leverage for other concerns, including disarmament. Michael Beschloss's *Crisis Years*, also benefiting from post-Soviet sources, gave more indications of an ongoing, though troubled, effort to sustain negotiations. Nikita Khrushchev's *Statesman* provided another important account, with details missing from his previous memoirs. These works also indicated original and secondary sources worth investigating for a dissertation on Berlin-crisis negotiations.

I saw that Berlin negotiations were ongoing from 1958-1963. These talks did not resolve the Berlin and German questions, but averted war and gave an opportunity to begin high level discussions between the superpowers. It was an imperfect process that gave rise to incidents like the Wall and Missile Crisis, but it created a template for discussion. Expertise in Soviet thinking was gained by individuals like Ambassadors Llewellyn Thompson, and Charles Bohlen, as well as analysts like Walt Rostow, Gerard Smith, Paul Nitze and Foy Kohler. They helped form a core of well informed Soviet observers. Leaders like Eisenhower and Secretary Dulles, and eventually even Kennedy and Secretary Rusk created a tense but closer and more stable US-Soviet relationship. Ironically, Berlin's situation - the catalyst, the artificial stimulus - was never resolved with satisfaction for any side. When other concerns replaced Berlin, none of them produced the same level of diplomatic relationship. As Berlin's importance diminished, so did US-Soviet contacts, though not to the low pre-Crisis levels.

The present work is an attempt to synthesize themes of Berlin as a transformative issue in allied and Soviet relations. By telling the story of how negotiations were arranged and conducted, at a number of levels, I seek to show changes in how the US, Allies and Soviets dealt with each other. The role of disarmament in these proceedings is a major subtext, though specific UN disarmament discussions never reached the scope and intensity of Berlin talks. Berlin-era contingency planning for a limited war with nuclear options, as well as force buildups, reveals basic shifts in US and NATO strategic doctrines. Alliance problems, US domestic pressure and Soviet politics are further subtexts that continue through the whole history of the Berlin crisis, with lasting effects. In the Berlin crisis, we see a redefining of the US-British ‘special relationship,’ beginnings of de Gaulle’s isolation from NATO, as well as West Germany’s growing importance and first taste of *Ostpolitik*.

Much of the basic narrative here is based on the *Foreign Relations of the United States* (FRUS) collections, which provide a good record of important meetings, correspondence, papers and statements. As useful a guide as FRUS is, there are many influential revealing meetings, cables and proposals not covered. My main sources for the ‘rest of the story’ have been Presidential Libraries, particularly the various national security and White House office file series on Germany and the Soviet Union. Particularly useful material has included National Security Council memos, State Department Policy Planning Staff material, CIA reports, ambassadorial working group meetings, briefing books, embassy cable traffic, position papers, and unofficial correspondence. Cross-referencing this material with the FRUS record has, I hope, provided a thorough and well-grounded chronology.

This chronology, also heavily based on secondary sources discussed earlier, also draws on specialized sources on specific leaders, issues and situations. For example, Frederic Bozo’s

Two Strategies for Europe, Frank Mayers' *Adenauer and Kennedy*, and Nigel Ashton's *Kennedy, Macmillan and the Cold War* are good accounts of these very influential and distinctive leaders. Wilfrid Loth's *Europe, Cold War and Co-Existence* and Christian Nuenlist's *Globalizing de Gaulle* are very useful anthologies on European relations with each other, as well as with the US and Soviets. David Mayer's *The Ambassadors* is an excellent history of the US diplomatic missions to the USSR and the various emissaries, as well as Soviet views towards them. Frederick Marks' *Power and Peace*, Saki Dockrill's *Eisenhower's New Look*, and Richard Immerman's *Waging Peace* make insightful cases for Eisenhower-era inclination against force, an impression also gained from Eisenhower's own memoirs and Stephen Ambrose's biography. Joseph Whelans's *Soviet Negotiating Techniques* provided a long range perspective on Soviet diplomacy

I have found consistent, well documented narratives the most useful sources, even in specialized topics. Glen Seaborg's *Kennedy, Khrushchev and the Test Ban* and Robert Divine's *Blowing in the Wind* provide well documented histories of the disarmament talks concurrent with the Berlin dialogue. Anatoly Dobrynin's *In Confidence* connects other Soviet narratives with diplomatic field experience. Robert Slusser's *Berlin Crisis of 1961* may overplay its case against Khrushchev's domestic critics, but does show strong domestic pressures that affected his Berlin strategy. Frederick Taylor's *The Berlin Crisis* and Andreas Daum's *Kennedy and the Wall* are helpful, if not critically deep, chronicles of the Berlin situation. Even Berlin histories embedded in topical surveys like Mark White's *Kennedy: the New Frontier Revisited* or Marc Trachtenberg's *History and Strategy* have been very helpful. Many other sources of good supporting evidence are cited throughout, but the books discussed above have been especially influential on my history of Berlin negotiations.

A combination of published and unpublished primary document series and secondary narratives account for most of my documentation. National Archive State Department collections provided a basic orientation, especially the central decimal files and Policy Planning Staff material. The long range of years documented in the Lyndon Johnson Presidential Library helped me connect the early Eisenhower phase of the crisis with the decisive Kennedy period. Further work at the Johnson, Eisenhower and Kennedy libraries provided most of my archival sources. These sources provided background for the events covered in the *FRUS* record, and showed important influences not indicated in other literature. The combination of *FRUS*, Presidential Library and secondary readings form the supporting evidence for my own narrative.

The core purpose of this project is a documented history that I believe supports conclusions listed in each chapter and summarized in a concluding chapter. My argument is simple but I believe well supported: choosing negotiations over force to solve Berlin was a significant step in a new direction, those negotiations changed from a multilateral to a bilateral approach, and US, Allied and Soviet relations were transformed as a result. Arms control, basic strategic doctrine and alliance politics were strongly linked to the course of negotiations, but Berlin remained the most important issue between the involved countries from 1958 to 1963. Though never resolved, Berlin provided a template for the later US-Soviet bilateral détente on disarmament. I believe the progress of events outlined here illustrates these conclusions. If successful, this history will provide a comprehensive reference on Berlin crisis negotiations, the importance of which has not been fully appreciated but deserves greater attention.

The Berlin Crisis may understandably seem of limited importance today, in a post-Soviet world where rubble for souvenirs is all that is left of the Wall and the EU is as much a rival as a partner of the United States. East-West nuclear arms control agreements have been in place for

nearly four decades. Unlike the leadership of the Berlin Crisis participants, many of today's European, American and Asian leaders are women, with a different perspective perhaps on negotiation and war, limited and nuclear. Superpower rivalries are considered more selfish hegemonic rivalry than profound national responsibilities. Such changes in thinking might have seemed almost unimaginable to the heads of state, ministers and even advisors who shaped the decisions of the Berlin Crisis. Berlin remains significant because it was the first major conflict since the war to be, if not resolved, then mitigated and deferred by negotiations. Unlike Korea, Suez or Dienbienphu, these leaders, most importantly Nikita Khrushchev, Dwight Eisenhower and John Kennedy, did decline to use force and did consistently pursue high level negotiation to resolve the problem. In doing so, these holders of nuclear force departed from their conventional wisdom and established a new dialogue that eventually did result in lasting disarmament agreements.

As important as the sources above have been in the progress of this work, I have been fully as influenced by the encouragement and criticism of my teachers at Louisiana State University and at the University of New Orleans. It is essential to acknowledge and thank them for their support. My advisor Dr. David Culbert's LSU seminar in 20th century American history helped greatly in getting me 'up to speed' for professional work in history. Dr. Culbert had taught me many years previously at LSU and I am very pleased and fortunate to have him as my advisor. He brings a tremendous range of experience to bear and I am still amazed at the breadth of his expertise. This work would not be possible without his support and direction.

My other committee members Dr. Paul Paskoff, Dr. Charles Royster, and Dr. Charles Shindo provided excellent seminars in American history, of which I am afraid I still had only a woefully inadequate understanding as I entered doctoral studies. These are all recognized authorities in their respected fields and outstanding teachers. I am very grateful to have such an experienced and capable committee, and to have had them as professors. Hopefully, this dissertation will not reflect badly on their attempts to overcome my innate denseness and wayward writing habits.

I have also benefited greatly from other LSU teachers, notably Dr. Gaines Foster, who taught a challenging course in historiography. My minor field teachers, Dr. Victor Stater and Dr. Suzanne Marchand were not only excellent guides to English and European history, but were most helpful in helping me get started in my LSU coursework. All these teachers have made me write better, research more thoroughly, and analyze more critically. I have tried their patience and turned in some ‘clunkers,’ but I have appreciated their criticism and encouragement. I must also acknowledge the great help I got from teachers I have assisted, including Dr. David Lindenfield, Dr. Reza Pirbhai and Dr. Louise Walker, all excellent teachers and historians.

I must give special acknowledgement and thanks to Dr. Guenter Bischof for continuing to share his impressive knowledge of Cold War and European diplomatic history. He is also a rigorous critic, but his encouragement has been invaluable since I started studying diplomatic history at UNO. He has directed me to the best archival sources and literature and facilitated my research, providing valuable opportunities for study and insisting on the best work possible. Working for his colleague and Eisenhower professor at UNO, Colonel Allen Millett was also a formative influence of key importance to my development as a historian. Col. Millett set essential standards for discipline and hard work that have been greatly appreciated.

I would also like to thank the staff of the National Archives and Records Administration at their College Park Maryland facility and at the Eisenhower, Johnson, and Kennedy libraries administered by NARA. I am particularly grateful to David Haight, senior archivist at the Eisenhower Library for providing a most useful overview of Eisenhower's staff structure, guiding me through the collections and pointing out important secondary sources

I would also like to thank my mother, Mrs. Trudy Williamson for her love and support in starting this work, helping me get through Hurricane Katrina, reading many drafts of this material, and listening to me drone about Khrushchev and company. Without her, I would have no dissertation. I would also like to thank my late father, Ernest L. Williamson for teaching me many important lessons about work, knowledge and people. Without his love and hard training, this dissertation would not be possible. My sisters, Judy and Nan, and brother Dave, as well as my aunt Nan Glasgow, have also been great supporters, for which I thank them.

I also thank friends at LSU, UNO and elsewhere who have encouraged my history studies. Bill Bertolette, Adam Pratt, Ashley Baggett, David Lilly, Kat Sawyer, Nathan Buman, Alan Forrester, Yvonne Brown, Todd Borque, Matt Wilson, Brian Morrow, Kristi Whitfield and other fellow students have been good comrades in this work. I thank them, as well as old friends like Mark and Cheryl Wall, Russell Desmond, the late Bill Mallory, Rob Beckley, Randy Johnston, Karen Anklam, and others who have kindly supported my doctoral studies. I am grateful to all my teachers, family and friends, and apologize to any that I have overlooked. I hope everybody find this paper pleasing.

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Abstract

"Berlin and the Origins of Detente" is a diplomatic history of the Berlin Crisis from 1958-1963. 'Berlin Crisis' usually means the events surrounding construction of the Berlin Wall in August 1961. The Wall, erected just two months after US President John Kennedy and the Soviet Union's Chairman Nikita Khrushchev met at Vienna, physically divided East Berlin from the Western sectors of the US, Britain and France, who kept occupation forces under the 1945 Potsdam accords. This work covers the events leading up to the Wall and after, when the focus shifted from multilateral Allied diplomacy in the Eisenhower-era to bilateral US-Soviet engagement in the Kennedy period. Salient events include the 1959 Geneva foreign ministers conference and Western ministers/head of state meetings principally concerned with Berlin. It covers ambassadorial meetings, papers and proposals, correspondence and historiography based on Khrushchev, Eisenhower and other leaders, European and Allied issues. The Wall was the most visible part of a dispute between the Soviet Union and the United States, Britain and France who occupied West Berlin. In 1958, Khrushchev issued an ultimatum to the West: end the occupation of West Berlin, turn it into an open 'free city' and recognize the (Eastern) German Democratic Republic through a 'peace treaty' that would supersede the Potsdam agreement. Principals displayed a readiness to use force if necessary, to defend their position, but attempted a diplomatic approach to resolve the Berlin issue, which was related to disarmament. Berlin acted as a catalyst in the US, USSR and Allied relationships. Diplomatic approaches lessened tensions and brought brief, tentative periods of detente. Negotiation renewed US-Soviet diplomatic engagement and provided a precedent for later attempts at detente, which were more

centered on disarmament. No other issue led to summit conferences or engaged the US, Allies and Soviet Union so intently.

Introduction: The US, USSR and Berlin, 1953-1958

Before Soviet Chairman Nikita Khrushchev began his Berlin initiative in 1958, US and Soviet relations had been distant and indirect for most of the period after Joseph Stalin's death in 1953. Stalin had surprised the West with an April 1952 proposal for German self-determination to create a reunified, neutral country.¹ Stalin's unattractive terms were declined, partially because the Germans themselves were not ready to change the current arrangements. The West assumed, probably correctly, that the Soviet proposal was simply a delaying maneuver. Overall, the Soviets did not seem interested in renewing the wartime diplomatic engagement seen at the Teheran, Yalta and Potsdam conferences. As US Ambassador in Moscow George Kennan observed in September 1952, "the Soviet leaders have broken diplomatic relations with the Western world."² Kennan hoped to renew a more cooperative relationship, but found little encouragement in either Moscow or Washington, especially after he made careless remarks about the Soviet environment and over-zealous anti-Communist blacklisting at home.³

When former Supreme Commandant of Allied European Forces General Dwight Eisenhower replaced Harry Truman as US President in early 1953, the Soviets waited to see how American policy might change, especially regarding Germany. Kennan's appointment was not renewed by the new US Secretary of State John Foster Dulles, who turned instead to Charles Bohlen, thought to be more prudent. John Lewis Gaddis says that Dulles wanted to relax

¹ Marc Trachtenberg, *A Constructed Peace: The Making of a European Settlement, 1945-1963* (Princeton: Princeton University press: 1999), p.129-30.

² George Kennan, *Memoirs Vol. 2* (New York: Pantheon, 1983), p.331.

³ David Mayer, *The Ambassadors and American Soviet Policy* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1995), p.180-185.

tensions and dramatically scale back US and Soviet forces in Europe, leaving a neutral, unified but disarmed Germany, as well as lower US defense costs.⁴ Eisenhower thought Bohlen might be able to strike a safe deal to in the period after Stalin, before a harder regime might emerge. Both Eisenhower and Dulles were averse to nuclear war. They were also skeptical of the summitry that British Prime Minister Winston Churchill was endorsing. Dulles thought summits created problems between allies. He also worried that Berlin could cause alliance problems.⁵

Like Kennan, Bohlen had been in a team of specialists trained by Estonian and White Russian nationalists in the 1920s and assigned to Moscow after diplomatic relations were established in 1934. They were both in Moscow during the difficult years starting with Stalin's purges and continuing through the war. Despite his experience and talent, Bohlen was not able to earn more confidence from either the new Soviet or American leadership. To the Soviets he was an errand boy for containment doctrines, to the Americans, an appeaser who accepted the permanent division of Germany.⁶ East Germany was firmly under Soviet control, but the heavy handed control of Party chief Walter Ulbricht produced strong popular resistance and a disastrous economy. The Soviets attempted relaxation of controls in East Germany in June 1953, when NKVD head Lavrentia Beria briefly seemed to be Stalin's likely successor, but the 'reforms' were short lived. When Beria was liquidated within weeks, reforms were replaced by harsh official counter-measures by the client authorities. The Soviets used armor to quell worker strikes and food riots, discouraging any hopes for a real rapprochement.⁷

After Stalin died in mid-1953, one likely successor, Politburo Central Committee veteran Georgi Malenkov, revived Stalin's proposals for a German 'peace treaty' that would

⁴ John Lewis Gaddis, *We Now Know: Rethinking Cold War History* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1997), p.132-133.

⁵ Frederick Marks, *Power and Peace* (Westport: Praeger, 1993), p.48.

⁶ Mayers, *The Ambassadors* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1995), p.98-101.

⁷ Hope Harrison, *Driving the Soviets Up the Wall: Soviet-East German Relations, 1953-1961* (Princeton: Princeton University Press) p.41.

‘normalize’ the wartime arrangements of Potsdam. West German Chancellor Konrad Adenauer had shown interest in these proposals, though his conditions involving all-German self-determination were unacceptable to the Soviets. Other Soviet insiders like Communist Party chief Nikita Khrushchev and Deputy Premier Dimitri Molotov forced Malenkov to abandon the German overtures.⁸ Malenkov's tentative warming to the West also included an invitation to the West to begin exploratory discussions to reduce tensions. Malenkov did not prevail in the post-Beria power struggles. Khrushchev won out over rivals Molotov, Malenkov and Nikolai Bulganin, who he would later purge as a Stalinist 'antiparty' group. First Secretary of Foreign Affairs Anastas Mikoyan, a Bolshevik and Central Committee member longer than any of the others, never vied for the leadership but would later be influential in the Berlin Crisis years.⁹

When Khrushchev began to project his new authority in 1954, he too experimented with the German peace treaty idea, along with other initiatives designed to present a more conciliatory Soviet image, particularly with the post-colonial regimes in India, Indonesia and other emerging Third World Powers. Khrushchev established the Warsaw Pact, a Soviet bloc of Eastern clients as a formal alliance to counter the Western NATO military alliance. He formalized relations with East Germany, while keeping the ‘peace treaty’ concept alive. When the USSR did not contest the normalization of a neutral Austria in 1955, hopes rose for a new round of summit diplomacy which might lead to a less hostile relationship, increasingly termed ‘detente.’¹⁰

Eisenhower and his Secretary of State John Foster Dulles were cautiously interested in detente, particularly in hopes of easing the expense and tensions of the Cold War

⁸ Vladimir Zubok and Constantine Pleshkov, *Inside the Kremlin's Cold War: From Stalin to Khrushchev* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1996), p. 165.

⁹ Vladimir Zubok, *A Failed Empire: the Soviet Union in the Cold War: From Stalin to Gorbachev* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2007), p. 98-99.

¹⁰ Nikita S. Khrushchev, trans. by George Schriver, ed. by Sergei Khrushchev, *Memoirs of Nikita Khrushchev, Volume 3: Statesman, 1953-1964* (University Park: The Pennsylvania State University Press, 2007), p. 31 -34.

standoff still firmly entrenched after the 1949-1952 Korean conflict. Detente was understood to mean an ongoing environment of close communication, diplomatic negotiation and head-of-state encounters that could defuse conflicts and lay the ground for normalized relations, disarmament, increased trade, conflict resolution and constructive exchange. Détente challenged hard-line security policies sufficiently to arouse critics in the West and East alike. Though in public they projected a tougher line against the Soviets, in private, Dulles and Eisenhower privately considered cautious steps to detente.¹¹

Even status quo containment proved to be very expensive. Rollback would be unsustainably so and dangerous, possibly involving long-term inconclusive struggles like Korea.¹² Dulles and Eisenhower both had decided that nuclear weapons were the solution given budget pressures and desired deterrent strength. Like the post-Stalin Soviets, the Americans faced expensive, unpopular defense costs. The US was spending nearly \$40 million a year in support of West Berlin. These costs, said National Security Council paper No. 5404, issued in January 1954, reflect the concern of the Congress for "Berlin's unique position and our special responsibilities there."¹³ The paper, approved by Eisenhower, reaffirmed US support for West Berlin. Dulles said in February 1953 that the US was "vitally interested in the welfare and security of this city." US High Commissioner for Germany Hugh Conant's stated a few weeks later that "the new administration in Washington will not abandon Berlin ... the US is pledged to do its part to see to it that this city continues as an unshaken outpost of the Western world ... the

¹¹ Frederick W. Marks III, *Power and Peace: the Diplomacy of John Foster Dulles* (Westport: Praeger, 1993) p. 75-78.

¹² Robert Bowie and Richard Immerman, *Waging Peace: How Eisenhower Shaped An Enduring Cold War Strategy* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1998), p.103-108.

¹³ Copy of NSC 5404. NARA, RG 273, Box 23, folder '160-61.'

US, in cooperation with the other two Western powers, is determined to keep open the line of communication with Berlin."¹⁴

Eisenhower's responsibility was ensuring American security while reigning in the defense spending that accompanied the early years of the Cold War. As a former military leader of US and Allied forces, Eisenhower was especially concerned about the costs and hazards of military intervention.¹⁵ Having worked with Russian generals in the war, he understood them realistically. He knew the political leadership could be intractable and often undependable. While the Western public may not have realized it, Eisenhower knew that the Soviets faced similar arms-costs problems. His "New Look" policy aimed to roll back defense commitments and spending, in part through a viable nuclear deterrent. The president faced a strong defense lobby and congressional pressure to stem an amorphous global Communist threat. Although he made the final decisions, he delegated most foreign-affairs policy and action to his Secretary of State John Foster Dulles.¹⁶

Dulles enjoyed his image as the stern New England Presbyterian minister's son, best law student (on the continent, too) and diplomatic journeyman with a resume including both Versailles and Dumbarton Oaks. He may have been unlovable in public, but he knew what he was doing, had the President's confidence and ran a clearly organized State Department.¹⁷ He recruited and retained excellent personnel and assigned them effectively, including Bohlen and later Llewellyn Thompson as Ambassadors to the Soviet Union and David Bruce to Germany. Dulles appointed Robert Bowie and then Gerard Smith to the Policy Planning staff, Livingston

¹⁴ National Security Council paper No. 5404/1, January 25, 1954. NARA, RG 273, Box 23, folder '160-61.'

¹⁵ Richard Damms, *The Eisenhower Presidency, 1953-1961* (London: Longman, 2002). p.27-28.

¹⁶ *Ibid*, p.31-32.

¹⁷ Robert R. Bowie and Richard H. Immerman, *Waging Peace: How Eisenhower Shaped an enduring Cold War Strategy* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1998), p.80.

Merchant, Foy Kohler and Douglas Dillon as Undersecretary of State. Dulles' State Department grew experienced and efficient, especially in Eisenhower's second term.¹⁸

Eisenhower and Dulles had many other concerns besides the Soviets. Eisenhower and Dulles promoted a European Defense Community (EDC) which require the Allies to shoulder more of their own defense. The EDC was not popular, in part because the US was willing to grant control of nuclear weapons.¹⁹ In the Pacific, Dulles took a very hard-line against Red China and believed in the 'domino' theory, which held that Communist gains in one country would destabilize neighboring countries. He understood that there were differences between China and Russia but did not realize how serious that friction was. He famously refused to shake Red Chinese Foreign Minister Chou En-Lai's hand in 1954, which the Chinese took as a national insult. Dulles offered only passive support for the French in Indochina, but he also laid groundwork for American involvement. He also understood that anti-communist partners like Korean president Syngman Rhee could be harsh, corrupt and unreliable partners.²⁰

Britain and France tried to maintain their empires and used unattractive tactics that cost them support in the colonies, even if they were popular at home. Dulles extended only reluctant support for the British in Egypt, Iran and Iraq, while also approving initiatives to gain American influence in the Mideast. He had respect but dwindling patience for British Prime Minister Anthony Eden and French Premier Guy Mollett.²¹ He developed a particularly strong rapport with West German Chancellor Konrad Adenauer, who remained in office throughout Dulles's term. Adenauer was very pro-American and Dulles had confidence in his leadership. Both leaders were disappointed when the other Allies resisted their strong lobbying for a European

¹⁸ Dwight Eisenhower, *Waging Peace* (New York: Doubleday and Co., 1965), p. 362-66.

¹⁹ Trachtenberg, *A Constructed Peace*, p. 120-25.

²⁰ Richard Goold Adams, *John Foster Dulles: A Reappraisal* (Westport: Connecticut, 1962), p. 98.

²¹ Townsend Hoopes, *The Devil and John Foster Dulles* (Boston: Little Brown Co., 1973). p.356-58.

Defense Community, which would have eased American commitments in Europe, furthered European integration and bolstered West-German resistance to invasion from the East.²²

Adenauer won a skillful victory in gaining West German admission to NATO in 1954. Although both East and West were interested in neutral, unified Germany, the potential advantages of a armed portion of Germany were also attractive. As Policy Planning Staff head Robert Bowie had told Dulles in 1953, neither side wanted to risk all of Germany deciding the balance of European power.²³ At the Geneva summit, Adenauer attempted to make German unification the central issue, even though he was not a participant. But the East Germans upstaged him by signing a 'treaty of recognition' in Moscow. This fell short of the peace treaty but did not please Ambassador Bohlen or the Western Heads. The Federal Republic of Germany (FRG) responded with the Hallstein doctrine: the FRG reserved the right to break relations with countries recognizing the German Democratic Republic (GDR). Adenauer advanced his own plan for a demilitarized Germany, but found little interest.²⁴

NATO's formation inspired Khrushchev to organize the USSR's East European satellites into the Warsaw Pact later that year. First Secretary Walter Ulbricht's East Germany lagged behind the West and its neighbors. Ulbricht complained that Soviet reparation demands had not helped, nor did the continuing exodus of skilled workers to the West. The Soviets had little more patience than Dulles did with his weaker partners and allowed only limited independence. Its economy was arguably more dynamic than the British and French, though the Soviet Union's political status was still that of a junior nation.²⁵ Within the Warsaw Pact, nations like Poland

²² Ibid, p. 246-48

²³ Melvin Leffler, *For the Soul of Mankind: the United States, the Soviet Union, and the Cold War* (New York: Hill and Wang, 2007), p.127-28..

²⁴ Wilfried Loth, "Adenauer's Final Western Choice" in *Europe, Cold War and Co-Existence, 1953-1965*, Loth, ed. (London: Frank Cass, 2004), p.26-27.

²⁵ Harrison, *Driving the Soviets Up the Wall*, p.54.

had less strict controls than East Germany, partly because their leaders were not as hard-line as Ulbricht. Even the Soviets advised Ulbricht that he could improve production with some relaxation, especially in the post-Stalin era.²⁶ Other satellites like Czechoslovakia and Hungary attempted considerably more independence, which would in 1956 result in harsh Soviet reprisal with Ulbricht's warm approval.

Tensions relaxed enough that leaders of same nations who had gathered at Yalta to convene a Four Power Summit in Geneva in 1955. Eisenhower, Soviet Premier Bulganin, French President Edgar Faure and British Prime Minister Anthony Eden met in hopes of relaxed global tensions but without a fixed agenda. Soviet authority Vladimir Zubok says the Soviets, then in good relations with their Chinese rivals, wanted to assert their leadership in the Communist world and to probe Western unity, particularly on Germany.²⁷ The West had no common front, because there were no real issues of specific common interest, except in the most general terms. The most substantive problems were Germany and disarmament, but all sides were very apprehensive about unfocused discussions that might lead to unwelcome commitments.²⁸ Moreover Dulles and Eden were personally antagonistic to each other, Faure's authority was uncertain, and the West Germans anxiously tried to project influence. Eisenhower mostly wanted to showcase his 'Open Skies' program for UN-supervised aerial inspections, which he hoped would slow the expensive arms race, which was costing the US about \$300 billion a year or 10% of GDP.²⁹

Disarmament, peaceful exchange and normalized trade were discussed superficially, but there were few agreements that could be signed. Bulganin was head of the Soviet state in an

²⁶ Ibid, 58-60.

²⁷ Vladimi Zubok, "Soviet Policy Aims at the Geneva Conference" in *Cold War Respite* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2000), p.69-72.

²⁸ Guenter Bischof and Saki Dockrill, eds. "Introduction" to *Cold War Respite: the Geneva Summit of 1955*, p. 11.

²⁹ Gaddis, *We Now Know*, p. 245.

ornamental sense only and had no real negotiating authority. Party Secretary Khrushchev represented the real power and controlled Deputy Foreign Minister Andrei Gromyko who did the practical negotiating.³⁰ Khrushchev nearly disrupted the conference with his denunciation of Open Skies as a sinister American scheme. Eisenhower and Dulles were disappointed by their allies' lackluster support and inability to work together. Russian obstruction and British and French weakness and self-interest seriously discouraged the American president and his Secretary of State from further summit negotiation for the foreseeable future. Khrushchev mistakenly thought Eisenhower was Dulles' puppet but realized that the United States represented the West's decisive strength. He wanted to pursue bilateral talks with the Americans as soon as possible, but the Americans had had enough of Khrushchev at Geneva for many months to come.³¹

Neither Eisenhower or Dulles were impressed by Khrushchev and they were not convinced of Soviet good intentions. These doubts were only worsened by crises involving Hungary and the Suez Canal the next year. In the meantime both Eisenhower and Khrushchev had to validate their leadership for the rest of the decade. Eisenhower won re-election on a campaign of peace through toughness with the Russians, coupled with a reasonable pursuit of peace and restrained military spending.³² Adlai Stevenson raised the new issue of atmospheric nuclear testing, which Eisenhower thought a necessary danger, he did not have the president's charisma.³³ Eisenhower's most pressing concerns after re-election were domestic, not foreign policy related. Civil rights cases, notably involving housing and school segregation, and an economic recession would not mobilize support for military intervention. Eisenhower resisted

³⁰ William Taubman, *Khrushchev: the Man and his Era* (New York: W.W Norton, 2003), p. 351.

³¹ Ibid, p.354.

³² Dwight D. Eisenhower, *Waging Peace: 1956-1961* (New York: Doubleday, 1965), p.19.

³³ Robert J. Divine, *Blowing In The Wind* (New York: Oxford University Press) p. 105-112.

calls for major military actions in Iraq and other areas in 1957 and 1958. Nor did Eisenhower did want to embark on new spending for ballistic missiles to match the production Khrushchev was boasting about.³⁴

In 1956, Berlin appeared to be a stable situation. The Operations Coordinating Group of the National Security Council observed, in NSC No.174, that the Soviets were gradually transferring more jurisdictional authority to the German Democratic Republic (East Germany), including "police and protective powers of control over East German borders and lines of communication to the Western garrisons in Berlin." NSC174 also noted the Soviets were trying to formalize the partition of Germany and "prevent reunification except on terms promoting Communist control of all Germany," a policy seen at Geneva and continuing afterward. GDR internal security had toughened, they noted, even as their economy deteriorated. Since Geneva, the report said, the Western allies had reaffirmed their goal of German reunification and repudiated USSR-GDR agreements of September 1955, recognizing a divided Germany. Those agreements were seen as part of a long term strategy to force Western recognition, but no near-term East-bloc action on Germany was anticipated.³⁵

Nikita Khrushchev's charisma was a much blunter instrument than Eisenhower's. He secured his power by 1955 through convincing both party and military factions that he would stand up to the Americans while still expanding Soviet influence and trade through peaceful means.³⁶ One of his first moves was to make clear that the Soviet Union would ensure that East Germany remain a separate Communist state.³⁷ With his speech denouncing Stalin at the secret

³⁴ Robert Bowie and Richard Immerman, *Waging Peace*, 256-59.

³⁵ NSC No. 174, May 17, 1956, NARA, RG 273, Entry 1, Box 23, folder NSC 160/1.

³⁶ Aleksandr Fursenko & Timothy Naftali, *Khrushchev's Cold War* (New York: W W Norton, 2006), p.32.

³⁷ Ibid, p.51-54.

20th Party Conference in Moscow in 1956, he signaled liberalization and modernization.³⁸ But his authorization of brutal Soviet suppression of Hungarian resistance showed that his reforms had strict limits. Hard-line factions remained influential. The military was particularly suspicious of Khrushchev because he wanted to cut conventional forces in favor of nuclear weapons and missiles.³⁹ The Red Chinese and Yugoslavians were also increasingly critical of Khrushchev's foreign policy, including both his intervention in Hungary and overtures to negotiate with the West.⁴⁰ Khrushchev's talk of peaceful coexistence outraged Chairman Mao Zedong, who exploited it for propaganda favoring his own leadership in the Communist world. Walter Ulbricht was among those, such as the Albanians, sympathetic to Mao's denunciation of the new Soviet direction.⁴¹

De-Stalinization was Khrushchev's project but the initiative also reflected widespread desire for some kind of closure on the old terror. Hard-line reaction was contained by public desire for consumer goods, less threat of war, and better social conditions. Khrushchev travelled throughout the Communist bloc and made overtures to Third World leaders like India's Jawarahal Nehru and Egypt's Gamel Nasser.⁴² Khrushchev assumed the title Chairman of the Council of Ministers which signified that, like Stalin, he embodied the Party and the state leadership. He expanded the Praesidium to include his supporters but tightened the Central Committee to give him closer oversight. Khrushchev was a good party administrator, but an erratic executive. He embarked on several expensive and troublesome ventures. He intensified Soviet missile research which helped the Soviets to launch the first orbital space vehicle,

³⁸ Sergei Khrushchev, *Nikita Khrushchev and the Creation of a Superpower* (University Park: the Pennsylvania State University Press, 2000), p. 89-91.

³⁹ *Ibid*, p. 10-112.

⁴⁰ Zubok, *A Failed Empire*, p. 114-119

⁴¹ Harrison, *Driving the Soviets*, p. 134.

⁴² Taubman, *Khrushchev*, p. 325; 339.

Sputnik, in 1957.⁴³ The missile program survived many tribulations, including a launch-pad explosion which wiped out many top engineers and military men. Khrushchev tried to open new agricultural lands with his 'Virgin Lands' program but the costly program bred only environmental ruin. He banked on increased production, the absence of which aggravated shortfalls caused by other agricultural mistakes and drought. By 1958, Khrushchev was the single most powerful Soviet leader but still lacked Stalin's absolute authority.⁴⁴

Khrushchev gradually gained foreign policy experience while securing his leadership in 1957-58. Within days of weathering intense criticism for his crackdown on Hungary, he noisily interfered in the Suez Canal crisis. Neither episode enhanced his international prestige; he was criticized by both the liberal West and Communist East. Public opinion in the peripheral nations was harder to gauge but clearly the Soviet leader had embarrassed both himself and his nation. Old-line Bolsheviks - the "Anti-Party group" - attempted a coup in 1957 and Khrushchev soon purged military rival Marshal Zhukov, the only Soviet leader who knew Eisenhower well.⁴⁵

Fortunately for Khrushchev, he had a knack for ignoring his errors and shifting attention to bold new moves. He needed to sustain momentum, confound the opposite camp when he wished their assistance for their plans, and silence rivals with decisive action. He was a fearless face to face negotiator in many encounters, especially when he thought he had some advantage, as with the Red Chinese.⁴⁶ Though Mao was able to humiliate Khrushchev, Mao was unable to operate outside of China. Khrushchev furthered Soviet influence in the 1950s to a degree more than Stalin had. This was an advantage for the Soviet leader, but he had to work vigorously to exploit this edge. Khrushchev became visibly critical over what he considered as Chinese

⁴³ Matthew Brezinski, *Red Star Rising: Sputnik and the Hidden Rivalries that Ignited the Space Age* (New York: Henry Holt, 2007), p. 52-54.

⁴⁴ Edward Crankshaw, *Khrushchev: A Career* (New York: Avon Books, 1966), p.266-67.

⁴⁵ Sergei Khrushchev, *Creation of a Superpower*, p. 211;234;244;249.

⁴⁶ Taubman, *Khrushchev*, p. 387-395.

adventurism in episodes such as the Chinese shelling of the offshore islands of Quemoy and Matsu. But he also knew he had to challenge the West, though it would help if he could be seen as just and peaceful in his demands. In 1958, he revived the issue of a divided Germany, which had received little attention since Geneva because it seemed an irresolvable but fairly stable problem.⁴⁷

In 1957 and 1958, the Allies slowly repaired relations badly fractured over Suez. American reluctance to intervene was compounded by poor relations between Anthony Eden and Dulles. Eisenhower still had little confidence in the other Allied leaders and was long since impatient with their refusal to end their colonial empires. The post-Suez ascension of Harold Macmillan and Charles De Gaulle to power in Britain and France offered hope that cooperation could be set back on track.⁴⁸ Konrad Adenauer remained Chancellor in the FRG and had made tentative contact with the Soviets. In 1957, the Western allies had formed Four-Power (UK/US/FRG/France) working groups to discuss issues like collective security, disarmament, and collective security. Dulles sought to treat these subjects discretely but because they were fundamentally related, the working groups only made fractious progress trying to deal with them separately. The Germans clearly thought the issues had to be considered together.⁴⁹ The inefficiency of the 4-power working groups and the problem of dealing with inter-related topics separately forecast problems that would beset the Allies throughout the coming crisis over Berlin.

Direct negotiations with Khrushchev, on the other hand, seemed all but impossible. His mercurial temperament and un-tempered stubbornness were obstacles enough, but his proposals offered no attraction for the West. Along with very low-key ambassadorial contacts, the annual

⁴⁷ John Lewis Gaddis, *We Now Know: Rethinking Cold War History* (New York: Clarendon Press, 1997), p.138.

⁴⁸ Marc Trachtenberg, *A Constructed Peace: the Making of a European Settlement, 1945-1963* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1999), p. 224-228.

⁴⁹ Steven J. Brady, *Eisenhower and Adenauer: Alliance Maintenance Under Pressure, 1953-1960* (Lanham: Lexington Books, 2010), p. 205.

United Nations sessions represented the extent of US-Soviet diplomatic engagement.

Eisenhower's response to mid-1958 overtures from Khrushchev for a summit, was that UN Security Council meetings were the only summits needed.⁵⁰ The UN also provided an umbrella to begin arms-control talks. By 1957, the US and Soviets, along with other nations, had begun low-level, UN-sponsored nuclear arms control panel discussions. Public concern, along with the costs and hazards of nuclear deterrence spurred new interest in disarmament. Talks held in Geneva in July 1958 determined that atomic tests could be monitored with a global net of inspection stations. Further Geneva conference sessions were held a few months later, but the US and Soviets rushed to complete as many tests possible in the Operation Hardtack series in late 1958. These included not only atmospheric testing of then high yield 9 megaton hydrogen bombs, but the first delivery of a thermonuclear warhead by a missile, an Atlas-Redstone rocket, for explosion beyond the atmosphere.⁵¹

Berlin and Germany seemed quiet issues, though Konrad Adenauer wanted a nuclear deterrent, even if under American control. NSC No. 5803, issued on February 1958 detailed how the West Germans (Federal Republic of Germany or FRG) had been contributing steadily smaller shares of their NATO defense costs, while receiving larger amounts of US support(\$408 million fiscal 1957). Overall, defense spending on West Germany had increased and that trend was expected to continue. The increase costs were borne disproportionately by the US. The FRG, noted the report, was limited in arms development and production by the Brussels Treaty (which established NATO), but was thought to be exploring nuclear weapons development with France and Italy, as well as developing and manufacturing their own short-range missiles. The US did

⁵⁰ Eisenhower, *Waging Peace*, p. 235.

⁵¹ Glenn Seaborg, *Kennedy, Khrushchev and the Test Ban* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1981) p.12-16.

not encourage the weapons research but did encourage the missile development. The FRG had indicated they wanted more missiles integrated into their territorial defense systems.⁵²

Existing treaties obliged the Western allies to defend Berlin if access was blockaded but the UK and France would be reluctant to take forceful action unless absolutely necessary. Two important points are spelled out: "if either side miscalculates, the situation could easily grow into war, even though neither side desires it" and "most courses of action can be carried out only with the united effort of the allies." However, they note, "although US actions must seek to retain Allied cooperation, the United States must be prepared to act alone if this will serve its best interests." The report also observes that "the period between initiation of aggressive actions and the 'showdown' is likely to be short." No imminent action was forecast; recommendations included improved intelligence gathering, a visible commitment of support for West Berlin and persuasion of the France and Britain to adopt US policies on Berlin.⁵³

Nuclear weapons on East and West German territory were central to the security equations of NATO and the Warsaw Pact, but neither side was comfortable with their reliance on this deterrent. In 1958, Nikita Khrushchev was concerned that NATO had approved the stationing of missiles in West Germany, just as East Germany was also receiving nuclear missiles strictly under Moscow's control. Walter Ulbricht was pressuring Khrushchev for economic assistance and an end to the refugee exodus through West Berlin.⁵⁴ These concerns, along with other problems, led him to re-open the German question in November 1958, through the issue of Allied occupation troops in West Berlin and a treaty to recognize a permanently divided Germany.⁵⁵

⁵² NSC No. 5803, February 7, 1958, "US Policy Toward Germany". NARA RG 273, Box 23, folder 160/1.

⁵³ Supplement I to NSC 5803, February 7, 1958. NARA , RG 273, Box 23, folder 160/1.

⁵⁴ Hope Harrison, *Driving the Soviets Up the Wall*, p. 1202-105.

⁵⁵ Gaddis, *We Now Know*, p.241-42.

Chapter 1: " A Free City," November 1958 - May 1959

Introduction

Soviet Premier Nikita S. Khrushchev's 1958-59 proposals to remove Western troops from Berlin and revise the existing German settlement challenged the balance of power in Europe and Western allied unity. The United States could not allow Khrushchev to unilaterally abrogate the Potsdam occupation agreements without a serious erosion of American influence in Europe.⁵⁶ President Dwight D. Eisenhower and Secretary of State John Foster Dulles had to reconcile longstanding goals, such as the reunification of Germany and reduced troop presence in Europe, with the difficulties of effectively using military force to assert Allied treaty rights.

They pragmatically pursued a diplomatic solution that consistently resisted pressure from Allied and U.S. military leaders to exercise force. In the early stages of the conflict, Dulles' personal command of the situation neutralized military assertiveness. When Dulles was replaced by Christian Herter, the Joint Chiefs of Staff (JCS) made a more determined effort to extend their influence. But Eisenhower was not going to change course at a point when negotiations were indicating a near-term resolution to the crisis.⁵⁷ At the same time, the President made it clear to the Soviets that the United States would not allow its occupation rights to be nullified.

This restrained but tough course maintained the viability of the status quo in Germany without armed conflict. It provided cautious hope for diplomatic resolution of Berlin's status and the German question. The United States was able to neutralize the Soviet threat without unacceptable retreat or use of force.

Thus, most of the US and Soviet actions regarding Berlin were conducted at the

⁵⁶ Stephen A. Ambrose, *Eisenhower: Soldier and President* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1990), p. 481.

⁵⁷ Dwight Eisenhower, *Waging Peace, 1956-61*, p. 340-41.

diplomatic level. Khrushchev's November 28 proposal to for a Western withdrawal from Berlin and a new German settlement was a diplomatic challenge not a military confrontation.⁵⁸

Secretary of State John Foster Dulles went to Europe in December for consultations with America's European allies. From these meetings, the US, France, Britain and West Germany drafted communiqués and delivered them to the Soviets at year's end.⁵⁹ Soviet Deputy Premier Anastas Mikoyan visited Washington in January to present a more belligerent and impatient response, including a draft German peace treaty.⁶⁰ In response, the ailing Dulles made a final trip to Europe in February to restore some Allied coherence.⁶¹ However, Prime Minister Sir Harold Macmillan's subsequent solo venture to Moscow⁶² and other differences during March⁶³ skewed these gains to some degree.

Dulles's cautions to French President Charles DeGaulle and West German Chancellor Konrad Adenauer for coolness and flexibility strained Allied relations. But his patience also established a framework for his replacement, Acting Secretary Christian Herter, to build upon. Direct diplomatic contact continued between the US and USSR throughout the spring of 1959, including further tough hints from Moscow about their own nuclear resolve.⁶⁴ The worst was over by then. By late April, tensions with the East and among the allies dissipated in the preparations for Foreign Minister's Conference between the US, the USSR, Britain, France, and Germany⁶⁵. These talks also provided some opportunity for one of Khrushchev's key aims, high

⁵⁸ Herter cable to US Embassy, Bonn, December 20, 1958, 762.0221/12-2058, Folder 2, Box 3534, RG 59, NARA.

⁵⁹ NATO meeting final communiqué, December 18, 1958, *Documents on Germany 144-1959*, University of Wisconsin, <http://digicoll.library.wisc.edu/history>, accessed April 2, 2006.

⁶⁰ Hope M. Harrison, *Driving the Soviets Up the Wall: Soviet-East German Relations, 1953-196*, (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2003), p.117.

⁶¹ Memo of Dulles meeting with Norstad, Merchant, Whitney, Barbour, et al, US Embassy, London, Feb 4, 1959, 762.0221/2-0459, Box 3534, RG 59, NARA.

⁶² Herter memo for Eisenhower, March 12, 1959, 762.0221/3-1259, Box 3535, RG 59, NARA.

⁶³ Young cable to Herter, from the Hague, April 15, 1959, 396.1-GE/4-1559, Box 3535, RG 59, NARA.

⁶⁴ Thompson memo to Herter, from Moscow, April 23, 1959, 396.1-GE/4-2359, Box 3535, RG 59, NARA.

⁶⁵ State Dept. internal draft, "Foreign Ministers Briefing Book", Folder 1, Box 45, Lot 63D390, RG 59, NARA.

level bilateral talks with the U.S., involving “some questions worthy of examination.”⁶⁶

This brief summary of the November 1958 to May 1959 diplomatic events does not challenge conventional interpretations. We have to closely examine the original material on which the interpretations are based. The archival records and relevant historiography covering this Cold War show the difficulty of coordinating military action with the Allies. Confusion and uncertainty over the effectiveness of force were principal reasons for choosing negotiations. Another reason was the essentially diplomatic foundation of the original 1945 agreements on Berlin. The Allied powers, in fact, made adherence to these agreements the cornerstone of their resistance and consistently referred to them in most communiqués and discussions among themselves.⁶⁷

The record provides copious examples of Dulles’s emphasis on considering force during Berlin II as an option of last resort. The evidence contradicts the image of Dulles as a “brinksman” who aggravated tensions. Instead, he enforced a general discipline of diplomatic and military restraint. That discipline, of course, carried the ultimate authority of the President. Eisenhower succeeded at an important level in making the Soviet Premier wait before getting his summit meeting. He used the seasoned coolness of Dulles and his deputies to ensure that there was a low risk of war. He did not want closer encounters with Khrushchev until Soviet attitudes improved.

Background to Khrushchev's Ultimatum

Actual military hostilities leading to this period began with a rash of US-East German confrontations at Berlin inter-zonal checkpoints in August and September over inspection issues.

⁶⁶ Intelligence Summary cable, via Cummings, to ‘American consul’, Geneva, May 18, 1959, Folder 1, Box 45, Lot 63D390, RG 59, NARA.

⁶⁷ Dulles cable to Bonn and Paris embassies, November 24, 1958, Folder 4, Box 3534, RG 59, NARA

These were minor but messy. On September 13, the East Germans detained a British Soldier at Helmstedt checkpoint, then transferred him to a Soviet car for delivery to Marienborn. There, he was released at the British checkpoint.⁶⁸ A West German man was beaten by the East Germans when he attempted to return to the U.S. sector at Dresdener Strasse crossing on September 19. An East German crowd gathered and interceded on the man's behalf to help him escape; he took an East German truncheon with him but returned it, although the *volkspolizei* refused to return the man's identification papers.⁶⁹

David Bruce, the US Ambassador in Bonn, requested that Washington allow them authority to take 'prompt and decisive action' short of military intervention. Bruce noted that military action would not improve the situation but taking no action would be 'inviting' further incidents.⁷⁰ US Embassy Counselor Bernard Gufler urged that a diplomatic response should emphasize that Soviet occupation responsibilities included guaranteed inter-zonal access for Berliners.⁷¹ On the 24th, two American soldiers on an East German train were detained, as were British soldiers who had strayed into East Berlin a few days. While the harassments did not appear to be planned, Soviet complicity may have represented a testing of Western willingness to insist on a strict interpretation of the occupation agreements. Those protocols dated from Potsdam and had been clarified in 1949 after the airlift.

The continued exodus of East Germans through Berlin to the Western sectors and resettlement outside of the Communist domain caused growing friction.⁷² The loss of so many professional and skilled workers annoyed the East German authorities who started taking their

⁶⁸ Bruce cable to U.S. embassies in Moscow, London and Paris, September 16, 1958, 762.0221/9-1658, Box 3534, RG 1959, NARA

⁶⁹ Gufler cable to Dulles, September 19, 1958, 762.0221/9-1658, Box 3534, RG 1959, NARA

⁷⁰ Bruce cable to Dulles, September 22, 1958, 762.0221/9-2258, RG 1959, NARA.

⁷¹ Gufler cable to Dulles, September 23, 1958, 762.0221/9-2358, RG 1959, NARA.

⁷² Harrison, *Driving the Soviets*, p.110.

frustrations out on hapless American soldiers. Khrushchev recalled in his memoirs, “The resulting drain of workers was creating a simply disastrous situation.” He added, “If things had continued much longer like this, I don’t know what would have happened.”⁷³

Pre-November access incidents were taken very seriously by the US mission in Bonn and in Washington. These incidents almost exclusively involved US personnel. While worrisome, they still did not directly suggest an imminent regional conflict. Just a few weeks before the crisis, the NSC had approved a new master policy statement, for West Germany, Berlin, and East Germany which did not anticipate any near-term change in Berlin’s status quo.⁷⁴ NSC 5803 reflected no change in inter-German relations. It put the blame for reunification’s stalled progress firmly at the Soviet door and expressed concern over the alternative concept of confederation. The report touted Berlin’s economic recovery and downplayed Communist provocations as diversions to aid East German morale and Walter Ulbricht’s power. NSC 5803 did not anticipate active, imminent conflict over Berlin. Only two active-response strategic options were discussed: nuclear deterrence and small-scale conventional war. Soviet efforts to transfer occupational authority to the GDR were dismissed as a propaganda effort more than a diplomatic problem.⁷⁵

Even though Germany did not loom as an expected theater of war in mid-1958, Dulles had already been studying concepts of limited war with nuclear weapons. A July 3, 1957 memo from State Department Policy Planning Staff (PPS) director Gerard Smith to his PPS colleague Elgon Matthews noted that Secretary Dulles was impatient with Defense limited-war papers. Dulles thought “military matters should be an instrument of political policy and not vice versa.”

⁷³ Nikita S. Khrushchev, trans. and ed. by Strobe Talbot, *Khrushchev Remembers* (Boston: Little, Brown & Co., 1970), p. 454-55.

⁷⁴ NSC 5803, (September 1958), Folder 1, Box 23, RG 273, NARA.

⁷⁵ *Ibid.*

Smith also thought the Secretary's thinking was becoming "more fluid", seen in his disagreement with the military doctrine that limited war capacity varied directly with total war capacity.⁷⁶

These memo records may refer to the "The Philosophy of Limited War," a brief for a meeting of State's Army Policy Council dated 9 October, 1957. This paper is notable for its references to private strategists like Robert Osgood and Henry Kissinger, and because of the way it defines the terms limited war: "one in which...one or more restrictions applies in some degree".⁷⁷

Limited-war doctrines represented a transition from the massive retaliation doctrines Dulles had been long been identified with and Eisenhower. These restrictions in Germany would include protection of civilians and vital infrastructure, logistic difficulties in fielding large conventional forces, difficulties in holding territory and political considerations. Limited war options included tactical nuclear weapons delivered by artillery, fighter-bombers, short and medium range missiles.⁷⁸ General war would entail use of intercontinental bombers and submarines, which the United States had advantages in. Even after Khrushchev's force reductions, the Soviets still had overwhelming infantry and artillery advantages already in East Germany and much shorter supply lines from home. The Soviets, it was thought, might also be trying to build an ICBM missile fleet to outmatch the West's fast long-range jet bombers like the new B-52 and British Vulcan.

An April 1958 protest by Soviet Foreign Minister Andrei Gromyko over U-2 surveillance was an early indicator of Soviet jumpiness over missile construction.⁷⁹ The Soviet leadership, especially Khrushchev, was very apprehensive about any form of inspection on their

⁷⁶ Elbert Matthews to Gerard Smith, "USAF Assumptions Regarding Limited Nuclear Combat", Folder 5, Box 1994, RG 59, NARA.

⁷⁷ "Philosophy of Limited War" briefing for Army Policy Council, Folder 5, Box 1994, RG 59, NARA.

⁷⁸ Introduction, *FRUS 1958-60*, Vol. III, http://dosfan.lib.uic.edu/ERC/frus/summaries/961203_FRUS_III_1958-60.html

⁷⁹ Philip Farley letter to G. Smith, April 23, 1958, Folder 2, Box 1994, RG 59, NARA.

territory. Aerial inspections, such as Eisenhower had suggested both sides carry out under an 'Open Skies' policy were particularly unacceptable.⁸⁰ Khrushchev considered U-2 flights as a calculated territorial insult. In August 1957, a U-2 had located the launch site of the mammoth R-7 booster rocket which would a few months later launch the Sputnik satellite. That development would allow photographic surveillance from space within five years, but in the meantime the U-2 would be a most valuable but risky intelligence tool for the United States. Khrushchev had accelerated development of the SA-2 surface-to-air missiles capable of reaching the U-2's 70,000 foot cruising altitude.⁸¹ Those missiles would later have considerable disruptive influence when they brought down U-2s before the Paris Summit and during the Cuban Missile Crisis.

Limited war doctrines were still not influential on Dulles and Eisenhower, neither of whom sought US combat situations, but neither of whom would relinquish US options for massive nuclear deterrence. Despite his own earlier hawkishness, Dulles had become impatient with those who refused to consider the inherent limits of particular conflicts. Germany was such a case. Dulles was becoming increasingly aware that the threat of war was often more constraining than anticipated. He had little confidence in the feasibility of limiting nuclear combat. The new private strategists like Kissinger chided Dulles' over-reliance on massive assured destruction.⁸² But he was skeptical of optimistic scenarios of tactical nuclear force. He understood how rapidly a local war could spark a general war. The Eisenhower administration had already avoided intervention in several limited wars, notably in Suez and Hungary in 1956.

⁸⁰ Sergei Khrushchev, *Nikita Khrushchev and the Creation of a Superpower* (University Park: The Pennsylvania State University Press, 2000), 155-62.

⁸¹ Matthew Brzezinski, *Red Moon Rising: Sputnik and the Hidden Rivalries that Ignited the Space Age* (New York: TimesBooks/Henry Holt, 2007), p. 125

⁸² Robert W. Coakley, "The Army as a Flexible Instrument of National Policy", in Gordon Turner and Richard Challenger, eds., *National Security In The Nuclear Age* (New York: Frederick A. Praeger, 1960), p.260.

Private debate over defense force structure and spending, such as emanated from the Council for Foreign Relations, did have some influence over the development of American strategic policy. America's ability to project force remained a topic of much discussion. By the next year's Fourth of July, 1958, Smith and Matthews were preparing yet another updated set of limited war options, this time explicitly incorporating nuclear capabilities. Days before, Defense officials had optimistically estimated that limited nuclear exchanges would last no more than 30-60 days.⁸³ But under questioning, they admitted that these estimates had not been based on the certain probability of in-kind retaliation.

Scenarios about possible small wars were still largely theoretical in 1958. Limited wars seemed more likely in post-colonial hostile situations. The U.S. did not yet have any large scale involvements to shore up colonial regimes. Deployments in response to unexpected provocation were the exception rather than the rule. The few military interventions Eisenhower had approved were intended to be demonstrations of surgical precision, like the deployment of the U.S. Army and Marines to Lebanon.⁸⁴ Laos was beginning to loom as a possible new theater of combat, but Germany seemed an improbable battleground. US occupation forces were usually just doing routine base duty, such as the jeep-driving GI Elvis Presley. Containment in Europe maintained a tolerable status quo, except for the flood of refugees from East Germany.

Several incidents in September involving inspections at border checkpoints may have forecast increased hostilities over Berlin. These were apparently instigated by the East German *volkspolizei* with a least tacit Soviet approval. A message from Ambassador David Bruce to Dulles on September 2 details a proposed note, planned in conjunction with the British and French, to the Soviets, "bring to your attention serious situation concerning life in this city...(re)

⁸³ Elbert Matthews to Gerard Smith, "USAF Assumptions...", NARA, RG 59, Folder 5, Box 1994,

⁸⁴ Eisenhower, *Waging Peace*, p.240.

measures now being imposed” by permitting them, the Soviet authorities are deepening the division of Germany”.⁸⁵ The same day, an American soldier had his camera taken at an inspection point by the *vopos*. He struck back at a *vopo* who then, in pursuit of the soldier” crossed the checkpoint barrier into the West. When told by the West Germans that he was now on their territory, the East German fled back across the border with the American’s camera.⁸⁶

Further tripartite meeting summaries reveal that such harassment had become an ongoing problem. British Foreign Service counselor Peter Wilkinson observed, “unless we were prepared to submit to Soviet inspection procedures, we will probably be blockading ourselves in Berlin.”⁸⁷ At a meeting with acting Soviet political advisor Shilov two days later, the U.S. embassy’s legal counselor Bernard Gufler “emphasized increasing brutality of Soviet sector police.” Shilov replied that, “this was a matter entirely outside Soviet competence”. He then cited a similar incident the previous month as evidence of the Soviet distancing themselves from responsibility for security in Berlin. When the US advisor inquired whether Shilov’s statement constituted definite unilateral abrogation of Soviet obligation to protect members Western allied forces while in East Berlin, Shilov answered affirmatively. He said he “could not use influence to return camera, matter out of his control.”⁸⁸ In quadripartite (US/Britain/France/FRG) meetings a few days later, West Germany’s Dr. Northe stated that the “Germans were impressed with apparent confusion in GDR circles on East German prerogatives re controlling passage into East German enclave.”⁸⁹ There may have been a slight breakdown between responsible East German and Soviet diplomatic and military authorities. The provocations were mainly against Allied military personnel, but there was no clear chain of command for the West to address their

⁸⁵ Bruce cable to Dulles, September 2, 1958, 762.0221/9-258, Box 3534, RG 59, NARA.

⁸⁶ Gufler cable to Dulles, September 2, 1958, 762.0221/9-258, Box 3534, RG 59, NARA.

⁸⁷ Bruce cable to Dulles, September 3, 1958, 762.0221/9-358, Box 3534, RG 59, NARA.

⁸⁸ Gufler cable to Dulles, September 5, 1958, 762.0221/9-558, Box 3534, RG 59, NARA.

⁸⁹ Bruce cable to Dulles, September 8, 1958, 762.0221/9-858, Box 3534, RG 59, NARA.

complaints. The situation had neither a ready military nor diplomatic remedy.

At this point, Dulles sent the Bonn mission an excerpt from his September 9 news conference, which he directed to be forwarded to West Berlin mayor Willy Brandt. Brandt queried Dulles: “Mr. Secretary, is it a fair understanding that ...you and the President regarded the threat of aggression in Quemoy and Matsu equal to the threat to the Western World in Berlin and...are we again prepared to resist aggression?” Dulles replied: “...the two situations are comparable...Perhaps Berlin is another example of a forward position which...could not be lost in the face of a frontal attack without consequences which were unacceptable.”⁹⁰

Unfortunately, the situation did continue to deteriorate at the local level, chiefly because of East German efforts during August and September 1958 to incorporate the neighborhood of Steinstuecken, near the outer border of West Berlin, into their jurisdiction. This de facto redrawing of the Potsdam-authorized borders was a serious concern in its own right, magnified because of the unstable inspection and checkpoint climate.⁹¹ In a message of concern from the embassy to Dulles and other missions and military installations, Bruce specifically emphasized that, “approval for the use of armed forces must emanate from the highest level of the US government.” He also noted that “the time required to obtain this authority after an act of aggression would preclude effective and timely reaction on the part of the US in Steinestucken.” Despite the dilemma of needing to be able to ‘take immediate action with...deliberate violations,’ Bruce stated forcefully that “not think it essential ... (US Berlin Commander) be given prior and unconditional authority to undertake military action” He concluded pessimistically that “one constant factor is that there is no REPEAT no stable *modus vivendi* in Berlin...only proposal might improve situation would be (if) generally known that if incursion

⁹⁰ Dulles cable to Bonn, September 10, 1958, 762.0221/9-858, Box 3534, RG 59, NARA.

⁹¹ Gufler cable to Dulles, September 15, 1958, 762.0221/9-1558, Box 3534, RG 59, NARA.

took place US armed force would be used to restore situation.” Bruce concluded, “for all practical purposes, our position is not such we can improve it fundamentally from military standpoint. ...situation hardly conducive to that.”⁹² However, over some objections from both Allies and the JCS, Dulles would only consider possibly conducting a light “garrison” airlift of essential military and diplomatic personnel and materiel.

A more serious interruption took place on October 8 at Marienborn checkpoint when Soviet, not East German, guards detained a large US truck and its driver. Bernard Gufler protested to the new Soviet political advisor Colonel Dimitri Markushkin. Markushkin’s frequent cooperation with Bruce was generally a great asset to both sides all through Berlin II. Though Markushkin could also be unhelpful when his superiors so directed, he helped in this case. The truck was released the same day. The Steinestuecken dispute continued to occupy much of the US mission’s attention particularly from October 22 to 28.⁹³ On November 23, Ambassador David Bruce issued general instructions that no inspection challenges, unauthorized convoys, or retaliations of any kind were to be attempted by US personnel. He concluded with this sobering caution: “any course of action designed to maintain freedom of Berlin will finally depend upon our determination, if necessary to use force.”⁹⁴

Contingency planning for armed combat over Berlin and along the inter-German borders was challenging for both the US and USSR. Restrictions included the necessity to limit collateral damage to civilians, economic assets, and infrastructure. A confined war zone could nullify force advantages. The USSR’s *in situ* advantages in conventional war assets were well

⁹² Bonn embassy cable to Dulles, September 22, 1958, 762.0221/9-2258, Box 3534, RG 59, NARA.

⁹³ Kearney to Hillenbrand State Dept. legal advisor, October 28, 1958, 762.0221/10-2858, Box 3534, RG 59, NARA.

⁹⁴ Bruce internal cable to US Berlin personnel, November 23, 1958, 762.0221/11-2358, Box 3534, RG 59, NARA.

understood and discouraging.⁹⁵ The Americans would be limited by their inability to match and mobilize conventional assets into the region quickly. Military targets for all parties would have to be selected very carefully. The Soviets had had an awkward time in both Poland and Hungary in 1956, and was now wary of heavy tactics. Their relations with the East Germans had been strained ever since 1953. East German leader Walter Ulbricht complained to Khrushchev that he needed economic help as well as assistance in stemming the refugee problem. Khrushchev thought Ulbricht had brought on his problems through heavy handed incompetence.⁹⁶

Khrushchev's November Speeches

By the fall of 1958, the Soviets had begun installations for R-5 ballistic missile systems in East Germany near Berlin. These intermediate-range missiles (IRBM) could reach Paris and London and gave the Soviets a forward based rapid-delivery nuclear capability to match the West's.⁹⁷ That capability, along with strong Soviet conventional force advantage, gave Khrushchev the muscle to back up his proposals. He wanted to remove the "bone in the throat" of the West's Berlin occupation troops within East Germany. In a speech at Moscow's Sports Palace on November 10, Khrushchev announced his intent to sign a separate peace treaty with East Germany. This treaty would supersede the Potsdam accords, nullifying the basis for occupation. Berlin would be transformed into a neutral 'free city.' He set a six-month deadline before the Soviet Union would undertake action, but would meet with Western leaders.⁹⁸

⁹⁵ Robert Bowie, and Richard Immerman, *Waging Peace: How Eisenhower Shaped an Enduring Cold War Strategy* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998), p.247.

⁹⁶ Hope Harrison, *Driving the Soviets*, p. 95.

⁹⁷ Aleksandr Fursenko and Mark Naftali, *Khrushchev's Cold War: The Inside Story of an American Adversary* (New York: W W Norton, 2006), p. 194.

⁹⁸ Eisenhower, *Waging Peace*, p.329.

Western Response

Consultations with European allies in the days after Khrushchev's November 10 p, indicated wide divergence of opinion about practical options.⁹⁹ The United States and British urged an immediate strong note of protest be sent but the French were reluctant to respond immediately. West Berlin mayor Willy Brandt, noting that the Allies seemed to be caught off guard, urged the West German government in Bonn to break off diplomatic relations with the Soviet Union.¹⁰⁰ The Europeans wondered if the Americans would abandon Germany for better relations with the Soviets. The Americans wondered if the European allies, including West Germans, had any idea what the costs of conflict would be. If one of Khrushchev's aims, which might include summit talks with the U.S., was to sow dissension among the American, French, British and West Germans, as US Secretary of State John Foster Dulles believed, the gambit was succeeding.¹⁰¹ Dulles would demonstrate that Allied unity was a greater priority for Eisenhower than accommodating the Soviets. That unity included visible solidarity with West Germany.¹⁰² US Ambassador In Bonn David Bruce told Dulles that he believed it "unlikely that (Khrushchev) would carry his purpose to the bitter end." Instead, Khrushchev wanted "to force a summit conference and to create an epoch of detente which he needs for his economic plans."¹⁰³

Dulles was in no hurry to involve the West in a Berlin conflict where they had about 11,000 troops against the East's 38,000 in the immediate Berlin vicinity. Hoping to defuse Khrushchev's demands through compromise, he made public comments that the West could

⁹⁹ Examples: Burns (in Bonn) cable to Dulles; Whitney (in London) cable to Dulles; Matthews cable to Dulles, all November 13, 1958, 762.0221/11-1358,, Box 3534, RG 58, NARA.

¹⁰⁰ Herter cable to Bruce, November 23, 1958; Gufler cable to Herter, November 23, 1958, 762.0221/11-2358, Box 3534, RG 1958, NARA.

¹⁰¹ Cable from Dulles to Bruce, November 25, 1958, 762.0221/11-2559, Box 3534, RG 58, NARA.

¹⁰² Cable from Dulles to Bruce, November 24, 1958, 762.0221/11-2459, Box 3534, RG 58, NARA.

¹⁰³ Cable from Bruce to Dulles, November 25, 1958, 762.022/11-2558, Box 3534, RG 58, NARA.

consider some East German border presence as 'agents' of the Soviet Union.¹⁰⁴ This would not be a major concession in practical terms, but anything that implied recognition of East Germany was anathema in Bonn and West Berlin. This flexibility on Dulles part, reflecting Eisenhower's own inclinations, was an early indication of the tactics he would try to set as basic Western strategy to deal with Khrushchev. Already, however, the US ran into resistance from the West Germans and West Berliners, fearful of anything that suggested permanent acceptance of a divided Germany.¹⁰⁵

Khrushchev underscored the seriousness of his intent with a formal statement of his peace treaty/free city demands which he had his ambassadors deliver on November 28. Although the West Germans remained suspicious of Dulles' flexibility on the 'agency' principle, Ambassador Bruce found general interest in negotiations that might lead to serious reunification discussions.¹⁰⁶ The French saw only three options, all unviable - refusing the note, finding a Berlin-only solution or attempting an all-German plebiscite wanted to delay any response pending inter-allied consultation.¹⁰⁷ Talking with French ambassador Herve Alphan in Washington, Dulles noted the overtly hostile tone of the new Soviet statement. He said there would have to be tripartite discussions in December, when the Western foreign ministers would be in Paris for NATO sessions. In practice, Dulles would have to temper French attempts to lock the West into difficult stances that hindered negotiation.¹⁰⁸ The West Germans would not participate yet in these meetings because they were not occupying powers in Berlin. In coming months, they became much more involved in negotiations, though indirectly.

The tripartite focus on Berlin tied in with French President Charles de Gaulle's

¹⁰⁴ Gufler cable to Dulles, November 27, 1958, 762.0221/11-2758, Box 3534, RG 58, NARA.

¹⁰⁵ Dr. Gefaeller cable to Dulles, November 27, 1958, 762.0221/11-2759, Box 3534, RG 58, NARA.

¹⁰⁶ Bruce cable to Dulles, November 28, 1958, 762.021/11-2858, Box 3534, RG 58, NARA.

¹⁰⁷ Houghton cable to Dulles, November 28, 1958, 762.0221/11-2858, Box 3534, RG 58, NARA.

¹⁰⁸ Memo re Dulles-Alphan meeting, November 28, 1958, 762.0221/11-2858, Box 3534, RG, NARA.

inclinations. Dulles used that angle to get the French interested in a negotiated Berlin solution. For the moment, the British reaction seemed more calm and steady than the US's other European allies but they would be seen as too willing to negotiate. Unlike Eisenhower or de Gaulle, British Prime Minister Harold Macmillan would send a personal letter to Khrushchev, on November 22. He got back a restatement of the demands, along with "a plea for better relations with the UK."¹⁰⁹

Importance of Individuals in the Berlin Situation

Khrushchev's individual nature and personality would be the most decisive and constant element of the whole Berlin campaign, but his Western counterparts were also very distinctive, experienced politicians and national leaders. Charles de Gaulle's ascension to the French Presidency three months earlier already portended trouble for Washington. De Gaulle had already indicated to Eisenhower and the new British Prime Minister Harold Macmillan that he wanted a triumvirate of Anglo-French-American global leadership, to which NATO would be subordinate. Convinced that Khrushchev did not want war, de Gaulle hoped to lead the West's Berlin response away from the negotiations Macmillan wanted.¹¹⁰ West German Chancellor Konrad Adenauer was eager to establish good relations with de Gaulle, as was the General, and maintain a united front against Communist expansion. Adenauer and Khrushchev were already adversaries, veteran but excitable politicians who used each other for propaganda.¹¹¹ The West Germans, along with the Belgians, Dutch, Italians and the rest of NATO, including the US and Britain, viewed de Gaulle's vision with apprehension. Macmillan had his own dreams of

¹⁰⁹ Whitney cable to Rusk, December 5, 1958, 762.0221/12-558, Box 3534, RG 58, NARA.

¹¹⁰ Frederic Bozo, *Two Strategies for Europe: De Gaulle, the United States and the Atlantic Alliance* (Lanham: Rowen & Littlefield, 2001), p. 31.

¹¹¹ Taubman, *Khrushchev*, p.414.

restoring British influence and US ties after the setbacks of Suez. Eisenhower had a more reserved but still authoritative style of leadership, made possible by his military background. Of these Allied leaders, only Eisenhower had any experience with Khrushchev and even that had been limited to the strained formal settings of the Vienna summit.¹¹²

What were Khrushchev's other aims, besides discord and a new summit? Would they limit his tactics? Not even his fellow Russians knew.¹¹³ Certainly he did not want a total war, and probably not even limited war. He had not been pleased with the few limited war situations, like Hungary, the Soviets had gotten embroiled in on his watch. Like Eisenhower, he had trimmed conventional bases and forces and even moderated heavy arms purchasing. He needed to preserve imposing conventional strength, yet keep costs manageable.¹¹⁴ The Soviet force in East Germany included theater nuclear missiles requested by Ulbricht. Khrushchev had to mollify Ulbricht who was losing control over Berlin as thousands of educated workers fled west. German unification had essentially been a moot question since the establishment of the German Democratic Republic and Warsaw Pact and the growing viability of West Germany as a renewed commercial and political power. Khrushchev's surprise proposals for a new Berlin and German settlement may not have been realistic, but they offered some political advantages.¹¹⁵ Ulbricht's complaints about the drain of human resources from Berlin to the West had to be addressed.¹¹⁶ Berlin was the one place where Russia and the Western Powers were all still in close contact.

By focusing his challenge there, Khrushchev could also advance several domestic and

¹¹² Stephen Ambrose, *Eisenhower: Soldier and President* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1990), p.393.

¹¹³ Harrison, *Driving the Soviets Up The Wall*, p.110-111.

¹¹⁴ Vladislav Zubok and Constantine Pleshakov, *Inside the Kremlin's Cold War: From Stalin to Khrushchev* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1996), p.193.

¹¹⁵ Mark Trachtenberg, *History & Strategy* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2001), p.170-73.

¹¹⁶ Harrison, *Driving the Soviets Up the Wall*, p. 97.

Communist-sphere aims, including reinforcing his strength with the new Politburo.¹¹⁷ In challenging the Potsdam agreement, he could challenge the final European judgment of the War, and recognize a new status quo with two independent Germanys and a non-aligned Berlin under UN auspices.¹¹⁸ He wanted to be seen as a peacemaker. Berlin was increasingly viewed by both the Americans and Russians as something of a liability - symbolic but dysfunctional. It was a safe target for political provocation. Berlin would be especially attractive if it could be acquired without any danger to the Cold War landscape. He hoped it might be worth a U.S.-U.S.S.R. summit meeting to Eisenhower as ransom for continued access. Culturally symbolic and functionally superfluous, it could be demanded without disrupting essential commerce and contact. The Warsaw Pact countries could be brought forth as diplomatic partners. Eastern European involvement would especially bother the West European allies, who tried to avoid initiatives like the Polish Rapacki plan. That plan would have made much of Europe a nuclear-free zone, and was viewed as a open door for Soviet conventional force advantage. Western governments still did not politically recognize East Germany and were not keen on doing business with Warsaw Pact client governments¹¹⁹

The new Moscow Politburo, finally purged of most of his rivals and old-line Stalinists, was astounded and bewildered by the Berlin initiative.¹²⁰ Khrushchev's impulsiveness had gone beyond the internal Russian upset of de-Stalinization to a whole new level of international mischief that might be dangerously unsustainable. But he did have control over his foreign policy apparatus. Veteran Praesidium member and Deputy Premier Anastas Mikoyan had been among the few to argue against the Berlin campaign and was later delegated to travel to the

¹¹⁷Zubok, *A Failed Empire*, p.130-136.

¹¹⁸ Sergei Khrushchev, *Nikita Khrushchev*, p. 302-04.

¹¹⁹ Piotr Wandycz, "Rapacki: The Search for Security", in Gordon Craig and Francis Loewenheim, ed., *The Diplomats: 1939 -1979* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1994), p.309.

¹²⁰ Zubok/Pleshakov, *Inside the Kremlin's Cold War*, p.199, p. 111-112.

United States on unofficial visits intended to press Khrushchev's demands but also repair relations in a more reasonable voice than Khrushchev used. Foreign Minister Andrei Gromyko obediently pursued the free city/peace treaty objectives with determination and little variation from the original formula for the next five years..¹²¹

Khrushchev's November statements marked the beginning of an sustained diplomatic campaign that lasted from November 1958 to a little after November 1963. The campaign required a ready military back-up which he did not expect to use but which was already on hand with extensive contingency plans already established. The West would also have to present a viable deterrent, but did not have forces afield or good planning. Khrushchev hoped to slow NATO nuclear deployments, remove the West's toehold in eastern Germany, and quiet critics like Ulbricht and his own generals, without actually having to go to war.¹²² Khrushchev could concentrate his own efforts on speeches and letters, as well as contacts with Western ambassadors like the American Llewellyn Thompson or the visiting US Senator Hubert Humphrey.

Life magazine covered Senator Hubert Humphrey's December 1st visit to Moscow, a week before Dulles would go to Europe, as a bigger event than it was. *Life* gave Humphrey his own byline and lots of pictures. No real negotiations took place. To Humphrey, who had presidential aspirations for 1960, *Life's* feature provided great publicity, but it was meant as a wake-up call to the administration. But, *Time* showed how Khrushchev easily neutralized Humphrey. A scathing critique, "Khrushchev's Plan," was followed by, "The Cancer of Freedom," contrasting Khrushchev with Willy Brandt. Khrushchev and Brandt had more in common than the Luce magazines would acknowledge; they were party politicians before they were statesmen.¹²³

Reasonable and belligerent often in the same conversation, Khrushchev could mix formal

¹²¹ Taubman, *Khrushchev*, p.396.

¹²² Fursenko and Naftali, *Khrushchev's Cold War*, p. 204-05.

¹²³ *Life*, Dec. 14th, *Time*, Dec. 15th, 1958, Periodicals collection, Earl K. Long Library, University of New Orleans.

statements and informal contacts to keep the West guessing about his real intentions. Gromyko and Mikoyan would be his main representatives, along with ambassadors.¹²⁴ His US Ambassador Mikhail Menshikov had only been in Washington since January 1958 but already earned the nickname "Smilin' Mike" for his baleful manner; Eisenhower was among the few who found Menshikov agreeable. He was not a persuasive diplomat but he was faithful to his boss.

Where Khrushchev had initially hoped for an early 1959 summit with more following, he would have to wait eighteen months only to abandon the conference with Eisenhower. Khrushchev never imagined the Berlin diplomatic operation would take so long.¹²⁵ His initial timetable was six months, a deadline he suspended and would later re-impose, but suspend again. Even though the West did not agree to his demands even after many months, it kept them distracted and provided him with leverage for other issues, most notably disarmament. Disarmament was related to the German problem, because of the recent nuclear deployments. The diplomatic campaign for Berlin was much cheaper than a war and was intended to accomplish the same desired changes. It was offered as an alternative to war but with an indefinite threat of force to ensure its demands. It involved very little new military effort, unless things went awry.¹²⁶ The campaign became time-consuming for leaders and diplomats on all sides with almost no gains, but they became much familiar with their counterparts. That sizing-up was also a key Soviet aim in the Berlin campaign.

The grand sweep of Khrushchev's ambition as well as his tough language was also a challenge to Red China's Chairman Mao Zedong. Mao remained angry over the de-Stalinization program and Russian refusal to share nuclear technology. He ridiculed Khrushchev's talk of peaceful coexistence. Mao had treated Khrushchev rudely on the latter's state visit to China some months before. Mao had recently probed the Western presence in the

¹²⁴ Taubman, *Khrushchev*, p.409.

¹²⁵ Fursenko & Naftali, *Khrushchev's Cold War*, p.210.

¹²⁶ Sergei Khrushchev, Nikita Khrushchev, p.305-06.

offshore territories. Post-Soviet Russian historians Vladislav Zubok and Constantine Pleshakov, who stress the Sino-Soviet rivalry in Khrushchev's decision making, have pointed out that Ulbricht had heard Dulles' recent comparisons of the Chinese offshore island situation with Berlin. In October 1958, possibly to goad Khrushchev, Ulbricht suggested the next issue of superpower contention might be Berlin's status.¹²⁷

President Eisenhower was dubious over Berlin's strategic value and not at all inclined to summitry with Khrushchev, especially under duress.¹²⁸ He regarded the previous summit of 1955 as a failure and did not think foreign-minister conferences very useful. Though Geneva was the first post-war US-USSR summit, it had not been productive. Eisenhower remained bitter over Khrushchev's subsequent abrogation of summit promises in both Poland and Hungary, as well as his interference in the Suez crisis.¹²⁹ Eisenhower believed in executive authority but also delegation of command. His "New Look" policy aimed to replace expensive "containment" strategy with a leaner, more responsive defense capacity. He wanted to eliminate costly self-perpetuating bureaucracies and force redundancies. He was disinclined to wholesale weapons system purchases premised on suspect intelligence.¹³⁰ This economical approach to maintaining sufficient defense assets also demanded a flexible foreign policy that looked to negotiation in crisis situations. To avoid such interventions, a reliably subordinate security establishment was required. Stephen Ambrose has described the President as an advocate for military caution and limits. More recent examinations of Eisenhower strategic policy such as Bowie and Immerman's *Waging Peace* have further argued that the "Ike" White House was

¹²⁷ Zubok/Pleshakov, *Inside the Kremlin's Cold War*, p.199.

¹²⁸ Letter from Eisenhower to Khrushchev, July 2, 1958, *Documents on Germany 1944-1959*, University of Wisconsin, <http://digicoll.library.wisc.edu/history>, accessed March 12, 2006.

¹³⁰ Douglas Kinnard, *President Eisenhower and Strategy Management: A Study in Defense Politics* (Lexington: The University Press of Kentucky, 1977) pp. 77-78..

systematically inclined to restraint and prudent. The President was averse to military risk-taking and committed U.S. forces carefully, if at all.¹³¹

Eisenhower did not regard the State and Defense Departments as rivals, but rather as equally subordinate institutions. Bureaucratization - whether at State or Defense - added a deadly inertia and drag on decision making.¹³² That could slow presidential authority unless an expediter like Dulles could whip and cajole Washington's security fiefdoms into cooperation. By 1958, Eisenhower had a sound grasp of Dulles' basic geopolitical instincts. After earlier heated experiences and disagreements, they were well seasoned and understood each other.¹³³ Their instincts about the Berlin situation were very similar. Both men thought this was an indirect maneuver by Khrushchev, who had forecast and loudly proclaimed his moves. The Kremlin leader established an extended timeline of six months, instead of simply occupying all of Berlin as a fait accompli. But Eisenhower was also under considerable political pressure from military and Congressional leaders wanting a more aggressive U.S. reaction.¹³⁴ Their martial allies in the press such as columnist Joseph Alsop advocated action.

Dulles's perceived direction of foreign policy insulated Eisenhower, reinforcing presidential gravitas. The National Security Advisor role was less important than it had been under Truman and would increasingly be with McGeorge Bundy and Henry Kissinger. Dulles ran a more centralized and influential foreign policy apparatus than the next few Secretaries of State.¹³⁵ He relied heavily on a few capable subordinates like Undersecretaries Livingston Merchant and Policy Planning Staff head Gerard Smith. In addition, he benefitted from

¹³¹ Bowie/Immerman, *Waging Peace*, p. 246.

¹³² J. Garry Gifford, "Bureaucratic Politics", in Michael Hogan and Thomas Paterson, eds., *Explaining the History of American Foreign Relations*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), p.142.

¹³³ Dwight D. Eisenhower, *Waging Peace: 1956-1961* (New York: Doubleday, 1965), p. 362-63.

¹³⁴ Eisenhower, *Waging Peace*, p. 340-41.

¹³⁵ Frederick Marks, *Power and Peace*, p. 38-39.

experienced ambassadors like David Bruce in Germany and Llewellyn Thompson in Moscow. Charles Bohlen and Foy Kohler were also experienced analysts of the Soviets and would remain involved for most of campaign

While de Gaulle and Macmillan actively involved themselves in the negotiations, Eisenhower, with confidence, delegated much of the US response to John Foster Dulles. As Secretary of State from Eisenhower's inauguration till his death from cancer in May 1959, Dulles enjoyed considerable leeway in carrying out policy yet could faithfully execute presidential directives. His opinion was valued, though he had his disagreements with Eisenhower. By 1958 his views were becoming especially more congruent with the President's.¹³⁶ At least in the preserved diplomatic record, there is little indication of divergence between the President and Secretary over the U.S. response to Khrushchev's proposals for a new German settlement.

Another reason for the executive branch's preference for diplomatic resolution was conflict between the State Department and the Joint Chiefs of Staff. Secretary of Defense Neil McElroy was a weak partner of the Chiefs more than he was a forceful leader like Dulles. McElroy could not lobby for his Department or for the JCS as effectively Dulles did for the State Department.¹³⁷ The State Department's "Militarization of Foreign Policy" noted the Defense Department's divergent security goals and resistance to Eisenhower's "New Look" drawdown and streamlining of American defense positions.¹³⁸ That growing conflict between the State Department and the Joint Chiefs (and disagreements between the various Chiefs themselves) represented an unacceptable obstacle to Eisenhower's control over negotiations. The diplomatic table, not Berlin and Germany, had to serve as the field of battle, with the nuclear backup kept

¹³⁶ Richard Goold-Adams, *John Foster Dulles: A Reappraisal* (Westport: Greenwood Press, 1962), p.263.

¹³⁷ Kinnard, *President Eisenhower and Strategy Management*, p.74.

¹³⁸ State Department brief: *The Militarization of U.S. Foreign Policy*, 1957-58, Folder 5, Box 1995, RG 59, NARA.

both ready and contained. This would require Dulles, Merchant, Thompson, Kohler and others to continuously have to deal with both domestic as well allied attempts to influence the situation. Dulles' pragmatism and patience proved very constructive in the early, pivotal stages of the campaign.¹³⁹ He would however not live to see even the foreign ministers conference he helped arrange, Dulles helped establish a Western consensus perhaps better than his successors would; that lack of consensus would help ,prolong the campaign and make progress near impossible.

Though the U.S. and U.S.S.R. ultimately achieved some political resolution without escalation to general conflict, the course of the 1958-59 Berlin negotiations did involve a high degree of military planning and readiness. This coldest of Cold War conflicts had to be conducted at the diplomatic level because the operating limits and resultant options for both sides were so restrictive.¹⁴⁰ Military confrontations consisted of only a few East German and Soviet detentions of U.S. soldiers and vehicles over inspection rights.¹⁴¹

One indication of differences between State and Defense in the initial reaction period came from Undersecretary Merchant. He wrote concerning an interruption on November 14, 1958 of an American military convoy at Soviet checkpoint Babelsberg in Berlin. Merchant noted that such harassment had become chronic. Merchant stressed that the Bonn mission and the Department agreed that “this is the wrong time, place, and issue on which to resort to force.”¹⁴² But he discouraged plans for a full scale airlift as too visible a military commitment. He did mention again the possibility for a light garrison airlift. He summarizes topics of a meeting with the JCS as: Soviet determination to inspect American trucks, allied reluctance to actually use

¹³⁹ Eisenhower, *Waging Peace*, p. 342-343.

¹⁴⁰ Speech by Paul H. Nitze to World Affairs Council, Milwaukee, Feb 21, 1959, 762.00/3-1759, Box 3535, RG 59, NARA.

¹⁴¹ Burns cable to Dulles re Babelsburg detention, November 15, 1958, 762.0221/11-1558, Box 3534, RG 59, NARA.

¹⁴² Letter and Memo from Merchant to Murphy, November 20, 1958, Folder 2, Box 1993, RG 59, NARA.

force, prospects for further allied disunity, and efforts to restore unity. The considerable Soviet surface advantages were discussed as well as the “awkward” American staging environment. Merchant added that the JCS were firmly against a new airlift, but also committed to defense of convoys by force: “The JCS are following two lines of thinking that cause us considerable concern.”¹⁴³ The Merchant memo shows the rough frontier between military and diplomatic positions in Washington.

In Berlin, State Department staffers Finlay Burns and Bernard Gufler were seriously pursuing the “little airlift” option which appealed to the allies as well. This is significant because it shows the diplomatic corps taking the leadership regarding the degree of force to be used. It was remarked at the time that detentions were almost always targeted against the Americans and with full Soviet oversight.¹⁴⁴ It also seemed as though the Soviet military and diplomatic offices were not always in full communication.

Khrushchev cast his November 10 and 28 proposals as a timetable for Berlin to become a demilitarized “free city”.¹⁴⁵ It was a surprise move, even given the hostilities over Steinestuecken. But, initial US review of the Sports palace speech noted that the East German leader Ulbricht had been trying to dismiss the legal foundations for the occupation for over a year.¹⁴⁶ Khrushchev co-opted Ulbricht idea of challenging the occupation protocols with his “Free City” concept, which he claimed as his own innovation.¹⁴⁷ The “free city” idea vaguely evoked the peaceful transition Vienna had made from an occupied city to a neutral capital. In Vienna, however, the Soviets had really had little reason to continue occupation, whereas in

¹⁴³ *Ibid*

¹⁴⁴ Letters from Gufler and Burns, US Embassy, Bonn, to Foy Kohler and Martin Hillenbrand at State Dept, November 24, 1958, Folder 2, Box 1993, RG 59, NARA.

¹⁴⁵ Soviet note to Thompson, November 27, 1958, *Documents on Germany 1944-1959*, University of Wisconsin, <http://digicoll.library.wisc.edu/history>, accessed April 2, 2006.

¹⁴⁶ Burns cable to Dulles, November 13, 1958, 762.0221/11-1358, RG 58, NARA.

¹⁴⁷ Taubman, *Khrushchev*, p.402.

Berlin they were naturally dominant with nearly four times as many troops as the Americans had.

The real significance of his “free city” proposal may have been its non-military format, delivered as a diplomatic message. The Soviets did not want a military reaction. They made no lightning thrusts such as in Hungary, or as their Egyptian clients had done at Suez. This was a long-course diplomatic challenge, yet with a potential nuclear threat. This diplomatic course was likely chosen because it was less hazardous or expensive than military options. As Khrushchev told his son Sergei after the second speech, “No one would start a war over Berlin...if negotiations don’t work, something will turn up.”¹⁴⁸

US & Allies Consult in Europe (December 1958)

In December, Gerard Smith summarized a briefing led by Defense Secretary McElroy as an indication that “in the immediate future the U.S. military capacity for meeting limited aggression would rapidly decline.” Smith added that there would “likely be (a) number of situations in which a strong foreign policy position will be difficult to maintain...” He stressed the “necessity for strengthening our limited war capabilities”.¹⁴⁹ To avoid accidental escalation into total war and still pursue their respective interests, both sides confined their challenges to official notes and resisted more than token military activity. But in November and December, it was unclear whether or not the crisis could be contained diplomatically.

This meant containment of destabilizing military activity. In mid-December, retired General Lucius Clay, who as US Commander in Chief for Europe in 1949, had masterminded the

¹⁴⁸ Taubman, *Khrushchev*, p.399.

¹⁴⁹ Smith letter to Murphy, December 2, 1958, Box 5, Box 1994, RG 59, NARA.

original Berlin airlift, promoted the idea of an armed convoy from West Germany to Berlin.¹⁵⁰

This option was endorsed by the French and West Germans but was directly overruled by Dulles, who was relaying the President's wishes.¹⁵¹ Eisenhower had no intention of conducting another full scale airlift. This would have likely only provoked Khrushchev to take more forceful measures. By preserving the status quo as much as possible, Khrushchev's challenge was diminished and he could less credibly accomplish his indirect aims.

Throughout, the basic centrality of Germany to the crisis was more in German eyes, East and West, than to the other allied nations. France and Britain considered Khrushchev's proposal a challenge to them as much as to the Germans. A unified Germany would diminish their place in the new European system. Not that Berliners were particularly pleased with the status quo. As the West German Interior Minister Joachim Lipschutz emphatically told the American military journal *Combat* in December, they were open to a new political situation but not under Soviet ultimatum.¹⁵² To the Soviets, their role as victors over Germany and guarantors of the European settlement was a cornerstone of their international stature. They still considered Berlin, Potsdam notwithstanding, as their rightful prize. However, both the East and West German government governments had eagerly sought and received the first installations of theater range nuclear missiles.¹⁵³ The rearmament of Germany prompted the Soviets to confirm their leadership – and protect their western flank - by calling for demilitarization in Berlin and later for all of Germany.

¹⁵⁰ Merchant letter to Gen. Clay, December 3, 1958, 762.0221/12-858 CS/MDR, Box 3535, RG 59, NARA.

¹⁵¹ Gufler to Dulles, relaying Soviet General Zakharov note to Gen. Hammett, re US tank activity in Koenigsweg, December 20, 1958, 762.0221/12-2058, Box 3535, RG 59, NARA.

¹⁵² Paris embassy memo to Dulles, December 15, 1958, 762.0221/12-1558 CS/MDR, Box 3535, RG 59, NARA.

¹⁵³ McElroy memo to West German Foreign Minister Strauss and Undersecretary of State Irwin, December 20, 1958, 762.0221/12-2058, Box 3535, RG 59, NARA.

Soviet primacy in German occupation matters had to be reasserted against the new nuclear backdrop. Soviet military doctrine had come to regard nuclear weaponry as indispensable for the time being. But their leadership was beginning to acknowledge its risks.¹⁵⁴ Tactical nuclear missile deployment was still controversial in America and in the Soviet Union. Morton Halperin describes the conflicting views on this topic. Advocacy of the tactical nuclear deployment had to be considered alongside arguments against America placing its main reliance on the unpredictable nuclear strategies. The latter “examined the political costs of initiating the use of nuclear options and have found them very substantial.”¹⁵⁵ Unwilling to encourage military proposals for Berlin, Dulles turned down General Clay’s request for an interview before his departure for a mid-December NATO Foreign Minister meeting.¹⁵⁶ Acting Secretary Herter’s brief from Washington in advance of the Dulles trip did provide some window for possible military action. Herter observed that “Soviets and East Germans should not be allowed to entertain doubts as to our determination to use limited force if need be...” He emphasized that the “purpose of (such) resort to is...test Soviet intentions”¹⁵⁷

Ambassador David Bruce had recently reported that even amidst Adenauer’s resolve to “take a firm position,” other extenuating factors needed to be evaluated first. These included the possibility that Khrushchev was trying to deflect attention from internal difficulties in Russia as well as trying to impress the upcoming All Party Conference. Adenauer also suggested that Khrushchev was acting out of frustration at West German influence with DeGaulle in the wake

¹⁵⁴ Herbert H. Dinerstein, etc., editors for the Rand Corporation, trans. of Marshal V. Sokolovski, *Soviet Military Strategy* (Santa Monica: Prentice-Hall, 1963) & p.110.

¹⁵⁵ Morton Halperin, *Limited War In The Nuclear Age* (New York: John Wiley & Sons, 1963), p. 68.

¹⁵⁶ Merchant letter to Clay, December 8, 1958, US State Dept, 762.0221/12-858, RG 59, NARA.

¹⁵⁷ Herter memo to Bonn, December 11, 1959, State Dept. Central Files, 762.0221/12-858 CS/MDR, Box 3535, RG 59, NARA.

of Soviet disappointment about their unaccepted advances the previous May.¹⁵⁸ Adenauer and Lipschutz had little to say about how firmness would translate to force projections or defensive positions.

Unsatisfactory practical applications of conventional power were often based on naively assuming military means could be used for political goals while underestimating predictable problems. Eisenhower was determined to avoid being ensnared in a dangerous quagmire over dubious territory. The President had deep reservations about Berlin's worth. He told Dulles: "This was another instance in which our political posture requires us to assume military positions which are wholly illogical".¹⁵⁹ Eisenhower and Dulles still hoped to contain the situation through middle range diplomatic engagement. At the NATO conference, Dulles would lay down the law: The United States would not support unauthorized military ventures or even full scale planning or deployment and they would consider Khrushchev's proposals at face value. Eisenhower and Dulles thought that the Soviet leader's own positions could be used against him.

Dulles willingness to discuss compromises with the Soviets disturbed the Allies, particularly DeGaulle.¹⁶⁰ Meetings with the other foreign ministers indicated little consensus. This resistance did not prevent communiqués from NATO on December 15 and 18th. The final communiqué asserted resolve "not to yield to threats." The Allies also indicated they too sought a 'solution to seek just settlements of the German problem...' This would include "European Security arrangements... (and)...controlled disarmament."¹⁶¹ The US cover statement left no doubt that Dulles was acting at Eisenhower's direction; "The President reiterated our ... firm

¹⁵⁸ Bruce to Herter, December 3, 1958, US State Dept., 762.0221/12-358 CS/MDR, Box 3535, RG 59, NARA.

¹⁵⁹ Dulles memo re meeting with Eisenhower, November 30, 1958, *Foreign Relations of the United States, 1958-60*, Vol. 8, doc. 143.

¹⁶⁰ Cable Reports from Dulles re Paris meetings, December 12-15, 1958, *Ibid*; 190-220.

¹⁶¹ NATO Communique, December 18, 1958, University of Wisconsin Digital Collection, @<http://digicoll.library.wisc.edu/history>, accessed March 14, 2006.

purpose” as a Four Power guarantor of Berlin’s freedom.¹⁶² After these communiqués, though there was a period of apparent relaxation, with some hints from Soviet aides that there was not likely to be any war over Berlin.

A Hard Soviet Reply and Strains on Allied Restraint (January-February 1959)

In January, Deputy Premier Anastas Mikoyan visited Washington, ostensibly on vacation and to renew trade discussions . Allowing an extended goodwill and trade promotion visit by as high ranking an official as Mikoyan was itself a sign that tensions with the Soviets, had relaxed since 1956.¹⁶³ Dulles and Mikoyan had a generally friendly meeting, though Mikoyan made clear he was also in the US to receive "acceptable proposals" on Berlin. Mikoyan also visited with Vice-President Nixon; both these number two men expressed his country's desire for better relations and the importance exchanges and discussion. They did however engage in some ideological debate. Their discussion on Berlin was a little more pointed, with Mikoyan asking why the Americans could not believe the Soviets did not want Berlin for themselves. Nixon said the Western allies could not countenance a unilateral change over Berlin but, "the main thing was to reach a mutually acceptable settlement so that we do not arrive in six months at an intolerable position." Mikoyan said he hoped the question could be resolved earlier. This was only an informal visit but Berlin had not interfered with the general expressions of mutual interest in trade and cultural exchanges.¹⁶⁴

On his return to Washington on January 16, Mikoyan met again with Dulles and his top lieutenants. They discussed a number of global issues, such as the Near East, Iraq, Laos, Taiwan and Korea, contrasting the worthiness of each other's clients. Mikoyan vigorously

¹⁶² *Ibid*, p.2.

¹⁶³ Fursenko & Naftali, *Khrushchev's Cold War*, p. 214-15.

¹⁶⁴ Memo re Nixon-Mikoyan meeting, Washington, January 6, 1958, *FRUS 1958-60*, Vol. VIII, doc. 61.

protested Western bases in Iran and Turkey. Dulles said the Soviets need not worry and anyway, "with the increased range of missile, it made no practical difference whether a base were nearby or away. The USSR perhaps could annihilate the US from one of its own bases."¹⁶⁵ Mikoyan asked if the US intended to provide the West Germans with atomic weapons? Dulles said the US government was prohibited by law from doing so, despite many allied requests. They also briefly discussed suspending atomic testing. Dulles indicated the US was open to comprehensive test suspension talks and possible agreements, which Mikoyan welcomed readily. Again, the tone was cordial and business like. Mikoyan did not relax Khrushchev's demands on Berlin. If anything, he made clear a un-negotiable Soviet point: in the event of a treaty, the East Germans would be in control of access to and from Berlin. Allied occupation troops would have to leave because they would be encircled by East Germany which had to regard them as hostile.¹⁶⁶ Khrushchev was slightly upping the stakes; there was more at stake than just Berlin. Thus the Soviet message on Berlin in January was tougher. It was also the same whether it came from Khrushchev in an angry mood or Mikoyan at his most charming.

Mikoyan met with the President the next day. He delivered a more forceful message on Berlin than Eisenhower probably expected. He presented an expanded version of the November proposals that now included calls for a possible demilitarized unified German settlement. He made it clear to Dulles that the Soviets had problems with the U.S. in non-German matters, particularly the possible U.S. bases being planned for Turkey and Iran.¹⁶⁷ Mikoyan was particularly strident on the subject of West German nuclear deployment.¹⁶⁸ But the Americans simply asked Mikoyan in return if the Soviets were really ready for open elections in Germany.

¹⁶⁵ Memo re Dulles-Mikoyan meeting, Washington, January 16, 1959, *FRUS 1958-60*, Vol. VIII, doc.63.

¹⁶⁶ Trachtenberg, *A Constructed Peace*, p. 252-53.

¹⁶⁷ Mikoyan-Dulles meeting, January 16, 1959, *Foreign Relations of the United States*, *ibid.*

¹⁶⁸ Mikoyan-Eisenhower meeting, January 17, 1959, *FRUS 1958-60*, Vol. 8, doc. 279.

They received no direct answer from Mikoyan, who simply repeated the official concerns about nuclear encirclement and intent to resist such containment. The meeting was friendly, despite some tenseness on Berlin and they again emphasized positive effects of trade and exchanges.

Mikoyan's visit convinced the Americans that the Soviets did not want war but seemed not only contractible on Berlin but very confident nevertheless. One reason for that confidence might have been serious differences of opinion were openly splitting the allies. Another might have been that increased harassment, often with some Soviet component, was raising tensions in Berlin. On January 13, Willy Brandt raised the prescient possibility of the East Germans "possibly sealing off Sector-Sovietzone and Sector-Sector borders without blockade." This would indeed be Ulbricht and Khrushchev's main solution to stabilize East German losses through Berlin. It would take over two years longer than the end of May 1959 that Brandt predicted.¹⁶⁹

The Allies were demanding more detailed contingency planning than Dulles was willing to support. De Gaulle wanted to commit to a military strategy, to "resist force by force." In the event of a blockade, he wanted a garrison airlift of troops.¹⁷⁰ Macmillan was equally reluctant to commit his country's troops, . Even Adenauer, whose country would be most disrupted by a blockade, was troop-shy. All these leaders had criticized Dulles in December for daring to consider the agency principle. Macmillan had already opened his own backchannel to Khrushchev. Livingston Merchant told British Foreign Secretary Sir Harold Caccia to be careful not to tell many more journalists like Joseph Alsop that the British had second thoughts on resorting to force to maintain Allied occupation. rights.¹⁷¹

¹⁶⁹ Memo re Gufler-Brandt meeting, Berlin, January 13, 1959, 762.0221/1-1359. RG 59, NARA.

¹⁷⁰ memo from Houghton to Dulles, January 20, 1959, 762.0221/1-2059. RG 59, NARA.

¹⁷¹ Memo re Merchant-Caccia conversation, London, January 21, 1959, 762.0221/1-2159, RG 59, NARA.

The US represented a middle position, inclined to negotiate but only with well-measured and supportable force. The US took a cautious attitude to mobilization and negotiation, unlike respectively the British and French.. But they wanted promises of American nuclear intervention in the event of a shooting war. Eisenhower, always reluctant to expose the US to the dangers and costs of overseas deployments, was not content with the imbalance of commitment and naive ideas of containing and supporting limited wars. Only through Allied cohesion could the West use diplomatic means to deflect Khrushchev's demands enough to make him lift his deadline for Berlin.¹⁷² Macmillan's planned solo trip to Moscow and de Gaulle's agitation for some military gesture disrupted the cohesion and made it easier for Khrushchev to try and reach separate understandings among the Allies. Eisenhower remained unmoved towards heads of state diplomacy under the circumstances. Although nearly too ill to travel from his worsening cancer, Dulles nevertheless returned to Europe to bring the allies together.

However, almost as soon as he arrived, another serious incident occurred, involving a more extended detention. This again required Soviet political aide Markushkin's assistance after direct entreaties to Soviet Commander Shilov were ignored. The incident also revealed some dissonance between the Soviet military and political authorities in Berlin. On February 2, the Soviets detained an American truck convoy on the *Autobahn*, which allegedly refused inspection. The complaint was somewhat dubious since the rear of the trucks was open and the contents - jeeps - were plainly visible. The British also suffered a detention the next day.¹⁷³ In each case, the soldiers were not detained but the vehicles were, suggesting a very nuanced attempt at deliberate provocation. Bruce wired Dulles that "this is an obvious move to force

¹⁷² memo from Gerard Smith to Livingston Merchant, February 10, 1959, RG 59, Lot #670548, Box 182, NARA.

¹⁷³ Memo of Dulles-Macmillan-Lloyd-Merchant meeting in London, February 3, 1959, 762.0221/2-359, Box 3535, RG 59, NARA.

inspection rights”¹⁷⁴ In his next-day follow-up, he noted that “we either submit to any inspection demand or resort to self-imposed blockade”.¹⁷⁵

This was the most serious actual military contact of the early phase of the crisis. Luckily –or perhaps by design – it did not occur at a point where armed hostilities were likely to flare up; inspection checkpoints are defensive more than forward positions and the US vehicles were minimally armed. The detention is conspicuously marginal in most accounts of the Berlin sequence, but it was of serious concern at the time to the US and British embassies. The French offered to run some trucks through instead. Although Bruce considered the suggestion “worth considering,” it was not followed up on. Perhaps they were concerned about escalating the incident. As brinksmanship goes, it was not a particularly saber-rattling moment. General Lewis Norstad, US NATO commandant, presented a plan for five light tanks to test the checkpoint. This would be followed by a reinforcement battalion of light infantry.

But this escalatory idea was deferred in favor of Bruce’s appeal to Markushin. Bruce and Markushin visited the site, and after Bruce demonstrated that only a jeep was being transported, Markushin replied: “It is cold. I will not detain you further...” He added, “you and I are not able to settle the issues involved. It must be taken to a higher level.”¹⁷⁶ Markushin also let him know the release was a personal favor. The inspection issue was still open, but less experienced and adept representatives might not have been able to defuse the situation so peacefully.

Before higher level discussions with the Soviets could resume, the Allies needed to develop a joint approach. Dulles had to analyze what the Soviet actions were really about. His first stop was London where he was surprised to find that Prime Minister Sir Harold Macmillan

¹⁷⁴ Bruce cable to Herter, February 2, 1959, 762.0221/2-259, Box 3534, RG 59, NARA.

¹⁷⁵ Bruce cable to Herter, February 4, 762.0221/2-459, Box 3534, RG 59, NARA.

¹⁷⁶ Bruce cable to Herter, February 5, State Dept Central Files, 762.0221/2-559, Box 3535, RG 59, NARA.

and Foreign Minister Selwyn Lloyd had a much “softer” attitude than the U.S. expected.¹⁷⁷

While the US had surprised the Allies in December with their flexibility, the U.S. was still not prepared to recognize the GDR, especially since the Soviets were not going to recognize the FRG. While still in London, Dulles also met with Norstad and raised the question of how garrisoning nuclear weapons in Germany would affect understandings with other allies. Norstad noted that it was a major step but also cautioned against putting the move up for approval with the other nations. He also complained of delays in deployments. Undersecretary Livingston Merchant commented that the “Rubicon with the Soviets will be crossed when the Soviets get atomic weapons” in the field, only a few months away.¹⁷⁸ The Soviets did not have to go far forward to do that.

At the next day’s round, Dulles stated that he was convinced that the Soviets did not want to go to war over Berlin and they had to be careful not to back them into changing that position. He also reiterated his opposition to any “thinning out” of forces without corresponding moves from the opposition. But most significantly a diplomatic solution to the crisis began to surface with discussion of a Foreign Ministers conference, possibly as early as May. Macmillan now made public his intent to engage in his own personal shuttle diplomacy, including a trip to Moscow. That prospect left both Dulles and Eisenhower aghast with disbelief.¹⁷⁹

Fortunately, Dulles found French President Charles De Gaulle and Prime Minister Regis Debre less shaky. Ever the effective diplomat, Dulles pleased de Gaulle with his reference to the France’s role as a victorious occupying power. He knew that de Gaulle resented the erosion of tripartite prestige after French blunders in Suez and Indochina. It is interesting that Dulles also

¹⁷⁷ Dulles letter to State Dept., February 3, 1959, 762.0221/2-359, Box 3535, RG 59, NARA.

¹⁷⁸ Memo of Dulles-Norstad-Merchant meeting at London embassy, February 4, 1959, 762.0221/2-459, Box 3535, RG 59, NARA.

¹⁷⁹ Memo of Dulles-Macmillan-Lloyd-Merchant meeting at London embassy, February 4, 1959, 762.0221/2-459, Box 3535, RG 59, NARA.

referred to a problem we now call the “leverage of the weak” when he says “we could not permit...the vanquished to...rule the victors.”¹⁸⁰ Ambassador Llewellyn Thompson cabled Dulles from Moscow to advise that raising the vehicle inspection problem either tripartitely or unilaterally with the Soviets would be “disastrous.” He added that the Soviets would back off if not pressed to avoid further harsh publicity.¹⁸¹ Further talks with the French now went smoothly, emphasizing the economic cooperation between France and the FRG as a natural basis for influence, without Dulles having to make unsupportable concessions to the French.

Dulles’ next stop in Germany was more troubling. Chancellor Adenauer frankly described his apprehensions about Western unity and NATO’s will and ability to stand up to Soviet backed aggression. He wanted specific commitments of US military support from Dulles, but acknowledged that “if force were used, the crisis would become acute.” Dulles replied that in the event of serious armed incursion, the West must be prepared to dispatch an armored division to secure a land route to Berlin. Such a condition would equate to a general war situation where the allies must consider the use of nuclear weaponry. Failure to show commitment would “invite defeat on a purely conventional battleground.”¹⁸² Adenauer replied that he feared there was little public support for such scenarios, while Dulles assured him that there was indeed such public will in the United States. Dulles also contrasted the US position with the softer British views and harder French view, and asked what the West German thoughts were for a provisional resolution. Adenauer wanted the deadline postponed and NATO’s planned mission extended.¹⁸³

¹⁸⁰ Memo of Dulles-DeGaulle meeting in Paris, February 6, 1959, 762.0221/2-459, Box 3535, R G 59, NARA.

¹⁸¹ Thompson cable to Dulles, February 7, 1959, 762.0221/2-759, Box 3535, RG 59, NARA.

¹⁸² Memo of Dulles-Adenauer meeting in Bonn, February 8, 1959, 762.0221/2-459, Box 3535, RG 59, NARA.

¹⁸³ *Ibid.*

Explicitly committed to forceful resistance as Dulles was with Adenauer, he remained non-confrontational with the Soviets. Dulles was serious in his commitment to Adenauer. But his reassurances that the U.S. would not bargain its ally away were matched by his continuing determination to avoid war. The inspection issue was then effectively sidelined, for the time being, by the use of sealed supply trains instead of the more ostentatious convoys.¹⁸⁴ Dulles impressed Adenauer with his perseverance on West Germany's behalf in the face of obvious physical pain.¹⁸⁵ The Secretary then returned to Washington with some confidence that the alliance had been effectively shored up. He was, however, soon back in the hospital, and Acting Secretary Christian Herter began to assume full time responsibility for crisis management.

Compromises Emerge (March and early April 1959)

Dulles' efforts for Allied unity were well received by Eisenhower, whereas Macmillan's solo diplomacy renewed concerns. Inter-zonal friction continued to simmer but involved no new important disputes. The Soviets did reassert their "rights of inspection", but conveyed this by diplomatic messages, which the Americans countered by referring back to the original occupation agreements.¹⁸⁶ The British and French were willing to cede leadership on the issue to the Americans. A possible additional option, a passive embargo dubbed a "pacific counter-blockade" was presented to Herter but only limited actual contingency planning was initiated.¹⁸⁷ Herter now had to consider just how onerous the agency principle might be in the case of document stamping by GDR replacements at Soviet checkpoints. Herter, with State's legal counsel concurring, was unwilling to entertain full stamping authority. Since that would be *de*

¹⁸⁴ Cable from Bonn to Dulles, February 9, 1959, 762.0221/2-959, Box 3535, RG 59, NARA.

¹⁸⁵ Richard Goold-Adams, *John Foster Dulles: A Reappraisal*, p.282

¹⁸⁶ Thompson cable to Herter, February 27, 1959, Herter memo to US European missions, February 28, 1959, 762.221/2-2759 and 2-2859, all Box 3535, RG 59, NARA.

¹⁸⁷ Becker memo to Herter, March 4, 1959, 762.221/3-459, Box 3535, RG 59, NARA.

facto recognition of GDR authority, such a possibility was being very quietly considered.¹⁸⁸

There was still a very good chance that the Soviets would make good on their ultimatum.

With Dulles incapacitated in the hospital, American military advocates for a more forceful response saw an opportunity to make their case anew. On March 13, Herter and his staff held a meeting on Berlin contingency planning with Secretary McElroy, his deputy Donald Quarles, General Nathan F. Twining, the chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, White House liaison, Brigadier General Andrew J. Goodpaster and representatives of each service. The military wanted to clarify reports they had gotten on a State Department meeting the day before. They told Herter they were very concerned about plans for the cut-off point (May 27) and also about his statement that in no circumstances should the US initiate general war. Herter explained to the Chiefs' satisfaction that the policy remained the same: to leave military options open but to be resorted to only in the event of the situation deteriorating to point of no return.¹⁸⁹

But McElroy and Twining belittled continuing the limited-use of force policy as being of no deterrent value, with Twining even opining, "we have the capability to lick the East Germans". McElroy was concerned about getting ensnared in fighting satellites with the Soviet armed forces so close at hand. The JCS protested laxity in preparedness in the US European and NATO allies' forces. Twining presented a long list of more forceful recommendations, including a large scale deployment of 7,000 troops to Europe. McElroy overruled that, saying the President would veto the move as a waste of strength. Macmillan's pilgrimage to Moscow had also stirred up the JCS.¹⁹⁰

Diplomatic and legal alternatives to military force created their own difficulties. The

¹⁸⁸ *Ibid*

¹⁸⁹ Memo of meeting, Herter-Merchant-McElroy-Twining, etc., March 14, 1959, Box 3535, 762.0221/4-1859, RG 59, NARA.

¹⁹⁰ *Ibid*.

level and scope of negotiation - ministerial or heads-of-state, Germany-specific or broader ranging - was a very sensitive topic.¹⁹¹ Skeptical hopes for assistance from the UN in stamping cases were answered with plans to refer cases to the International Court of Justice. While the stamping issue seems arcane in many ways today, it was then crucial in cross-border transfers of any kind. A deadlock in stamping would seal the borders. Such a standoff was potentially destabilizing enough to worry everybody but Walter Ulbricht who was still hoping for escalation. The UN had been of only peripheral assistance in resolving the crisis anyway. UN Secretary General Dag Hammerskjold's reluctance during the worst of the crisis to take sides cost the UN any role in negotiations or the Foreign Minister's conference. The US mission in Berlin also had to contend with a protest from the Soviets about armed "escorts" dispatched by the US Army to observe convoys.¹⁹²

Negotiations with the Soviets towards the Foreign Minister's Conference proceeded slowly. The Western ministers, meeting in Paris in early April, were still hoping to bring up in disarmament, but could not agree on whether or how to link arms control with German questions. The Germans objected to any compromises on reunification.¹⁹³ The Soviets preferred a specific German settlement conference and/or a summit meeting with the United States.¹⁹⁴ Harold Macmillan, having helped arrange a foreign ministers meeting, then lobbied for a summit; the ministers might be more inclined to progress if it would enable a productive summit. Acting Secretary Herter urged Eisenhower to provide assurances that the US would participate in a summit following the conference. The President did indicate some willingness to

¹⁹¹ Memo from Bruce to US Europe missions, April 1, 1959, 396.1-GE/4-159, NARA.

¹⁹² Gufler cable to Herter, March 14, 1959, 762.0221/4-1859, Box 3535, RG 59, NARA.

¹⁹³ Herter circular cable to US Eur. embassies, April 1, 1959, 396.1 - GE/4-159, Box 3535, NARA

¹⁹⁴ Memo re Merchant-Heeney meeting, March 30, 1959, Washington, 762.0221/3-3059, Box 3535, NARA.

Macmillan, but would not make a binding commitment for a summit.¹⁹⁵

Macmillan was still worried, though for his own political reasons. He had taken Eden's seat after the failures of Suez and knew he could be just as vulnerable himself. However, he made good on his intent to visit Moscow. It was an uncomfortable visit. Khrushchev stood him up so to entertain visiting Iraqis (who had recently overthrown a British-backed king in Baghdad). He then taunted the Prime Minister at official dinners and generally subjected him to a very public display of how far British foreign influence had diminished. Khrushchev did take the opportunity to lift his May 28 deadline, though it is unlikely that that decision was hastened by Macmillan's visit.¹⁹⁶ Still, Macmillan had mollified the Russian leader somewhat with praises of Khrushchev's war record as political commissar and supply expediter. Macmillan's message was sufficiently muted to assure Khrushchev that Britain was no threat in this matter.

Macmillan, along with British Foreign Minister Selwyn Lloyd and Ambassador Harold Caccia briefed Herter in Washington within days. The Foreign Minister's conference now seemed a certainty. On many points the British and the US attitudes were agreeable. Herter and Eisenhower easily deflected Macmillan's suggestion that the most effective course would be to actually negotiate with Khrushchev, which was, of course, not on the US agenda at all.¹⁹⁷ When Macmillan reported on what seemed to him certainly a great step forward, Eisenhower congratulated him for good intentions and determination. But the ailing John Foster Dulles gave the Prime Minister a very undiplomatic appraisal of his solo diplomacy with the Soviets.¹⁹⁸

¹⁹⁵ Herter memo to Eisenhower, March 12, 1959, 396.1-GE/3-1259, Box 3535, NARA.

¹⁹⁶ Timothy Naftali & Aleksandr Fursenko, *Khrushchev's Cold War: The Inside Story of an American Adversary* (New York: W W Norton, 2006) p. 217-220.

¹⁹⁷ Memo of Herter meeting with Macmillan, Lloyd, and Caccia, March 12, 1959, 762.0221/3-1259, Box 3535, RG 59, NARA.

¹⁹⁸ Richard H. Immerman, *John Foster Dulles: Power, Pragmatism & Piety In U.S. Foreign Policy*, (Wilmington: Scholarly Resources Books, 1999), p.195.

In the wake of Macmillan's visit, Herter received the first rumblings of the next challenge. Polish and Czech envoys were demanding conference participation equal to Britain, Germany, and France. Herter expressed his doubts as to Soviet good faith and the follies of dividing the world into "two hostile camps."¹⁹⁹ On March 30 in Moscow, Gromyko hand-delivered the Soviet endorsement of the East European bids to Thompson at the US embassy in Moscow. The good news was that the Soviets were hinting at resolution; the bad news was they were not letting the West off the hook as easily had been hoped.²⁰⁰ The Soviets were officially demanding full participation for the Poles and Czechs, and even made reference to their status as victims of Hitler's Germany, a neat reversal of the Allied invocation of World War II era legal precedents. Ambassador Llewellyn Thompson observed that the Soviets were no longer chiefly concerned with German reunification, but wanted to harden their line across Europe in order to prompt negotiations on a broader level. Despite the recent gains, Thompson concluded that "the present outlook seems to be a gloomy one."²⁰¹

Arranging and Conducting a Foreign Minister's Conference (late April-May 1959)

But Allied relations did continue to improve in the weeks leading up to Foreign Minister's Conference. The April 18 quadripartite meeting was less tense than January's sessions when deep mistrusts existed among all four camps.²⁰² General Norstad suggested that the US lead joint tripartite and NATO contingency planning dubbed "Live Oak," with direct intermediary command being delegated to British and French commanders. No mobilization or action would be undertaken pending the foreign ministers meeting, but plans were drawn up for

¹⁹⁹ Memo of Herter meeting with unnamed Polish aide, March 24, 1959, 762.0221/3-1259, Box 3535, RG 59, NARA.

²⁰⁰ Soviet note to US State Dept, March 30, 1959, 762.0221/4-1859, Box 3535, RG 59, NARA.

²⁰¹ Thompson letter to Merchant, April 6, 1959, 762.0221/4-659, Box 3535, RG 59, NARA.

²⁰² Tyler memo re quadripartite meeting Bonn, April 18, 1959, 762.0221/4-1859, Box 3535, RG 59, NARA.

armed probes in the event of a new Berlin blockade and further measures suggested, including deployment of atomic submarines, if necessary.²⁰³ Live Oak planning would end up outlasting the May deadline as the basic framework for Berlin contingency planning.

Ambassador Thompson wired Herter that the Soviets "have shown obvious pleasure and relief that foreign ministers meeting has been arranged and [Deputy Foreign Minister] Zorin adopted almost pleading attitude for a summit meeting." Thompson noted that Gromyko was afraid disarmament discussions would 'bog down' the conference. Thompson also saw uncertainty among the Soviets about post-Dulles US objectives.²⁰⁴ Ambassador Bruce had to reassure the West Germans that the Allies would not bargain away reunification for Germany. However, he said, the Four-Power working group could not recommend plans, like phased-unification, which the Soviets would not accept.²⁰⁵ The British and French helped arrange use of UN Secretariat facilities in Geneva, placating UN officials hoping to have some role.²⁰⁶

The briefing book prepared for the conference provides a good picture of the US agenda. Primary goals included, "standing firm against pressure...stabilizing military situation...effecting retraction of Soviet power...ascertaining Soviet intentions... furthering substantive agreements...relaxation of intentions."²⁰⁷ These are adaptive tactics, not proactive initiatives. It is very significant however that the only topics listed for discussion concerned Berlin and Germany.²⁰⁸ The instructions to delegates are enumerated very specifically along with specific references to limited and general war potentials, as well as intelligence opportunities, in their briefings. Acting Secretary Herter wrote Merchant, "we are concentrating on the wrong danger,

²⁰³ Herter memo to Eisenhower, "Berlin Contingency Planning, March 17, 1959, 762.0221/3-1759, RG 59, NARA.

²⁰⁴ Thompson memo to Herter, April 14, 1959, 396.1 - GE/ 4-459, RG 59, NARA.

²⁰⁵ Herter letter to von Brentano, April 8, 1959, 396.1 - GE/4 - 859, RG 59, NARA.

²⁰⁶ State dept. memo, "Secretariat for Foreign Ministers Meeting", unsigned, April 9, 1959, 396.1/GE/4-959.

²⁰⁷ "Foreign Ministers Briefing Book", May 1959, Folder 1, Box 43, Lot 63, D390, Box 3535, RG 59, NARA.

²⁰⁸ *Ibid.*

interference with allied access to Berlin ... (instead of) East German interference with West German access to Berlin.” Difficulty in simply seating participants to general agreement was even one more reason why the US team limited its response to diplomatic means.²⁰⁹

Simultaneously in Geneva alongside the ministerial parleys, the US and Soviets also held bilateral discussions and began to lay the framework for Khrushchev’s late 1959 visit to the United States. These discussions were often tedious. The tenacious Gromyko had a deft touch for turning the tables on American strategy. When the Americans insisted on limiting discussion to German issues, he replied by insisting that a German settlement was purely a matter for the Germans. An exasperated Herter asked what happened to other questions the Soviets had said they wanted to discuss, like the growing nuclear stockpiles in Germany. But Gromyko was too opaque for Herter to be able to engage more deeply. The Russians may have wanted to ensure that these private bilateral talks could not substitute for a summit meeting.²¹⁰

Unfortunately, the architect of reason did not survive. John Foster Dulles died in Washington and was buried with honors. All the Foreign Ministers attended his funeral in Washington on May 28, one day past Khrushchev’s original deadline. Their comity on the occasion was proof that, in this last assignment as both architect and instrument of U.S. foreign policy, Dulles had pursued the most effective course to defuse tensions constructively.²¹¹ Acting at Eisenhower’s direction, he deflected a challenge that would not only have ended the Allied presence in Berlin, but would have shredded their unity and global standing.

²⁰⁹ Herter to Merchant, April 6, 1959, 762.0221/4-1659, Box 3535, RG 59, NARA.

²¹⁰ Gromyko -Herter meeting, May 12, 1959, *FRUS 1958-60*, Vol. 8, doc. 297.

²¹¹ Eisenhower diary entry, *Presidential Papers of Dwight D. Eisenhower*, May 28, 1959, Document 1178 (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1960-61)

What Was At Stake in Berlin

Several good reasons made Berlin an important and also unique concern. Though largely ornamental as a theater of influence, Berlin was especially valuable as an intelligence center for the America in Central Europe,²¹² Veteran intelligence operatives David Murphy and Sergei Kondrashev argue that the Soviets actually ran a far more effective operation there than the U.S. But Berlin also offered a an easy route for defection. General leakage of Communist assets to the west was one of Ulbricht's most persuasive complaints with Khrushchev.²¹³ The flow of refugees was an uncomfortable advertisement for the Western alternatives to socialism and this also may have motivated Khrushchev.²¹⁴ But, in 1958-59, the value of German reunification and occupation to either the Americans or Soviets was secondary to greater concerns about nuclear armaments and peripheral situations. Influence in the peripheral areas of Asia, Africa and South America, where the situations were less fixed than they were in Europe, demanded close attention as well.

Germany's primacy as the Cold War's political epicenter has been the main area of research for historians like Marc Trachtenberg. He said that Khrushchev's Berlin initiative "was rooted in the USSR's concern with Germany as a whole and above all with what was going on in West Germany..." Moscow "wanted the former allies to keep West Germany from becoming too powerful."²¹⁵ Despite trade advances and the successful re-equipping of its army, West Germany was still the junior partner of the Allies, not significantly threatening to anyone. Indeed, it was supported in great measure by the United States. Any challenge to the Potsdam agreements would have at least as much to do with the United States as the West Germans.

²¹² George Feifer, "The Berlin Tunnel" in Robert Cowley ed. *The Cold War: A Military History* (New York: Random House, 2005), p.195-196.

²¹³ David Murphy and Sergei Kondrashev, *Battleground Berlin* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1997), p.201.

²¹⁴ Harrison, *Driving the Soviets Up the Wall*, p.104.

²¹⁵ Trachtenberg, *Constructed Peace*, p. 252.

Regardless of whether or not Khrushchev's primary concern was Germany, the resolution of this challenge meant the most powerful players would have to use all military capabilities available in case diplomatic activities did not succeed. The mix of military and diplomatic options involved considerations extending far beyond Germany. Hope Harrison notes that while the United States had not "confirmed the presence of Soviet medium-range nuclear missiles in the GDR in 1959, U.S. suspicions were enough to deepen U.S. apprehension."²¹⁶ Even medium-range missiles, however, invoked the possibility of either side making intercontinental nuclear attacks. John Gaddis states that "NATO strategy had come to rely increasingly upon the first use of nuclear weapons in the event of a war."²¹⁷ If that was the case, then it may be understandable why the Eisenhower-Dulles strategy kept NATO on the periphery of their response. American insistence on controlling NATO nuclear weapons, especially in Germany, grew stronger and complicated contingency planning throughout the crisis.²¹⁸

Nevertheless, Berlin is not generally considered as a textbook example of pragmatic restraint where diplomatic resolution was emphasized. Authoritative modern historians such as Marc Trachtenberg, Hope Harrison, Thomas Schwartz and John Gaddis have generally viewed the crisis as a primarily European problem, aggravated by Dulles penchant for brinksmanship.²¹⁹ The question of whether the American strategy was a success or failure of in terms of allied relations or resolution of the German problem may be irresolvable.²²⁰ The historiography is contradictory in evaluating what is usually considered as a marginal interlude of Cold War history before the Wall's construction.

²¹⁶ Harrison, *Driving the Soviets*, p.129.

²¹⁷ John Lewis Gaddis, *We Now Know* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1997), p.137.

²¹⁸ Trachtenberg, *Constructed Peace*, p.281.

²¹⁹ Harrison, *Driving the Soviets Up the Wall*, p. 118, Trachtenberg, *A Constructed Peace*, p.261, Schwartz in Ambrose/Bischof, eds. "Eisenhower and the Germans" in *Eisenhower, A Centenary Assessment*,. (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1995), p.221

²²⁰ Stephen Ambrose and Gunter Bischof, eds., "Introduction" to *Eisenhower, A Centenary Assessment*, p. 8.

But there are other perspectives than the prevailing German emphasis. One is the crisis' role in the developing rivalry between Khrushchev and Mao. Berlin is also an important event in the careers of British Prime Minister Harold Macmillan, French President Charles DeGaulle, and West German Chancellor Konrad Adenauer. These leaders all played active, but not necessarily decisive, roles. The interpretations of their roles in Berlin present their own challenges. For instance, Gordon Craig suggests that it was DeGaulle's unwillingness to compromise that preserved West German independence, of which Adenauer remained very proud.²²¹

These were all veteran leaders greatly familiar with war and the limits affecting the effective application of force. But perhaps most essential to the success of diplomatic process over actual war were the formidable experience, talents, and inclinations of Eisenhower and Dulles. Soviet Premier Nikita S. Khrushchev's own strong disposition against needless war also encouraged a diplomatic solution. Though projecting a more threatening public image,²²² he was relatively restrained in delivering his proposals. He also kept the Soviet forces in Germany restrained, for the most part, during the crisis. Although he had a much colder relationship with his diplomats –Taubman reports that Gromyko was terrified of Khrushchev – they did function very efficiently on his behalf.²²³

Eisenhower and Dulles were faced with many problems in using force with necessary precision. Eisenhower was already dissatisfied with the Defense Department's efficiency and reliability and had ordered organizational review in June 1958.²²⁴ His frustration was increased by disagreements among the allies over strategy and by pressures to increase military spending. Competition between the Departments of Defense and State for influence both in Washington

²²¹ Gordon A. Craig, "Konrad Adenauer and his Diplomats", in *The Diplomats*, p. 215.

²²² Taubman, *Khrushchev*, p. 398.

²²³ Taubman, *Khrushchev*, p.399.

²²⁴ Kinnard, *President Eisenhower and Strategy Management*, p.88.

and in the field, as well as inter-service conflicts within Defense compounded his frustration. The ability to use military force effectively was essential because there was no guarantee that negotiation would succeed or that the Soviets would not present new provocations. Effective military capability had to be preserved and not squandered through ill-considered displays of force. Eisenhower told a congressional group during this period “the Communist objective is to spend ourselves into bankruptcy.” He went on, “This is a continuous crisis: Iran, Indochina, Formosa, Iraq.”²²⁵ Instead of airlifts or heavily armored convoys through East Germany, the Allies needed to conserve their forces and show firmness through readiness and cohesion. Achieving this proved almost as intimidating as the prospect of Warsaw Pact tanks rolling across western plains. Eisenhower and Dulles had similar basic instincts about their allies' limited capacity to effectively muster and use force. Handling the allies was a delicate proposition even before the state of alarm. Because Eisenhower's and Dulles's views were congruent, the American President could send his Secretary of State to Europe as his direct emissary to allied heads of state.²²⁶ The able work of the American diplomatic staff in Europe, such as Bruce and Thompson, greatly facilitated Dulles's efforts. The United States successfully avoided a possible nuclear conflict through negotiation. The US may have been summoned to the summit table under duress, but consistently urged mid-level negotiation to avoid forceful conflict. This allowed the Soviets to present the East Germans as their partners at the same table in Geneva as the western allies, without either side having to extend formal recognition. The US and its allies had outlasted Khrushchev's original six-month deadline and continued their presence in Berlin without any loss of military stature or position.²²⁷

²²⁵ Blanche Weisen Cook, *The Declassified Eisenhower: A Divided Legacy* (New York: Doubleday and Co., 1981), p. 210-11.

²²⁶ Trachtenberg, *A Constructed Peace*, p. 258-59.

²²⁷ Damms, *The Eisenhower Presidency*, p.90-91.

The early months of the Berlin crisis were a pivotal Cold War moment for the United States, its Allies and the Soviet Union. Though ostensibly involving all four western powers, it quickly evolved into a bipolar dispute between the US and Soviets. It was the first major encounter between the superpowers since Korea to carry the active potential of nuclear combat. Khrushchev wanted negotiations, not war.²²⁸ The success of the US's diplomatic response, with restrained contingency planning, established a template of negotiation with the USSR as a course of first resort. Eisenhower's New Look defense policy emphasized flexibility, instead of aggressive containment.²²⁹ His leadership style allowed him to benefit from new policy ideas while managing to channel their influence.²³⁰ He could withhold force without appearing weak.

Khrushchev had similarly drawn down the Soviet Union's armed forces yet was anxious to be able to project Soviet military strength if desired. There were compelling economic, political and strategic reasons for the Russian streamlining. But, as with the Americans, they also created some concern over maintaining effective strength. Nuclear deterrence involved considerably more risk than conventional forces but it also provided capabilities that seemed essential for superpower strategy. The writings of private nuclear strategists like Henry Kissinger, Edward Teller and Robert Osgood reflected new rationales for risking fallout and mass casualties.²³¹ The nuclear capacity provided the diplomats with a 'big stick', but the uncomfortable reality for both sides was that any conventional action would be hard to sustain and nuclear exchanges would negate the value of the territory. If diplomats could just invoke the potential of nuclear weapons while trying to forestall the need for that recourse through

²²⁸ Harrison, *Driving the Soviets*, p. 116-17.

²²⁹ Bowie/Immerman, *Waging Peace*, p.246.

²³⁰ General Andrew J .Goodpaster, "Forward," in Ambrose/Bischof, eds. *Eisenhower: A Centenary Assessment*, p.xvii.

²³¹ James King, Jr., "NATO: Genesis, Problems, and Progress", in Gordon Turner & Richard Challener, eds., *National Security In The Nuclear Age*, (Westport: Praeger, 1960), p.171.

negotiation, many problems associated with limited wars could be avoided.

Growing distance between the United States' diplomatic and military establishments in also discouraged Eisenhower's confidence in a military solution. State officials were openly skeptical over military competence at exercises of force. Rivalry between the armed services eroded Eisenhower's confidence even further.²³² General Clay's December convoy proposal and the March visit by the JCS to Herter show that the Pentagon was favorably disposed toward armed conflict. But the President saw war as an option of last resort. He was inclined to pursue negotiation instead.²³³ Because his Secretary of State had similar instincts about Allied relations, the German question, negotiations with the Soviets and the hazards of accidental war, Dulles's diplomatic team became the instrument of choice to resolve the Berlin problem.

Dulles was no longer the rigid policy hawk with little command experience he had been when Eisenhower and Khrushchev had met in 1955.²³⁴ Nor did he attempt to put Europe under the US's nuclear thumb with Eisenhower's distracted approval. Such criticisms might have characterized Dulles earlier in the decade. Richard Goold-Adams says that, by 1959, "first and foremost, he was from start to finish determined to prevent the use of force at almost any cost."²³⁵ Thomas Schwartz has pointed out the US had other problems to consider and could not undertake risk casually.²³⁶ For example, in the midst of the crisis, on the first of January 1, 1959, suspected Soviet sympathizer Fidel Castro overthrew Cuba's U.S.-aligned government.²³⁷ Budget constraints and potential hazards of regional wars demanded the

²³² H. W. Brands, "Eisenhower and Loose Ends", in Ambrose/Bischof, ed. *Eisenhower: A Centenary Assessment*, p. 131.

²³³ Stephen E. Ambrose, *Eisenhower: Soldier and President* (New York: Simon & Shuster, 1990), p. 480.

²³⁴ Gunter Bischof, "Eisenhower, the Summit, and the Austrian Treaty, 1953-1955", in Ambrose/Bischof, eds. *Eisenhower: A Centenary Assessment*, p. 142.

²³⁵ Richard Goold-Adams, *John Foster Dulles: A Reappraisal*, (Westport: Greenwood, 1962), p. 206.

²³⁶ Thomas A. Schwartz, "Eisenhower and the Germans", in Ambrose /Bischof, eds. *Eisenhower: A Centenary Assessment*, p.221.

²³⁷ John Lewis Gaddis, *The Cold War: A New History*, (New York: Penguin, 2006), p.74.

attention of both Washington and Moscow. Both countries analyzed militarization and limited war issues, to project force short of general war. Khrushchev had to deal with resistance from the Soviet military when he attempted defense cutbacks in the latter 1950s.²³⁸

Conclusion: Nuclear Diplomacy as the Only Expedient Option

Throughout the first phase of the Berlin crisis, the United States' response was restrained, but tough and open to negotiation. The U.S. was prepared – over the objections of the West Germans and French - to negotiate objectionable topics.²³⁹ Americans called the Russian hand by considering such unappealing measures as an “agency principle.” This would allow East German document stamping and even plebiscites on reunification. But the President and Dulles recognized that no unilateral reordering of the WWII jurisdiction arrangements could be tolerated.²⁴⁰ The essentially diplomatic nature of the 4-power occupation agreement for Berlin - an agreement between states - also prompted a diplomatic course. American diplomacy was backed by a readiness to use force if and when the President deemed it appropriate.²⁴¹ The Soviets could not be sure how the Americans would define the limits.

The diplomatic course in Berlin may not have produced conclusive results but neither did it leave Germany destroyed yet again. The proxy mode of conflict -- diplomatic exchange instead of military action - was a very risky but viable alternative to general war. Diplomacy helped avert war over Berlin, in part because the leaders involved had neither the inclination nor resources for a serious conflict. But the danger of accidental war was growing, especially with tactical nuclear weapons as a front-line defense. Paul H Nitze described dilemmas that would

²³⁸ Khrushchev, *Khrushchev Remembers*, p.516f.

²³⁹ Trachtenberg, *A Constructed Peace*, p.260-61.

²⁴⁰ Schwartz, “Eisenhower and the Germans in *Eisenhower: A Centenary*,” p.220

²⁴¹ Richard D. Challener, “Dulles: Moralizer as Pragmatist”, in Craig/Lowenheim, eds., *The Diplomats: 1939 -1979*, p.215.

face the entire next generation of US presidents and their advisors: “The process of action and reaction will test the resolution of both sides. It is comparable to the process of peeling off the successive layers of two onions. At the center of each onion is a kernel of self-knowledge that no stake, even the German stake, is worth a nuclear war. Each side will try to peel...the other side’s onion of resolution, while trying to protect its own. This is a dangerous game.”²⁴² The 1958-59 Berlin crisis was the first round in the Cold War with real nuclear war possibilities, and it would not be the last.

²⁴² Paul H. Nitze speech to World Council, Milwaukee, February 21, 1959, 762.00/3-1759, Box 35435, RG 59, NARA.

Chapter 2: "Seeking a Summit," June 1959-December 1960

Introduction

Khrushchev suspended his original May 28, 1959 deadline for a new Berlin settlement pending the outcome of the Foreign Ministers Conference in Geneva, but he did not withdraw his demands. The opening sessions produced no progress and when the ministers resumed negotiations, following Secretary of State Dulles funeral at the end of May, the deadlock continued.²⁴³ Talk of an East-West Heads of State summit increased in June. Although the idea had been rejected the previous winter, Western leaders now received the idea more favorably. The Soviets sent clear signals to Washington that they believed direct talks between Eisenhower and Khrushchev were necessary to break the impasse. Rather than an official bilateral summit, both sides began to explore the feasibility of an exchange of visits that would include unofficial talks between the US and Soviet leaders.²⁴⁴

These visits would not replace a Four-Power summit but it was becoming understood that the United States and the Soviets represented the real power. Harold Macmillan was eager for a conference to regain rapidly eroding British stature. Charles de Gaulle wanted to enhance French influence, but was wary of entering into a conference that might change the balance of power in Europe to their disadvantage. Berlin resolution and disarmament progress would be the twin objectives of the East-West Heads of State summit.²⁴⁵ Ostensibly, disarmament would be the top priority, but preliminary discussions focused on Berlin.

²⁴³ Townsend Hoopes, *Devil and John Foster Dulles*, p. 47-79.

²⁴⁴ Gaddis, *We Now Know*, p.142.

²⁴⁵ Trachtenberg, *A Constructed Peace*, p. 280-82.

Early discussions imagined a conference in the fall of 1959, but the schedule was pushed back so that the summit was eventually held in Paris in May 1960. Although disarmament is often cited today as the main concern, there was little consensus on how to achieve it. Berlin was an immediate concern. Disarmament did not have the same compelling interest, despite the growing numbers of nuclear weapons in Germany. While Eisenhower and Macmillan hoped for a test-ban agreement from Paris, neither Khrushchev or de Gaulle would accept their terms.²⁴⁶ An interim arrangement on Berlin might preserve the status quo for a couple of years. Despite Berlin's importance, neither West nor East would reconsider their positions enough to allow real negotiations. Stalled progress on Berlin or disarmament issues doomed the summit even before the U-2 incident.²⁴⁷

Western hopes for a productive summit focused on a possible Berlin moratorium to be followed by long-term measures that might lead to German reunification. Berlin, not disarmament, was the one exclusive area of shared business that France, Britain, the United States and the Soviet Union had in common. Berlin and disarmament were hardly exclusive subjects. Regardless of the stated agenda, Berlin would have probably emerged as the main topic if the summit had proceeded as planned. The final summit agenda released by the Western allies listed, in order: disarmament, Berlin and international cooperation.²⁴⁸ French and West German resistance to any change on Berlin may have helped shift Allied interest towards disarmament, as a way to achieve something at the summit.

Although the Paris summit was an important event in its own time, it receives only passing references in much of the Cold War historiography. There is little consensus on the

²⁴⁶ Divine, *Blowing In The Wind*, p.310-11.

²⁴⁷ Damm, *The Eisenhower Presidency*, p.99

²⁴⁸ Western Minister meetings, Istanbul, May 2-4, 1960, *FRUS 1958-60*, Vol. X, docs. 140-143

goals of the conference nor the reasons for its collapse. Disarmament and Berlin are recognized as prime concerns, but the linkage between these two issues remains unexplored. The U-2 incident and Khrushchev's theatrics overshadow the serious problems regarding Germany, among the Allies and between them and the Soviets.²⁴⁹ These problems helped convince American leaders to begin direct discussions with the Soviets. Although the summit collapsed, it still must be recognized as a pivotal event.

It was the last multi-lateral Heads-of-State meeting, in the tradition of Potsdam and Vienna, and it marked a decisive shift towards US-Soviet superpower diplomacy.²⁵⁰ Disarmament may have been the preferred purpose, but Berlin was the issue above all that brought the leaders to the table. As such, it should be recognized as a key step in the 1958-63 Berlin crises. Paris was also notable as a media event; the leaders went through with the summit mainly because they wanted to appeal to public opinion and they wanted to reassure the public that their concerns were understood.²⁵¹ Paris was a key event in the careers of all the leaders involved, providing a good example of the importance of personal diplomacy in the détente process.

But the final importance of the Paris summit is that it was an exercise in nationalism as much as cosmopolitanism. Conflicting national interests and priorities hindered Allied unity. The Soviet Union and East Germany also had differences. Common interests did not translate into common actions to resolve either the Berlin or disarmament questions. The events in Paris may not have great immediate effect on the nations involved, but were emblematic of how they were perceived in the global arena. After the Paris summit, bilateral US-Soviet diplomacy

²⁴⁹ Trachtenberg, *A Constructed Peace*, p. 277.

²⁵⁰ Gordon R. Weihmiller, *US-Soviet Summits: An Account of East-West Diplomacy at the Top, 1955-1985* (Lanham: University Press of America, 1986), p.42.

²⁵¹ Kenneth Osgood, *Total Cold War: Eisenhower's Secret Propaganda War at Home and Abroad* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 2006), p.209-11.

displaced the multilateral approach to the Berlin problem. Historians need to look at the 1960 summit not as a thing apart, as in the historiographic examples following, but in context, to develop a more complete synthesis of the event's purpose.

Historiography on the Paris Summit

For example, Russian political historian and biographer Roy Medvedev treats the subject very briskly, identifying the purpose only as “discussion of problems arising from the meeting of great powers in Geneva in 1955.”²⁵² He concentrates on the U2 incident as mainly a problem for Soviet ground-to-air missile technology. The Americans, “did not offer even formal apologies.” Khrushchev’s visit to New York three months later receives more attention from Medvedev, suggesting that the Soviets did not hold the event in high regard.

Saki Dockrill puts the summit into a context of Eisenhower’s attempts to de-escalate armament growth, if not to actually disarm without assurance of reciprocal actions from the Soviets. She focuses on Eisenhower’s attentions to disarmament in 1958-59, saying disarmament was the most important concern during the Camp David talks.²⁵³ That is debatable; the memoranda show the most attention being paid to Berlin. She notes that Eisenhower refused to negotiate under a Berlin deadline. Although she does not see Berlin as the motive for a conference, both sides used the Berlin problem as leverage regarding disarmament. Dockrill says Khrushchev saw the summit mainly as a step towards an eventual test-ban treaty and pursued détente in reaction to domestic foreign communist pressure.

²⁵² Roy Medvedev, *Khrushchev*, trans. Brian Pearce (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1982), p. 149-53.

²⁵³ Saki Dockrill, *Eisenhower’s New Look National Security Policy, 1953-61* (London: Macmillan Press, 1996), p. 254-56.

Veteran Cold War historian John Lewis Gaddis places the summit in the context of aerial surveillance, Open Skies and defense spending limits. He does not deal with the summit specifically in the emergence of detente. He sees the U-2 as having been worth the risk because it gave the President the intelligence needed to fight ruinous missile costs. Gaddis leans towards disarmament as the proper context of the summit, but does not deal with the sharp difference in American and Soviet positions, nor the linkage with nuclear weapons in Germany and the Berlin problem. In Gaddis's accounts, based on Khrushchev's own version, the decision to abort the summit was made on the flight to Paris.²⁵⁴ Gaddis and Medvedev may be correct in minimizing the failed summit's importance, but may also not give due respect to the fact that it was attempted at all and that it marked the end of four-power summitry.

Timothy Naftali and Aleksandr Fursenko, who have done considerable work with Soviet sources, say Khrushchev believed Eisenhower had a personal interest in peace and was inclined to detente. Khrushchev hoped that the Eisenhower might be sensitive enough about the U-2 incident to look past the hard-line advice of Secretary of State Herter and Vice President Nixon. He told the Supreme Soviet that disarmament and the German question were the key issues, but suggest that he was open to general discussions. They say Khrushchev did want a successful summit. Khrushchev held more flexible views on disarmament than on Berlin but was too concerned about US military strength to allow verification. This paper agrees with Naftali and Fursenko's important point that Khrushchev had considerable prestige at stake. The U-2 may not have necessarily have doomed the summit, but it threaten Khrushchev personally and as a national leader.²⁵⁵

²⁵⁴ John Lewis Gaddis, *We Now Know: Rethinking Cold War History* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1997) p. 246-47.

²⁵⁵ Timothy Nafgtali and Aleksandr Fursenko, *Khrushchev's Cold War*, p. 275-91.

Vladimir Zubok's observations deserve special attention because of his unparalleled access to Soviet archives and his reliable objectivity. He frames the summit as an exercise in public opinion, part of Khrushchev's global campaign for influence.²⁵⁶ On one hand he was eager to continue the statesmanship and peacemaking he believed he was conveying in Third World visits, the United Nations and other publicity opportunities. On the other, he wanted to show up Mao Zedong after a very tense visit to Peking. Both public opinion and reaction to Mao themes are important parts of the summit story. Zubok posits Berlin as a central Khrushchev concern, because he did not like the idea of a nuclear armed Germany which he thought he could use as leverage to gain German neutralization and disarmament concessions from the West.

Michael Beschloss frames the summit as backdrop for the U-2 incident. The real story here is the aerial reconnaissance program, its risks and the reward of proof to thwart the missile lobbyists. Beschloss sees the conference goals as a competing set of Western interests and anxieties. The summit seen here is an isolated incident, not a direct consequence of the 1958 Berlin initiative or the emergence of a practical detente. though they are all too aware the Khrushchev can easily tip their hands. He treats Khrushchev's summit goals as being very broad and general.²⁵⁷ This may have been true at some levels, particularly in the realm of public relations objectives. In terms of practical politics, though, Khrushchev consistently linked Berlin and the German treaty with disarmament as his reasons for needing a summit.

Former State Department analyst Robert Bowie and diplomatic and military historian Richard Immerman provide further background on Eisenhower era security policy, which was not belligerent but required a strong deterrent. Eisenhower was not opposed to nuclear deterrent

²⁵⁶ Vladimir Zubok, *A Failed Empire: The Soviet Union in the Cold War from Stalin to Gorbachev* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2007) p. 137-139.

²⁵⁷ Michael Beschloss, *Mayday: Eisenhower, Khrushchev and the U2 Affair* (New York: Harper & Row, 1986) p. 220-22.

but was very wary of spending so much on inadequate systems that the nation might be unprepared for an unexpected threat. In evaluating Eisenhower's legacy, the authors conspicuously do not emphasize movement towards détente. They provide only marginal mention of the 1955 Vienna summit where Eisenhower hoped to make a convincing case for the Open Skies inspection program. They do observe that Eisenhower was always committed to allied unity and held a special capability for leadership in this area. They note that Eisenhower left office deeply disappointed at the lack of progress in disarmament, yet was determined to keep the nuclear emphasis in US defense forces, including tactical weapons such as were in Germany by 1960.²⁵⁸ It is difficult to imagine their version of Eisenhower approaching a Paris summit with any intent of rejecting American prerogatives of aerial reconnaissance.

Political discourse analyst Ira Chernus offers another perspective on Eisenhower's public diplomacy, namely the pursuit of promising goals in the interest of reassuring the public.²⁵⁹ Nuclear weapons loomed ever more ominously in the public imagination. Chernus emphasizes that the promotion of national security carried with it the implication of insecurity, requiring continuous buildups of force. Thus the United States and Soviet Union tried to pursue contradictory purposes in their public diplomacy. Leaders would use provocative language even as they attempted to open negotiations where they did not intend to actually change their positions. Berlin provided a dramatic image of the consequences of national insecurity. Period media, such as the Luce magazines or Newsweek, show vivid examples of Berlin's symbolic value, as well as an implied danger of atomic war if the situation became too unstable.

²⁵⁸ Robert R. Bowie and Richard H. Immerman, *Waging Peace: How Eisenhower shaped an Enduring Cold War Strategy* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1998) p.248-259.

²⁵⁹ Ira Chernus, *Apocalypse Management, Eisenhower and the Discourse on National Insecurity*, (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2008).

Post-Geneva Calls for a Summit

Khrushchev's 1958 ultimatum had threatened to destabilize not only Berlin and Germany, but East-West relations in general. John Foster Dulles had helped contain the post-ultimatum confusion with his visits to Europe in December and February. Dulles died during the Geneva meeting, but he had already resigned as Secretary. Eisenhower had appointed former Christian Herter as head of the State Department in March.²⁶⁰ The president had confidence in Herter because of the latter's extensive record in public service as a state governor and a diplomat, but did not allow Herter the same authority that Dulles had exercised. Herter relied extensively on the State Department staff that had worked well with Dulles, in particular Undersecretaries Livingston Merchant and Douglas Dillon.²⁶¹ Ambassadors David Bruce in Bonn and Llewellyn Thompson in Moscow had provided indispensable contributions in the first phase of the Berlin crisis. They would continue to do so, enabling Herter to proceed with Eisenhower's and Dulles' strategies to neutralize Khrushchev's provocations as much as possible. Thompson's close ties with Khrushchev and sound perception of trends in the Soviet leadership made him invaluable as the Soviets concentrated increasingly on their bilateral relationship with the US.²⁶²

Khrushchev kept Foreign Minister Andrei Gromyko in Geneva. Once the ministers reconvened, Gromyko wasted little time in hardening the Soviet position, just short of re-imposing a deadline. He countered Herter's complaints about using Berlin as a basis for propaganda and subversion by noting similar Western activities.²⁶³ When the West complained that Gromyko only wanted to consider the occupation situation in West Berlin, Gromyko replied

²⁶⁰ Eisenhower, *Waging Peace*, p. 397.

²⁶¹ Bowie & Immerman, *Waging Peace*, p.253.

²⁶² Mayers, *The Ambassadors*, p. 204-207

²⁶³ Memo re Foreign Ministers Conference, June 1, 1959, Geneva Switzerland, *FRUS, 1958-60*, Volume VIII, doc. 348, p. 803-05.

that the West would not yield occupation rights and wanted also to interfere in East Berlin's affairs. He suggested that the respective German ministers be invited to attend but Herter refused to allow East German participation. By refusing to recognize the GDR, he was effectively rejecting the German peace treaty idea. At that point, Gromyko re-introduced Khrushchev's 'free city' proposal for Berlin. The free city idea was problematic for the West because it created a new German political entity, probably with Soviet peacekeepers, clearly without Soviet guarantees of access. Gromyko said the Soviets were tired of continuing an occupational function and wished to turn access over to the local government, which was the GDR.²⁶⁴ He rejected the agency idea, which left the Soviet Union responsible through their GDR representatives. The agency idea, which was only brought to the table after much reluctance, was one of the few Western concessions offered.²⁶⁵

Gromyko had taken the Soviet position on Berlin and Germany back to the November starting point without any acceptance of Western compromises such as a troop freeze or accepting East German agency stamping of documents. He suggested "the Germans be allowed to decide this. Let them try for one year to undertake these tasks. The terms of reference would be ... reunification by stages and ... a German peace treaty."²⁶⁶ He said the Soviet Union desired more sessions, but the reasons why were unclear. A major reason may have been to lay the groundwork for a summit.

Berlin's Mayor Willy Brandt expressed his serious anxiety over the conference's lack of progress on guaranteed access for West Berlin's civilians. Eisenhower was concerned about the lack of progress. As he told Macmillan, some progress might be found in the fact that East-West

²⁶⁴ Memo re Foreign Ministers Conference, June 2, 1959, Geneva Switzerland, *FRUS, 1958-60*, Volume VIII, doc. 358, p.829-32.

²⁶⁵ *Ibid.*

²⁶⁶ *Ibid.*

negotiations were proceeding, though in a meandering fashion. The West needed to affirm its commitments to Berlin. He suggested the ministers might declare, "Since the Geneva Conference is partially a result of the crisis in Berlin, there must be an agreement confirming the continuing status of Berlin, pending the reunification of Germany."²⁶⁷ 'Ike' considered a summit possible only with Soviet agreement. Further plenary sessions in Geneva produced no opening in the Soviet position. Despite the toughness of the Russians, they did not seem intent on any forcible activities in the near future, though long- term interests were harder to gauge.²⁶⁸

Herter visited privately with Gromyko on June 12. They outlined their respective governments' positions, and Herter considered Gromyko's statements that no deadline was currently in effect as reason to continue the conference. Then Gromyko brought up a summit conference, which he said the Americans had incorrectly linked to the Foreign Ministers Conference. The Soviets considered a summit too important to be made an "object of bargaining."²⁶⁹ American linkage of a summit to concessions on Berlin appeared as an ultimatum to the Soviets, Gromyko informed Herter. The Secretary replied it might be thought the new one-year moratorium might be constituted a deadline. He said Eisenhower had made plain that he could not reconcile going to a conference to restore tensions while the Soviets made threats over Berlin. The candid and tense exchange ended with the Secretary saying the new few days would determine if progress were possible and Gromyko saying the US was to blame for unsatisfactory relations between their countries.

A potential summit came up in the next plenary session of the Foreign Minister's Conference. Gromyko told his counterparts that a summit, or series of summits, could be useful but should not be made contingent on a Berlin deal. Herter told Eisenhower that he expected

²⁶⁷ Eisenhower letter to Macmillan, June 3, 1959, *FRUS, 1958-60*. Vol. VIII, doc. 360, p.836.

²⁶⁸ Eisenhower, *Waging Peace*, p. 400-402.

²⁶⁹ Memo re Herter - Gromyko meeting, Geneva, Switzerland, June 12, 1958, *FRUS, 1958-60*, Vol. VIII, doc. 384.

Gromyko to propose a summit conference within a week. The President replied that, while still unwilling to proceed toward a summit under present conditions, he would write personally to Khrushchev to express his concerns that Foreign ministers were being “considered only as errand boys ... some kind of (Soviet) concession on Berlin and German problem” would be essential” for a summit.²⁷⁰ Eisenhower reminded Khrushchev of the President’s March 20 letter linking progress at the conference and any possibility of a heads of government meeting. The Soviet Union had changed the topic of business in Geneva to summit meetings without solving the Berlin problem. The US could not accept the call to a summit without resolution first. He told Khrushchev that “final agreements on critical questions affecting world peace could probably be best concluded at a meeting of Heads of Government.”²⁷¹ His Secretary of State was in Geneva negotiating in good faith and he hoped the Soviet Foreign minister was also negotiating seriously and with authority. He hoped that they could yet make progress. Their progress would be the best indicator that a sufficiently productive understanding was in place to proceed with a summit.²⁷²

The next day, Gromyko requested a private audience with Herter, who said the Russian “made even more clear than on any previous occasion Soviet indication to get us out of Berlin.”²⁷³ Gromyko also brought up other topics including a nuclear-free zone in Europe, global disarmament and a non-aggression pact. Herter found Gromyko friendly on this occasion, but thought he might be probing American positions on matters beyond the ministers’ conference. Harold Macmillan wrote Eisenhower that he hoped the conference could conclude with an agreement on a summit. He acknowledged the lack of progress but feared that, if the

²⁷⁰ Memo of telephone conversation, Eisenhower-Herter, June 13, 1959, *FRUS, 1958-60*, Vol. VIII, doc. 391.

²⁷¹ Eisenhower letter to Khrushchev, June 15, 1959, *FRUS, 1958-60*, Vol. VIII, doc. 395.

²⁷² Eisenhower, *Waging Peace*, p. 403

²⁷³ Herter memo to State Department, Geneva, June 16, 1959, *FRUS, 1958-60*, Vol. VIII, doc. 397.

West made a summit contingent on Berlin resolution, that Khrushchev might force a summit through some other action. The West would do better to consider a summit where it still had the most leverage, Berlin notwithstanding. Perhaps, a Heads of State meeting minus a large staff might actually be productive. Eisenhower rejected that prospect, saying that Khrushchev's reply would give a good idea of Soviet attitudes.²⁷⁴

In the meantime, the Foreign Ministers could recess with the option for a quick resumption if conditions warranted. Although French Foreign Minister Couve de Murville was active in the discussions, the French Government did not offer new proposals of their own, nor did they take nearly as strong a position regarding the summit as the Americans. Since Dulles' visit in February, they were congruent with the Americans but still had their own special concerns about German reunification. De Gaulle was more interested achieving parity with the Americans, possibly at British expense, in a tripartite Western bloc. He would later initiate his own bipolar dialogue with the Soviets, though, and end up chairing the Paris summit. That was later. In the summer of 1959, though, the French president remained reserved in the extreme.²⁷⁵

Khrushchev replied to Eisenhower by restating the Soviet positions, declaring that the Soviet side had bargained in good faith, and laying the blame for the breakdown on the West. The Soviet leader sidestepped the summit question, but his tone was cordial and he said he hoped to continue a private direct correspondence with Khrushchev.²⁷⁶ Such correspondence had in fact been very formal and sporadic; this would represent a step towards engagement. Such small steps were not immediately visible compared to the overall intransigence of Khrushchev's reply. The Western ministers were discouraged by the message and discounted the worth of continuing in conference. In the final June sessions, Gromyko repeated his intention to resolve the matter

²⁷⁴ Eisenhower, *Waging Peace*, p. 403.

²⁷⁵ Bozo, *Two Strategies for Europe*, p. 40.

²⁷⁶ Taubman, *Khrushchev*, p. 415-16.

along Soviets line at an indeterminate but definite date within a year or so. When he called for a two-week recess, the other ministers agreed but declined to sign a joint communiqué.

The conference resumed in mid-July but without any more progress. In the meantime, Averill Harriman, a former US Ambassador to Moscow and longtime back-channel intermediary for Kremlin contacts, reported to Eisenhower and Herter on his recent visit to the Soviet Union. Harriman toured the country and visited privately with Khrushchev, with whom he mainly discussed agriculture but also Soviet ambitions and military progress.²⁷⁷ They were joined by Deputy Premier Anastas Mikoyan whose tour of America in January had combined tough sessions with the president and largely successful publicity opportunities with business and political leaders. Harriman thought that Mikoyan might be emerging as a co-partner with Khrushchev. The possibility that Khrushchev's authority might not be absolute was underscored by their chiding the Americans for placing too much emphasis on junior aide Dmitri Kurichenko as a successor. Mikoyan and Khrushchev told Harriman that Deputy Premier Frol Kozlov was in fact the most likely next Soviet leader.²⁷⁸ Kozlov, an economic specialist who had been made a full member of the Politburo in 1957, was about to visit America on a similar goodwill visit to Mikoyan's but would not bring the demands Mikoyan had brought in January.²⁷⁹ Harriman also came away with the impression that Khrushchev had doubts about his country's missile strength, despite his frequent boasts touting their destructive capacity. On the subject of Berlin, however, Harriman felt Khrushchev was still convinced "he could end our rights in Berlin by signing a piece of paper, and we would be the ones to move our tanks and accept the onus of war."²⁸⁰

²⁷⁷ Taubman, *Khrushchev*, p. 413-14.

²⁷⁸ Memo from Thompson re Harriman-Khrushchev visit, Moscow, June 23, 1959, *FRUS, 1958-60*, Vol. X, doc. 73.

²⁷⁹ Eisenhower, *Waging Peace*, p. 404-05.

²⁸⁰ Memo re Harriman-Herter talk, July 10, 1959, Washington, D.C., *FRUS, 1958-60*, Vol. X, doc. 77.

Harriman thought a summit conference might be "a good idea" if a summit could be held to informal discussions that might touch on disarmament.

Mikoyan's trip to the US in January had been the first in a series of high-level visits intended to relax tense relations between the two superpowers. Vice-President Nixon would visit the Soviet Union a few weeks later; both deputy leaders would host an industrial exhibition and then travel around the host country.²⁸¹ This exchange helped prepare the way for mutual visits by the US and Soviet heads of state, which were at first projected to include informal executive talks and goodwill tours, but stopping short of conclusive summit meetings. Such visits had not been part of the wartime or Geneva 1955 summit formulas but would become an essential feature of 1970s era détente. Publicity tours were intended as a confidence-building, tension-reducing counterpart to the executive discussions. Though still unconvinced of the practicality or usefulness of mutual visits at the heads-of-state level, Eisenhower's advisors began exploring the possibility of such visits in June 1959. A back-channel exploratory offer to Khrushchev for an exchange was accepted unexpectedly.²⁸² Eisenhower was furious because the precondition of Berlin progress had been bypassed. Nevertheless, plans for the visit proceeded, especially after the Kozlov visit.

Kozlov met with the President on July 1 and their discussions touched on many of the same matters as Khrushchev's visit two months later. Agriculture was a comfortable opening topic, with Kozlov investigating American corn production. He visited the Iowa rancher Roswell Garst, who had already met with Khrushchev in Moscow.²⁸³ Kozlov and the President talked about peaceful uses of atomic energy in icebreakers and heavy industry. The Russia declared that their own natural resources were superior to those of potential client states like

²⁸¹ Eisenhower, *Waging Peace*, p. 404-05.

²⁸² Taubman, *Khrushchev*, p.417.

²⁸³ N S Khrushchev, *Statesman*, p. 91-95.

Egypt and therefore the Soviets had no selfish designs in seeking closer ties in these Third world countries.²⁸⁴

Kozlov also met with Vice-President Nixon for cordial but tougher talks, centering on trade problems. Their discussions extended into other areas of contention between the two countries, including propaganda and nuclear deterrence. These discussions touched on Berlin; Nixon suggested that the problem remained unresolved at present but the peaceful cooperation in agriculture represented a potential for improved general relations. Nixon probed for assurances that he would be given comparable freedom of movement to what had been extended to Kozlov, but the tacit assurances offered by the Russians were not in fact realized.²⁸⁵ But in talks with Livingston merchant two days later, Kozlov reiterated Soviet demands for a new Berlin settlement remained, even without a formal deadline.²⁸⁶

As important as Berlin was to US-Soviet relations, questions remained about the real strength of the Soviet nuclear deterrent. Harriman had suggested that Khrushchev did not have full confidence in his ability to deliver nuclear bombs with missiles, so the extent of that strength was a necessary piece of intelligence for the West.²⁸⁷ On July 8, Eisenhower told Secretary Herter and Director of Central Intelligence Allen Dulles that he was very apprehensive about launching U-2 reconnaissance flights over the Soviet Union to find their missile bases. The President "expressed his concern over the possibility of getting involved in something costly and harmful." Herter said only one operation was planned and the "the intelligence objective outweighs the danger of getting trapped."²⁸⁸ They agreed that "in case of protest, we would defend ourselves with an absolute disavowal and denial on the matter." Prophetically,

²⁸⁴ Memo re Eisenhower-Kozlov meeting, Washington, July 1, 1959, *FRUS 1958-60*, Vol. X, doc. 79.

²⁸⁵ Memo re Kozlov-Nixon talks, July 1, 1959, Washington, D.C., *FRUS, 1958-60*, Vol. X, doc. 80.

²⁸⁶ Memo re Kozlov-Merchant meeting, July 3, 1959, *FRUS 1958-60*, Vol. X, doc.81.

²⁸⁷ Fursenko & Naftali, *Khrushchev's Cold War*, p. 226.

²⁸⁸ Memo re Eisenhower-Herter meeting, July 8, 1959, *FRUS 1958-60*, Vol. X, doc. 82.

Eisenhower noted that Khrushchev could "put us in a terrible hole over Berlin." He could say Soviet interception of a U-2 flight "marks the end of serious negotiation." Eisenhower remarked that " we must decide if we are trying to prepare to fight a war, or to prevent one," but he approved the mission.²⁸⁹

Vice-President Nixon was due to visit Moscow two weeks later. The Nixon-Khrushchev 'kitchen debate' in Moscow was televised and became a celebrated piece of Cold War public theater, a kind of proxy conflict for the cameras and a strange public counterpoint to the Geneva talks. In private, Nixon and the president's brother Milton Eisenhower had much more serious talks that focused on military strength and global political aims. They did not discuss practical programs for disarmament nor the need for heads of state agreements to begin disarmament. Khrushchev's all-or-nothing approach was as well known to the Americans as Eisenhower's insistence on inspection during disarmament was to the Soviets.²⁹⁰ Neither position was attractive to the other side. Khrushchev's vision of total simultaneous disarmament without inspection seemed utterly unrealistic to the Allies.²⁹¹ The Soviet efforts to link disarmament with Berlin complicated efforts to develop a negotiating strategy. The Americans concluded that, whatever plans might be made for a summit, Khrushchev would block progress in any other area till he gained Western acceptance for the 'free city' and German peace treaty proposals. Ambassador Thompson thought that Nixon's visit had been successful in terms of public relations and that the Soviets had extended favorable hospitality to the Vice-President.²⁹² By the time they returned to Washington, the Foreign Ministers conference had resumed and ended

²⁸⁹ Ibid.

²⁹⁰ Memo re Nixon-Khrushchev meeting, July 26, 1959, Moscow, *FRUS, 1958-60*, Vol. X, doc. 99.

²⁹¹ Bowie & Immerman, *Waging Peace*, p. 254-55.

²⁹² Thompson cable to State dept, August 3, 1959, *FRUS, 1958-60*, vol. X, doc. 105.

without resolution. Discussion of a summit assumed new urgency as Khrushchev's visit approached.

Eisenhower Consults Allies in Europe

In August 1959, Eisenhower and Herter visited West German Chancellor Konrad Adenauer and his foreign minister Heinrich von Brentano. They discussed possible interim agreements to forestall new Berlin threats, but differed about possible revision of the occupation arrangement. They discussed disarmament briefly and only after first speaking of Berlin. The president emphasized "mutual and effective inspection."²⁹³ Eisenhower asked Adenauer if progress was necessary before a summit conference was in order; the Chancellor agreed. The West Germans forwarded to the Americans their draft reply to a very tough July 17 note from the Soviets, warning the West Germans from accepting US Polaris missiles. In their own public reply to the Soviet note, the US made no apologies for the missile deployment, observing that the Soviets "threaten the use of rockets in support of its policy towards Cuba."²⁹⁴ The Americans also visited Macmillan, who believed personally in head of state diplomacy, having made a solo visit to Khrushchev during the chilliest days of the crisis. Macmillan asked the President whether he now saw any ground to explore the idea of summit with Khrushchev during the latter's forthcoming visit to the United States. Eisenhower had cautioned Macmillan already that most of his advisors still were unconvinced a summit was necessary and he shared their doubts.²⁹⁵

²⁹³ Memo re Eisenhower-Adenauer meeting, August, 27, 1959, Bonn, Germany, *FRUS 1958-60*, Vol. IX, Pt. 2, Doc. 8.

²⁹⁴ Copy of press release: "Text of Statement by Department of State re Soviet Note Alleging United States Plans to Provide Germany With Polaris Missiles." July 27, 1960. Dwight D Eisenhower Presidential Library, Presidential Papers, (Ann Whitman Files) Box 88, Lauris Norstad Files, folder 3.

²⁹⁵ DDE letter to Harold Macmillan, July 22, 1959; Dwight D. Eisenhower Presidential Library, Presidential Papers, Ann Whitman file, Box 11, Administrative series, Douglas Dillon group, folder 3.

Khrushchev's and Eisenhower at Camp David; Conceiving a Summit

Khrushchev visited the United States in September 1959, partly to reinforce his country's presence at the United Nations General Assembly sessions and partly as an experiment in goodwill to Americans.²⁹⁶ Khrushchev, a few weeks later as Eisenhower's guest at Camp David, Maryland, broached the topic of a summit. Eisenhower had opened their talks with a statement on Berlin, affirming American commitment and a sincere desire to eventually move beyond the occupation arrangements. He said Khrushchev's statements on Berlin had only increased American determination to defend its responsibilities. The president said "if some [corrective] statement [from the Soviets] could be made on this question, we could make progress on others, up and down the line, such as disarmament."²⁹⁷ This is the first stated linkage of Berlin and disarmament in the summit dialogue, and it indicates that disarmament was a topic dependent on progress in Berlin discussions.²⁹⁸ On September 29, White House Press Secretary James C. Hagerty briefed reporters the president and the Chairman had "concentrated almost entirely on the question of Berlin and Germany. There was discussion of one other topic...disarmament, but the main concentration...has been on Berlin and Germany." But the last communiqué of this main day of meetings emphasized disarmament as the main topic, though no details were provided. Eisenhower's visit to Russia was heralded, but there was no mention yet of an East-West summit.²⁹⁹

Though disarmament was scarcely mentioned in their first session, Khrushchev soon widened the discussion to include disarmament: "Mr. K said that without a thorough exposition

²⁹⁶ Sergei Khrushchev, *Creation of a Superpower*, p. 340-42.

²⁹⁷ memo re Eisenhower-Khrushchev meeting, September 26, 1959, Camp David, *FRUS 1958-60*, Volume X, Pt.2, Doc. 13, p. 36.

²⁹⁸ James C. Hagerty Press Briefings, Gettysburg, Pennsylvania, September 29, 1959, Eisenhower Library, Ann Whitman Files/Box 21/James C. Hagerty series, 'Khrushchev Visit-Camp David' folder.

²⁹⁹ *Ibid.*

of the US position on Germany and disarmament, it would be difficult for him to report to his government and say where the barometer pointed - to clear, changing or stormy.”³⁰⁰ Eisenhower answered in two phases, stressing that there was no need for any tensions over Berlin.

Americans were ready to seek solutions but patience was necessary. Eisenhower said some progress on general disarmament was necessary to solve specific issues. Khrushchev said disarmament offered more room to negotiate because the sides were not frozen into set positions.

Discussing the meeting later, Eisenhower reported that talks had centered on Berlin and unacceptable Soviet deadlines and demands. A summit was impossible under such conditions, said the president, but “he had told Khrushchev that he would rather have a summit meeting for negotiations on the subject of disarmament if we were both ready to negotiate on this question. In this sense he had made Berlin a catalyst.”³⁰¹ The final communiqué said that the leaders agreed that disarmament was the most important issue of the day, though Berlin, not disarmament, had dominated their conversations. The communiqué referred to these negotiations as a summit on disarmament. The summit had been conceived and its parameters roughly described - two intersecting axial concerns of Berlin and disarmament. International cooperation remained as the periphery of discussion.

Eisenhower told Adenauer he and Khrushchev had discussed a summit but reiterated American commitment to defend West Berlin’s interests and Allied occupation rights.³⁰² Eisenhower then wrote Macmillan and framed the summit idea as Khrushchev’s. Although, the President noted, “Mr. Khrushchev did not modify the Soviet positions regarding Berlin, German reunification, disarmament or other major international questions ... there was sufficient

³⁰⁰ memo re Eisenhower-Khrushchev meeting, September 26, 1959, Camp David, *FRUS 1958-60*, Volume X, Pt.2, Doc. 14.

³⁰¹ Eisenhower-State Department meeting, Camp David, September 27, 1959, *FRUS 1958-60*, Volume X, doc. 16, p.48.

³⁰² Eisenhower letter to Adenauer, September 28, 1959, *FRUS 1958-60*, Vol. X, doc. 18

indication of a change of tone ... I believe we would be assuming a heavy responsibility if we now refused to meet him at the Summit.”³⁰³ Eisenhower expressed skepticism about summit prospects; hastily conceived agreements entered into for appearances would solve nothing. But even if little of substance might be accomplished, the West might better win world support than if they declined such a meeting.³⁰⁴

Before the State Department drafted a formal proposal for a summit, Secretary Herter, along with Undersecretaries Livingston Merchant and Foy Kohler, met with the President to discuss possible aims for such a conference. Eisenhower immediately brought up Berlin, asking if there any possibility of reaching a Berlin agreement at a summit. “Our main aim,” Herter replied, “that would be to get Mr. Khrushchev to agree to a moratorium for a couple of years.”³⁰⁵ The president then brought up the desirability of cutting US occupation force levels, citing costs. All present doubted whether Khrushchev would seriously consider the Western version of a moratorium. A Western conference would be necessary to plan an agenda.

De Gaulle made his own reluctance for a summit known in an October 8, 1959, letter to Eisenhower. The President responded by suggesting disarmament as a possible topic, citing the ten-power East-West disarmament talks as basis for higher-level negotiation.³⁰⁶ In reply, De Gaulle repeated his doubts about any real progress, saying that of all issues, “only Berlin” warranted heads-of-state negotiations, “yet its solution appears more uncertain than ever.” DeGaulle mentioned Asian affairs as a topic of concern, but not disarmament.³⁰⁷ The West Germans offered further doubts, citing the Soviets failure to extend any concessions on Berlin or Germany in spite of the compromises offered on July 28. In a letter from von Brentano to

³⁰³ Eisenhower letter to Macmillan, October 9, 1959, *FRUS 1958-60*, Vol. X, doc. 24.

³⁰⁴ Eisenhower letter to Macmillan, October 9, 1959, *FRUS*, Vol X, pt.2, doc. 24.

³⁰⁵ Eisenhower-State Dept. meeting, October 16, 1959, Washington, D.C. *FRUS*, Volume X, , doc. 2.

³⁰⁶ Eisenhower letter to de Gaulle, October 16, 1969, *FRUS 1958-60*, Vol. X, doc.27..

³⁰⁷ De Gaulle letter to Eisenhower, October 20, 1959, *FRUS 1958-60*, Vol. X, doc.30.

Herter, the Foreign Minister noted that, “in view of the attitude of the Soviet Union, we must assume that any *change* in Berlin’s status will necessarily be a *change for the worse* [italics in original].” Von Brentano scoffed at the value of a United Nations supervised solution. Von Brentano noted reunification problems, but did mention that Soviet budget pressures might present an opportunity for disarmament progress. However, the most recent Soviet offer appeared unsatisfactory, “it does not look like an act of good faith to speak of disarmament but ... indicate that controls should only become effective once disarmament has been carried out.”³⁰⁸ De Gaulle then sent a more optimistic letter to Eisenhower, outlining a possible agenda “general disarmament, Germany, assistance to underdeveloped countries, non-interference.”³⁰⁹ He said Khrushchev had just accepted a French offer to visit Paris.

Meeting with Eisenhower on October 21, Herter summarized the difficulties facing the Western heads as they prepared to meet. Adenauer wanted to join in while de Gaulle wanted only a tripartite meeting. Adenauer resisted the focus on Germany and Berlin and claimed that disarmament was his main concern. Eisenhower observed that a summit might deal with issues far afield of Germany’s particular interests. Herter said the United States wanted a long-term solution for Berlin. The British preferred a short-term situation to stabilize the situation, given upcoming British and German elections. Herter moved on to disarmament, in the form of conventional force cutbacks in Europe. Eisenhower replied that, though desirable, he would not advance this proposal until some basic agreement was reached on disarmament.³¹⁰ Low-level East German provocations continued in Berlin and the refugee situation continued to erode, so Eisenhower may have had some concerns about thinning- out at that time. Eisenhower finally

³⁰⁸ Von Brentano letter to Herter, October 23, 1959, *FRUS*, Vol. X, doc. 34.

³⁰⁹ De Gaulle letter to Eisenhower, October 26, 1959, *FRUS*, Vol. X, oc. 36.

³¹⁰ Eisenhower-Herter meeting, October 21, 1959, Washington, D.C. *FRUS 1958-60*, Volume X, doc. 37.

convinced de Gaulle that that a summit with the Soviets would be useful to work on disarmament and Berlin, but only after a Western summit later that fall.³¹¹

The West Germans were now signaling that disarmament should not be the only item discussed at such a Summit; it would also be necessary to deal with Berlin.³¹² Herter told West German Ambassador Wilhelm Grewe that that the Soviets would probably open with their German proposals. Herter said there were two options - a temporary and a permanent solution - and the West Germans did not favor an interim solution. Herter brought up the possibility that the Soviets might simply direct the summit to whatever topics they wanted. He said he did not know if summits were practical. Various distractions complicated planning. Adenauer was working up his own new German and Berlin proposals, centered on German self-determination through internationally supervised elections. A NATO ministerial meeting was scheduled for December and the United States planned to make its case for a reduced share of expenditures. De Gaulle's meddling in NATO business disturbed Herter, already impatient with the French president's aspirations for dominance on the continent.³¹³ Macmillan and his Foreign Minister Selwyn Lloyd visited Adenauer and DeGaulle, finding them manageable but still troublesome.

Cautionary voices were heard as the Western meeting preparations concluded in mid-December. Livingston Merchant told Grewe that "primary stress on disarmament might be an effective tactic but...armaments were essentially the symptoms of political tensions not the reverse."³¹⁴ From Moscow, Ambassador Thompson wired Herter that he saw little chance for resolution of the German and Berlin problems unless some more imaginative new proposals were developed. Thompson agreed with German Ambassador Kroll that Khrushchev was under

³¹¹ Eisenhower letter to de Gaulle, October 21, 1959, *FRUS 1958-60*, Vol. X, doc. 32.

³¹² Brentano letter to Herter, October 23, 1959, *FRUS 1958-60*, Vol. X, doc.34.

³¹³ Herter-Shepard Stone meeting, November 13, 1959, *FRUS 1958-60*, Vol. IX, doc. 41.

³¹⁴ Merchant-Grewe conversation, December 11, 1959, Washington, D.C. *FRUS 1958-60*, Vol. X, doc. 49.

domestic political pressure from hardliners. It might be in the West's interest to give Khrushchev some support to forestall a tougher new Soviet regime. Various distractions complicated planning for the Western heads meeting.³¹⁵ Subsequent reports indicated Adenauer was working up his own new German and Berlin proposals, centered on German self-determination through internationally supervised elections. A NATO ministerial meeting was scheduled for December and the United States planned to make its case for a reduced share of expenditures.

Policy Planning Staff head Gerard Smith told analyst Henry Owen, "in thinking about Berlin, we should keep in mind the primacy of the need for a US-USSR detente. Probably the first real test of the genuineness of the detente will be the Berlin negotiation." If Khrushchev would freeze his plans till the next German elections, in September 1961, that might allow "a serious disarmament discussion which I understand is the President's main motivation in trying quickly to get a Berlin solution." Smith thought a postponement strategy was better than unacceptable compromises just to get an agreement.³¹⁶ That thinking would later underlie most of US's negotiating approaches in the more bilateral phase after the Berlin Wall's construction. Smith also suggested a post-freeze idea the Soviets would later propose in modified form but which the West would decline: putting the occupation regime under the UN's auspices.³¹⁷ Owen would be one of the few carryovers at the State Department into the Kennedy administration and a very influential advisor throughout Kennedy's public and private attempts to foster detente. He had a good understanding of the Soviet Union as well as the Allies and was involved in the Berlin crisis from the onset. After 1961, the Allies would become less directly involved, but in 1959 and 1960, they were all equal partners regarding Berlin.

³¹⁵ Thompson cable to State Department, December 15, 1959, *FRUS 1958-60*, Vol. X, doc. 50,.

³¹⁶ Gerard Smith memo to Henry Owen, October 20, 1959, DDE, Dulles Papers, Smith series, Box 1, folder 1.

³¹⁷ Gerard Smith memo, October 20, 1959, DDE, Dulles Papers, Smith series, Box 1, folder 1.

Western Heads Meet to Plan Summit

De Gaulle's meddling in NATO business disturbed Herter, already impatient with the French president's aspirations for dominance on the continent.³¹⁸ Macmillan and Selwyn Lloyd visited Adenauer and DeGaulle, finding them manageable but still troublesome. NATO member Canada expressed support for the summit, but also some impatience with its peripheral role. Foy Kohler told them that the United States imagined, "almost an agenda-less meeting, " with disarmament being "a tough question to place on the agenda.....the summit might be our kick-off place for this topic; but there would not be enough time...to get very far with it." Kohler pleased the Canadians by asking their opinion and noted how difficult it would be to have summit disarmament talks so close to the ten-power talks.³¹⁹ Kohler approved NATO discussion of the summit but could only offer limited hope of meaningful input. The Italian NATO representatives also expressed similar sentiments of support mixed with frustration at their second-tier status. (Following the conference, the Canadians and Italians would explicitly blame de Gaulle for their diminished role).

Berlin was reasonably quiet, though the occupying powers were exploring tricky questions of high altitude flights in the access corridor. The flag problem had receded but political tensions ran high in anticipation of Mayor Brandt's upcoming run against Adenauer for the Chancellorship.³²⁰ The working groups continued their work, helping the Western heads make their final preparations for their meeting in mid-December. Undersecretary of State Douglas Dillon met with European leaders in mid-December and advised Eisenhower that trade rivalries were dividing the Allies. Britain was afraid the European Economic Community, 'the

³¹⁸ Herter-Shepard Stone meeting, November 13, 1959, *FRUS 1958-60*, Volume X, doc. 41.

³¹⁹ Kohler meeting with Canadian embassy staff, Washington, November 27, 1959, *FRUS 1958-60*, vol. X, doc.44

³²⁰ Lightner cable to Herter, November 10, 1959, *FRUS 1958-60*, vol. , doc. 38.

Common Market,' would evolve into a political entity, a course the Americans, French and West Germans desired. Europe also needed to provide more aid to less developed areas, said Dillon. Both trade rivalries and aid to the underdeveloped would have to be discussed at the December heads-of-state meetings.³²¹

French president De Gaulle chaired the meetings, also including President Eisenhower, Prime Minister Macmillan and Chancellor Adenauer, which began in Paris on December 19. Their first session, with Heads alone and interpreters, dealt with arrangements for an East-West summit. Eisenhower suggested they not plan too much on a fixed agenda because of Khrushchev's tendency to "go from one subject to another." Eisenhower said "there should be some definite items on the program and the subjects of disarmament, the under-developed countries, non interference..and naturally Germany had been mentioned." On disarmament, they thought, "there were no great possibilities of coming to grips with such a subject at a summit meeting but it could be discussed in general terms."³²² The British had proposals ready but without Allied support. They were in general agreement that "the juridical status and rights of the West in Berlin should not be brought into question." Plans needed to be made in case of a new blockade. Khrushchev had to be told that if he "created difficulties then this means he does not want a detente." The main topics, disarmament and Berlin were agreed on firmly but without much specificity. On other areas, like trade reform, aid to the undeveloped and colonial self-determination, the Allies exhibited cordial but obvious differences.³²³

In their last meetings on December 21, the Western leaders agreed to send a formal invitation to the Soviets, without specifying an agenda. Eisenhower suggested disarmament and

³²¹ Dillon letter to Eisenhower, December 16, 1959, DDE, Ann Whitman files, Box 11, Dillon series, folder 1.

³²² Memo re Western Heads meeting, Paris, December 19, 1959, White House Office files, Box 10, International Trips and Meetings/Heads of State, Paris, 1959, folder 2.

³²³ *Ibid.*

related matters. De Gaulle and Adenauer wanted to at least mention Germany and Berlin. The Four agreed that the ten-power disarmament committee should try to have a common Western position ready to show Khrushchev. There was no consensus on Berlin. Adenauer reacted sharply to Eisenhower's readiness to look beyond the July 28 proposal, but had no idea what to do if the Soviets wanted changes on Berlin. De Gaulle said that Khrushchev would probably talk about whatever he wanted, no matter what the plan was.³²⁴

De Gaulle said disarmament was a big question, but some progress might be possible. Adenauer mentioned cost-savings which could be channeled to aid projects. Macmillan cited UK disarmament interest. All agreed that warheads and delivery systems should be limited. "On Germany," De Gaulle concluded, "the four had centered on Berlin...juridical status and Western rights should not be brought into question...governments should plan measures ...[to]...prevent interference...developments in Germany depend on intentions of Khrushchev."³²⁵ Citing the failure of the 1955 Geneva meeting, Eisenhower again spoke of his fear that Khrushchev could use Germany as a blunt tool to obstruct progress. Macmillan brought up possible economic obstacles to this limited agenda. Clearly, substantial differences remained as to the summit's purpose.³²⁶

In their final session, de Gaulle summarized their position. They had agreed that the "Communist menace" was still great, but that Khrushchev's recent comments about peaceful coexistence had prompted an invitation to a summit. The Four "had discussed Germany and agreed that their position should be very reserved, especially re Berlin."³²⁷ They must not give up their occupation rights and they must affirm their commitment to the well-being of the West

³²⁴ Memo re Western Heads meeting, Paris, December 21, 1959, DDE, White House Office files, Box 10, International Trips and Meetings/Heads of State, Paris, 1959, folder 2.

³²⁵ Western Heads meeting, December 21, 1959, Paris, France, *FRUS 1958-60*, Vol. X, pt.2, Doc. 56, p. 142.

³²⁶ Western Heads of state plenary, December 22, 1959, Paris, France. *FRUS 1958-60*, Vol. X, Doc. 57.

³²⁷ Western heads meeting, December 22nd, 1959, Paris, France. *FRUS 1958-60*, Vol. X, doc. 58.

Berliners. Expectations for a German solution were modest unless international tensions should relax. Disarmament was mentioned, with little expectation of progress. The Four made note again of Adenauer's suggestion of disarmament savings being diverted for aid to underdeveloped areas. They discussed joint efforts with Khrushchev on Nile development and public health projects. Macmillan opposed linking disarmament and aid projects without careful study. They agreed to a summit date in May, then adjourned. The West was now committed to a summit, but without a practical strategy towards agreements on either Berlin or disarmament.

Still intent on his tripartite vision, De Gaulle was able to get Macmillan and Eisenhower to meet with him after the main meetings were done. De Gaulle said they needed to determine what attitude to take towards Khrushchev. They could not let him browbeat them over Berlin and wartime injustices but should allow the Soviets to raise the topic. Eisenhower cautioned against overplaying Berlin as a test of the Soviets' interest in detente. They would continue to use the 'Western Peace Plan' of July 28 as their basic program for Berlin.³²⁸ That program had been rejected by the Soviets in July. Tentative talk of possible border concessions or long-range reunification understandings found little agreement. The French admitted they were in no hurry for German unification; the British agreed. Eisenhower said a permanently divided Germany destabilized Europe; that was also the West German position.³²⁹

That schism would grow deeper in coming weeks. Their tripartite discussion of disarmament was very brief and inconclusive. Other areas of non-Berlin tripartite like the colonies and European military integration were even less productive. The meeting indicated

³²⁸ Memo De Gaulle-Eisenhower-Macmillan meeting, Paris, December 22, 1959, DDE, White House Office files, Box 10, International Trips and Meetings/Heads of State, Paris, 1959, folder 2.

³²⁹ Memo De Gaulle-Eisenhower-Macmillan meeting, Paris, December 22, 1959, DDE, White House Office files, Box 10, International Trips and Meetings/Heads of State, Paris, 1959, folder 2.

that, whatever de Gaulle hoped for, Berlin was the only real piece of business that France, Britain and the United States held exclusively in common.³³⁰

Slow Progress to a Summit Strategy

On New Year's Day, Llewellyn Thompson cabled Washington to describe his talks with Khrushchev at a party the night before. Khrushchev told him how much he liked Eisenhower and Herter too, though he did not look forward to the possibility of a Nixon presidency. He wanted peace, lamenting the destructive potential of atomic weapons. He spoke at length about Berlin, hinting that Adenauer might provoke him into signing a separate peace treaty. He told Thompson the Soviets would not be throwing the Allies out of Berlin but simply turning over access responsibility to the GDR. He refused to acknowledge that the Allied position would be restricted by a separate peace treaty. Khrushchev compared the situation to the American arrangements with Japan. Thompson disagreed and told him the American commitment to uphold its position and responsibilities was unchanged.³³¹

Khrushchev said he could not see why the West placed such importance on Berlin. Thompson asked the Soviet chief why he placed such emphasis on Berlin. Khrushchev replied "because it was surrounded by East Germany." Thompson followed up with a long letter to Herter, noting how both East and West would probe the other side's positions at the summit before advancing their positions. He thought Khrushchev "seeks a détente of long duration and a real measure of disarmament if this can be had without jeopardizing the Communist empire in

³³⁰ Maurice Vaisse, "De Gaulle's Handling of the Berlin and Cuban Crises, " in *Europe, Cold War and Coexistence*, Loth, ed, p.68-69.

³³¹ Thompson, Moscow, to State Dept, Washington, January 1, 1960. *FRUS 1958-60*, Vol. X, doc. 63.

Eastern Europe.”³³² Thompson warned that Western positions so far would appear as threats too dangerous and fruitless to proceed with.

Even before their New Year’s Eve talk, Thompson was convinced of Khrushchev’s intent to sign a separate peace treaty with Germany at the earliest opportunity. Eisenhower’s security analysts said, “The rhetoric of the Soviet treaty emphasizes the danger of German revanchism and portrays the new treaty as a great initiative for global peace that would finally resolve the last unresolved remainder of the Second World War. The treaty addresses not only Europe and America but many developing nations by name. It promises German unity but would sharply restrict self-defense and military alliance options; if the nations addressed do not affirm the treaty in unison, they may recognize it unilaterally, which the Soviet Union makes it clear is its intention.”³³³ East German pressure to solve their problems was mounting. Soviet hardliners and Chinese rivals also wanted action.³³⁴ If the West could not accept Soviet terms, they needed to figure some way for him to save face. Linkage to disarmament progress might be a good delaying tactic but it would not be long before Khrushchev felt compelled to make the separate treaty with the GDR. Thomson saw few options: more flexible Western positions that still maintained their rights, a pan-German solution that might put peace treaty and Berlin actions on hold, or a breakthrough in disarmament, such as a US offer to thin its military presence in Germany if the Soviets would do the same. Thompson’s conclusion was the British and West Germans should learn of the full range of the conversation, but the other NATO partners should be informed only that the Soviet position on Germany was essentially unchanged.³³⁵

³³² Thompson, Moscow, to State Dept, Washington, January 2, 1960. *FRUS 1958-60*, Vol. X, doc. 63.

³³³ Copy of “Soviet Proposed Draft Treaty with Germany” DDE, Presidential Papers, Ann Whitman file, Box 50, International series, USSR folder '1959-60.'

³³⁴ Harrison, *Driving the Soviets*, p.133-135.

Discussions in the following weeks did not indicate that Thompson's advice was understood. Adenauer backed away from the July 28 proposals on Berlin.³³⁶ This was the kind of provocative attitude Thompson warned against. The preparation process was so broad that building a consensus for a more innovative strategy would be hard. Smaller NATO partners like Italy and Canada were concerned the Big 4 would leave them out of decision-making.³³⁷ Gerard Smith, the State Department's Policy planning head, cautioned against saber-rattling but warned the status quo must be maintained.³³⁸ Livingston Merchant had told Gerard Smith the US "should take a position which ruled out any change," but Smith said that was unrealistic given the Soviets' large advantage in conventional forces. Besides, said Smith, "when the chips are down, none of the other three Western powers would stand firm with the United States."³³⁹ Both Smith and Thompson had reviewed the same set of options. Thompson in Moscow may have had a better idea what might influence the Soviet leader. Smith's view reflected much of the thinking in Washington, which still favored tough positions and propaganda actions. State Department leaders were beginning to realize that they had a narrow set of options, with limited, chances for success.³⁴⁰

In Moscow, Khrushchev told Italian Prime Minister Giovanni Gronchi that "if the West was trying to give disarmament precedence over German questions as trick to maintain status quo, he was not such a fool as to fall into a trap."³⁴¹ Thompson, along with West Germany's Ambassador Kroll, felt Khrushchev would still prefer negotiation, but might not be able to defer

³³⁶ Memo re Adenauer visit to Berlin, January 11, 1960, *FRUS 1958-60*, Vol. X, doc. 65.

³³⁷ Memos re Merchant-Heeney meeting, January 15, 1960; re Kohler-Brossio meeting, January 18, 1960, Washington, *FRUS 1958-60*, Vol. X, docs. 67 & 68.

³³⁸ Smith memo to Herter, January 28, 1960, *FRUS 1958-60*, Vol. X, doc. 72.

³³⁹ Memo from Gerard Smith, DDE, Dulles files, Box 2, Gerard Smith series, folder 2.

³⁴⁰ Memo from Smith to Kohler, February 1, 1960.; memo from Kohler to State, February 1, 1960 and memo from Smith to State, February 1, 1960, *FRUS*, Vol. X, doc. 71, 72 and 73.

³⁴¹ Memo from Zellerbach to State, February 13, 1960, Rome, Italy, *FRUS*, Vol. X, doc. 77.

unilateral action on Germany. Both thought Khrushchev now saw an all-German commission as the best vehicle to delay action while still moving toward his goals for a new settlement without a Western military presence in Berlin or Germany. They also agreed that Adenauer was intent on blocking any new Western concessions. The Soviets and GDR were testing the waters by issuing new travel documents allowing continued access to and within Berlin, with a new layer of bureaucratic interference. None of these alternatives were likely to be brought to the table by May, but he saw signs the Soviets were interested in accommodation.³⁴² Relaxation of tensions might lead to more freedoms for the Soviet satellites including East Germany, thus quieting the Berlin issue.

This relaxation was fortunate for the West because Live Oak contingency planning had not proceeded very far since the Foreign Ministers Conference. Live Oak was essentially tripartite (UK/US/France), representing the West Berlin signatory peace-keepers. In February 1960, they were reluctant to allow either further West German or United Nations participation, which might dilute their tripartite responsibility. The Western ambassadorial group was still working with basic position papers, not battle plans. This reflected not only lack of coordination but caution on the part of their governments about over-mobilizing, which might tip Khrushchev's hand towards action.³⁴³ Their immediate task was to prepare status reports to be included in the four-power Western Working Group Reports for final review before the summit. Frictions were visible even at the tripartite level, with the French being especially sensitive to anything that hinted at compromises with the East Germans. The Americans and British saw such compromises, such as which might flight notification or allowing GDR personnel to check documents, as pressure-relieving devices to avoid flash conflicts. FRG Ambassador Grewe was

³⁴² Thompson cable to Herter, February 16, 1960, *FRUS 1958-60*, Vol. X, doc. 78.

³⁴³ Memo re Tripartite ambassadorial meeting on contingency planning, Washington, February 18, 1960, DDE, White House Office (NSC), Box 8, Exec. Scty files, Berlin Master Briefing Book, folder 4.

present for March meetings and voiced strong concerns that the other Allies still might accept the peace treaty.³⁴⁴

Berlin was still the primary area of discussion, but its military aspects explained why disarmament was also on the table. US Army General Lauris Norstad, assigned to NATO, reported to Eisenhower that control and inspection programs might be worked out for central Europe. This could allow reduced force levels, thus easing tensions. Adenauer might be placated a little by extending the control zones beyond German territory, but generally appeared to be more inflexible than ever. The FRG's growing independence might, as US Ambassador Walter to Bonn Dowling told Herter: "create problems of grave danger."³⁴⁵ Adenauer was so afraid of recognizing the GDR that he wanted to move quickly from Berlin to disarmament. Dowling told him the likely progression was still Berlin-reunification-disarmament.

On the eve of Adenauer's mid-March visit, Eisenhower affirmed that Berlin was still the "key." He hoped Adenauer would be more interested than the French in his ideas for in disarmament-inspection zones, which might even be palatable to the Soviets.³⁴⁶ He lamented loopholes had been left in the original agreements and the fact that he could not guarantee access or supply for West Berlin. Eisenhower still thought a UN solution for Berlin was possible, though this option was not well received. Since Adenauer would be unreceptive to any revisions on Berlin, the only areas where concessions of interest to the Soviets might be developed were the West German-Polish border and limited East German access control duties.³⁴⁷

³⁴⁴ Memo re Tripartite ambassadorial meeting on contingency planning, Washington, March 10, 1960, DDE, White House Office (NSC), Box 8, Exec. Scy files, Berlin Master Briefing Book, folder 4.

³⁴⁵ Dowling to Herter, March 11, 1960, *FRUS 1958-60*, Vol. X, Doc. 86.

³⁴⁶ Meetings with Eisenhower meetings with Herter and Norstad, Washington, March 11 and 14, 1960, *FRUS 1958-1960*, Vol. X, docs 85 & 87.

³⁴⁷ Ibid.

Progress on even these concessions proved elusive, let alone on the really significant issues; the Soviets wanted major revisions on Berlin and arms levels in central Europe. The Chancellor did not object to Eisenhower's suggestion of continuous aerial inspection, apart from any disarmament pact. This was essentially an update of his familiar "Open Skies" proposal.³⁴⁸ In further talks without the President, Von Brentano warned against waffling on civilian access to Berlin. The July 28 proposals had explicitly refused to separate civilian from Allied military access rights to and within Berlin. Adenauer repeated his insistence that any recognition of GDR authority - granting them access authority - was still unacceptable. Herter reminded him that East and West Germany had ongoing toll and tariff arrangements that implied mutual recognition. Adenauer demurred and expressed his concern that no common Western position would be ready in time for the summit. He now opposed the inspection zone proposals. He again suggested a plebiscite in West Berlin, which he wanted to hold before the summit.³⁴⁹ This was clearly impossible, causing both the Americans and the other West Germans to wonder if the Chancellor was still serious about the summit.

Eisenhower and Herter's meetings with Adenauer had not gone well, foreshadowing problems the Chancellor would present throughout the rest of the Berlin crisis. Adenauer's insistence on a quick referendum for Berlin, demands that the FRG be more involved in contingency planning and resistance to the inspection zone proposals prevented the West Germans from more meaningful participation in summit preparation.³⁵⁰ Dulles, an old friend, had been able to manage Adenauer better than Herter.³⁵¹ The problem was not so much with the Americans as with the British and French, who were less eager to see West Germany as a senior

³⁴⁸ Memo re Eisenhower-Herter meeting, Washington, March 15, 1960, *FRUS 1958-60*, Vol. X, doc. 90.

³⁴⁹ Memos re Herter-Adenauer meeting, Washington, March 15 & 16, 1960, *FRUS 1958-60*, Vol. X, doc.94.

³⁵⁰ Memo re Herter-Eisenhower meeting, Washington, March 16-17, 1960, *FRUS 1958-60*, Vol. X, docs. 95 & 96.

³⁵¹ Stephen J. Brady, *Eisenhower and Adenauer: Alliance maintenance Under Pressure, 1953-1960* (Lanham: Lexington Books, 2010), p.250.

partner in NATO.³⁵² Adenauer was determined to see the FRG gain a nuclear deterrent, even if they not control its use and did not welcome disarmament yet. Even reunification may have been second to his nuclear aspirations.³⁵³

The Americans made their final preparations with the British and French. Macmillan visited Eisenhower at Camp David at the end of March. During discussion about a test ban treaty, Eisenhower brought up the Soviets' concerns about an armed, reunited Germany. He had seen firsthand evidence of reunification spirit in West Germany, yet knew that current borders needed to be recognized. Macmillan commented that "this might be an important consideration to the Soviets. If anything could be gotten from such a statement, he thought it might be worthwhile. Eisenhower agreed that "this was not a thing we should let the Soviets have cheaply."³⁵⁴ He wondered whether a two year test ban moratorium might be traded for a two year moratorium on Berlin. They noted Adenauer seemed intractable on any revision for Berlin or for GDR recognition. Eisenhower said the Chancellor might opt for neutralization if too disgruntled. Macmillan disagreed, saying the Germans liked being well armed. He personally would be happy with a "free city" arrangement but said it was "unobtainable." Eisenhower feared an island city like West Berlin could not last indefinitely but "it would be serious blow to the entire western position if we show ourselves to be weak on Germany." He hoped Adenauer could be persuaded to accept an inspection zone plan that might get Soviet agreement. Macmillan wished they had done more tactical planning, fearing that they would end up trading speeches.³⁵⁵

³⁵² Ralph Dietl, "Sole Master of Western Nuclear Strength, " in *Europe, Cold War and Co-Existence*, ed. Wilfried Loth, (London: Frank Cass, 2004), p. 139.

³⁵³ Klaus Schwabe, in "Adenauer and Nuclear Deterrence, "in *Europe, Cold War and Co-Existence*, ed. Wilfried Loth, (London: Frank Cass, 2004), p. 50..

³⁵⁴ Eisenhower-Macmillan meeting, March 28, 1960, Camp David. *FRUS 1958-60*, Vol. X, doc. 105.

³⁵⁵ Ibid.

The next day Ambassador Houghton in Paris sent the first reports of Khrushchev's meeting with de Gaulle. De Gaulle told Khrushchev his fears of an armed West Germany were unfounded. He accepted the reality of two Germanys, but thought that West Germany's strength helped balance strategic power in Europe.³⁵⁶ Khrushchev disagreed and expressed his intent to sign a separate peace treaty. De Gaulle replied that France would still not recognize the GDR. Khrushchev raised the German question again, concentrating on the peace treaty and free city ideas. De Gaulle and Khrushchev, said Couve de Murville "agreed they want a détente...the difference being that the French want a détente leaving the German situation in status quo ...the Russians want a détente based on a settlement of the German question... it appears fundamental positions of both sides remain unchanged."³⁵⁷ He did not make any new offers or accept Western terms but he did encourage de Gaulle's independent ambitions. Khrushchev probably understood now that de Gaulle did not share Eisenhower and Macmillan's flexibility. De Gaulle wanted an armed West Germany next door, ready to take a first strike from the East.³⁵⁸

Although expectations were diminished for the summit, the participants were still prepared to go forward. The ministers might actually succeed in finding some agreement among the various papers on the table. These reports, the products of the working groups on disarmament, Berlin, and cooperation, were received in April 7, just a few days before the U-2 incident.³⁵⁹ These reports summarized Western and Soviet positions, areas of agreement and difference, and expected Soviet negotiating strategy. For instance, on disarmament, the Soviets were expected "to maintain their public postures of champions of complete and general

³⁵⁶ Maurice Vaisse, "De Gaulle's Handling of the Berlin and Cuban Crises" in Loth, *Europe, Cold War and C-Existence*, p.69.

³⁵⁷ Houghton to State Dept. re DeGaulle-Khrushchev meetings. March 29 and April 4, 1960, Paris, France. *FRUS 1958-60*, Vol. X, doc.106.

³⁵⁸ Fredric Bozo, *Two Strategies for Europe*, p.50-51.

³⁵⁹ Editorial Note on working groups, *FRUS 1958-60*, Vol. X, doc. 111.

disarmament, to get the west to agree to certain disarmament principles, which would form the basis of a treaty...later represented as being equivalent to the Khrushchev plan and consequently available to blackmail the West ...make the Western delegations responsible for rejecting the concept of a general and comprehensive disarmament.”³⁶⁰ This assessment reflects low expectations. US Ambassador to West Germany Walter Dowling reported from Bonn that the plebiscite was simply impossible at the present time when even the regularly scheduled election season was chaotic.

The Berlin working group released its report on April 9. Like the disarmament paper, this was more a summary than a new plan. The preferred schedule would consider disarmament first and then Berlin and Germany, followed by international cooperation. The Western aim should be to eliminate Soviet threats without sacrificing freedom and cooperation in Europe. The West would counter the Soviets’ peace treaty with the Western Peace Plan (essentially the July 28th plan), calls for a freeze on Berlin and then an all-German plebiscite proposal.³⁶¹ A ‘free Berlin’ would be countered with an all-Berlin plebiscite plan. They might then try seeking extra time, whether by signed agreement or by tacit understanding. Like the disarmament paper, it was intended to guide what would at best be an incremental process.

The Western foreign ministers, including West German Foreign Minister von Brentano whose country would not take part in the summit, gathered in Washington, April 11 to 14, 1960, to coordinate their plans. In a private session, Herter and British Foreign Minister Selwyn Lloyd reviewed reports that the Khrushchev-de Gaulle talk had included a possible trade-off linking interim freezes on nuclear testing and Berlin actions. Lloyd thought de Gaulle might “have less

³⁶⁰ “Five Power Report of April 5 on Disarmament” paper for Foreign Ministers Conference, April 7, 1960. *FRUS*, Volume X, Doc. 112.

³⁶¹ “Five Power Report of April 5 on Berlin” paper for Foreign Ministers Conference, April 9, 1960. *FRUS*, Vol. X, Doc. 116, p. 283-5.

of a chip on his shoulder.”³⁶² In Von Brentano-Herter talks, the Germans expressed their concern that the West need to show unity on Berlin and German issues. Herter reassured him that the positions were coming together. They also discussed a possible disarmament-Berlin trade-off, agreeing it was difficult to forecast what the Soviets would do at the Summit. Von Brentano predicted that “Khrushchev would provoke at least one serious crisis”³⁶³ Herter agreed but noted that the Soviet leader’s usual technique – to start calmly, provoke, and then level off. Von Brentano worried the Soviets might try to introduce the GDR into discussions. He also wanted to know if there was any chance a test limitation treaty might be signed at the summit. Herter said a signed agreement was not imminent.

Despite some US effort to emphasize disarmament, Berlin remained the most prominent concern of pre-Summit preparations. In the final planning sessions in Washington from April 12-24, the Big Three ministers tried to set a summit agenda, after reviewing reports of the working-groups on Germany, disarmament and international aid. Herter “recalled that the Soviets had generally mentioned four topics...disarmament, Germany and Berlin, East-West relations.”³⁶⁴ He suggested that they proceed in that order, with nuclear testing first. Lloyd countered with the idea of opening with East-West relations; that way, Khrushchev might be channeled towards expressing the idea of a detente in principle right up front. De Murville said the French would not object to discussion of nuclear testing, but would absent themselves from those talks. He also told Herter that de Gaulle was opposed to any German-Polish border revision. Herter was leery of the West’s committing itself to détente and then being embarrassed if Khrushchev then proved intractable over German/Berlin issues. Couve de Murville noted that détente would be

³⁶² Herter-Lloyd discussion, April 12, 1960, Washington, D.C. *FRUS*, Vol. IX, Pt. 2., Doc. 119, p. 292.

³⁶³ Herter-Von Brentano talks, April 12, 1960, Washington, D.C. *FRUS*, Vol. IX, Pt. 2., Doc. 120, p. 295.

³⁶⁴ Foreign ministers meeting, April 12, 1960, Washington, D.C. *FRUS*, Vol. IX, Pt.2., Doc. 121, p. 298.

futile if the Soviets would not budge on German issues. Herter asked that they give the subject some thought and re-visit it later.³⁶⁵

Clearly, serious doubts persisted about chances for a real détente in Paris. De Murville downplayed the idea of a disarmament-Berlin interim freeze and said de Gaulle was not eager to go to Moscow. The French minister indicated that the French had not significantly changed their positions since the December heads of state meeting. The West Germans and French were still not fully reconciled with the working group's proposed tactics, such as popular referendums in both Germanys. Nor did they like the idea of an interim agreement that would eventually hand over Berlin access to the GDR. The French worried about creating a third category of non-aligned German territory. The Germans wanted to flatly state that normalization of Berlin should be a first step towards reunification.³⁶⁶

Similarly, the working-group paper on disarmament revealed divergence in the Western position. The Soviets were expected to insist on a commitment to general principles before discussing concrete measures like inspection, but had also tentatively agreed to seismic test research cooperation.³⁶⁷ The West had reached rough agreement on pilot programs of force reduction and inspection zones. The British had ready a counter-statement on general principles. Such a counter-statement might help move the Soviets towards feasible near-term disarmament agreements. But Herter thought that French insistence on tackling the problem of nuclear delivery systems would probably result in the Soviets successfully hiding their missiles and warheads. Trying to do too much too early might derail meaningful progress.³⁶⁸ Nor was there

³⁶⁵ Memo re Herter-de Murville meeting, Washington, D.C., *FRUS 1958-60*, Vol. X, doc. 122.

³⁶⁶ Memo re Western ministers meeting, Washington, D.C., *FRUS 1958-60*, Vol. X, doc.123.

³⁶⁷ Eisenhower, *Waging Peace*, p. 480-81.

³⁶⁸ Foreign ministers meeting, April 13, 1960, Washington, D.C. *FRUS 1958-60*, Vol. X, doc. 124.

much enthusiasm for inviting the UN into the discussions. Khrushchev, it was felt, could simply use the UN as a propaganda forum.

The ministers approved a Western five-power plan calling for a ban on space weaponry, notification of missile launches, force ceilings of 2.5 million troops for the Soviets and 2.1 million for the West, and stricter controls on production and distribution of fissile materials. The plan emphasized force balance, effective control and inspection, phased force reduction without a strict timetable, and rejection of space weapons.³⁶⁹ Disarmament and non-proliferation also figured in the ministers' session on East-West relations. Again, the Soviets were expected to open with an emphasis on general principles that might prove more restrictive to the West than the East. Non-interference pledges could be troublesome because the Soviets would try to exclude their Communist Party activities from restrictions on government action. Trade and aid agreements might be possible but would have to be coordinated with existing bilateral arrangements, and would need approval by the U.S. Congress and other national assemblies. Enough disagreement remained between the Allies to delay issuing a press statement that might reveal those differences.³⁷⁰

The inter-connectedness of disarmament, Germany and East-West relations can be seen in the military's reports to the summit planners. The test-ban debate was still unproductive, as seen in the Geneva UN-panel discussions of January 1960 and the April Western Ministers meetings.³⁷¹ The most important area where arms, conventional and nuclear, needed to be reduced was Europe, not the heartland arsenals of the United States and Soviet Union at stake in the later detente. Disarmament in 1958 meant force reductions in nuclear artillery,

³⁶⁹ *Ibid.*

³⁷⁰ Foreign ministers meeting, April 14, 1960, Washington, D.C. *FRUS 1958-60*, Vol. X, Doc. 126.

³⁷¹ Robert J. Divine, *Blowing In the Wind, the Nuclear Test Ban Debate* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1978) p. 296.

fighter/bombers, short and medium range ballistic missiles in Germany, as well as troop levels. With both Germanys now nuclear-armed, any change in their political systems would affect military situations in the surrounding countries as well.³⁷²

Though tensions in Berlin had relaxed somewhat in advance of the summit, the basic military standoff over Germany that disturbed Khrushchev also remained very serious to NATO Commandant General Lauris Nortsad. Reviewing attempts to denuclearize central Europe, Nortsad said that the Rapacki plan would have left Western Europe vulnerable and recent Soviets proposals that lacked inspection options were impractical. Norstad argued that a robust and mobile, ground and air inspection system would be the only way to satisfy public concerns and guarantee safety. Though it would not protect central Europe from weapons launched outside the control zones, it would greatly reduce chances and effects of armed conflict.³⁷³ Livingston Merchant told him the US would support this plan in Paris, though the Soviets had not indicated they were open yet to inspection measures.

The summit was now less than a month away. The State Department prepared a last position paper that listed three main “affirmative purposes” for the summit: first, “a small beginning toward practical controlled disarmament”; second, “detering communist action towards Berlin and paving the way for an eventual acceptable solution,” third, “An increase in the confidence and cohesion of the Western alliance.”³⁷⁴ This paper, which did not discuss tactics, might be taken as a clear indication that disarmament progress was indeed the West’s primary summit purpose. But the discussions on Berlin had been the most extensive and

³⁷² Trachtenberg, *A Constructed Peace*, p. 281-82.

³⁷³ Memo from Merchant to Irwin, April 21, 1960, *FRUS 1958-60*, Vol. X, doc. 132.

³⁷⁴ State Department position paper, undated, probably April 22, 1960, *FRUS 1958-60*, Vol. X, doc. 133.

conflicted in all these late-April foreign minister sessions.³⁷⁵ Disarmament proposals were less likely to reveal Western differences and invite Soviet rejection. Arms control also had the virtue of being an attractive cause in global public opinion. In Washington, Secretary of Defense Gates told Herter he opposed any force reduction in Berlin and West Germany.³⁷⁶

The Soviets had been fairly quiet in the final pre-summit period, but Thompson brought former ambassador Bohlen along with him to visit Gromyko on April 24. Gromyko expressed his "disappointment" that the Geneva test-ban panel had not made more progress. He said he hoped disarmament discussions in Paris would be more specific and substantive. Gromyko discussed Berlin and Germany in more depth, but offered little hope that Khrushchev would relax his demands. He said Allied occupation troops would have to leave West Berlin, but the Soviets would guarantee the city's freedom. Bohlen observed that this meant the summit could produce no solution on Germany, but Gromyko finally hinted at a possible interim understanding. He did not discuss Khrushchev's visit to de Gaulle, which may have been a turning point in Khrushchev's expectations for the summit.³⁷⁷

De Gaulle visited Eisenhower at Camp David on April 24 to make final plans for the summit. De Gaulle said, unrealistically, he hoped Berlin and Germany "could be left alone for the time being." On disarmament, he "wondered how they might take that up with the Russians." Eisenhower said mutual inspections were essential to "sound" disarmament, but they should try to also propose zones outside of Germany. De Gaulle said they should concentrate on pledges against missile and bomber delivery of nuclear weapons, with inspection targeted on those systems. Eisenhower said that would involve an "Open Skies" arrangement which the Soviets

³⁷⁵ Hally memo for Lay, w/ working group report on Berlin and analysis, DDE, WH Office Box 8, Exec Scty. files, "Berlin Master Briefing Book," folder #9.

³⁷⁶ Gates letter to Herter, April 15, 1960, *FRUS 1958-1960*, Vol. X doc. 128.

³⁷⁷ Thompson cable to Herter, April 24, 1960, *FRUS 1958-60*, Vol. X, doc. 135.

had pointedly refused. Ground inspection, he said, was a better starting point. De Gaulle acknowledged then that Germany would be discussed, but offered no new ideas. Eisenhower reiterated that there could be no Berlin discussions with any deadline attached and de Gaulle agreed.³⁷⁸ Later that day, Herter said that no matter what agenda was set, there was a strong chance the Soviets would "become difficult over Berlin." De Gaulle said they should ask Khrushchev: "Have you come here to seek a detente" and if so, suggest disarmament as the important topic. They must insist "all agreements were tied together." He thought they might keep Khrushchev on track in small meetings. They would end up holding larger sessions with staff.³⁷⁹ The foreign ministers had their own differences with the executives they worked for. Herter commented in private, "the Heads want to be alone and all the Foreign Ministers were afraid of this."³⁸⁰

The U-2 Incident & the Summit

A week later, the United States released a statement on a missing aircraft, which was actually a U-2 reconnaissance plane. Unbeknownst to the Americans, the Soviets had developed the S-25 surface-to-air missile capable of intercepting and destroying Captain Gary Powers reconnaissance flight over the ICBM facility Chelyabinsk-40 near Kyshtym in Soviet Central Asia. They recovered the plane's ruins and captured the pilot. Khrushchev viewed the incursion as a personal betrayal by Eisenhower.³⁸¹ He remained silent for the moment, waiting for the United States to attempt a cover-up. The first American statement, dismissing the matter as routine, was carelessly drafted. The Soviets soon revealed the whole story. The over-flight and

³⁷⁸ Memo re Eisenhower-de Gaulle meeting, Camp David, April 24, 1960, *FRUS 1958-60*, Vol. X, doc. 136.

³⁷⁹ Memo re Eisenhower-de Gaulle meeting, Camp David, April 24, 1960, *FRUS 1958-60*, Vol. X, doc. 137.

³⁸⁰ Memo of telephone conversation, Herter to Gates, April 2, 1960, Eisenhower Library, Presidential Papers, Herter series, Box 12, Telephone Conversations

³⁸¹ Sergei Khrushchev, *Creation of a Superpower*, p. 372-75.

cover-up embarrassed the Americans and gave the Soviets an escape route from an unpromising conference. Foy Kohler told Grewe that Khrushchev “seems to be preparing his people for something less than success at the Summit.” The Germans told Kohler they’d heard hardliners in the Kremlin were forcing Khrushchev to act tough on the U-2. If this was the case, then Khrushchev might have to take such a tough line on Berlin as to destroy the summit. But Khrushchev did not want to be seen as the summit’s spoiler.³⁸²

The Western ministers had convened a final time, before the summit, at the NATO meetings in Istanbul from May 2-4 1960. They adopted the America position paper in principle, with the understanding that all agreements would be linked. The Germans, French, and British diverged from the Americans, however, on how to address the issues. Would reunification be taken off the table, asked the Germans? The French warned they could alienate Khrushchev with too aggressive a stance on Germany. The French emphasis on delivery systems bothered the others, who pointed out that the issue complicated disarmament. Should they just engage in discussion or seek agreements? They noted that Soviet positions on Germany and disarmament were unchanged.³⁸³ For all their professed agreement, the Allies not have specific common objectives for the summit.

In the National Security Council’s final pre-summit session, less than a week before the Summit, Livingston Merchant summed up Western chances for progress. Disarmament talks would have to be carefully nudged past Soviet insistence communiqués, without practical measures. In the event of real negotiations, the French were likely to push prematurely for missile control but without specific plans yet.³⁸⁴ The USSR would table the standard German peace treaty and the West would counter with plebiscite and referendum options. Some chance

³⁸² Kohler-Grewe meeting, May 9, 1960, Washington, D.C., *FRUS* 1958-60, Vol. X, Doc. 147, p. 379-80.

³⁸³ Western Minister meetings, Istanbul, May 2-4, 1960, *FRUS* 1958-60, Vol. X, docs. 140-143

³⁸⁴ National Security Council, May 9, 1960., Washington, D.C. *FRUS* 1958-60, Vol. X, doc. 151.

was seen of deferring the Berlin problem to a lower level panel for continuing study, which might serve as an interim solution. Khrushchev might be agreeable to such a solution. He could let the West have an interim Berlin truce without being seen as too flexible by Kremlin rivals. Eisenhower said he'd just let Khrushchev have his public say on the incident and then come around for private talks. He wanted to point out Soviet espionage in the US. Eisenhower also wanted to know why the West Germans had picked this time offer the East a \$1 billion line of credit. The President remarked, "the Summit meeting would not be a Sunday School Picnic."³⁸⁵

In a May 10 press conference in Moscow, Khrushchev signaled he was far from done with the U-2. He indicated the invitation for Eisenhower's Moscow visit might be withdrawn.³⁸⁶ American intelligence analysts thought Khrushchev feared the West had a problem because of U2 publicity. Therefore, his behavior "would lead to the conclusion that he now considers it better to avoid a summit confrontation under present conditions and that he is out to blame the United States for wrecking the summit."³⁸⁷ The analysts speculated the Chinese might have threatened a break over the peaceful coexistence policy. The next day, Llewellyn Thompson, cabling from Moscow, seconded these views of Khrushchev's position. He attributed Khrushchev's sea change to the de Gaulle visit.

Khrushchev saw that France was not disposed to negotiate away its presence in Berlin, one of the few remnants of French power. Nor did any of the other Western parties seem likely to make the concessions he wanted. He "may have believed that in view of the strong position he had taken, it (the summit) would end in humiliating defeat for him which could seriously jeopardize his situation as leader of the Communist bloc."³⁸⁸ He urged the leaders to waste no

³⁸⁵ *Ibid.*

³⁸⁶ Taubman, *Khrushchev*, p. 459.

³⁸⁷ Current Intelligence Memorandum, May 11, 1960, *FRUS 1958-60*, Vol. X, doc. 152. ,

³⁸⁸ Telegram from Thompson to Herter, May, 12, 1960, Moscow, *FRUS 1958-60*, Vol. X, doc. 153.

time starting concrete negotiations. Thompson cautioned again that Khrushchev's words in public and in private "indicate that the cold war is on again."³⁸⁹ At the NSC meeting on May 10, Eisenhower said he still hoped to let Khrushchev talk about the plane and settle the matter in private, by showing him evidence of Soviet espionage in America.³⁹⁰

Two days later, the Foreign Ministers were in Paris, the next day. On May 15, the Heads of State were scheduled to hold their first plenary, limited to them alone. That morning, Khrushchev demanded an apology from Eisenhower and renunciation of the U-2 flights. If not received promptly, he would withdraw the Soviet Union from the conference.³⁹¹ Though the Western gave him a chance to change his mind, Khrushchev enjoyed playing the outraged statesman. He did not return to the afternoon and next days. He shunned the conference but remained in Paris a day or so, giving sidewalk press conferences where he denounced the U-2 flights and generally taunted the Allies.³⁹²

The Allied heads of state had little new to talk about as they met bilaterally recently and their ministers had been in close contact for weeks. All the working group reports, briefing books and position papers were rendered obsolete as the Allies retreated to rethink their positions. Squabbling broke out at the ministerial sessions that continued after the walkout. British asked why they should consider war over Berlin when the West and East Germans had large ongoing trade arrangements.³⁹³ The French wanted to plan delivery-system-limitation talks when Geneva ten-power talks reconvened in June, but the Americans were cautious. The French had few delivery systems, but wanted to keep testing.³⁹⁴ The Western Heads-of-State put

³⁸⁹ Thompson cable to Herter, May 12, 1960, *FRUS 1958-60*, Vol. X, doc. 153.

³⁹⁰ Memo re NSC meeting, Washington, May 10, 1960, *FRUS 1958-60*, Vol. X, doc. 150.

³⁹¹ N S Khrushchev, *Statesman*, p. 246-54.

³⁹² Taubman, *Khrushchev*, p.465.

³⁹³ Memo re Lloyd-Kohler conversation, Paris, May 16, 1960, DDE, White House Staff, Box 12, Intl. Trips, Summit series, chronology folder 4.

³⁹⁴ Memo re Herter-de Murville-Caccia meeting, Paris, May 18, 1960, *FRUS 1958-60*, doc. 182.

on a show of unity, though Macmillan, and de Gaulle to a lesser extent, had tried hard to get Eisenhower to apologize to the Soviets.

The decision to boycott the summit may have been even before the plane ride Khrushchev publicly mentioned. It was probably made before the plane left Moscow, says Vladimir Zubok.³⁹⁵ There is a fair chance the decision was made not long after his earlier visit to Paris. Khrushchev biographer William Taubman says that Soviet generals were very displeased by Khrushchev's provocative exploitation of the incident. As early as May 12th some Praesidium members were already urging him to call off the summit; the final decision was made in consultation with Praesidium members at the airport. These signals show that Khrushchev's authority was by no means complete,³⁹⁶ Khrushchev himself said in his memoirs that he decided "present an ultimatum to the United States." He and Gromyko radically revised their opening statement on the plane and then sent a copy to the party leadership for approval. In the same section, Khrushchev says, "we had come to this summit to discuss this very question of Germany."³⁹⁷ Sergei Khrushchev discounts reports friction in the Soviet leadership but admits some, especially in the military were "cool" to detente but "kept their opinions to themselves"; he notes that some of his father's personally selected candidates were elected to the Praesidium in early May, and future Premier Brezhnev replaced veteran Marshal Voroshilov, the last, though apparently reformed, member of the 'anti-Party' Group. Conspicuously, Sergei does not advance any purpose for the summit.³⁹⁸

Apart from the Berlin question, there was probably little that could realistically be accomplished at a multilateral summit. France was open to bilateral dialogue with the Soviet

³⁹⁵ Vladimir Zubok, *A Failed Empire, the Soviet Union in the Cold War from Stalin to Gorbachev*, (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2007), p.138.

³⁹⁶ William Taubman, *Khrushchev: the Man and his Era*, (New York: W. W. Norton & Co, 2003), p. 458-60;

³⁹⁷ N S Khrushchev, *Statesman*, p. 243 & 248

³⁹⁸ Sergei Khrushchev, , *Creation of a Superpower*, p. 386-60.

Union, exclusive of the United States. Berlin and German issues might be approached obliquely. The same could be true with the British, Macmillan was also agreeable to separate negotiation, but could not lead on the Berlin question.³⁹⁹ That left bilateral talks with the United States as the next logical step and that could wait till the next US President. Though Khrushchev was pessimistic about Vice President Nixon's attitude to the United States, he had a low opinion of him and thought there was a good chance the next President might be more flexible.⁴⁰⁰

Thus, the Soviets in Paris kept open the possibility of a postponed multi-lateral summit but never seriously followed up on that option. This would be the last Heads of State meeting till the Berlin Wall came down. The reason that another attempt at a Big Four summit was never again scheduled during the crisis years may have been that the Wall stabilized the situation. Khrushchev had quieted the East Germans and other critics, but, in so doing, could not continue to use Berlin as leverage against other issues. After all, in 1959, he had used Berlin to get Western attention in hopes of a new German settlement or concessions. He wanted a summit, if possible, to enhance Soviet prestige. As Livingston Merchant told the US National Security Council, in a post-mortem review session some weeks after the Paris debacle, "the story really began in November 1958 with Khrushchev's speech on Berlin and the intent to make a separate peace treaty with East Germany ... [eventually] ... it became an important part of Soviet thinking that there was unanimity among the Allies... as the Summit approached."⁴⁰¹ If that is the case, then Khrushchev probably left de Gaulle convinced Eisenhower and Macmillan were inflexible on Berlin. The point is not to blame de Gaulle for the summit's demise but to show that Summit's chances for success were low even before the U-2 crash. That incident and Khrushchev's theatrics overshadowed the serious problems among the Allies and between them

³⁹⁹ Burgess memo to Herter, May 23, 1960, DDE, WH Office, Box 12, Intl. trips, summit series, chron. folder 6.

⁴⁰⁰ Sergei Khrushchev, *Creation of a Superpower*, p. 391.

⁴⁰¹ National Security Council Meeting, Washington, D.C. May 26, 1960, *FRUS 1958-60*, Vol. X, doc. 194.

and the Soviets. A deputy ministers meeting on May 19 revealed little consensus about what to do next on Berlin.⁴⁰² These problems helped convince American leaders to begin direct bipolar discussions with the Soviets. Although the summit was unsuccessful, it still must be recognized as a pivotal event.

Conclusions

The Paris summit was the last Heads-of-State meeting, in the tradition of Potsdam and Vienna, and it marked a decisive shift towards US-Soviet superpower diplomacy.⁴⁰³ Disarmament may have been the desired purpose, but Berlin was the issue above all that brought the leaders to the table. As such, it should be recognized as a key step in the 1958-63 Berlin crises. Paris was also notable as a media event; the leaders went through with the summit mainly because they wanted to appeal to public opinion reassure their respective publics that their concerns were understood. Paris was a key event in the careers of all the leaders involved, providing a good example of the importance of personal diplomacy in the détente process.⁴⁰⁴

Perhaps the early phases of the Berlin crisis receive less attention today because the events of the next few years neutralized the issue. For modern historians, Berlin may seem a case of selfish interests by occupying powers who were reluctant to yield their residual importance as World War II victors. But Allied and Soviet leaders did attempt diplomatic resolution at Paris. Although the U-2 espionage that wrecked the summit may seem a selfish interest today, Eisenhower and his advisors felt strong public pressure about Soviet missile

⁴⁰² Memo re Hillenbrand-La Ly-Cartsens-Rumbold meeting, May 19, Paris, DDE, W H Staff Scty. files, Box11, Intl Trips, 'Summit Meeting May 60', folder 6.

⁴⁰³ Gordon Weihmuller, *US-Soviet Summits*, p.42.

⁴⁰⁴ Kenneth Osgood, *Total Cold War*, p.360.

strength.⁴⁰⁵ They saw more public concern with dangers of an insufficient nuclear deterrent than the necessity for disarmament treaties. Khrushchev's very public demands for a German peace treaty and expulsion of the West from Berlin made the public expect those issues would dominate summit discussions. Disarmament might involve dangerous concessions. The prospects for détente had seemed unpromising before Khrushchev's 1959 visit to the United States.⁴⁰⁶ But the public approved the exchange of US-Soviets and high level unofficial talks, suggesting that despite the summit's failure, direct superpower diplomacy might be more viable than the familiar multi-polar dissension. For the first time since the war, there appeared some chance that the US and Soviets would have to deal with each other again.⁴⁰⁷

A major reason for the shift from a multilateral East-West approach to engagement was the lack of consensus on aims and approaches, not only on Berlin but on nuclear deterrence.⁴⁰⁸ This discord discouraged lesser allies in the Western camp, such as Italy and Canada, who were not pleased with British and French efforts to dominate the Paris proceedings. They had made their complaints known before and during the Western heads and NATO meetings in December and through the spring preparations. After the summit's failure, other countries like Turkey seconded these complaints, especially about de Gaulle. They expressed more confidence in American leadership and respect for other national interests. These allies' skepticism reflected the real problems that faced the Western allies. Macmillan's eagerness for peace agreements worried the Italians who thought Britain too ready to disengage from Europe just to could prop up their colonial positions. De Gaulle, Macmillan and Adenauer were confirmed in positions on

⁴⁰⁵ Memo re NSC meeting, May 24, 1960, DDE, Ann Whitman files, Box 12, 'May 24th 1960' folder.

⁴⁰⁶ Eisenhower, *Waging Peace*, p.448-49.

⁴⁰⁷ David Reynolds, *Summits: Six Meetings that Changed the Twentieth Century* (New York: Basic Books, 2007), p. 172-74.

⁴⁰⁸ Robert Bowie report to Herter, 'The North Atlantic Nations: Tasks for the 1960s', summary section, August 1960, DDE, Nortsad files, Box 98.

Berlin and disarmament that they had staked out in the first weeks, through the foreign minister conference, heads-of-state conference, Western heads and the summit.⁴⁰⁹

De Gaulle was particularly troublesome, though Eisenhower approved of his leadership at the summit, if not during the preparations. De Gaulle tried to assume a chairman's role for a summit he initially opposed. His private diplomacy with Khrushchev in March showed the Soviets that the French had no intention of changing their position on Berlin. The Americans and British had not opposed the visit. They were disappointed that the French leader had not used the opportunity to convince the Russians that progress was possible on Berlin.⁴¹⁰ They showed little readiness for any limit on nuclear testing or for comprehensive disarmament that would limit their own deterrent strength. Eisenhower expressed satisfaction for de Gaulle's performance at the summit but did not think the French president was ready to offer any breakthrough.⁴¹¹ Eisenhower was impatient with de Gaulle's intractability and delusions of French importance.⁴¹²

Coordination of efforts with the British was easier but still difficult. The British were also distracted and relatively weak in the wake of their colonial retreats. Macmillan was an old friend, intelligent and experienced but he was not a strong partner. He faced strong political pressures, especially on disarmament, defense costs, and Britain's failure to win more participation in military research and development. The Skybolt shared-development project was fraught with setbacks and eventually cancelled.⁴¹³ De Gaulle was frustrating British attempts to gain access to the Common Market. Eisenhower appreciated British loyalty and

⁴⁰⁹ Memo from White to Herter, August 2, 1960, *FRUS 1958-60*, Vol. X, doc. 204.

⁴¹⁰ Memo re Herter-Lloyd meeting, Washington, April 12, 1960, *FRUS 1958-60*, Vol. X, doc. 119.

⁴¹¹ memo re NSC meeting, Washington, May 24, 1960, *FRUS 1958-60*, Vol. X, doc.193.

⁴¹² Gordon R. Welhmler and Dusko Doder, *U.S. – Soviet Diplomacy: An Account of East-West Diplomacy At The Top, 1955-1985* (Lanham: University Press of America, 1986) p. 42.

⁴¹³ John Dumbrell, *A Special Relationship: Anglo-American Relations from the Cold War to Iraq*, (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2006) p.172-73.

support but had little confidence in Macmillan's eagerness to negotiate with the Soviets without preconditions. Macmillan had urged Eisenhower to consider making some concession to Khrushchev so the conference could proceed. Even after the summit had been suspended, the British were still eager to consider the Soviet offer to try another summit several months later. The French were also willing to discuss such a possibility but to Eisenhower, such talk seemed futile.⁴¹⁴

Eisenhower had less reason than ever to believe Khrushchev was interested in serious and wide-ranging negotiations, but he also had little confidence in his own allies. If there were good reasons to seek détente with the Soviets, Eisenhower would proceed cautiously.⁴¹⁵ He had agreed to a summit that, if not totally dedicated to Berlin, would probably not have been called if that issue had not been so contentious and difficult to resolve. This last multi-lateral summit coincided with the first experiments in mutual US and Soviet visits. Eisenhower was not interested in attempting further visits or summits, multilateral or bilateral. Khrushchev later offered to reinstitute the Eisenhower Moscow visit, on the same preconditions demanded in Paris. Eisenhower angrily ridiculed the offer but understood that his successors might attempt to revive the engagement that had emerged in 1959 and faltered in 1960.⁴¹⁶ He authorized continued disarmament and test ban negotiations under the oversight of Glenn Seaborg but those discussions made only incremental progress during the rest of his term.⁴¹⁷ He also authorized more vigorous Live Oak contingency planning for a response to armed action against West Berlin. Eisenhower biographer Stephen Ambrose wrote that the President was very depressed in the wake of the conference and believed that there had been the chance of swapping an

⁴¹⁴ Editorial note re State Dept. paper 'Future of Summitry (June 29, 1960), *FRUS 1958-60*, Vol. X, doc. 199.

⁴¹⁵ Eisenhower, *Waging Peace*, p. 560.

⁴¹⁶ State Dept. intelligence report 'Increasing Communist Attention to Berlin', August 25, 1960, *FRUS 1958-60*, Vol. X, doc. 207.

⁴¹⁷ Glen T. Seaborg, *Kennedy, Khrushchev and the Test Ban*, (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1981) p.25.

unsupervised test ban for inspection teams within the Soviet Union.⁴¹⁸ The diplomatic record does not indicate great chances that this would have been the case, especially after Khrushchev's Paris visit, unless the Berlin question was resolved first.

Despite Eisenhower's public position that he would not negotiate under a deadline, there was in fact a constant threat of duress related to Berlin from 1958 to 1960. To use a Western idiom, Paris was a 'shotgun' summit. Its failure was due to Western disunity as well as Soviet stubbornness and belligerence. Despite its failure, it still represented a constructive approach instead of the retaliation that had been urged as recently as the 1958 Iraq and Chinese island crises. Eisenhower's consistent reluctance to use force, while keeping a credible deterrent, improved the climate for diplomacy.⁴¹⁹ The difference was that, before Berlin, Eisenhower still thought the United Nations Security Council was a better venue for resolution than summits.⁴²⁰

Eisenhower also guessed correctly that Khrushchev would not wage war unless absolutely necessary. Though reluctant to begin détente with the mercurial Khrushchev whom he did not trust, he did come to believe it was worth attempting.⁴²¹ Campbell Craig has argued that Eisenhower's restraint of contingency activity had helped contain the Berlin crisis in the spring of 1958. The president offered a simple choice between negotiation and general nuclear war, without allowing for the possibility of limited war. If this is the case, it may represent the kind of brinksmanship which Dulles had been accused of, but which was to become a hallmark of the next phase of Berlin and the ensuing Cuba crisis. More likely, Eisenhower and Dulles had

⁴¹⁸ Stephen Ambrose, *Eisenhower: Soldier and President* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1990), p. 515-17.

⁴¹⁹ Bowie/Immerman, *Waging Peace*, p. 258.

⁴²⁰ Eisenhower, *Waging Peace*, p. 285.

⁴²¹ H W Brands, *Cold Warriors* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1988), p. 199.

already decided even before 1958, that diplomacy backed with maximum force did not mean that they would use that force in any but the last resort possible.⁴²²

In getting to Paris, there had been nearly two years of ambassadorial talks, top-level Soviet and US visits by private and deputy leaders, such as Harriman, Humphrey, Nixon, Mikoyan and Kozlov. More importantly there had been visits to the United States by Nikita Khrushchev, Premier and Chairman of the Council of Ministers of the Soviet Union. He had been received by Eisenhower and there had been every expectation that American president would return the visit. Ambassadorial connections between the Americans and Russians increased. A network of contacts, official and back-channel alike, was creating an ongoing dialogue. The conferences established templates for negotiating formats and tactics, as can be seen in the briefing books prepared for successive meetings in Geneva and Paris. Khrushchev tried to revive this momentum with his October 1960 visit to New York for UN sessions, but failed. Despite new pressures on Berlin, he could not recreate the catalytic potential. Without a focus, he ended up just banging his shoe at the United Nations. He would have to wait for a new president to retry the Berlin gambit.⁴²³

When the Soviets proposed a new round of exchanges and meetings in early 1961, experienced diplomats and analysts, a network of contacts and templates of protocol provided Eisenhower's successor with many of the tools for engagement. Though engagement had seemed unlikely two years before, it now appeared necessary and inevitable. Circumstance, more than a change in ideology or softening of positions, had brought about this realization.

The Soviet leader, like Macmillan, de Gaulle, Ulbricht and Adenauer, would still be in power when Eisenhower's successor John Kennedy assumed office in January 1961. Kennedy's

⁴²² Campbell Craig, *Destroying the Village: Eisenhower and Thermonuclear War*, New York: Columbia University press, 1998) ch.6.

⁴²³ Taubman, *Khrushchev*, p.473-76.

attempts to keep continuity in some respects and depart from it in others meant that the next phase of détente built on the Eisenhower legacy only in part. Berlin remained the catalyst, but the new Kennedy administration's strategies diverged from the formulas established by Eisenhower and Dulles. Berlin's refugee problem in early 1961 renewed Khrushchev's urgency to quiet East Germany's Walter Ulbricht and created pressures for the Kennedy administration to resolve what had become an ongoing crisis over Berlin.⁴²⁴

⁴²⁴ Gaddis, *We Now Know*, p. 144.

Chapter 3: "Vienna & the Wall," January - August 1961

Introduction

Even after the collapse of the Paris summit in May 1960, the Soviet Union indicated its willingness to resume Four-Power negotiations over the status of Berlin and Germany. Disagreements among the Western allies and the firmness of the Soviet position ensured no further summits would be undertaken till after the impending presidential elections in the United States.⁴²⁵ The Soviet Union's Chairman Nikita Khrushchev, Britain's Prime Minister Harold Macmillan, West Germany's Chancellor Konrad Adenauer and France's President Charles de Gaulle waited to see whether president-elect John Kennedy would continue the personal diplomacy begun by President Dwight Eisenhower. Berlin had been the main issue bringing these leaders together, although intransigence had rendered summit negotiations largely futile. Other compelling interests such as disarmament, nuclear testing and international cooperation offered little opportunity for immediate agreements. Berlin remained Khrushchev's primary concern. The Soviet leader used Berlin to control progress in other areas, divide the Western alliance, forestall challenges within the Communist bloc and deter nuclear arms for West Germany. He thought Kennedy might be more accommodating on Berlin.⁴²⁶

If Kennedy wished to continue the diplomatic momentum begun with the 1959 Foreign Minister's Conference and the Paris summit, he would have to either bring together his Western partners and persuade them to adopt more unified, practical approaches, or set aside the multilateral approach exemplified by the wartime conferences at Tehran, Yalta, Potsdam and the

⁴²⁵ Trachtenberg, *A Constructed Peace*, p. 282.

⁴²⁶ Fursenko & Naftali, *Khrushchev's Cold War*, p. 340-41.

1955 summit at Geneva.⁴²⁷ Instead, he might need to seek a more direct, bilateral rapprochement with Khrushchev. Kennedy was inclined by personal temperament and external circumstances to the latter course.

Like Eisenhower, he was unhappy with the degree to which Berlin had taken precedence over other problems: the nuclear arms race, competition for influence in Africa, Latin America, and Asia, particularly Laos. Both the outgoing and incoming presidents were impatient with the limited cooperation offered by their erstwhile allies. They understood that, however scant the actual prospects for progress through summit negotiations might be, domestic and global public opinion now favored the attempts at diplomacy.⁴²⁸ Negotiation would be a welcome relief from the tensions of containment and would assure the public that a more relaxed peace remained possible. Though the challenges and ambitions of the United States were little different at the beginning of Kennedy's presidency, it soon became clear that his approach would differ markedly from his predecessor.

Contrasts Between Eisenhower and Kennedy

Eisenhower had been a generally popular, confident, authoritative president, though with a reserved public presence and leadership style. Eisenhower's experience in military administration had tempered his willingness to invest in new weapons systems and large force levels. He was wary of using force as a crisis response, especially on Berlin.⁴²⁹ He relied on a tightly organized and co-coordinated hierarchical foreign policy establishment run by Secretary of State John Foster Dulles. Dulles' patience and pragmatism restored Allied unity in the first

⁴²⁷ Reynolds, *Summits*, p.180-82.

⁴²⁸ Michael Beschloss, *Crisis Years*, p 177-78.

⁴²⁹ John Lewis Gaddis, *We Now Know: Rethinking Cold War History* (New York; Clarendon Books, 1997) p.258.

phase of the Berlin crisis.⁴³⁰ Dulles successor, Christian Herter, had taken over just before the 1959 Foreign Ministers Conference and generally continued Dulles's approach but less independently. Herter retained most of the key staff, including Undersecretary Livingston Merchant and Policy Planning Staff head Gerald Smith, and such distinguished career ambassadors as Llewellyn Thompson in Moscow, Thomas Dowling in Germany and David Bruce in London. The Eisenhower foreign policy establishment was considered by the incoming President as professional but conservative, able to maintain an often tense status quo with confidence, but perhaps unwilling to look past containment and convert crisis situations into opportunities.⁴³¹

Kennedy presented a strong contrast, with a strong personal charisma and personal confidence. He was a decorated World War II veteran but most of his experience lay in congressional legislation. As Kennedy scholars such as Lawrence Freedman and Mark J. White have noted, Kennedy's 'New Frontier' signaled a combination of military reinforcement and initiatives for peaceful cooperation.⁴³² Kennedy wanted to project an openness to new ideas and diversity of opinion among his advisors. His foreign policy structure was more horizontal, with McGeorge Bundy, special assistant for national security affairs having as much or more influence than his Secretary of State Dean Rusk or the Secretary of Defense Robert Macnamara. Adlai Stevenson, passed over for the job at State, was named United Nations envoy, while Truman's Secretary of State Dean Acheson was brought in as a special consultant.⁴³³ Both of these appointments, the former more open to unconditional negotiation and the latter more

⁴³⁰ Richard Damm, *The Eisenhower Presidency*, p.90-91.

⁴³¹ Lawrence Freedman, *Kennedy's Wars Berlin, Cuba, Laos and Vietnam*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 2000) p. 34-35

⁴³² Mark J. White, "A New Synthesis for a New Frontier" in *Kennedy: The New Frontier Revisited*, ed. M. White, (New York: New York University Press, 1998) p. 10-11.; also see note 327.

⁴³³ Fursenko & Naftali, *Khrushchev's Cold War*, p. 342.

insistent on linking negotiation to progress on outstanding disputes, were subordinate to the inner circle of Bundy, Rusk and McNamara. Acheson's strong, hawkish opinions and confidence in his long experience often conflicted with the rest of Kennedy's security advisors.⁴³⁴ Rusk's deputies, Chester Bowles and George Ball also enjoyed the President's confidence to a high degree. Acheson's former head of Policy Planning Staff, Paul Nitze, recruited by Kennedy for the Defense Department, also had a strong advisory role, particularly on nuclear issues.⁴³⁵

Though Rusk, Acheson and Nitze had some experience in the official diplomatic structure, they, like the rest of the new security apparatus, had been external policy experts in academia, foundation and the Democratic party. Rusk had experience in the Truman-era State Department but had been out of government since that time. He was well-informed but cautious, inclined more to consider options than recommended specific courses of action. He cautioned Kennedy against seeking an early summit with Khrushchev. McNamara had been a Ford Motor Company executive, brought in more for managerial than foreign policy expertise.⁴³⁶ Retention of the senior ambassadorial corps helped provide continuity; Thompson was especially valuable as one of Khrushchev's preferred conduits and Bruce was adept at handling not only British, but other European partners. In addition to these senior personnel, younger advisors such as Henry Kissinger often challenged established opinion-makers.⁴³⁷ The president's younger brother and new Attorney General, Robert Kennedy emerged as an important foreign policy influence, who

⁴³⁴ Douglas Brinkley, *Dean Acheson, The Cold War Years, 1953-71* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1992), p. 124..

⁴³⁵ Freedman, *Kennedy's Wars*, p.37.

⁴³⁶ Beschloss, *Crisis Years*, p. 76 & 404

⁴³⁷ Kissinger had been an analyst with RAND and Harvard University, from which both Rusk and Bundy solicited his participation, with Rusk winning out for help in policy planning (PPS). The PPS under Gerard Smith had played a significant advisory role in the Dulles-Herter State Department, but Smith left when Herter did. Kissinger proved even more willing than Smith had often been to criticize, without solicitation, what he considered realistic assumptions. Kissinger's role during the 1961 Berlin crisis/summit period is also important because it was formative experience in his pursuit of détente ten years later. He would have preferred working for the NSA, where he would later work under President Nixon. Rusk memo to Kennedy, February 8u, 1961, John F Kennedy Library, National Security Files, Box 405, McGeorge Bundy Correspondence series, "Memos to the President" 1/61-2/61, folder 7.

the Soviets sometimes used for back-channel communications with the White House.⁴³⁸ In addition to this already broad variety of advisors, Kennedy often sought external opinions and could be receptive to unsolicited opinions, to a degree not seen in the previous administration.

Kennedy Assesses Berlin Situation & Meets with Allied Leaders

Eisenhower briefed Kennedy after the election and just before inauguration, identifying security issues and specific country problems but de-emphasizing Berlin. Soon after the inauguration, Rusk summarized the history of the Berlin controversy, noting that refugee flight from East Germany was intensifying and Khrushchev was still intent on his Berlin ‘free city’ and German ‘peace treaty’ demands.⁴³⁹ No immediate Soviet action was anticipated. On February 17, Kennedy assured West German Foreign Secretary Heinrich von Brentano that their interests and opinions would be respected and protected. Kennedy explained that America was not going to bring up the Berlin issue for the time being and remained committed to the status quo. When asked whether he thought the Soviets were preparing to renew their demands more vigorously, von Brentano said he did not anticipate new moves as long as Western commitment remained visibly firm.⁴⁴⁰

At the same time, Kennedy was also considering new overtures for US-Soviet discussions. Meetings with the French and West Germans had already touched on the possibility of a new Paris-style meeting, with unanimous feeling that such meetings remained premature. The reluctance to consider a new summit camouflaged lingering disagreements among the

⁴³⁸ Beschloss, *Crisis Years*, p. 154-56.

⁴³⁹ State Department paper: “The Berlin Problem in 1961” and cover letter from Rusk to Kennedy, Feb.2, 1961, John F. Kennedy Presidential Library, National Security File, ‘Country’ series: Germany, Box 81 “Berlin General, 1/61”

⁴⁴⁰ Kennedy-Von Brentano meeting, Washington D.C, February 17, 1961, *Foreign Relations of the United States 1961-63(FRUS)*, Vol. XIV, doc. 5.

Allies.⁴⁴¹ Exploration of bilateral talks reflected a still-embryonic trend, with precedents like Macmillan's solo visit to Moscow in February 1959, Khrushchev's talks with Eisenhower at Camp David in September of that year, and de Gaulle's reception of the Soviet leader in Paris several weeks before the abortive summit.

In a February 23 meeting, February French ambassador Herve Alphand told Rusk his government had no problems with such talks but cautioned about the need for 'Big Three (France, Britain and United States)' agreement. Alphand emphasized Berlin's primacy among Western security interests and indicated the Soviets might be planning a new initiative in advance of German elections coming up in September. He thought that Khrushchev's recent letter to Chancellor Konrad Adenauer was a clear signal to the West Germans that Soviet demands remained on the table. Like West German Ambassador to the U.S. Wilhelm Grewe, Alphand believed the Soviets would, if they acted, proceed in small but steady increments till their demands *de facto* if not *de jure* were enacted; from there, the West would have to recognize the new environment. Rusk did not disagree. He felt contingency planning must be advanced.⁴⁴² The British, hopeful of strengthening their 'special relationship' with US in hopes of offsetting a burgeoning Franco-German alliance, had already approached Kennedy on a variety of issues including joint weapons development and nuclear testing.⁴⁴³

Kennedy had begun by consulting the Allies, but soon realized the major differences in their relative positions, both in policy and capability. Discussions with Ambassador Thompson confirmed his belief that he should meet personally with the Soviets and

⁴⁴¹ Lawrence Freedman, *Kennedy's Wars: Berlin, Cuba, Laos, Vietnam* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2000) p. 51-54.

⁴⁴² Rusk-Alphand meeting, Washington, February 23, 1961, *FRUS 1961-63*, Vol. XIV, doc. 6.

⁴⁴³ Nigel J. Ashton, *Kennedy, Macmillan and the Cold War: the Irony of Interdependence* (London: Palgrave, 2002) p.3-4.

that it would be to his advantage to control the circumstances.⁴⁴⁴ Once a reasonable amount of common ground had been established and relations were acceptable, Rusk asked Thompson to approach Khrushchev about new bilateral discussions on issues like disarmament/testing, aid to the underdeveloped, and joint scientific programs. Thompson was instructed to avoid broaching the subject of Berlin but to carefully observe and communicate any signals on that subject.⁴⁴⁵

Khrushchev listened to Thompson's message from Kennedy for better Soviet relations, but immediately noted Berlin had not been mentioned. That, said Khrushchev, was the subject he most wanted to discuss. He emphasized the issue of German unification, which he understood to be a goal held in common with the West. The borders in place since the war “needed legal foundations” but that the “socialist camp does not want to expand towards the West. Khrushchev then directed his focus toward Berlin, which he called “a bone in the throat of Soviet-American relations...if Adenauer wants to fight ...West Berlin would be a good place to begin.”⁴⁴⁶ He shifted his tack again, asserting he wanted “better relations with the US” and said that he merely wanted to “render it impossible for preparation for aggression and everyone understands what this would mean with nuclear weapons.”

Thompson replied that the President was reviewing the situation and looking for clarification of the Soviet position about how the Berlin “free city” plan would work in actual practice. Khrushchev answered that West Berlin might be able to keep the current arrangements - a step away from the original ‘free city’ plan – but was vague about how this could be guaranteed. Thompson pointed out that East German leader Walter Ulbricht “was very much interested in West Berlin.” Khrushchev said Ulbricht would also sign the commitment to ensure West Berlin’s status. Thompson did not force the issue further but reiterated that the German

⁴⁴⁴ Beschloss, *Crisis Years*, p.68-70.

⁴⁴⁵ Rusk cable to Thompson, February 28, 1961, *FRUS 1961-63*, Vol. XIV, doc. 7.

⁴⁴⁶ Thompson cable to Rusk re meet w/Khrushchev, Moscow, March 10, 1961, *FRUS 1961-63*, Vol. XIV, doc. 8..

problem was under review. Khrushchev identified Adenauer as the aggressor but said that if “Pres. Kennedy and they (Soviets) could sign a peace treaty, it would be a great step forward in American-Soviet relations” which at present resembled an armistice more than peace. The peace treaty could be implemented in installments and an “atmosphere of trust” could foster “disarmament negotiations.”⁴⁴⁷

Although Khrushchev had not been explicitly offered a new summit opportunity and had not extended one himself, he did say he wanted better relations with America. Berlin was still his top priority and progress towards his peace treaty and ‘free city’ plans were prerequisites for disarmament negotiations. This talk of incremental implementation of the peace treaty was remarkably similar to the French and West German estimates of how Khrushchev might proceed unilaterally. Khrushchev at this point was making his most forceful demands directly to the West Germans. Thompson thought Khrushchev was not yet ready to sign his German peace treaty.⁴⁴⁸

In Washington that same day, March 10, Ambassador Grewe was reviewing the recent Khrushchev letter to Adenauer which reiterated familiar demands with renewed harshness. Grewe asked the president about a shift in US military policy, which the Germans feared would de-emphasize nuclear deterrence even if it amplified conventional forces. The President was noncommittal on this topic and on Grewe’s suggestion that a new public statement of the Western position would be helpful.⁴⁴⁹ Kennedy met with West Berlin Mayor Willy Brandt a few days later; Brandt was running against Adenauer in the September elections and Kennedy did not want to play favorites.⁴⁵⁰ Kennedy asked Brandt about recognition of the Polish-East

⁴⁴⁷ *Ibid.*

⁴⁴⁸ Thompson cable to Rusk, March 16, 1961, *FRUS 1961-63*, Vol. XIV, doc. 11.

⁴⁴⁹ Meeting between Kennedy and Grewe, March 10, 1961, Washington, D.C., *FRUS 1961-1963*, Vol. XIV, doc. 9.

⁴⁵⁰ Beschloss, *Crisis Years*, p.274.

German border at the Oder and Niesse rivers, which the West was inclined to grant as an easy concession. Brandt felt that was an issue for a peace conference. Brandt viewed reunification as a possibility but only over a very extended period. The president commented that he wanted to continue contingency planning, but thought that NATO commandant Lauris Norstad's force targets were "grandiose." He clearly did not want to begin his presidency with a new Berlin conflict. Kennedy did not have particularly warm relations with either Adenauer or Brandt and was keeping his distance as long as he could.⁴⁵¹

A cable from Thompson a few days later indicated the Khrushchev might not give him that option much longer. The consensus among the Western missions in Moscow was that, without a new round of negotiations, Khrushchev would proceed with his plans before the German elections. Thompson's guess was that the Soviet leader would conclude his peace treaty with the East Germans but would try to avoid a Berlin conflict by instructing them to continue to allow Western access to the city. The decision would be heavily influenced by the overall state of relations with the West, which were not presently favorable. Thompson thought Laos might be settled amicably but that Latin American and African competition would intensify. Test ban and disarmament prospects were not encouraging, with minimal progress in UN-sponsored talks and new increases in US defense spending after the force reductions of the Eisenhower years.⁴⁵² Kennedy's personal support for Radio Free Europe and American refusal to grant licenses for machine tools further clouded prospects with the Soviets.

West German foreign minister Von Brentano believed new East-West talks might postpone the peace treaty, though he did not mention this when he was in Washington.⁴⁵³ West

⁴⁵¹ Meetings between Kennedy and Brandt, March 13, both Washington, D.C. , *FRUS 1961-1963* , Vol. XIV, docs 10 & 11.

⁴⁵² Thompson cable to State, March 16, 1961, *FRUS 1961-1963*, Vol. XIV, doc. 11.

⁴⁵³ Ibid.

German rejection of Khrushchev's demands remained adamant, but they were concerned that Kennedy's "flexible response" policy, deemphasizing nuclear use, would encourage Soviet ambitions on Germany.⁴⁵⁴

Thompson thought "at such time as the President might meet Khrushchev, discussion German problem will be main point exercise so far as he is concerned and he will probably make his decision on German policy at that time or shortly after. ...alternative would seem to be that President should be able to hold out prospect for negotiations which would at minimum enable Khrushchev to save face somewhat and maintain his position." Thompson noted that while Khrushchev was probably better for US purposes than other Soviet leaders, he did not think this possibility should determine US policy.⁴⁵⁵ These last comments indicate that some kind of US-Soviet meeting was likely, but neither side was yet making specific overtures. They also showed awareness that Khrushchev's authority was not absolute and that he had rivals. Thompson did not believe the West Germans could handle implementation of the peace treaty without US assistance.

The Ambassador warned that Khrushchev might begin to take the incremental steps already forecasted. Specifically, he warned: "If we expect Soviets to leave Berlin problem as is, we must at least expect East Germans to seal off sector boundary in order to stop ... refugee flow through Berlin."⁴⁵⁶ This is the first prediction of the Wall on record from a senior US foreign policy officer. Thompson was probably better acquainted with Khrushchev than any other American and was an astute observer of Soviet politics.

It is remarkable that the possibility of a border closure had not received much attention in contingency planning or position papers already. Even after this warning, US planners

⁴⁵⁴ Mayer, *Adenauer and Kennedy*, p.21.

⁴⁵⁵ Thompson cable to State, March 16, 1961, *FRUS 1961-63*, Vol. XIV, doc. 11.

⁴⁵⁶ *Ibid.*

concentrated on initiatives like negotiation or even forceful probes with force, instead of contingency planning for incremental Soviet actions toward Berlin. Henry Kissinger, a new consultant drafted from strategic studies at Harvard University, urged the president personally to visit Berlin during a goodwill tour of Western European capitals projected for April, but this option was not carried out till thirty months later in a very different situation.⁴⁵⁷

Kennedy needed to consult with the other Western heads of state before he could further consider direct US-Soviet negotiation. A briefing that Dean Acheson provided for a meeting with the President and Harold Macmillan, as well as most of senior foreign policy leaders of the US and Britain, did not reflect immediate readiness to negotiate with the Soviets.⁴⁵⁸ Instead, Acheson wanted a demonstration of ground power to show the West was ready to defend Berlin though surface-to-air missiles now made an airlift unrealistic; blocked ground access was still considered Khrushchev's likely first move. Acheson criticized the slack pace of conventional planning. The president was reluctant to concede that an airlift was no longer an effective option, but Macmillan told him he had gotten the same opinion. McNamara was pessimistic about a ground attack, and the leaders and their advisors returned to the idea that an airlift might be feasible after all.⁴⁵⁹

British Foreign Secretary Lord Douglass Home warned that "if Khrushchev says he wants a conference and that we want to make a change, then we have no alternative to propose." Home thought the West should try get Khrushchev to accept a deal that would defer change in occupation for ten years. Acheson rejected the suggestion that this "would get Khrushchev off the hook," saying that should be of no concern since Khrushchev "was trying to divide the

⁴⁵⁷ Kissinger memo to Rostow, April 5, 1961, *FRUS 1961-1963*, Vol. XIV, doc. 13

⁴⁵⁸ Freedman, *Kennedy's Wars*, p. 63.

⁴⁵⁹ Meeting notes Kennedy-Macmillan-Rusk-Home Acheson et al, Washington, D.C, April 5, 1961, *FRUS 1961-1963*, Vol. XIV, doc. 14.

allies.” Rusk seconded Acheson by saying that Khrushchev should not be allowed to seem as though he could grant what was already guaranteed by the end-of-war agreements. Home observed that “the right of conquest was wearing thin.” Rusk ended the meeting by reaffirming the familiar declaration to stand up for their rights by agreement. But first Home noted that he did not like “going to a conference knowing we had nothing to offer.”⁴⁶⁰

Home’s observation confirmed the reality that rhetoric could not conceal: there was no reason to believe that Khrushchev would accept what was still the Western peace plan of July 1959. Unless the West was prepared to much more visibly acknowledge East Germany to defuse the German peace treaty issue and then accept their control of ground access, their occupation position in West Berlin would probably be challenged very soon, with unpredictable results.⁴⁶¹ Eisenhower, and Macmillan, too had been willing to consider these concessions in the spring of 1960, but de Gaulle and Adenauer were reluctant to consider any form of German reunification that did not give them complete assurance of the outcome. Even before the Paris summit it had become apparent that no breakthrough on Berlin was likely.⁴⁶² Whether the West might have been able to use such a compromise to leverage progress on disarmament cannot be known, because such an offer was never approved in common.

The comments of Acheson and Rusk indicate a retreat to initial, hard-line reactions of late 1958 when Khrushchev began his free city/peace treaty demands. Home’s comments at the Acheson meeting also indicate that another Paris-type of summit was not likely in the near future, even if a possible Soviet move might be more imminent now than at any time since the demands were first presented.⁴⁶³ In subsequent talks, the President and Macmillan tried to look

⁴⁶⁰ Ibid.

⁴⁶¹ Acheson memo to Kennedy, April 3, 1961, JFK Library, Presidential Papers, NSF files, Box 81, folder 4/61.

⁴⁶² Fursenko & Nafatli, *Khrushchev's Cold War*, p. 289.

⁴⁶³ Memo re Kennedy-Macmillan meeting, Washington, April 5, 1961, *FRUS 1961-1963*, Vol. XIV, doc.14.

at more flexible approaches, including co-opting the ‘free city’ with a Western counter version but indicated no movement to the deeper concessions probably necessary.⁴⁶⁴

When Adenauer himself came to Washington a few days later, he mostly discussed contingency issues. Asked by the President what he thought the proper US response should be in the event of a peace treaty, the Chancellor indicated legal questions would be raised that might deter immediate action, but would be troublesome nevertheless. He also worried that the West Germans might not be fully involved in any NATO defensive action on Berlin. He queried Kennedy and Rusk about Allied access plans in the event of a peace treaty, but they had no ready answer.⁴⁶⁵ In a follow up visit with West German Ambassador Grewe, Rusk warned of the Soviets blocking access through incremental means: "it would be difficult to find definite line which, if breached by the East, would elicit specific Western measures. Here was the old Communist problem of ... salami tactics."⁴⁶⁶ Soon after, Khrushchev informed Hans Kroll, West German Ambassador to the Soviet Union, that he planned to sign a peace treaty with East Germany after the West German elections, then about four months away.⁴⁶⁷

The Joint Chiefs of Staff contingency plans required at least two divisions to avoid reliance on nuclear weapons, which would require a significant mobilization effort.⁴⁶⁸ They wanted to enlist West German forces although their participation was still limited in NATO. A quadripartite session of US, French, British and West German foreign ministers in Bonn “generally agreed that was no basis for Western initiative to open negotiations with the Soviets on Berlin.” They thought Khrushchev’s “possible misperception ... re Allied firmness of

⁴⁶⁴ Memo re Kennedy-Macmillan meeting, Washington, April 6, 1961, *FRUS 1961-1963*, Vol. XIV, doc.15.

⁴⁶⁵ Frank A. Mayer, *Adenauer and Kennedy: A Study in German-American relations, 1961-1963*. (New York: St. Martin Press, 1996) p.24-26.

⁴⁶⁶ memo re Rusk-Grewe meeting, April 23, 1961, Washington, *FRUS 1961-1963*, Vol. XIV, doc.18.

⁴⁶⁷ Editorial note, *FRUS 1961-1963*, Vol. XIV, doc.19.

⁴⁶⁸ Hillenbrand memo to Kohler, April 25, 1961, *FRUS 1961-1963*, Vol. XIV, doc. 21.

intentions on Berlin ... could be highly dangerous.” Von Brentano said the West Germans wanted to be more active in planning (Kennedy had told Adenauer that was his wish also). Rusk said this would be helpful, especially in legal matters.⁴⁶⁹

Multi-party negotiations did not look promising but Kennedy remained interested in meeting with Khrushchev. The President had just suffered a major credibility challenge when the US failed to provide air cover for an ill-prepared CIA-sponsored guerilla incursion of Cuba at the Bay of Pigs in April 1961.⁴⁷⁰ Khrushchev, on other hand, could bask in the achievements of Cosmonaut Yuri Gagarin, who became the first human in space in early April. Kennedy hoped that he could recover some of his questioned authority with a vigorous tour of Europe.⁴⁷¹ He had already received most of the western heads in Washington, with the notable exception of French President Charles de Gaulle. A visit abroad would help Kennedy project the commitment and outreach he wanted his administration to stand for. He hoped Khrushchev might respond to a day or so of intimate meetings where they might be able to explore issues besides Berlin. The initial contact came from Soviet Foreign Minister Andrei Gromyko, who asked Thompson if the President did in fact want a personal meeting with Khrushchev. Kennedy responded affirmatively that he hoped to adjust his tour schedule to meet in neutral Vienna in early June; he promised to set definite details shortly.⁴⁷²

This contact was supplemented by backchannel communication through the president's brother Robert, who had already had informal but apparently privileged messages from the Soviets through their embassy aide and GRU operative Georgi Bolshakov.⁴⁷³ Robert Kennedy

⁴⁶⁹ Memo re Quadripartite Foreign Ministers meeting, Bonn, West Germany, May 9, 1961, *FRUS 1961-19*, Vol XIV, doc. 23.

⁴⁷⁰ Robert Dallek, *An Unfinished Life*, John F. Kennedy, 1917-1963 (Boston: Little Brown & Co., 2003.), p. 394

⁴⁷¹ *Ibid*, p. 368-70.

⁴⁷² Aleksandr Fursenko and Timothy Naftali, *Khrushchev's Cold War: The Inside Story of an American Adversary* (New York: W W Norton, 2006), p. 350.

⁴⁷³ *Ibid*.

outlined his brother's program: progress on the nuclear test inspection issue which could lead to broader disarmament discussions.⁴⁷⁴ These contacts are notable not only as indicators of Kennedy's desire to move past Berlin and build a more stable and productive base for US-Soviet relations. David Reynolds notes they also mark the emergence of Robert Kennedy as a major voice in Kennedy's inner foreign policy circle. And, since the Bolshakov-Kennedy connection continued for another eighteen months, it is also an important precedent in secret backchannel diplomacy. Backchannels would be a key element of the diplomatic campaigns of the later détente era.⁴⁷⁵ Khrushchev approached Thompson on May 23, two weeks before the summit, to make it clear that Berlin was still his main concern. The tough message only made Kennedy more determined to announce his conventional arms build-up to send a message that the United States would be negotiating from a position of strength, not under intimidation.⁴⁷⁶

The meeting pioneered a bilateral US-Soviet summit approach, using a neutral country as backdrop. Guenter Bischof has recently argued that the bilateral approach with the Soviets was continued through his week-long series of visits with other heads of state.⁴⁷⁷ Kennedy planned to conduct an intensive round of bilateral summits as an alternative to the multilateral approach that had stalled even before Paris 1960. Optimally, this would open the foreign relations deadlock between East and West which had existed since November 1958 and bridge the distance among the allies already apparent before the Berlin/peace treaty issue. It also marked a new readiness to assume the superpower role that Eisenhower and Dulles had to moderated to

⁴⁷⁴ David Reynolds, *Summits: Six Meetings that Shaped the Twentieth Century* (New York: Basic Books, 2007), p. 182-87;

⁴⁷⁵ Lawrence Freedman has more recently questioned Bolshakov's importance, though the Soviets undoubtedly were glad to learn of the President's intentions for the meeting. Lawrence Freedman, *Kennedy's Wars*, p. 50-52.

⁴⁷⁶ Thompson memo to Rusk, May 23, 1961, *FRUS 1961-1963*, Vol. XIV, doc.25.

⁴⁷⁷ Guenter Bischof, "John F. Kennedy and European Summitry, June 1961"; 2010, publication pending.

avoid unwelcome commitments. Kennedy needed to balance firmness with outreach to make his strategy work. In preparation for the talks, Kennedy was advised to avoid ideological discussions and the subject of Berlin if at all possible.⁴⁷⁸ The president, by his later admission, still did not understand the extent of Khrushchev's single-mindedness and determination regarding Berlin and Germany. Experienced Soviet observers like Thompson, Undersecretary Charles Bohlen, Foy Kohler and George Kennan advised caution.⁴⁷⁹

On May 24, Khrushchev himself sent a clear signal, through a private interview with Thompson at the American ice skating exhibition, that Berlin remained his top priority for the Vienna meetings.⁴⁸⁰ Khrushchev "revealed plainly that he was troubled by problem how to deal with the president on question Berlin." He could not make the same approaches in a get-acquainted meeting in front of staff that he did privately with the Ambassador. Khrushchev reaffirmed his intention to sign separate peace treaties, pending the failure to sign a new Berlin agreement, just after the German elections. He had told West German Ambassador Hans Kroll the same thing. Khrushchev acknowledged the danger of war but insisted his moves would not lead to war. Thompson replied that it was his official duty to make American commitment to Berlin clear to the Soviet leader. Khrushchev answered by saying that "if he wanted war, we could bet it," but, "only madmen wanted war and the Western leaders were not mad, although Hitler was." Khrushchev tempered this provocative line by trying to bring up the 'free city' idea as a peaceful alternative. Thompson pointed out, while Khrushchev "might not want Berlin, Ulbricht clearly did."⁴⁸¹ Khrushchev kept returning to the theme of finally normalizing relations

⁴⁷⁸ Beschloss, *Crisis Years*, p. 174-76.

⁴⁷⁹ Freedman, *Kennedy's Wars*, p. 56.

⁴⁸⁰ Fursenko & Naftali, *Khrushchev's Cold War*, p.354.

⁴⁸¹ Telegram from Thompson to Herter, May 24, 1961, *FRUS 1961-1963*, Vol. XIV, doc. 24.

sixteen years after the war. He said Western access would not be obstructed by a treaty, promising no blockade; the West could then deal with the East Germans.

Khrushchev seemed interested when Thompson indicated the US might be flexible on East European frontier issues if that would help. Khrushchev, very informally, mentioned possible troop reductions of as much as a third. Thompson thought Khrushchev “seemed to be groping for some war out of [an] impasse. Thompson carefully suggested that a freeze might still be the most productive near-term course, saying this might allow time for disarmament progress. Khrushchev “said frankly that disarmament impossible as long as Berlin problem existed.” Despite the tough line, continued sparring, and Khrushchev’s refusal to discuss all-Berlin alternative solutions, the Soviet leader did appear “most anxious” that the talks with Kennedy should “go well” but appeared “deadly serious” about signing the separate treaties.⁴⁸²

Thompson followed this report by noting that he had compared notes with Kroll and other Western Ambassadors in Moscow, all of whom believed Khrushchev would proceed with the peace treaty. Thompson thought the Western position should put Khrushchev in the position of being the one “saying no” to peace. Thompson saw some hope in trying to re-advance their Geneva peace plan (the “July 28” plan also used at Paris), but spread out over time and sweetened with assurances that East European borders were accepted by the West.⁴⁸³ He hoped these offers could be accompanied by better access guarantees for the West. He noted also that both the Americans and Soviets had tremendous prestige interests at stake: some formula must be found which would enable both sides to save face...difficult but not impossible...President might most usefully explore with K. in private stating frankly what his purpose was.” Thompson

⁴⁸² *Ibid.*

⁴⁸³ Telegram from Thompson to Herter, May 25, 1961, *FRUS, 1961-1963*, Vol. XIV, doc. 25.

ended his assessment pessimistically, observing 'some difference of opinion' among the Allies.⁴⁸⁴

Thompson believed the peace treaty would provide a wedge for "radical action from the Communist side." The lack of Western consensus encouraged bilateral US-Soviet diplomacy and discouraged the back-up consensus that the West had been able to rely on through the problems of the Geneva Foreign Ministers Conference and the Paris summit.⁴⁸⁵ A State Department paper from May 25 noted that Khrushchev might be emboldened by successes with "Laos, Cuba, and Yuri Gagarin, " The analysts cautioned "Khrushchev is undoubtedly reluctant to risk a major war ... real danger is that he might risk such a war without realizing he is doing so."⁴⁸⁶

Michael Beschloss and David Reynolds have noted that Undersecretary Bohlen and Press Secretary Salinger tried to downplay expectations for the summit in the final days.⁴⁸⁷ Kennedy, still recovering from a perceived lack of leadership surrounding the Bay of Pigs, faced a much different negotiating situation than Eisenhower. The former president had met Khrushchev in Geneva at the 1955 summit and held informal talks on his own home ground at Camp David. In both those meetings, he was working with an experienced, centralized foreign policy team. He knew the other Allied heads of state well. By the time of the Paris summit, they had worked out and defended their positions for nearly two and a half years. Kennedy, on the other hand, was

⁴⁸⁴ *Ibid.*

⁴⁸⁵ Kissinger submitted to Walter Rostow his own more optimistic estimate of the prospects for Berlin; he thought that West could match incremental Soviet steps requiring cooperation with the GDR with their own procedural questions; that the West could successfully probe access resistance without provoking general war, and "concurrently the West could make a demarche at the UN," for free access to West Berlin. His prescriptions for combined diplomatic renewal and displays of force were less forceful than Acheson's but more proactive than Rusk's ideas. Thompson and Ambassador to Berlin Alan Lightner's warnings of new Khrushchev toughness diminished what influence Khrushchev's advice might have had. JFK Library, National Security Files, Country series, Berlin/Germany, Box 81, folder 5/5/61.

⁴⁸⁶ State Dept. position paper, "Berlin and Germany," May 25, 1961, *FRUS 1961-1963*, Vol. VIV, doc. 26.

⁴⁸⁷ Reynolds, *Summits*, p. 190; Michael Beschloss, *The Crisis Years, Khrushchev and Kennedy, 1961-63* (New York: Edward Burlingame Books, 1991), p. 180.

still getting to know his Western counterparts and had never met Khrushchev. His own advisors were not in agreement, with Acheson urging a hard line and Averell Harriman calling for a new beginning to discussions.⁴⁸⁸

Just days before the President left for Europe, US Ambassador to West Berlin, Allan Lightner urged that Kennedy should use the unilateral setting to make clear that the US regarded the Soviets as responsible for the problems of a divided Germany. Kennedy needed to say “Sovs should keep hands off Berlin where US committed to stay...nothing further to discuss on Berlin itself ...Vienna will be psychological testing ground.” Lightner thought Yuri Gagarin’s space flight and Communist gains in Laos and the Congo had cushioned Khrushchev against hard-line rivals who might be more difficult to deal with.⁴⁸⁹ Thompson noted Khrushchev had so committed himself to this issue that he would not want to risk losing face, through concessions, before the Communist Party Congress met just after the West German elections. In this situation, he might not accept the kind of rebuff suggested by Acheson and Lightner.

Thompson had the most confidential relationship with Khrushchev of any US official; he saw strong determination on Berlin, as well as a hope for negotiations in Khrushchev. This was a difficult situation for the US to approach: “we should not allow gradual erosion (of) our position by embarking on slippery path of tempting compromises. President has difficult task of convincing K on one hand that we will fulfill our commitment...and on other that it is not our attention to saw off limb on which he has crawled.”⁴⁹⁰ Thompson advocated some kind of solution that would mutually save face and defer action so other problems could be studied. The President needed to make clear to Khrushchev that American remained committed to both West

⁴⁸⁸ William Taubman says that Harriman also advised Kennedy to approach Khrushchev with confidence as well as some good humor to demonstrate resolve as well as flexibility. William Taubman, *Khrushchev: the Man and his Era* (New York: W W Norton, 2003), p. 494.

⁴⁸⁹ Telegram from Lightner to Herter, May 27, 1961, *FRUS 1961-1963*, Vol. XIV, doc. 27, p. 76.

⁴⁹⁰ Telegram from Thompson to Herter, May 24, 1961, *FRUS 1961-1963*, Vol. XIV, doc. 28.

Berlin's freedom and productive relations with the Soviet Union; these positions did not need to be mutually exclusive.

A final pre-summit talking points memorandum by the State Department suggested that Khrushchev might respond if Kennedy showed strong concern about the destabilizing effects of any unilateral Soviet move on Berlin. By indicating that the US still viewed occupation withdrawals and GDR recognition as unacceptable, Kennedy could perhaps steer the discussion to disarmament instead.⁴⁹¹ Although these latter suggestions sounded reasonable, they were unlikely to be persuasive. Khrushchev's messages to Kroll and Thompson had made it plain that he would need strong reasons to change his demands.

Part of Khrushchev's urgency in renewing his demands was increased pressure from both Walter Ulbricht in East Berlin and Mao Zedong in China. This pressure might be reflected in the upcoming Party Congress. The flow of refugees from the East through West Berlin had risen to nearly 18,000 in May 1961.⁴⁹² From Khrushchev's view, Kennedy's May 25 speech calling for sharp increases in American defense spending may have also been a challenge that needed to be answered. The tough warnings to Thompson may have been a response to Kennedy's proposed build-up. The increases were a unilateral move in which Kennedy tried to recover from the Bay of Pigs indecision and make good on campaign promises for a strong defense. Though Khrushchev had considerable hopes that Kennedy was more interested in negotiation than Eisenhower, he was not impressed by his performance in the Cuban fiasco.⁴⁹³

William Taubman says that Khrushchev announced, to the Praesidium just days before the Vienna meeting, his intention to press the American President hard on Berlin. Mikoyan

⁴⁹¹ State Dept. paper Berlin and Germany, May 25, 1961, FRUS 1961-63, Vol. XIV, doc.26.

⁴⁹² Frederick Taylor, *The Berlin Wall: A World Divided, 1961-1989* (New York: Harper Perennial, 2006.) p.66.

⁴⁹³ Nikita Khrushchev, *Statesman*, p.297-99.

cautioned against forcing Kennedy into hardening the American position.⁴⁹⁴ Khrushchev apparently dismissed such cautions, saying that he did not believe Kennedy had Eisenhower's political maturity. Sergei Khrushchev says that his father "never regarded Kennedy as a weak president."⁴⁹⁵ Whatever the Soviet leader's estimate of Kennedy, he shortly was to demonstrate his intention to test Kennedy through the Berlin issue. His treatment of Kennedy would be reminiscent of his attempts to intimidate Vice-President Nixon in the private meetings after the Moscow "kitchen debate." Unlike his tactics in the televised encounter, in the private talks, Nixon, aided by the presence of the President's brother Milton Eisenhower, had followed his briefing advice to respond vigorously but not to seek confrontation or be drawn into ideological debates.⁴⁹⁶

Kennedy's Trip to Europe

In the new bilateral mode of summitry, personal dynamics assumed much more significance than was the case in the large-staffed formats of the Foreign Minister's Conference or the Paris summit. This was especially true because Kennedy was conducting a series of bilateral summits with a small staff. While a large staff may have impeded spontaneous negotiations, it also provided some insulation in the case of serious disagreements, as well as a mechanism to keep negotiations going. Kennedy had not yet met de Gaulle or Khrushchev. The latter were already secure in their leadership and with much longer diplomatic experience,

⁴⁹⁴ Taubman, *Khrushchev*, p. 495.

⁴⁹⁵ Sergei Khrushchev, *Nikita Khrushchev and the Creation of a Superpower*, p. 441.

⁴⁹⁶ Prior to Vienna, aides had provided the President with Nixon's debriefing reports of the meetings with Khrushchev. Memos re meetings between Nixon and Khrushchev, Moscow, USSR, July 26, 1959. John F Kennedy Library, Boston, MA. Presidential Office Files, Box. 126, folder 2 ('background to Vienna Conference, 1958-61').

particularly regarding Berlin. Both also differed with Kennedy on a number of issues, notably the dangers of German rearmament.⁴⁹⁷

In his first visit, with Charles de Gaulle, the French President urged Kennedy to take a non-confrontational approach. De Gaulle had his own interests in assisting Kennedy. He wanted to improve US-French relations which had cooled over the Eisenhower years. He did not want a US-led NATO to control European defense matters.⁴⁹⁸ Kennedy respected and admired de Gaulle and appeared interested in the latter's advice. De Gaulle had managed to retain cordial relations with Khrushchev despite their disagreements over Berlin and Germany and the failed summit. He established a warm personal accord with Kennedy, though the US and French positions diverged widely on issues from post-colonial problems in Africa and Asia to defense and economic integration in Europe.⁴⁹⁹

In their talks on May 31, Kennedy noted that Berlin continued to be the most pressing issue in East-West matters and openly asked for de Gaulle's advice. De Gaulle observed that, since the initial Soviet demands had been presented two and a half years earlier, that Khrushchev had established a pattern of setting and then postponing deadlines. This suggested that the Soviet leader did not, in fact, want war, but that he was not yet prepared for a real *détente*, which would involve practical disarmament negotiations. De Gaulle said that he had told Khrushchev as much. Kennedy pressed de Gaulle for advice on how to show the Soviets that the West still remained firm on Berlin. De Gaulle said it was necessary to make clear that it was the Soviets who were intent on disrupting a stable, if unsatisfying, situation. Khrushchev must also be told that if the Soviets proceeded to sign a separate 'peace treaty' that the West would not recognize

⁴⁹⁷ Beschloss, *Crisis Years*, p. 183.

⁴⁹⁸ Caroline Davidson, "Dealing with de Gaulle: the United States and France" in *Globalizing de Gaulle*, eds. Neulist, Locherr & Martin, p. 118-19.

⁴⁹⁹ Jean Lacouterie, trans. by Alan Sheridan, *De Gaulle: the Ruler, 1945-1970* (New York: W W Norton, 1992.), p. 373-74.

it any way, not even accepting East German document stamping. De Gaulle repeated his belief that the Soviets did not want war; since a Berlin confrontation would probably devolve into general war, that a visible Western readiness not to be intimidated would deter Khrushchev.⁵⁰⁰ Notably absent from their discussion was any mention of resuming four-power talks. De Gaulle indicated no displeasure with the independent talks. He himself had held bilateral talks with Khrushchev – but said there could be no revision of Berlin agreements unless agreed upon and signed by all four occupying powers.⁵⁰¹

In their next session, de Gaulle reported that he had talked with Macmillan, whose position was “unclear ... (and) ... hesitant,” and the British would, of necessity, have to go along with the French and American positions.⁵⁰² This probably misrepresented the situation. Although the British had the weakest position, they were also determined not to be perceived as subordinate to the French. Further, the British had consistently shown themselves to be, among the Allies, most inclined to a flexible Berlin strategy. Although De Gaulle may have been less than realistic in assessing British readiness to negotiate and Soviet willingness to risk general war, Kennedy accepted his formulations. Kennedy stated that he was not satisfied with contingency planning or the material state of Western defense capacity. Although Kennedy spoke in broad terms, de Gaulle responded in terms of strengthening just the West Berlin occupation forces. De Gaulle noted Soviet nuclear deterrence now made an airlift less feasible. He did think, however, that increased Soviet trade with the West made the Soviets more vulnerable to economic retaliation. De Gaulle was sanguine: “Generally speaking, the West is not as weak as people think in regard to the Berlin question and Mr. Khrushchev must be made

⁵⁰⁰ Memo of Kennedy-de Gaulle meeting, Paris, France, May 31, 1961, *FRUS*, 1961-63, Vol. XIV, doc. 31.

⁵⁰¹ Garrett Martin, “A Grand Strategy” in *Globalizing de Gaulle*, eds. Neulist, Locher and Martin, p. 299

⁵⁰² Memo of Kennedy-de Gaulle meeting, Paris, France, May 31, 1961, *FRUS*, 1961-63, Vol. XIV, doc. 31.

to understand this.”⁵⁰³ This view was much more optimistic than observers like Kroll and Thompson were suggesting. De Gaulle's priority in these talks was Laos and Africa, not Berlin. He wanted to reassure Kennedy about Berlin so that the America would be more receptive to French policies in the Third World. Although de Gaulle may have underestimated Khrushchev's resolve, his advice on how to handle Khrushchev was sound.

Khrushchev had little reason to believe that Kennedy was any more inclined to accept his terms than Eisenhower had been. Through his long experience as an executive leader, Eisenhower had become adept at cautious, patient personal diplomacy, using his foreign policy team to insulate himself as needed. Kennedy was impetuous and more confident in his own charisma than in his handler's advice. British historian David Reynolds suggests that Khrushchev saw Kennedy as personally immature because of his penchant for womanizing.⁵⁰⁴ American historian Robert Dallek's research confirms the reports of Michael Beschloss that Kennedy was being heavily medicated just prior to the Vienna stop; the president had strained his back during an unproductive summit with the Canadian prime minister a few weeks earlier.⁵⁰⁵ Beschloss speculates that Kennedy was less than ready for the tough encounter to come; Dallek does not believe Kennedy was functionally impaired for the summit. Whether Kennedy was in full capacity or not, if Khrushchev's intelligence services made him aware of the president's pain and fatigue, this knowledge may have contributed to the aggressive confrontation he soon launched in their private sessions.

In their first session on June 3, the two leaders were accompanied by staff. Kennedy had Secretary Rusk, and perhaps more importantly, Thompson and Undersecretaries Foy Kohler and

⁵⁰³ *Ibid.*

⁵⁰⁴ Reynolds, *Summits*, p. 196.

⁵⁰⁵ Robert Dallek, *An Unfinished Life: John F. Kennedy, 1917-1963* (New York: Little Brown and Co., 2003) p.404; Michael Beschloss, *the Crisis Years*, p. 191.

Charles Bohlen; these State Department aides had been involved with the Berlin problem since its beginning and were more familiar with Khrushchev's tactics than Rusk. After opening statements of peaceful intentions, Khrushchev became combative.⁵⁰⁶ He led with an ideological thrust, asserting the inevitable victory of a superior Communist system. Kennedy, despite many briefings against accepting this line of discussion, chose to answer Khrushchev on the Chairman's own terms.⁵⁰⁷ This was a mistake. Khrushchev was capable of speaking in abstractions at greater length than Kennedy had ever experienced in his political life. Nixon had confronted Khrushchev with abstract moral arguments, but, briefly, in a media environment. That exercise in contentious public diplomacy stands in sharp contrast to the caution of Nixon's private talks held later the same day with Khrushchev. Kennedy's attempts at cordiality collapsed in the face of Khrushchev's invective. Practical discussion was delayed and the president failed to gain momentum.

As the discussion turned to the German issue, Khrushchev evoked the Soviet Union's wartime sacrifices, including his and Gromyko's own loss of family, to frame his 'peace treaty' proposal. He asked how the Americans could oppose ending the last vestiges of the war. The unspoken but present subtext here was the delay in opening a second front against Germany till 1944. Kennedy replied that "We are not in Berlin because of someone's sufferance but by contractual rights. We fought our way there, although our casualties may not have been as high as the USSR's."⁵⁰⁸ Kennedy noted his predecessors had upheld this principle of contractual rights and he intended to do the same. Khrushchev was hardly moved by the statement, saying this meant "the US did not want a peace treaty." Kennedy tried to work his way out of this impasse by asking why it was necessary to change a stable, if "abnormal," situation when there

⁵⁰⁶ Reynolds, *Summits*, p. 204-205.

⁵⁰⁷ *Ibid*, p.202.

⁵⁰⁸ Memo re Kennedy-Khrushchev meeting, Vienna, Austria, June 3, 1961, *FRUS 1961-63*, Vol. XIV, doc. 32.

were so many other pressing problems. Khrushchev replied that the US still did not understand the Soviet goal of normalizing “the situation in the most dangerous spot in the world.” He then proceeded to restate the Soviet Union’s wartime losses and the claim that the peace treaty was the only just solution at the present time. When Kennedy interrupted to ask “whether the peace treaty would block access to Berlin,” Khrushchev said it would.⁵⁰⁹

As recently as his talk with Thompson at the ice show, Khrushchev still claimed the peace treaty would leave Western access unimpeded. His blunt dismissal of the President’s question shows that Khrushchev felt little need to accommodate the president. Mikoyan had cautioned Khrushchev about bullying the inexperienced Kennedy.⁵¹⁰ Just as Kennedy failed to heed expert advice, so did Khrushchev’s rashness lock him into a belligerent posture, at the cost of possible gains in other areas. The tone of these initial discussions also shows that Berlin still outranked all other issues. Khrushchev’s toughness on Berlin reflected not only personal belief that his strategy could solve many problems, but also the degree to which he had staked his personal prestige on this issue.

The only concession Khrushchev was willing to offer was another six month deadline.⁵¹¹ Overall, his position and language was nearly the same as it had been since 1958, now presented to a new President and Secretary of State. The parties broke for a lunch, which turned out, not unexpectedly, to be an awkward affair. Rusk tried to steer the conversation to agriculture, especially corn, one of Khrushchev’s favorite topics. Khrushchev was not so easily deterred from taunting his guests, ridiculing Nixon’s kitchen debate performance.⁵¹² Mrs. Kennedy found

⁵⁰⁹ *Ibid.*

⁵¹⁰ Fursenko & Naftali, *Khrushchev's Cold War*, p.358.

⁵¹¹ *Ibid.*, p. 95.

⁵¹² Reynolds, *Summits*, p.197

him boorish. Toasts were awkward and the afternoon sessions promised to be little better than the first. When Kennedy suggested an outdoor walk, Khrushchev again brought up Berlin.⁵¹³

Kennedy suggested their last session on June 4 be held with only translators; the Chairman agreed. Despite Kennedy's attempts to win his counterpart over with self-deprecating humor and observations on common national interests, Khrushchev returned argumentatively to Berlin.⁵¹⁴ Again, Kennedy tried to debate Khrushchev in ideological terms, a disastrous tactic. Kennedy attempted to introduce a more global perspective, "an evolution is taking place in many areas of the world and no one can predict which course it would take ... it is most important that decisions should be carefully considered." Khrushchev made it known that he had already made his decision by saying that if, after a peace treaty "the borders of the GDR – land, sea and air borders –were violated, they would be defended."⁵¹⁵ He painted the US as a potential aggressor intent on humiliating the USSR. He was willing to offer six months delay to protect US prestige. To make further concessions would be a dereliction of his duty as Soviet head of state.

Kennedy interrupted to say he was afraid he would have to tell Macmillan that the West had been given a new ultimatum instead of a breakthrough. Kennedy's frank admission that his prestige was at stake elicited only token offers to retain some Western troops, alongside Soviet troops, without any contractual basis. Khrushchev did not further sweeten his offer or suggest further negotiation. Instead, he ended on a tough note, "It is not the USSR that threatens with war, it is the US."⁵¹⁶ The President needed to tell Macmillan, de Gaulle and Adenauer that "the decision is firm and irrevocable and the Soviet Union will sign it in December if the US refuses an interim agreement." Kennedy understood well that another interim agreement in these

⁵¹³ Beschloss, *Crisis Years*, p.223

⁵¹⁴ *Ibid.*, p.199.

⁵¹⁵ Memo re Kennedy-Khrushchev meeting (2nd session), Vienna, Austria, June 3, 1961, *FRUS 1961-63*, Vol. XIV, doc. 33.

⁵¹⁶ *Ibid.*

circumstances was unacceptable, since it would probably be accompanied by incremental steps to transfer access authority to East Germany. He simply replied to Khrushchev that “it would be a cold winter.”⁵¹⁷

Kennedy had found himself in an even more defensive position than in the morning sessions. By the end of the day, the President was indeed fatigued, perhaps due to the back problems, perhaps the medication.⁵¹⁸ Not only had he failed to reverse Khrushchev’s course on Berlin, he had attempted to defuse Third World competition by acknowledging the superpowers were effectively stalemated in attempting to bring their military strength to bear through proxies. David Reynolds says that Khrushchev saw this as an unprecedented US admission of military parity, an admission which seriously displeased the American Joint Chiefs of Staff.⁵¹⁹ A tired and dejected President told his Press Secretary that Khrushchev “just beat hell out of me.” The formal state dinner that followed did not improve the situation. The Kennedys and Khrushchevs found scant rapport. The attempted pleasantries of the evening was uncomfortably forced. Khrushchev later said Kennedy was “very gloomy ... I sympathized with him ... but there was nothing I could do to help him.”⁵²⁰ Khrushchev acknowledged that he had “kept the pressure on, in order to place the president in a hopeless position and force him to recognize the necessity meeting us halfway; otherwise a military conflict would be possible.” He told Austrian Foreign Minister Bruno Kreisky that the President was “pleasant” but “displays no understanding.”⁵²¹

Kennedy had attempted personal diplomacy to resolve a solution which had defied American and Allied diplomats and executives for two and a half years. This was an ambitious

⁵¹⁷ *Ibid.*

⁵¹⁸ Beschloss, *Crisis Years*, p. 224.

⁵¹⁹ Reynolds, *Summits*, p. 202.

⁵²⁰ N S Khrushchev, *Statesman*, p. 306.

⁵²¹ Nikita S. Khrushchev, ed. Sergei Khrushchev, trans. George Shriver, *Memoirs of Nikita Khrushchev, Volume 3 Statesman (1953-1964)* (University Park: The Pennsylvania State University Press, 2007), p. 308.

goal, and he underestimated Khrushchev's fixation on Berlin. Thompson said the outcome was predictable once the President strayed from his briefing advice. Domestic and European public reaction to the Kennedy-Khrushchev meeting was cool at best. The comity seen at Secretary Dulles' funeral during the Foreign Ministers Conference and in some of the period leading up to the Paris summit now seemed even more distant than it had in the wake of the U-2 incident.⁵²² Multilateral diplomacy had been postponed indefinitely. Khrushchev had not indicated any reason to convene the Heads of State again, for disarmament, resolution of Third World competition, international cooperation or any other cause. The bilateral approach pioneered by Macmillan in February 1959 and Khrushchev in Paris in March 1960, had stalled. Kennedy and Khrushchev had damaged the most important bilateral relationship in the world. The fact that they had even attempted diplomatic resolution as a basis for a *détente* seemed unimportant in the face of their failure to negotiate prudently.⁵²³ However they still had the rest of the summer to try to salvage the Berlin situation before the German elections.

Discouraging as this situation was, it was fortunate that Kennedy's next scheduled bilateral summit in this period was with the supportive British Prime Minister. Harold Macmillan had championed head-of state-diplomacy for some time. He had also suffered through Khrushchev's belligerence in Moscow and in Paris.⁵²⁴ Macmillan observed that, as harsh as Khrushchev's personal language had been with Kennedy, the official *aide memoire* the Soviets handed the US at the Vienna was considerably milder. Khrushchev had suggested that the treaty be handled through a 'peace conference' instead of by simple unilateral *diktat*. The President and the Prime Minister recognized that, however tough Khrushchev's language was,

⁵²² Beschloss, *Crisis Years*, p. 231-33.

⁵²³ Reynolds, *Summits*, p. 219-21.

⁵²⁴ Macmillan was inclined to be conciliatory because he wanted Kennedy's support for enhanced British participation in defense research and production, European economic integration, and a test ban. Nigel Ashton, *Kennedy, Macmillan and the Cold War: the Irony of Interdependence* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2002), p.55.

and however much observers were convinced of his determination, the Berlin deadline had been extended once again. Khrushchev would be most unlikely to make any large move before the September German elections. The immediate Western task was to draft, in concert, a reply to the Soviet note. They also needed to upgrade West Berlin's capacity to withstand a blockade.⁵²⁵ In Europe, Kennedy had touched base with the US's West Berlin occupation partners, but they were no nearer a common strategy on Berlin, let alone resolution, than they had been a year earlier at Paris.

Preparing for the Soviets to Sign Their German Peace Treaty

Forceful defense of West Berlin occupation rights now had to be considered with greater intensity.⁵²⁶ Joint Chiefs of Staff memo JCSM-287-61, providing the latest update on the state of contingency planning, outlined a 'checklist' of conditions, options and other considerations. The checklist approach was incremental and carefully targeted, to avoid escalation or negative effect on countries not directly involved. It did not constitute a plan for a general war response and, in fact, shows the narrow limits Allied planners faced in considering forceful response. Non-military measures of 'political, economic, or psychological nature' would first be applied, but "more severe military measures" amounting to reprisals "should be considered."⁵²⁷ Both military and non-military measures should be flexible enough that they "may be turned on and off again in accordance with the situation." Reprisals might be required in the event of "Soviet or East German actions or omissions adversely affecting Allied rights of access to West

⁵²⁵ Memo re Kennedy- Macmillan meeting, London, June 5, 1961, *FRUS 1961-1963*, Vol. XIV, doc.34.

⁵²⁶ Trachtenberg, *A Constructed Peace*, p. 286-87.

⁵²⁷ JCS-memo JCSM -287-61, "Berlin Contingency Planning", Annex B to Appendix C, JFK Library, NSF files, Box 81, folder 'Berlin 5/61.'

Berlin.”⁵²⁸ Naval and air controls would be imposed quickly after notifying ‘friendly governments.’ The checklist states that “Nuclear weapons will not be used, except upon direct order of the President, and no threat or implication of their use will be made.” Clearance and guarantees of non-interference would have to be obtained from neighboring countries.

A naval blockade would expand the area of possible confrontation outside of Berlin and the Germanys and “US effort applied to reprisals against Soviet merchant shipping and air activities could become disproportionate to the real effects obtainable.” Adding forces in the area could adversely affect US ability to deter threats elsewhere. Soviet probes in other sensitive areas worldwide could be expected in response.⁵²⁹ Public reaction would be more supportive of forceful Allied responses if the responses were made after the Soviet had already blockaded West Berlin. The report concluded by emphasizing the need to curtail responses if the Soviets showed a willingness to negotiate. This would require careful coordination among the Allies.

Paul-Henry Spaak, head of NATO, summed up the major challenges facing NATO in achieving better integration at this time. Spaak said “Nothing is more important in NATO than to enmesh West Germany into the Alliance in every possible way,” in part to ensure that a post-Adenauer West Germany would remain committed to the Alliance. Of secondary importance was the “problem of bringing General de Gaulle’s France more into the Alliance.”⁵³⁰ Spaak also wanted to bring American nuclear capacity more fully into NATO, but US representatives informed him that was not a priority for the US at that time. Although the Soviets still had a strong advantage in conventional forces in Europe, the JCS report had been very cautious about bringing any more explicit nuclear deterrence to bear than necessary. NATO dissonance, and

⁵²⁸ Ibid.

⁵²⁹ Ibid.

⁵³⁰ Memo re NATO advisory meeting, Spaak-Finletter, Brussels, Belgium, May 9, 1961, JFK Library, NSF files, Box 81A, folder ‘Berlin 6/9/61.’

increasing public concerns about nuclear fallout, discouraged continued reliance on theater nuclear response, though such deterrence still needed to be made evident to the Soviets. Airlift scenarios involved considerably more difficulties than imagined two years before.⁵³¹ Debate on the nature and degree of force would become increasingly important as President Kennedy commissioned new plans for US responses to Soviet moves on Berlin.⁵³²

Although military planning had gained more immediacy in the wake of the Vienna meeting, softer new Khrushchev speeches suggested further negotiation might still be possible.

⁵³³ The four-power Allied working group gathered in Washington in mid-June to draft a response to the June 4 Soviet aide-memoire. In private talks, Undersecretary Foy Kohler told French Minister Jean Laloy that Khrushchev, despite his bluster, was taking a cautious approach on Berlin: “the President may have had more effect on Khrushchev than was thought at the time.”⁵³⁴ Laloy agreed, though he doubted whether the UN might provide a productive diplomatic forum for resolution. The working group’s full session agreed the UN would only complicate the problem; the Allies should focus on contingency planning and a reply to the Soviets’ tough diplomatic note of June 4.⁵³⁵ British Undersecretary Sir Evelyn Shukburgh told Kohler that his government wanted to emphasize diplomatic correspondence and publicity efforts to delay the peace treaty. The UK remained skeptical about military measures on Berlin.⁵³⁶

Bonn wanted to emphasize the legal problems of a unilateral change to a multi-party agreement. They wanted to make their own reply in advance of the Allied joint communiqué, but Kohler wanted the US to make its response first, followed immediately by the German note.

⁵³¹ Memo from Roger Hilsman to Rusk, “Airlift and the Berlin Crisis,” JFK, NSF Box 81A, folder 6/30/61.

⁵³² Trachtenberg, *A Constructed Peace*, p. 291-93.

⁵³³ Rostow memo, “Soviet Handling of the Berlin Crisis, JFK, NSF Box 81A, folder 6/30/61.

⁵³⁴ Memo re Kohler-Laloy meeting, Washington, June 16, 1961, JFK Library, NSF files, Box 81A, folder ‘Berlin 5/61.’

⁵³⁵ Memo re “Tripartite Working luncheon on Berlin, Washington, June 16, 1961, JFK, NSF Box 81A, folder 6/16/61.

⁵³⁶ Memo re Shukburgh-Kohler-Nitze meeting,, June 15, 1961, JFK, NSF Box 81A, folder 6/16/61.

The US would propose to bring the matter before the International Court of Justice (ICJ). Opening the Berlin issue up to juridical negotiation offered a new non-reprisal alternative to stalled diplomacy. Kohler said this strategy might be accomplished through the UN and could produce favorable public reaction.⁵³⁷ British delegate Sir Evelyn Shukbrough was reluctant to spell out recourse to the Court mediation just yet. Further review of this idea brought forth doubts by the French that the UN Security Council would be able to bring the issue before the ICJ and that ICJ resolution would lead indirectly *de jure* recognition of East Germany. Kohler said that bringing the case to the ICJ would be done on grounds of threatened world peace rather than as a simple legal dispute.⁵³⁸

Speaking informally with West German attaché Martin Hillenbrand, US diplomatic counselor to the French Jean-Claude Winkler said he thought the new French objections might be a sign of displeasure at bilateral US-Soviet disarmament discussions.⁵³⁹ Further talks between Laloy and Kohler centered around what they discerned as reduced threats of nuclear threats from Khrushchev re Berlin. Laloy dismissed East German and Chinese pressure on Khrushchev, as well as the importance of Berlin to the Soviets but did acknowledge that Khrushchev might still need support against Kremlin hard-liners.⁵⁴⁰ While these Allied talks were cordial and some general accord was found, serious differences remained on basic assumptions and attitudes, as well as on prescriptive action.

Some of Kennedy's advisors outside the State Department were also looking at the possibility of non-military responses. Eugene Rostow urged Chester Bowles, personally close to

⁵³⁷ Memo re Tripartite working group luncheon, Washington, June 15, 1961, JFK Library, NSF files, Box 81A, folder 'Berlin 5/61.'

⁵³⁸ Cable from Rusk to Bonn Embassy, June 17, 1961, *FRUS 1961-1963*, Vol. XIV, doc. 43.

⁵³⁹ memo re Hillenbrand-Winkler conversation, June 20, 1961, JFK, NSF Box 81A, folder 6/16/61.

⁵⁴⁰ Memo re Winkler-Hillenbrand meeting, Washington, June 20, 1961, JFK Library, NSF files, Box 81A, folder 'Berlin 5/61.'

the President, to suggest a new diplomatic and much-less defensive approach. The US initiative should try to marshal global public opinion towards a spirit of détente and towards European progress. Rostow felt that British integration into Europe was a development on a par with the Chinese revolution. Rostow noted further the Soviet supplemental note on disarmament to the June 4 *aide-memoire* and suggested a fresh linkage of disarmament and Berlin.⁵⁴¹

He saw possibilities for such an approach in an emerging Russian shift to diplomacy. Soviet military confidence, based in great part on missile progress, was the foundation for a diplomatic campaign evidenced by the Mikoyan, Kozlov and Khrushchev visits to the United States. This campaign involved some risks that Soviet prestige would be damaged if the visits were unsuccessful and that their Chinese rivals might be displeased. The campaign might currently be centered around Berlin and Germany but involved farther reaching goals for enhanced Soviet influence. Secretary Dulles had erred, Rostow believed, by never sufficiently challenging Soviet domination of Eastern Europe as a violation of the Yalta and Potsdam understandings.⁵⁴²

Rostow's comments on Dulles might have been a suggestion that the Kennedy administration could develop a new paradigm in its diplomacy. They overlook the fact that Dulles consistently invoked Potsdam as the contractual basis for insisting on continued Allied occupation rights. Dulles had, moreover, marshaled Allied unity as Herter and Rusk had not.⁵⁴³ Rostow saw the Berlin/German strategy as a wedge leading to greatly increased Soviet presence in Europe, accompanied by conspicuous nuclear strength. British estrangement from European

⁵⁴¹ Letter from E V Rostow to Chester Bowles, June 16, 1961, JFK Library, NSF files, Box 81, folder 5/61.

⁵⁴² *Ibid.*

⁵⁴³ Frederick Marks, *Power and Peace: the Diplomacy of John Foster Dulles* (Westport: Praeger, 1993), p. 142.

economic integration hindered a common Western front. The West needed a more vigorous and positive public relations effort to counter Soviet ambitions.⁵⁴⁴

Senator Mike Mansfield, a frequent critic of what he saw as laxness in US Berlin policy, supported the firm but open tone being considered in response to Soviet note, and suggested that private talks might be arranged between Bohlen and a Soviet counterpart, perhaps at the United Nations.⁵⁴⁵ Unofficial advisor William Griffith wrote from Berlin, concerned that US compromises against reunification could rapidly alienate the West Germans. Griffith also reported that the East German economy was disintegrating, that the Poles preferred a divided Germany, and that public opinion in Berlin was firmly in the Allied favor. Contacts in Yugoslavia and Albania reported deteriorating Sino-Soviet ties and that their leaders, Marshall Tito and Enver Hoxha, were attempting to gain leverage with Khrushchev as a result.⁵⁴⁶ The US thus had to consider dissenting allied opinion, tentative Congressional support, and a diverse range of public opinion in Europe.

Kennedy also had to deal with prominent vocal critics like Walter Lippmann who told CBS News on June 15 that Berlin was still the most important issue in the Cold War. Lippmann thought Khrushchev was bluffing, but that nuclear war was more likely to result over Berlin than any other issue.⁵⁴⁷ Lippmann and other vocal commentators only complicated the US Administration's hope of pursuing a diplomatic resolution of the Berlin issue. On June 10, Bundy forwarded recent commentaries by Lippmann and Joseph Alsop to the President, noting that while Alsop remained as hawkish as ever on Berlin, Lippmann saw a true, sustainable neutralization of Berlin as the best hope for resolution. Bundy also recommended the recent

⁵⁴⁴ Same as note 431.

⁵⁴⁵ Sen. Mansfield memo to Bundy, June 17, 1961, JFK, NSF Box 81A, folder 7/15/61.

⁵⁴⁶ Griffith letter to Rostow, July 16, 1961, JFK, NSF Box 81A, folder 7/15/61.

⁵⁴⁷ Letter from Stephen Varro (private citizen) to Howard K Smith, CBS news anchor re Smith-Lippman interview, May 15, 1961, JFK Library, NSF files, Box 81, folder 'Berlin 5/61.'

Kissinger position paper to Kennedy, particularly in regard to its renewed emphasis on German unification. Kennedy's personal leadership was going to be essential, said Bundy, because "Four-power parleys will almost surely produce uncertain postures."⁵⁴⁸

On June 19, Llewellyn Thompson provided Secretary Rusk with his own analysis. He thought Khrushchev's objectives were stabilization and border recognition for East Germany, neutralization of Berlin preceding East German assimilation, and erosion of NATO coherence. Although Khrushchev had attempted to shield US prestige previously through sweeteners like the 'free city' concept, he was so disappointed by Vienna and the Western reply that he was now willing to 'discredit the United States or seriously damage our prestige.' Thompson was convinced Khrushchev was not bluffing and without unacceptable concessions he would go through with the treaty. The imminent timeframe for action could be divided into four phases: the time remaining before West German elections, the time between elections and Soviet convocation of a peace conference, the time between a conference agreement and its expected date, and the time between that date and treaty implementation.⁵⁴⁹ Although each of these phases offered some continued room for a non-peace treaty resolution, the West must make its decisions well in advance of each deadline. Short term, pre-election options included an alternative to the 'free city' plan, well-publicized proposals for a Berlin plebiscite, and resumption of nuclear testing, which the British might strongly resist. He also suggested Soviet Marshal Vershinin be invited to review Western military readiness.

Thompson saw few new diplomatic options once a peace conference was called; if such a conference did not agree on a treaty, military readiness must be in their final stages. He still thought that military measures should begin with an airlift, while ground forces were put into

⁵⁴⁸ Memo from Bundy to Kennedy, June 109, 1961, *FRUS 1961-63*, Vol. XIV, doc. 38.

⁵⁴⁹ Memo from Thompson to Rusk, June 19, 1961. JFK Library, NSF files, Box 81, folder 'Berlin 5/61.'

position to probe the access corridor. If these measures failed, we should then proceed with military action, including the use of tactical atomic weapons.” The Soviets should be made to see that the West would not stop with economic and political sanctions.⁵⁵⁰ It is notable, in retrospect, that Thompson did not discuss possible responses to a border closure, even though he had been one of the first, in February 1961, to mention such a possibility.

On June 16, Dean Acheson presented his preliminary report on Berlin to the interdepartmental group headed by Foy Kohler and including Kissinger, Henry Owen, Thompson, Martin Hillenbrand, and Paul Nitze. The Acheson report, commissioned by the President but not binding, would become a basic, hotly contested reference point for discussions in the coming weeks.⁵⁵¹ Acheson affirmed the continuing importance of Berlin “involving deeply the prestige of the United States and perhaps its very survival...(and) ...did not believe a political solution was possible.”⁵⁵² Because Khrushchev, under pressure from the East Germans and rival Communist factions, perceived less risk of a Western nuclear response and was feeling certain other pressures, he was now willing to carry out his long-delayed threats over Berlin. “It was absolutely essential,” for the United States, “to increase the belief that we would use nuclear weapons to oppose Russian advances.” The US needed to make such readiness highly visible in the post-Vienna military buildup in order to maximize deterrence. Such demonstrations of readiness were, so far, missing in Berlin contingency preparations. Conventional force enhancements and civil defense needed to be increased concurrently, and nuclear testing resumed. “It would be important to bring our Allies along,” said Acheson, “but we should be prepared to go without them unless the Germans buckled...we should be prepared to go to the

⁵⁵⁰ *Ibid.*

⁵⁵¹ Beschloss, *Crisis Years*, p. 242-44.

⁵⁵² Memo re meeting of Kohler, Kissinger, Acheson, Thompson et al, Washington, D.C. May 17, 1961, *FRUS 1961-63*, Vol. XIV, doc. 42.

bitter end if the Germans go along with us.” Acheson said the US needed to decide on its policy within two weeks.⁵⁵³

Foy Kohler expressed his general agreement with Acheson, and opened the meeting to questions. Paul Nitze noted that General Nathan Twining said that it might not be advisable to cross the East German border with a large ground force. Nitze added that the British were uneasy about such plans. Acheson dismissed Allied "cold feet", saying: "We should ... say "boo" and see how far they jump." Thompson cautioned against putting Khrushchev in a position where he could not back down from hard-line Western response. Thompson wanted incremental steps including air raid shelters, a garrison airlift and delayed reaction to separate treaty.⁵⁵⁴ Perceived Allied unity would deter Khrushchev more than saying "boo" publicly. Kohler agreed with Thompson that it was important to leave Khrushchev with "a face-saving device." Paul Nitze noted that it would "necessary to mobilize the entire US behind this program {of increased deterrence and civil defense} and that it would be very visible." Acheson reaffirmed his support for a garrison airlift, but noted "the situation would heat up very quickly," especially if the Soviets shot down Allied aircraft.⁵⁵⁵ Military contingency measures, not further attempts at multi-polar resolution, would constitute the next immediate steps on Berlin.

Kohler headed both the US inter-departmental group and the Allied working group, but the tone of their discussions was markedly different. The US policy planners were more convinced that Khrushchev was serious this time and there would be no more postponed deadlines. The US was becoming more willing to act independently of the Allies. At the same time the Allies were more forthcoming with their reservations about American assumptions and

⁵⁵³ *Ibid.*

⁵⁵⁴ Freedman, *Kennedy's Wars*, p.66-67.

⁵⁵⁵ *Ibid.*

proposals.⁵⁵⁶ The Western reply to the Soviet June 4 note was still under review. Kennedy complained drafts were just recycled boilerplate dating back to 1958, but J Kohler said anything new would have to get Allied approval.⁵⁵⁷ The British, French and German governments were working on their own military contingency reports while the US began deliberating its own, now much tougher, plans. Allied cooperation had not improved since Vienna.

On June 19, US Chief of Naval Operations Admiral Arleigh Burke sent a memo to Acheson and to the JCS cautioning that military planning also needed to take into account possible Soviet diversionary moves in Southeast Asia and suggested that Khrushchev might link Berlin concessions to US guarantees of non-interference in that region. NATO commandant and US General) Lauris Norstad had met with Acheson and the JCS prior to Acheson's full report to the coordinating group. Norstad's subsequent memo to the JCS reflected the now more visible commitment to forceful response, but also cautioned that the West, and specifically the US, must retain flexibility and freedom of action to avoid dangerous circumstantial escalation.⁵⁵⁸ Not spelled out in the JCS memorandum, but still important to the US planners, was the need to keep popular support for a course that involved substantial risks of war over an issue, Berlin, that might not seem to be worth the danger. British and French public opinion was much cooler towards war over Berlin.⁵⁵⁹

Dean Acheson issued his full report on June 28. He framed his argument "an issue of resolution between the US and the USSR...which will go far to determine the confidence of Europe - indeed the world - in the United States." In this "conflict of wills", said Acheson, "an attempt to solve the Berlin issue by negotiation is worse than a waste of time and energy...it is

⁵⁵⁶ Rusk cable to Bonn Embassy, June 17, 1961, *FRUS 1961-1963*, Vol. XIV, doc. 43.

⁵⁵⁷ Beschloss, *Crisis Years*, p. 248.

⁵⁵⁸ Memo from Burke to Joint Chiefs of Staff, Paris, July 27, 1961, *FRUS 1961-1963*, Vol. XIV, d. 48, p. 136-38.

⁵⁵⁹ Eckart Conze, "West European Public Opinion and the Berlin Wall, 1961" in, *Europe, Cold War and Co-Existence*, ed, Loth, p. 93-96.

dangerous.” Negotiation was contingent on Kremlin attitudes, which could be turned to constructive purpose only by a demonstration of Western force. Otherwise, negotiation could only lead to “a submission to Soviet demands.”⁵⁶⁰ Acheson’s proposal outlined his idea of an effective demonstration of force, in military, economic and political terms.

Successful negotiation, insisted Acheson, would be explicitly contingent on the extent and outcomes of demonstrated readiness to maintain Western positions in Berlin and Germany. He saw little merit in ‘interim freeze’ variations, or an indefinite agreement, which define the peace treaty’s consequences for Berlin; these options would be unacceptable to West Germany. He saw some value in Thompson’s idea of an agreement, reached between East and West before the ‘peace conference,’ which would leave the West in Berlin despite a peace treaty, but doubted this arrangement would gain Soviet approval. Accommodations like a pledge against nuclear arms in Berlin, disengagement from espionage and propaganda activities and recognition of the Oder-Niesse border between East Germany and Poland. Acheson did not think Khrushchev, after staking prestige on demands for withdrawal, would accept continued occupation.⁵⁶¹ Acheson concluded his report by noting force carried its own risks, including refusal of the Allies to carry through with forceful measures, escalation to general (i.e. nuclear) war by “mischance,” or Soviet determination to implement its new arrangements despite the demonstration of force.

Kennedy had commissioned the Acheson report but he invited review and critique , which was quick in coming. The State Department’s Bureau of Intelligence and Research observed that the proposed military buildup would be expensive but manageable for the US,

⁵⁶⁰ Acheson memo to Kennedy re Berlin, June 28, 1961, JFK Library, National Security Files, Box 81A , folder 6/23/-6/28/61.

⁵⁶¹ *Ibid*, p. 19-20 of Acheson paper.

more so for the Allies and difficult for the Soviets.⁵⁶² Kennedy's May 25 television announcement had already outlined major new military investments by the US. The President would, within the next month, call for additional new military spending. These major increases in defense costs marked a distinct shift from Eisenhower's restrained defense spending. The same State Department research unit also presented a report noting considerable difficulties for an airlift. Electronic counter measures, harassment and sabotage on the ground, and economic interference would make an airlift difficult, but possible. West Berlin could be sustained on an austerity basis for up to a year, but eventually the Allies would have to resort to ground action.⁵⁶³ State Department analyst Roger Hilsman doubted whether Khrushchev really sought the showdown of 'will' that Acheson envisioned.⁵⁶⁴ All these reports suggest that Acheson's proposed use of force entailed serious collateral concerns, economically, logistically and politically; furthermore, a "showdown" might be basically unnecessary since Khrushchev's continued extension of the crisis suggested he really did not war.

Not only did forceful response have its critics, but some advisors continued to hold out hope for renewed negotiation. State Dept. legal counselor Richard Kearney suggested a new approach to negotiation that would de-emphasize reunification. The Kearney proposal essentially called for neutralization of Berlin with a guaranteed access corridor, but on terms more acceptable to the United States and hopefully for France and West Germany as well. Kearney raised the possibility of another summit: "it would be possible to offer the Soviets at a summit meeting a variety of other Berlin solutions so as not to appear to be standing on a take-it or

⁵⁶² State Department paper "Berlin Crisis, US military expenditures and Soviet Allocation Problems", June 29, 1961, JFK Library, National Security Files, Box 81A, (Country series), "Berlin/General", folder 6/23/-6/28/61.

⁵⁶³ State department paper "Airlift and the Berlin Crisis", June 30, 1961, JFK Library, National Security Files, Box 81A, (Country series), "Berlin/General", folder 6/23/-6/28/61.

⁵⁶⁴ State Department memo, Hilsman to Foy Kohler, June 30, 1961, JFK Library, National Security Files, Box 81A, (Country series), "Berlin/General", folder 6/23/-6/28/61.

leave-it position.”⁵⁶⁵ Presidential special advisor Arthur Schlesinger, Jr. explicitly argued against Acheson’s assumptions and recommendations, especially the dismissal of further negotiation. Schlesinger urged Kennedy to examine possibilities for negotiation “well before the crisis.”⁵⁶⁶

Eugene Rostow, Walt's brother and dean of the Yale Law School, continued to argue that the Soviets wanted negotiation much more than conflict. He delivered lectures and circulated a paper arguing that the Soviets had embarked on a diplomatic campaign that was "one of the most strenuous and dramatic of the century." He cited the Khrushchev, Mikoyan and Kozlov visits to the US as gambles that showed intense Soviet interest in using diplomacy to avoid conflict with the West. Rostow said the Berlin initiative was more than just an attempt at incremental expansion of their dominion or a public relations gambit. Their real goal, thought Rostow, might be the limitation of nuclear arms.⁵⁶⁷ The arms race was expensive, dangerous and destabilizing. Khrushchev's Berlin campaign could thus be an oblique strategy to begin serious disarmament negotiation. Rostow suggested that the US be more understanding of legitimate Soviet fears about German militarization, notwithstanding the admitted Soviet domination of Eastern Europe. Although Rostow denigrated Dulles's Berlin strategy, perceived linkages of Berlin and disarmament were not, in fact, new but had been understood since the beginning of the crisis in late 1958. The difficulty had been, and still remained, in getting the Soviets, to show enough flexibility on either Berlin or disarmament to advance towards new agreements.

⁵⁶⁵ L D Battle memo to Bundy June 28, 1961, JFK Library, National Security Files, Box 81A, Country series - "Berlin/General", folder 7/1/-7/15/61.

⁵⁶⁶ Memo from Schlesinger to Kennedy, July 7, 1961, *FRUS 1961-1963*, Vol. XIV, d. 57, p. 173-76. Schlesinger wanted the Acheson report reviewed by a wider, not a narrower filed despite the risk of leaks; probably in hopes that critics would quickly outnumber supporters; he also wanted Kissinger brought closer into the opinion loop.

⁵⁶⁷ Eugene Rostow paper, "The Russian Diplomatic Campaign," JFK, NSF, Box 81A, folder6/16/61.

Disarmament was becoming more timely in mid-summer 1961, because contingency scenarios for Berlin pointed towards use of nuclear weapons in the event of a forceful Western response to a Berlin blockade. Limited nuclear use in Europe could readily escalate to total war.⁵⁶⁸ Carl Kaysen, an NSC deputy who became very influential from mid-1961 on, wrote a memo for Bundy outlining the risks and effects of nuclear attacks on the United States. Kaysen recommended that more attention be paid to civil defense. Henry Kissinger also wrote Bundy about general nuclear war. He agreed with Acheson that Kennedy must decide if he was ready to risk nuclear war over Berlin. That commitment, Kissinger said, was essential to all Western plans to ensure ground access; the problem was preparing a set of graduated nuclear options and understanding their risks.⁵⁶⁹ Bundy told Rusk and McNamara that the US prepare short-term disarmament options, including a "crash effort which might be proposed to the USSR at the height of a Berlin crisis, in order to defuse a dangerous situation."⁵⁷⁰

Allied cohesion was still shaky, though drafts of reply to the Soviet June 4 note were finally being circulated. Rusk advised the US envoy to NATO that "we cannot begin intergovernmental consultations until ... we ourselves are clear about how we see the problem and how we think the West should proceed." Rusk acknowledged that news reports were suggesting the Allies felt ignored, but added that the allies were welcome to offer their own alternatives. Rusk wanted to send the Western replies, grouped as closely as possible, by July 14. In National Security Action Memorandum 58 dated July 30, the President commissioned yet another comprehensive Berlin report, including the state of contingency planning. NSAM 58 set an October 15 deadline for airlift capability, a November 15 deadline for naval blockade

⁵⁶⁸ Trachtenberg, *A Constructed Peace*, p. 286-88.

⁵⁶⁹ Kissinger memo to Bundy, July 7, 1961, JFK, NSF Box 81A, folder 7/1/61.

⁵⁷⁰ Bundy memo to Seaborg, Rusk and McNamara, July 7, 1961, JFK, NSF Box 81A, folder 7/1/61.

capability, and ongoing Strategic Air Command readiness for an alert.⁵⁷¹ On July 12, at the initial review session for the resulting paper, the lingering divide between advocates for forceful demonstration and those favoring new negotiation became quickly evident. Acheson, backed by General Maxwell Taylor, said adequate military preparations would require not only sustained effort into 1962, but might also involve a congressionally approved state of national emergency. Bundy agreed “in general” with Acheson but was worried about collateral effects of declaring such an emergency. Participants were cautioned to keep discussions in strict confidence.⁵⁷²

Meanwhile, US Ambassador to West Germany Thomas Dowling reported that the refugee exodus through Berlin was rapidly becoming uncontrollable for East German leader Walter Ulbricht. Dowling warned that the US prestige would be badly damaged if it remained “on sidelines” in the event of refugee riots. Khrushchev was under great pressure to resolve the problem and began to seriously consider Ulbricht’s requests for an inter-zonal border closure to stabilize the Berlin situation. The East German press demanded an end to the drain of human resources.⁵⁷³ Western planners continued to ignore the possibility of such a stop-gap solution.

At a July 13 National Security Council meeting, Secretary Rusk admitted that the West really did not know what Khrushchev’s timetable for action might be. Rusk affirmed the Acheson view that “the US was not currently in a good position to negotiate.” Khrushchev no longer appeared interested in providing cover for Western prestige and would be compelled to negotiate only if “appropriate steps were taken for our side.” Rusk wanted to begin implementing economic counter measures, but was still reticent about declaring a national

⁵⁷¹ NSAM 58, via JFK library online @ <http://www.jfklibrary.org/Asset+Tree/Asset+Viewers/Image+Asset+Viewer.htm?guid={4F031DB2-673A-4059-92EA-B209083816CC}&type=mpd>.

⁵⁷² Memo re Interdepartmental Coordinating Group meeting, Washington, July 12, 1961. *FRUS 1961-63*, Vol. XIV, doc. 64.

⁵⁷³ Memo from Dowling to Rusk, July 12, 1961, *FRUS 1961-63*, Vol. XIV, doc. 65.

emergency. Kennedy said he wanted to first see a very specific program. Acheson “made clear his belief that the President should decide to support a full program of decisive action.”⁵⁷⁴

Vice President Lyndon Johnson agreed with Acheson, arguing for a speedy and substantial reinforcement of ground forces. Secretary of Defense and McNamara agreed with Rusk that measures short of requiring a state of emergency should be implemented first. General Taylor wanted a declaration of emergency and mobilization up to the point of calling up reserve forces. President Kennedy did not specifically endorse any of these plans, but, to McGeorge Bundy, appeared still committed to maintaining US presence in and access to Berlin.⁵⁷⁵ The next day Rusk, Macnamara, and Director of Central Intelligence Allen Dulles met to address the calls for new preparedness reports, emphasizing military and economic preparation for a probable and imminent crisis.⁵⁷⁶

In these highest circles of foreign policy-making, negotiation now seemed a distinctly unlikely alternative. There had been only incidental discussion of further summits for resolution of the Berlin problem. Nevertheless, negotiation did remain an outside possibility. Schlesinger continued to argue for negotiation, warning that the US should provide “an escape hatch for Khrushchev.”⁵⁷⁷ State Dept. planners issued a new paper on Soviet positions in the event that the US were to actually participate in the ‘peace conference’ that Khrushchev had referenced often as a vehicle for his peace treaty. Problems included East German participation, which the Soviets had lobbied hard for in the 1959 Geneva Foreign Minister’s Conference and which was anathema to Paris and Bonn. Khrushchev might still try to assuage the West by delaying reunification and allowing East and West Germany to remain in their respective

⁵⁷⁴ Memo re NSC meeting , Washington, July 16, 1961. *FRUS 1961-63*, Vol. XIV, doc. 66.

⁵⁷⁵ Ibid.

⁵⁷⁶ National Security Action memorandum, No.59, July 14, 1961, *FRUS 1961-1963*, Vol. XIV, doc. 67.

⁵⁷⁷ Schlesinger memo to Bundy, July 18, 1961, JFK Library, Box 81A, folder 7/15-7/17/61.

military alliances for the time being. The planners thought concessions might be offered to link Berlin/German resolution to a new round of disarmament talks: “the Soviets would probably hope to elicit a conditional but positive response from the West, which they would cite as an endorsement for separate, unconditional negotiations on European security within a reconstituted disarmament forum.”⁵⁷⁸ The Soviets however would not advance such linkage before they had secured a satisfactory amount of their basic Berlin/German program.

Linkage continued between Khrushchev’s Berlin proposals and Soviet disarmament, but the Soviets had hardened their positions against any German reunification based on a freely-elected government. They certainly would want to retain the option of concluding their own arrangements with East Germany to end the existing occupation regime. Since these demands had been consistently rejected by the West, Khrushchev's apparent intention to sign the peace treaty still constituted, an unacceptable outcome for the Western occupying powers in Berlin and for the Allies. The West was unaware that the East Germans and Soviets were already mobilizing for a border closure.⁵⁷⁹

Post-Vienna Standoff Deepens

Soviet Ambassador Mikhail Menshikov sought out Bundy's NSC aide Walt Rostow on July 17 to exchange views. The conversation quickly turned to Berlin. Menshikov and Rostow both restated the familiar positions of both sides. Menshikov wondered why the US could deal with other opposed governments, but not the East Germans which the US “evidently disliked.”

⁵⁸⁰ Rostow replied that the East German government had been established in violation of the wartime agreements. The US, he said, still considered this a serious problem. Menshikov

⁵⁷⁸ State Dept. paper “Likely Soviet Position Berlin and Germany.” JFK Library, Box 81A, folder 7/15-7/17/61.

⁵⁷⁹ Harrison, *Driving the Soviets*, p.192-93.

⁵⁸⁰ Memo re Rostow-Menshikov meeting, Washington, July 17, 1961, JFK Library, Box 81A, folder 7/15-7/17/61.

replied the Soviets were very worried about a nuclear-armed West Germany. Rostow said the US was also anxious about this development, a curious position since it was official US and NATO policy to equip the West Germans with US-supplied tactical nuclear missiles. Rostow said that nuclear armaments in Europe were a good reason to complete a test-ban agreement. They both expressed regrets over escalating problems in Africa. Then Menshikov announced the Soviets would sign a treaty with East Germany in the latter part of November, preceded first by invitations to all parties involved in Berlin. He wondered if the US would come to such a conference. Rostow tried to avoid answering directly; the Soviet Ambassador then said he had gathered that the US would not attend such a conference. Rostow did not deny such reports.⁵⁸¹

Menshikov returned to basics of the Berlin conflict. He asked “Why do you wish to be in Berlin as conquerors?” Menshikov told Rostow he did not think the US public was really prepared to go to war over Berlin.⁵⁸² Rostow said Hitler had made similar assumptions about American resolve. They both agreed that the nuclear weapons had changed the equations of national security. They concluded by briefly discussing Laos without any particular animus, but also without any particular enthusiasm. Rostow reported that Menshikov seemed willing to defuse the issue of Western access but did want to confirm US interest in recognizing East Germany, if not outright, then by degrees. Rostow said this was the first time he had heard a Soviet official mention the peace conference with a firm late November date. Menshikov did not appear to doubt US readiness to “fight over access, nor did he threaten the US.”⁵⁸³

He appeared conciliatory to Rostow, who thought this softened tone reflected Soviet awareness that the US was making its crucial decisions on Berlin that same week. If that was the case, it might confirm Acheson's conviction that US firmness might prompt new negotiations.

⁵⁸¹ *Ibid.*

⁵⁸² Beschloss, *Crisis Years*, p.255.

⁵⁸³ *Ibid.*

Thompson reported harsh new Soviets statements about West Germany that struck a much more belligerent tone.⁵⁸⁴ 'Peace conference' negotiations would, in no way, represent Soviet acceptance of the status quo as Acheson had so optimistically imagined.

On July 25, President Kennedy delivered a televised address on Berlin. He said the US would not allow the Soviet Union to "drive us out of Berlin." He announced mobilization measures including a call-up of reserve troops, civil defense actions, and a state of ground alert for combat and support aircraft. Acheson had argued for a declaration of national emergency, but Kennedy wanted to provide some margin to encourage the Soviets to reconsider negotiation.⁵⁸⁵ Kennedy explicitly reminded the American people that the Berlin crisis carried dangers of thermonuclear war. Those warnings did not deter an appreciative public response or Congressional approval of the announced measures.⁵⁸⁶

Further refinements and arguments over the Acheson plan continued over the next few weeks. Henry Kissinger lobbied hard for a new more positive and confident US diplomatic initiative, but defense planning overshadowed such ideas. On August 3, Bundy forwarded plans for possible new US-UK-France-USSR foreign-minister and summit meetings to Kennedy. The Allies were not enthusiastic over negotiations, but the deteriorating situation in Berlin and lack of contingency preparedness compelled them to reconsider their options.⁵⁸⁷ In Moscow, Khrushchev was angry over Kennedy's speech and authorized new Soviet statements calling for implementation of his peace treaty.⁵⁸⁸

The Western foreign ministers met again in Paris from August 4-9 to discuss Berlin. They could not agree on a timetable or common program for resuming negotiations, but did

⁵⁸⁴ Thompson cables to Rusk, August 3, 1961, JFK, NSF Box 81A, folder 8/1/61.

⁵⁸⁵ Beschloss, *Crisis Years*, p.255-62.

⁵⁸⁶ Freedman, *Kennedy's Wars*, p. 71.

⁵⁸⁷ Bundy memo to JFK, August 3, 1961, JFK, NSF files, Box 81A, folder 8/1/61.

⁵⁸⁸ Sergei Khrushchev, *Creation of a Superpower*, p. 456

agree the situation called for new high-level talks. A near-term plebiscite, the heart of any all-German self-determination proposal, did not seem feasible.⁵⁸⁹ The imagined timetable for conferences would be in October after the German elections. The Soviets were about to take "game-changing" action well before the elections. On August 10, when Rusk visited Adenauer in Bonn, the West still did not realize the Soviets were about to undertake their most significant restriction of Berlin access since the 1948 blockade.⁵⁹⁰

The Berlin Wall is Constructed

The conflict in Washington over pursuing a forceful or negotiable US response to the June 4 Soviet demands was soon rendered moot by events in the Soviet Union and East Germany. The drain of 50 to 75,000 people from East Berlin and heavy financial support meant Khrushchev had to stabilize the situation.⁵⁹¹ East Germany was key to the Warsaw Pact and Ulbricht was a prominent leader in the Communist bloc, with allies in the Soviet Union. Ulbricht also wanted to minimize the Western presence in East Berlin. He made a persuasive plea for assistance to Warsaw Pact leaders in East. He had been demanding a border for months. and in early July, Khrushchev finally gave his approval.⁵⁹² By August 10, Soviet Army engineers had delivered vast loads of materials and technicians and prepared to construct a barbed wire barrier, with concrete reinforcement. Soviet and East German troops and tanks were brought closer to Berlin.

Khrushchev was still most interested in his peace treaty but had decided a border closure was necessary first, if only to quiet Ulbricht. Michael Beschloss has suggested that Robert

⁵⁸⁹ memos re Western minister meetings, August 4-9, 1961, Paris, *FRUS 1961-1963*, Vol. XIV, docs. 97-100.

⁵⁹⁰ Memo re Rusk-Adenauer meeting, Bonn, August 10, 1961, JFK, NSF files, Box 81A, folder 8/1/61.

⁵⁹¹ Vladislav Zubok, *A Failed Empire: The Soviet Union in the Cold War from Stalin to Gorbachev* (Chapel Hill: the University of North Carolina Press), p.141.

⁵⁹² Harrison, *Driving the Soviets*, p. 189-90.

Kennedy may have suggested, through Bolshakov, closure as a compromise to the Soviets.⁵⁹³

Hope Harrison says Khrushchev was angry over Kennedy's July 25 speech announcing an arms build-up.⁵⁹⁴ Sergei Khrushchev recalled that his father did not seem very enthusiastic about the Wall at first. The reluctance seems likely. Khrushchev probably realized that the Wall would be viewed as harsh symbol of Communism. A wall might not fit well with the 'free city' concept. Nor did Khrushchev know how the West would react. Though he later became pleased with the Wall, it may have been because it calmed things down. He still had not successfully negotiated with the Americans.⁵⁹⁵ The Wall gave him time to figure how to achieve the peace treaty.

On a Sunday morning, August 13, the East Germans, with Soviet assistance and approval, erected barriers closing East Berlin's access to the city's Western zones. By afternoon, they had sealed off most access points. There was little resistance on either side, though news got out quickly. They reinforced the border crossings, notably at Friedrichstrasse and Steinsteucken.⁵⁹⁶ The Wall was erected before there was any thought of mobilizing the occupation troops. The East Germans had armor and troops within sight. Escapee numbers went from thousands to hundreds to dozens to singles within a few days. Initial Western reaction was relaxed. Neither Kennedy nor Macmillan interrupted their vacations for full-on crisis consultation. The Berlin refugee crisis had been, at least temporarily, resolved.⁵⁹⁷

The cool reaction may have been prudent, but the US could not accept the Wall without some protest. Quadripartite Western meetings in Paris failed to develop an effective response.⁵⁹⁸ Willy Brandt, Mayor of Berlin, was furious that the troops had done nothing and West German

⁵⁹³ Beschloss, *Crisis Years*, p. 281

⁵⁹⁴ Harrison, *Driving the Soviets*, p.19-94.

⁵⁹⁵ Taubman, *Khrushchev*, p. 506.

⁵⁹⁶ Frederick Taylor, *The Berlin Wall*, p. 172-77.

⁵⁹⁷ Beschloss, *Crisis Years*, p.283

⁵⁹⁸ Memo re quadripartite meeting, August 15, 1961, Paris, *FRUS 1961-1963*, Vol. XIV, doc. 113.

public opinion was turning against the Americans. He sent a strong letter of protest to Kennedy.⁵⁹⁹ Adenauer was more understanding but still concerned about what might happen next. President Kennedy, under some pressure, sent Vice-President Lyndon Johnson to Berlin to reassure the West Berliners. Kennedy bolstered Johnson's mission by sending along a US ground battalion, commanded by General Lucius Clay, who had overseen the 1948 airlift. Adenauer and Brandt were locked in a bitter election for the Chancellorship. Johnson would have to placate both of them and deliver reprimands from Kennedy for their presumptuous demands on the US.⁶⁰⁰

Johnson and Clay, with Ambassador Bohlen along as a "minder," went to Bonn on August 19, when they met with Adenauer. They then flew to Tempelhof airport in West Berlin, though Adenauer had to take a separate plane to appease Brandt. All received an overflowing and appreciative reception. Johnson effectively navigated the Adenauer-Brandt rivalry, though he made clear Kennedy's impatience with their refusal to acknowledge the hazards of military action in the situation. Johnson's Texas-politician street skills served him well in an enthusiastic motorcade tour where he stopped and walked among the crowds. Bohlen prevented him from attempting to enter West Berlin. Johnson's street tour presaged a later appearance by Kennedy in Berlin in June 1963, but Johnson did not have Kennedy's oratorical skill. Clay remained with the battalion, which met only minor harassment as it travelled the access corridor.⁶⁰¹

During his trip, Johnson made no attempt at negotiations with either East German or Soviet representatives. The Johnson visit was only a stopgap measure, a sharply limited protest against the Wall. Dean Rusk recalled in his memoirs: "we quickly decided that the wall

⁵⁹⁹ Brandt letter to Kennedy, August 16, 1961, *FRUS 1961- 1963*, Vol. XIV, doc.117.

⁶⁰⁰ Memo re Kennedy-Rusk, Kohler, McNamara, Taylor, etc. meeting, August 17, 1961, *FRUS 1961-1963*, Vol. XIV, doc.118.

⁶⁰¹ Beschloss, *Crisis Years*, p. 283-85.

was not an issue of war and peace between East and West; there was no way we would destroy the human race over it." The Secretary was, however, less confident about new negotiations than the President.⁶⁰² New talks would be further complicated by the Soviets' August 31 announcement of resumed atomic testing.⁶⁰³ The events of August 1961 concluded a very significant phase of the Berlin crisis and set the stage for a much different approach to negotiations beginning in September 1961.

Conclusions

Construction of the Berlin Wall in August 1961 concluded the first, multilateral phase of a diplomatic arc that began in November 1958 with Khrushchev's demands for a new Berlin and German arrangement. In the first phase the Western partners in Berlin chose closer consultation with each other and with the Soviets to address Khrushchev's ultimatum. The Geneva conference, US-Soviet goodwill/trade visits of 1959, and the attempted Paris summit had raised hopes that a détente was in the making.⁶⁰⁴ Détente, i.e. a mutual effort to create and sustain an atmosphere of negotiation, relaxed tension and cooperation, would stand in sharp contrast to the diplomatic estrangement that had characterized the 'containment' era. The failure of the Paris summit showed how frail this fledgling detente was. The disappointments of Vienna and the Wall reflected that detente had again been attempted and had apparently failed.⁶⁰⁵ New precedents for high level negotiation, however, had been established.

The arc from late 1958 to late 1960 was an important learning exercise in the transition from containment to détente. Berlin was the catalyst, though the hoped-for linkage with

⁶⁰² Dean Rusk and Richard Rusk, *As I Saw It* (New York: W. W. Norton, 1990), p. 223-24.

⁶⁰³ Dallek, *An Unfinished Life*, p. 128-33.

⁶⁰⁴ Keith. Nelson, *The Making of Detente: Soviet-American Relations in the Shadow of Vietnam* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University, 1995) p.14.

⁶⁰⁵ Reynolds, *Summits*, p. 221.

disarmament did not produce recognizable gains. The dangers associated with Berlin fostered awareness of the need for arms-control, but the Geneva disarmament talks made only slow and intermittent progress. Disarmament would gradually be de-linked from Germany in the arc that began with Kennedy's election and the Vienna summit. The Wall's construction may have stabilized the Berlin situation, but it also lessened the impetus for Berlin negotiation.

Though the next year would seem to represent a definite slide back into vintage Cold War tensions, much progress had been made at times up the 'slippery path.' These lessons would be helpful in the years to come, as US leaders, frustrated by Allied disagreements, decided it had to take the diplomatic initiative. In the coming months, Kennedy continued the transition from multi-lateral to bilateral diplomacy.⁶⁰⁶ Though tedious and unproductive, these talks provided useful negotiating experience with the Soviets and precedents for the later, disarmament-centered detente. But, in 1962, the strains on the US-Soviet relationship would disrupt diplomatic engagement. Increasingly distant from their alliance partners, the test for both Khrushchev and Kennedy would be whether they would anchor superpower relations in confrontation or detente.

⁶⁰⁶ Rusk & Rusk, *As I Saw It*, p. 226-227.

Chapter 4: “Salami Tactics,” September - December 1961

Introduction

The sudden construction of the Berlin Wall in August 1961 marked the end of the preliminary détente American and Soviet leaders had been exploring since 1959. Renewed interest in diplomacy instead of force to resolve the lingering Berlin controversy had led to the 1959 Geneva Foreign Ministers Conference and then to the 1960 Paris and 1961 Vienna heads of states summits. Just before the Wall's construction, Western leaders had been ready to accept a new East-West foreign minister's conference and possible summit. Afterwards, they were less willing, although Khrushchev still seemed ready to sign his peace treaty very soon, possibly at a 'peace conference.' To avert potential conflict and recover American leadership on Berlin, Kennedy decided to try a confidential approach to the Soviets, with the Allies deciding any final agreement.⁶⁰⁷ He had to balance this private diplomacy with alliance disunity, as well as pressures from military and hard-line advisors for tough contingency planning that might include limited nuclear warfare.

The fall of 1961 did not accomplish any new agreements among the Allies or with the Soviets, but included some of the most significant diplomatic sequences of the Berlin crisis. The American and Soviet foreign ministers, Dean Rusk and Andrei Gromyko, held bilateral diplomatic talks in September 1961. Nikita Khrushchev and American President John Kennedy began an unprecedented private correspondence to renew negotiations.⁶⁰⁸ US Ambassador

⁶⁰⁷ Georg Schild, "The Berlin Crisis" in White, ed, *Kennedy: the New Frontier Revisited*, p.115-17.

⁶⁰⁸ Beschloss, *Crisis Years*, p.326.

Llewellyn Thompson prepared to begin new discussions in Moscow that winter. Western ministers and heads of state also met to try and develop a common strategy on Berlin and German issues. Britain's Harold Macmillan was most interested, as always in a summit, but France's Charles de Gaulle was adamantly opposed to new negotiations with the Soviets on Berlin. One reason for the impasse was the lack of persuasive new proposals on Germany/Berlin or the related topic of disarmament. The lack of Western consensus on Berlin became more pronounced than at any time since Soviet demands of November 1958. Soviet resumption of nuclear testing, and France's continued testing, discouraged disarmament progress, even while the need had become more obvious. The Soviets did seem very interested in negotiating, despite the impasse, but the ongoing pursuit of negotiations helped leaders on all sides resist the use of force to resolve post-Wall conflicts in Berlin.

Searching for a Post-Wall Strategy

In late August, Khrushchev had told American columnist Drew Pearson, "There will be no war."⁶⁰⁹ Kennedy and his advisors could not be sure how long the post-Wall truce would last. The construction of the Wall on August 13, the Soviet resumption of nuclear testing on August 31, and Khrushchev's evident intention to sign the peace treaty with East Germany signaled a sharp retreat from detente, but fell short of an open break with the West. Vice-President Johnson's visit to West Germany and West Berlin on August 19, carefully managed by Kennedy, Ambassador Charles Bohlen, and national security aide Walt Rostow, aimed to reassure European allies and deflect domestic criticism in America.⁶¹⁰ Kennedy hoped to display some toughness by assigning General Lucius Clay to accompany Johnson and dispatching a combat

⁶⁰⁹ Michael Beschloss, *Kennedy and Khrushchev: the Crisis Years, 1961-63* (New York: Edward Burlingame Books, 1991), p. 290.

⁶¹⁰ Fursenko & Naftali, *Khrushchev's Cold War*, p.384.

battalion through the East German access corridor.⁶¹¹ While successful as a morale-builder, the Johnson-Clay expedition did not attempt any new East-West discussion and instead highlighted the growing impasse over Berlin. West German Chancellor Konrad Adenauer and West Berlin's mayor Willy Brandt were locked in a bitter election contest. Both leaders had offended Kennedy with their ham-handed insistence on a more vigorous response. Neither de Gaulle nor Macmillan was impressed by the American exercise, nor did they expect that Khrushchev would be either.⁶¹² Scarcely had Johnson made his report to Kennedy, when Khrushchev announced that the USSR would resume nuclear testing. The president was furious at the announcement, but was reluctant to respond in kind. He delayed agreeing to the Joint Chief of Staff's calls for immediate US nuclear testing and further mobilization for a possible Berlin conflict.⁶¹³

Khrushchev further surprised Kennedy by requesting, via a private letter delivered by Cyrus Sulzberger, "some sort of informal contact with him to find a means of settling the crisis without damaging the prestige of the United States - but on the basis of a German peace treaty and a free city of Berlin."⁶¹⁴ Thompson had just warned that the West would probably have to "accept de facto" the Wall and avoid the temptation to tie West Berlin and West Germany further together politically.⁶¹⁵ Unwilling to accept Khrushchev's apparent ability to define the situation, Kennedy resolved to find a new approach to negotiations. Two days after receiving Khrushchev's note, Kennedy and Rusk agreed they should call for a peace conference to consider parallel peace treaties for Germany. The president did not want to use a new variant of the familiar "Western Peace Plan," which dated back to the 1959 Foreign Ministers Conference,

⁶¹¹ Aleksandr A. Fursenko and Timothy Naftali, *Khrushchev's Cold War: the Inside Story of an American Adversary*, p. 384.

⁶¹² De Gaulle letter to Kennedy, August 26, 1961; memo re Kennedy-Grewe meeting, Washington, August 30, 1961, *FRUS 1961-63*, Vol. XIV, docs.131 & 133.

⁶¹³ Beschloss, *Crisis Years*, p. 294-96.

⁶¹⁴ Editorial Note, *Foreign Relations of the United States 1961-63*, Vol. XIV, doc. 145.

⁶¹⁵ Cable from Thompson to Herter, September 9, 1961, *FRUS, 1961-63*, Vol. XIV, doc. 146.

as the basis for new discussions.⁶¹⁶ Kennedy would not call for reunification through all-German free elections – an idea unacceptable to the Soviets, as well as the East and West German leadership. Instead of specific political measures, Kennedy wanted to open with a statement of general goals before presenting a “real reconstruction of our negotiating positions.” He thought new British proposals were tied up in “impracticable machinery.” He designated a small group of advisors, including Bohlen, Kohler, Hillenbrand and Owen, to prepare new options that might lead to a resolution of the Berlin and German issues.⁶¹⁷ This group was to work in the strictest confidence, outside from the usual working group on Berlin and without input from Acheson and others committed to forceful responses.

Berlin remained tense, with particular Soviet harassment at the chronically troublesome Steinstuecken and Freidrichstrasse checkpoints. Kennedy wanted to convey American readiness to respond to further provocations. In mid-September, Kennedy assigned General Lucius Clay to remain as a special military advisor.⁶¹⁸ West Berliners found Clay's appointment reassuring, but the General soon troubled Kennedy with unauthorized probing of various boundary points. Adenauer defeated Brandt, but had to settle for a coalition government and the promise he would not serve a full term. Walter Ulbricht, believing Khrushchev would soon implement his peace treaty, was ready to consolidate access control for all Berlin.⁶¹⁹

On September 14, Rusk advised British Foreign Minister Lord Home and French Foreign Minister Couve de Murville that he intended to sound out Gromyko, at the upcoming United Nations General Assembly sessions, about the prospects for new negotiations. The French were cool to this idea, saying Soviet positions were still unchanged and new negotiations under the

⁶¹⁶ Memo from Rusk to Kennedy, w/attachment "Western Peace Plan", JFK NSF Box 82A, folder, 9/7-9/8/61.

⁶¹⁷ Aleksander Fursenko and Timothy Naftali, *Khrushchev's Cold War* (New York: W. W. Norton, 2006), p. 391.

⁶¹⁸ W. R. Smyser, *Kennedy and the Berlin Wall: "A Hell of a Lot Better than a War"* (London: Rowan & Littlefield, 2009).

⁶¹⁹ Frederick Taylor, *The Berlin Wall*, p. 270-71.

circumstances were “not appropriate.”⁶²⁰ If the Americans and British wanted to explore the possibility, the French would not object. Rusk noted ongoing British and French differences over what the Western position should be regarding Berlin and Germany, but thought his own recent talks with de Gaulle had lessened their overall differences. De Murville noted the French press had already announced Rusk’s intended overtures to Gromyko at the UN; public response was already critical. Bohlen said it was necessary to keep talking with the Soviets because they had earlier “changed their positions” on important matters like the end of the 1948-49 Berlin Blockade and the Austrian peace treaty.⁶²¹ De Murville said the Soviets had a more immediate objective now: shutting down air access to starve out West Berlin. France thought serious Rusk-Gromyko talks could be useful, but as long as the Soviet Union remained committed to getting the West out of Berlin, there was no point in a conference held on Soviet terms.

Rusk’s meeting with Soviet Ambassador Mikhail Menshikov less than three hours later seemed to confirm French skepticism. Menshikov said that if the Americans were prepared to negotiate in a “businesslike” manner, the Soviets would meet with them in the same spirit. However, the Ambassador said recent US language might also be read as threatening, a tone the Soviets were prepared to match. Rusk said it was the Soviets and East Germans who were making obstructive threats to air access for West Berlin. Menshikov dismissed Rusk’s objections, saying the US did not have “the full facts.”⁶²²

⁶²⁰ Tripartite meeting; Rusk, Lord Home, De Murville, September 14, 1961, Washington, D.C. *FRUS 1961-63*, Vol. XIV, d. 149.

⁶²¹ Upon reviewing the memo of this ‘FoMin’ meeting, US Ambassador George Kennan, who like Bohlen was a veteran of the early US missions to Moscow, expressed strong disapproval at the reluctance to resume negotiations. Kennan also emphasized the need to keep talking to understand Soviet attitudes and intentions and to deflect hostile action. Kennan said the idealistic talk of self-determination and Soviet withdrawal from any German territory amounted to a thoroughly unrealistic “demand for a unilateral Soviet military and political withdrawal from Central Europe.” Kennan thought the West needed to resume talks with more pragmatic proposals. *FRUS 1961-63*, Vol. XIV, doc. 158.

⁶²² Rusk-Menshikov meeting, September 14, 1961, Washington, D.C. *FRUS 1961-63*, Vol. XIV, doc 150.

The next day, Kennedy met with the Western foreign ministers and asked them what differences remained regarding negotiations. De Murville noted that negotiations would entail concerns similar to those presented by coordinating individual national contingency planning (for a military response) with the multilateral Live Oak planning. The problem was to “convince Khrushchev that he was facing a serious risk of war and he should not be allowed to have his own way.” Only the United States “had the strength to speak convincingly to Khrushchev along these lines ... a US private warning was extremely important...the preliminary to everything.” Kennedy also said “he wanted to stress the role of the Federal Republic in this question,” a statement much appreciated by West German Foreign Minister von Brentano.⁶²³

The Western ministers met again without Kennedy. Lord Home said he didn’t think Khrushchev would pay much attention to public warnings; instead a conference was needed, an idea that de Murville quickly dismissed. He reiterated that the US would have to take the lead in opening up new negotiations, which could only proceed if Khrushchev was really prepared to negotiate constructively and flexibly. West German foreign minister Heinrich von Brentano, also present, but saying little, said that the West needed to be able to match Soviet initiatives like the ‘free city Berlin’ plan with firm proposals, such as free elections for Berlin and Germany. Kennedy endorsed Von Brentano’s statement; the US would “keep closely in step with the (West Germans) and that we not undertake courses of action or proposals which would turn them away from the Alliance.”⁶²⁴

This meeting illustrates serious internal problems which had complicated Western responses over Berlin since the November 1958 Soviet proposals: The Kennedy administration's attempts to reduce NATO control over nuclear use of nuclear angered European leaders,

⁶²³ Memo re Kennedy-Western ministers meeting, Washington, Sept.15, 1961, *FRUS 1961-63*, Vol. XIV, doc. 151.

⁶²⁴ Memo re Western ministers meeting, Washington, Sept.15, 1961, *FRUS 1961-63*, Vol. XIV, doc. 152.

especially de Gaulle.⁶²⁵ While all Western co-signatories of the Berlin occupation accords had equal political status, disparity in their relative practical strengths hindered a balanced alliance with the US. Trade rivalries disturbed Allied unity.⁶²⁶ The French were telling Kennedy to take the lead, but not proceed far without consensus. The British, weakest of the alliance and keenest on conference negotiation, had little weight to back their positions. The French had little confidence in the British, but both encouraged and resisted US leadership. The West Germans, still regarded with some skepticism by the French and British, would be most affected by matters in which they could not yet negotiate directly.⁶²⁷

The United States felt it essential to preserve West German freedom from Eastern domination, yet understood that Berlin in itself did not have much essential value economically, militarily or for intelligence and propaganda purposes. The European leadership of Macmillan, de Gaulle, and Adenauer had remained a stable constant, besides Khrushchev's unwavering attachment to his free city/peace treaty proposals. That constant provided a steady reference point for the US leadership. Kennedy was sincere in wanting to find new approaches to this central problem for the Western alliance.⁶²⁸ The problems he faced, even after the Wall, were essentially the same as Eisenhower and Dulles had faced in December 1958. De Gaulle and Adenauer wanted no revision of the Berlin status quo and Macmillan was too willing to bargain.

At the same time as the Western powers were trying to find consensus for a new approach to negotiations, a series of war-games designed by Professor Thomas Schelling were conducted to gauge the viability of forceful responses. Schelling devised a set of scenarios

⁶²⁵ Trachtenberg, *A Constructed Peace*, p. 306.

⁶²⁶ Vojtech Mastny, "'De Gaulle's Handling of the Berlin and Cuban Crises,'" in, *Europe, Cold War & Co-Existence*, Loth, ed., p.70-71.

⁶²⁷ Frank A. Mayer, *Kennedy and Adenauer*, p.48.

⁶²⁸ Freedman, *Kennedy's Wars*, p. 85-88.

requiring decisions at crucial stages and evaluated the probable outcomes.⁶²⁹ NATO Commandant General Lauris Nortsad reported that the Soviets could field 100 divisions, twice the number estimated by the US Defense Department. At a meeting with Kennedy, Rusk and McNamara Joint Chiefs of Staff representative General Curtis Lemay said the Army and the JCS chairman were split over sending more reinforcements. Kennedy decided to call up one infantry and one armored division, but with little fanfare.⁶³⁰ He had good reason to be cautious.

Reports from the Schelling exercise indicated that the US would find it “difficult to use its military power flexibly and effectively for tactical purposes.” One problem was “alliance drag ... getting agreement among a number of allies on day to day measures.” Another was predicting reliably what the other side might do in a given situation Rolling force back once deployed also appeared difficult. The problem of finding allied and domestic consensus in support of tactical operations was not easily solved. The democratic nature of Western Europe's political systems made heads of state cautious about public reaction. Greater political flexibility in dealing with the East on GDR recognition or the Oder-Niesse border could mean trouble at the polls. The US had to “take more initiative in relation to our allies and to assume a degree of independent leadership which corresponds more nearly with the degree of responsibility we bear for the final result.”⁶³¹ National Security Council advisor Carl Kaysen concluded that it would be more useful if the exercise was repeated with high-ranking participants, such as General Maxwell Taylor, Foy Kohler, Paul Nitze, Walt Rostow and McGeorge Bundy.⁶³² Those individuals would actually shape decisions in a crisis.

⁶²⁹ "Memo to Participants in NATO Planning Conference," September 6, 1961, JFK, NSF files, Box 82A, folder 9/6/61.

⁶³⁰ Meeting notes for Kennedy, Rusk, McNamara, Lemay etc, September 18, 1961, Washington, D.C., John F. Kennedy Library, National Security Files, Box 83, Country series: Germany/Berlin, folder 9/17/61- 9/22/61.

⁶³¹ Memo from NSC aide Carl Kaysen to Kennedy, September 22, 1961, John F. Kennedy Library, National Security Files, Box 83, Country series: Germany/Berlin, folder 9/17/61- 9/22/61.

⁶³² *Ibid.*

Rusk and Gromyko Begin Talks

At the beginning of the United Nations General Assembly sessions, Rusk approached Gromyko about private bilateral discussions on Berlin. They began their discussions on September 21.⁶³³ McGeorge Bundy outlined for Kennedy what Rusk needed to consider. The US needed to concentrate on the demands to end occupation rights, restrict access to West Berlin, and make unilateral political changes regarding East Germany's status. The US wanted serious bilateral talks with the Soviets in a mutually acceptable setting. The US would consider the idea of peace conference to normalize unresolved issues left over from World war Two. The US would not use the Western Peace Plan as its starting proposal and did not think another Four-Power Foreign Minister's conference would be productive.⁶³⁴

The Rusk-Gromyko meetings proved "reasonably relaxed" but not very productive. Gromyko underscored the intransigent tone that the Soviets had presented at Vienna and in their June 4 aide-memoire. Rusk said he was speaking for the US alone. He said the Berlin crisis "was essentially a Soviet creation." The peace treaty threatened "vital interests and fundamental commitments of the US." The US did not want an arms race but would meet such challenges. Although Rusk believed the Soviets did not want war either, Soviet unilateralism did threaten war. In response, Gromyko narrowed in on the specific issue of the peace treaty, which the Soviets cast as a legitimate means of normalizing the post-war situation and as the best means for German unification. Western forces would definitely have to withdraw but that did not mean Soviet forces would replace them; neutral or UN peacekeepers could be brought in to oversee Berlin. Access to the city was, likewise, a residue of the wartime situation and had no role in

⁶³³ Beschloss, *Crisis Years*, p.311-312.

⁶³⁴ Bundy memo to Kennedy, September 21, 1961, *FRUS 1961-63*, Vol. XIV, doc. 155.

perpetuity. Rusk replied that while the 1945 agreements were to designed as temporary mechanisms, “it was not intended that one side would unilaterally terminate them.”⁶³⁵ The Soviets had already unilaterally turned over their responsibilities for East Berlin and removed its status from discussion. The Soviets could begin, Rusk said, by inviting UN peacekeepers to replace East German and Soviet forces in East Berlin. Western access rights were not Soviet property to be disposed of at will. The meeting ended noncommittally, with no new ground being broken but no new obstacles to further discussion.

British Foreign Secretary Lord Home held his own private meetings with Gromyko three days later. Home asked Gromyko if the Soviets, before proceeding with their peace treaty, might arrange with the East Germans for guaranteed Western access. Gromyko said that would best handled through Western recognition of East Germany (with the Oder-Niesse eastern border) and withdrawal of occupation forces from West Berlin. Home asked if Khrushchev was prepared to make good on his offer to negotiate “any time, anywhere and at any level.” If that was the case, said Home, it would be useful to discuss other approaches than the free city/peace treaty package. Gromyko “said with strong emphasis that this would be useless and a waste of time.” He repeated the Soviets had no interest in discussing “the whole of Germany or the whole of Berlin.”⁶³⁶ He repeated that the USSR had one main interest and that was the normalization of the wartime agreement. The West was worried about access, he complained, while the East was “interested in respect for the rights of the DDR, boundaries, atomic weapons, demilitarization of Western Germany, and the status of West Berlin.” The Oder-Niesse border, established at Soviet

⁶³⁵ Meeting notes re Rusk-Gromyko, September 21, 1961, Washington, D.C., *FRUS 1961-63*, Vol. XIV, doc. 156.

⁶³⁶ Memo and cover letter re Home-Gromyko meeting, New York, September 23, 1961. This memo was restricted to the inner group of Rusk, Bundy, Bohlen and Kohler (and the President). JFK Library, National Security Files, (Germany/Berlin series), Box83, folder 9/23/61-9/30/61.

insistence after World War II, had granted German territory to Poland as a buffer zone for the USSR. Khrushchev wanted full Western recognition of Warsaw Pact boundaries.⁶³⁷

Berlin was, as Khrushchev had reminded Thompson, in the middle of East Germany. The Soviets thought West Berlin's current status was an unacceptable anomaly in that system and could be corrected only by a peace conference to formally accept the Soviet Berlin/German package. Home said the Soviet Union must know the Western powers could not sign an agreement with East Germany. Could not Berlin be placed under some neutral administration like the United Nations? Gromyko ignored this suggestion, saying again that a peace conference was the only acceptable approach. If the West participated, they could help shape the arrangements (on general Soviet terms). If the West boycotted the conference, the Soviets would have no obligation to consider their objections. Home concluded the meeting by saying that would be a very dangerous course the Soviets. The United Kingdom did not want war but "would not be threatened by threats."⁶³⁸

The British, as they had since 1958, had again demonstrated their persistent pursuit of negotiation. Home's approach was nuanced and principled. However, it was reactive and could never have the same focus and momentum as the single-minded Soviet approach.⁶³⁹ Gromyko's replies also revealed a basic dynamic to the problem that the Britain, France and the United States still did not fully understand. West Berlin destabilized East Germany and encouraged the strength of West Germany. A nuclear West Germany would be a constant threat that reminded the Soviets of the worst dangers of wartime invasion. Compared with these concerns, Western complaints about access rights, let alone occupation rights, seemed trivial.⁶⁴⁰

⁶³⁷N S Khrushchev, *Memoirs*, p.637,

⁶³⁸ *Ibid.*

⁶³⁹ Ashton, *Kennedy, Macmillan and the Cold War*, p. 60-61.

⁶⁴⁰ Fursenko and Naftali, *Khrushchev's Cold War*, p.392-94.

This Soviet attitude could be challenged at a number of levels . Both France and Britain had suffered terrible wartime incursions. Soviet occupation in Eastern Europe violated wartime protocols and was overtly hostile to the West. The Soviets possessed overwhelming combat-ready superiority in conventional forces. The Western powers could not solve the Soviet challenge by endlessly rebutting minor details. Nor were the Soviets any more ready to pursue Western ideas; Gromyko refused to consider any all-German discussion.⁶⁴¹ Soviet negotiating tactics over Berlin and Germany followed a negotiating pattern that was very familiar to Kennan, Thompson, Bohlen and other experienced Western diplomats. The Soviets were adept at sticking to a particular agenda, to the exclusion of any other topics or approaches. Yet, the same observers who best knew Soviet intransigence remained the most committed advocates for continued negotiation, however difficult that might prove.⁶⁴²

The difference between veterans like Bohlen and Kennan and less experienced advisors like Kissinger is that the novices believed the Soviets could be influenced by theoretical arguments, no matter how attractive and reasonable these ideas might seem in Washington.⁶⁴³ The Rusk-Gromyko-Home talks and the fledgling ‘pen pal’ correspondence did amount to constructive efforts to renew negotiations. But the initial discussions continued to reflect the same self-imposed limits and unrealistic thinking that had so far separated both East and West into unproductive positions.⁶⁴⁴

NSC consultant Carl Kaysen noted that achieving consensus was difficult for both internal and external reasons. Internally, there was concern that any new position would be perceived as weakness – a retreat from long-standing positions. Externally, difficulties

⁶⁴¹ Kaysen memo to Bundy, "Strategy and Substance on Berlin," JFK, NSF, Box 83, folder 9/23-9/30/61.

⁶⁴² Mayer, *The Ambassadors*, p. 207-208.

⁶⁴³ Kohler memo to Rusk, September 18, 1961, JFK, NSF, Box 83, 9/23-9/30/61.

⁶⁴⁴ Freedman, *Kennedy's Wars*, p. 64-65.

remained in getting the French and Germans to support new negotiating proposals. Kaysen thought that Khrushchev was softening his position regarding access, provided “we accept legitimacy of GDR.” Kaysen thought both the internal and external obstacles might be overcome by a Kennedy speech recapping the Rusk-Gromyko talks and proposing a choice of negotiation approaches: broad, encompassing all of European security, or talks narrowly focused on Berlin and Germany. The Soviets would be publicly challenged to engage in peaceful negotiation, an idea advanced by William Griffith, Henry Kissinger and others. Even Kaysen admitted in this memo that he did not know how the Soviets would react to such a proposal.⁶⁴⁵

The Soviets had, for a number of years, shown themselves to be willing to forego public approval in lieu of specific security aims. Examples of this indifference to opinion included interference in Berlin in 1948 and 1953, suppression of Hungarian resistance in 1956, and, more recently, the Wall’s construction and the decision to resume testing. Speeches generally did not move Khrushchev. When they did, as in the Kennedy’s May and July speeches announcing higher defense spending, they often had the opposite effect than intended. Khrushchev resolved to delay his military cutbacks once Kennedy announced reserve call-ups of 250,000 troops.⁶⁴⁶

Military planning indicated the West could not readily present a credible deterrent to a blockade.⁶⁴⁷ A week after the US/UK/USSR foreign minister sessions, General Maxwell Taylor reported to the President about some likely, and serious, difficulties projected in the event of a forceful response. The President was about to meet with NATO’s General Norstad who had just made a pessimistic report to the JCS. Norstad had concluded that “the Allies cannot unilaterally control any conflict with the USSR and thus may not be able to enforce a gradual controlled

⁶⁴⁵ Kaysen paper “Strategy and Substance on Berlin,” JFK Library, NSF file, (Germany/Berlin series), Box 83, folder 9/23-9/30/61.

⁶⁴⁶ Sergei Khrushchev, *Creation of a Superpower*, p. 456-57.

⁶⁴⁷ Editorial footnote re Kennedy-Taylor meeting, *FRUS 1961-1963*, Volume XIV, doc.166.

development of the battle ... the US must be prepared for explosive escalation to general war.” Norstad distrusted the concept of “progressive escalation” because it might encourage the Soviets “to think that they can become involved without the risk of incurring nuclear war at once.”⁶⁴⁸ Norstad did not think six extra divisions (not yet even approved) would provide more operational flexibility. He warned that the Allies would become very apprehensive if planning directions indicated the US might concede territory “for time to negotiate and to avoid spreading the war to the United States.”

Norstad said six divisions might be able to reopen access and secure a corridor for a week, but the Soviets would be able to repel such action. The Soviets were readily capable of a strong counterattack; the question would be whether they were politically disposed to undertake such a risk. Taylor noted Norstad had said the cause for nuclear use would be “to insure the success of major military operations,” instead of the standard phrase, “to avoid defeat.” No use of West German troops was anticipated. Taylor’s cautious advisory about the memo would have indicated to the president that serious doubts about forceful response persisted even within the highest levels of the military.⁶⁴⁹ At least, the September Rusk-Gromyko talks indicated the Soviets were also interested in negotiation.⁶⁵⁰

Beginning of Khrushchev-Kennedy 'Pen Pal' Correspondence

Gromyko-Rusk talks resumed on September 29, followed immediately by a long letter from Khrushchev to Kennedy. Notable in the ministers' sessions was a broader, more muted Soviet approach that almost concealed the standard free city/peace treaty demands. This same

⁶⁴⁸ Memo from Taylor to Kennedy, September 28, 1961, JFK Library, NSF file, (Germany/Berlin series) , Box 83, folder 9/23-9/30/61.

⁶⁴⁹ Ibid.

⁶⁵⁰ Cable from Rusk to US Europe embassies re Gromyko meeting, September 22, 1961, *FRUS 1961-1963*, Vol. XIV, doc. 155.

tone was evident in Khrushchev's letter. Even before the Rusk meeting, the Soviet Chairman had delivered an oral message for Kennedy through the Soviet Foreign Ministry's press secretary, Mikhail Kharmalov, to the President's spokesman, Pierre Salinger. That message noted the hazardous Berlin situation and suggested they hold another meeting soon. Kennedy had Salinger deliver a reply, also unwritten, to Kharmalov, indicating his interest.⁶⁵¹ Kennedy hoped the message indicated Khrushchev was not yet ready to sign the peace treaty. That exchange prepared the way for a private written correspondence, the 'Pen-Pal' exchanges, which would continue till mid-1962.⁶⁵²

In his first letter dated September 29, 1962, Khrushchev mentioned the late summer weather he was enjoying on vacation. He then turned to afterthoughts on Vienna and what he saw as conflicting signals from Kennedy in the weeks since. Khrushchev said he was convinced that, like himself, Kennedy did not want war. A draft 'statement of principles' on disarmament, then under consideration for submission to the UN General Assembly, was a good, if tentative, first step. He restated his desire for "prompt implementation of general and complete disarmament," with no mention of the contentious issue of inspections. But, said Khrushchev, the current "strengthening of armaments ... in connection with the German question" discouraged prospects for disarmament. He tied the situation to "problems we inherited from the last war" which could, he said, be best resolved by the peace treaty proposal. Khrushchev then brought up, for the first time, a Kennedy visit to the USSR, a possibility "I am hoping for." He said that such a visit, a clear sign of detente, would be contingent on a peace treaty.⁶⁵³

To sweeten this offer, the first such incentive offered since 1959, he also suggested that there could be parallel peace treaties, one for the Soviets to sign with the (East) German

⁶⁵¹ Sergei Khrushchev, *Creation of a Superpower*, p. 462.

⁶⁵² Beschloss, *Crisis Years*, p. 316-20.

⁶⁵³ Khrushchev letter to Kennedy, September 29, 1961, FRUS 1961-63, Vol. XIV, doc. 162.

Democratic Republic and one for the US, France and Britain to sign with the (West) Federal Republic of Germany. These treaties would include language which could be used for unification "if the Germans so desire," but would have to recognize the current borders between the GDR and the FRG. The peace treaty would supersede the Potsdam agreement and Berlin, situated within the GDR, would be transformed into a "free city." The Soviet Union would provide guarantees of Berlin's "free city" status but would allow a small transitional presence of Western troops in Berlin. This was still basically the 1958 proposal, with token innovations of parallel treaties and small, temporary contingents of Western peace-keepers to assuage Western prestige.⁶⁵⁴

Khrushchev also brought up the possibility of UN or neutral peace-keepers for Berlin but emphasized that "the occupation regime in West Berlin must be eliminated." He dismissed the occupation arrangements as a destabilizing residue of the war, but invited the United States to present its own versions of his formula. He suggested the Rusk-Gromyko talks could serve as the start of broader discussion on the German question: "it could be arranged for you and I to appoint appropriate representatives for private meetings and talks." Such talks could prepare the ground for a conference to conclude a peace treaty. He mentioned the recent discussions that Ambassador to Yugoslavia George Kennan was having with Soviet delegates in Belgrade. Though Khrushchev thought these diplomats were wasting too much time "sniffing each other out," he respected Kennan and authorized the Soviet ambassador to hold substantive discussions. Khrushchev suggested that Llewellyn Thompson, Ambassador to the Soviet Union, might be a suitable representative for high-level talks to arrange a peace conference.⁶⁵⁵

⁶⁵⁴ *Ibid.*

⁶⁵⁵ *Ibid.*

Khrushchev noted that non-aligned leaders had recently written to him and to Kennedy, calling for another summit meeting, and that they had both replied positively to that suggestion. Khrushchev now said to Kennedy, "I believe a meeting between us could be useful." This was the first direct reference, by either head of state to the other, to a new summit since Vienna. Such a meeting would require careful and confidential preparation but could be held "any place." Its purpose would be to conclude a German peace treaty, for which all nations would be grateful. Khrushchev again disavowed war and said their political difference should not obstruct the quest for peace. He invoked a surprising analogy of both "clean and unclean" animals going together into Noah's Ark to seek sanctuary. So too did the superpowers need to put aside their differences and resolve this issue, not only for themselves but for all nations. He linked "disarmament and the German question" one last time, saying he would need to make a progress report to the upcoming 22nd Party Congress.⁶⁵⁶ His tone was noticeably less confrontational, his desire for high-level negotiations unmistakable.

The final round of Rusk-Gromyko talks in New York on October 2 showed that serious difficulties still remained, but the Soviets wanted a diplomatic solution.⁶⁵⁷ Rusk noted the Soviets had not clarified what effects the peace treaty would have on access rights to West Berlin. Gromyko replied that the treaty would make West Berlin a 'free city' without occupation rights. Diplomatic relations with the GDR could be optional but de jure recognition would be necessary. Parallel treaties could satisfy Western prestige but Western non-participation would leave the Soviets and East Germans free to determine access. Gromyko surprised Rusk by suggesting their talks be expanded to consider broader questions of European security. Rusk said the US might be interested in broader discussions but not by giving up rights that had

⁶⁵⁶ *Ibid.*

⁶⁵⁷ Bundy memo to Kennedy, October 2, 1961, *FRUS 1961-1963*, Vol. XIV, doc. 165.

already been established by legal treaties.⁶⁵⁸ Gromyko brushed this objection aside, complaining that the US only wanted to perpetuate an outdated wartime understanding. Rusk said the US was more interested in preventing another world war than re-addressing well established agreements. The US could not make specific proposals affecting European security without the input and approval of other nations involved. The US and the USSR might not be overtly involved, militarily, in Europe, but they could not disengage quickly without creating a "vacuum."⁶⁵⁹

Rusk stressed that the US was very interested in disarmament and nuclear non-proliferation and wanted to review current Soviet proposals to the UN about these topics. Gromyko said his government needed to consult with Ulbricht and consider GDR interests. He spelled out the essential goals the USSR and GDR held in common: recognition of current German borders, recognition of GDR sovereignty over its territory, halting the spread of nuclear weapons in West Germany, and transformation of West Berlin into a free city, with East Berlin remaining the capital of the GDR. These demands could not be made contingent on broader discussions of European security. Further, said Gromyko, "existence of two separate German states must be accepted as ... fact. Unity of Germany only possible through arrangements between the two German governments."⁶⁶⁰ Aleksandr Fursenko and Timothy Naftali, who have had extensive access to Soviet records, say that Khrushchev was very pleased with this first Rusk-Gromyko meeting and did what he could with socialist allies to ensure the talks would not be disturbed with new frictions.⁶⁶¹

National Security Advisor McGeorge Bundy reported to the President that the Soviets seemed "more willing to settle the access question" but were not offering any significant

⁶⁵⁸ Memo re Rusk-Gromyko meeting, New York City, October 2nd, 1961, *FRUS 1961-63*, Vol. XIV, doc. 164.

⁶⁵⁹ Memo from Rostow to Bundy, October 2, 1961, JFK, NSF, Box 83, folder 10/1-10/4/61.

⁶⁶⁰ Same as 42.

⁶⁶¹ Fursenko and Naftali, *Khrushchev's Cold War*, p. 394.

concessions themselves. Bundy warned "unless something more is put into the record before these conversations close, I think we are on a dangerous slope of appeasement. He added that this would be the likely view of "the Germans, the French and the Republicans." Gromyko needed to be told, before returning to Moscow, that further clarification of Western access was still necessary, not conditional on GDR approval; one internationalized route to West Berlin should be established. Bundy thought Rusk had done an excellent job and the talks had on the whole been constructive.⁶⁶²

Walt Rostow prepared for Bundy a counter-proposal for a '1961 protocol' which would supersede the Potsdam agreements but keep Western occupation forces in West Berlin. Because the USSR was unwilling to recognize the legality of the Potsdam agreement, the US would not proceed with a peace treaty or recognition of the GDR. This proposal would offer recognition of the Oder-Niesse boundary for the GDR, proscribe ownership or control of nuclear weapons for both the FRG and GDR, encourage contacts and agreements between the FRG and GDR without demanding they recognize each other diplomatically, and use such contacts as a gauge to guide US policy in the region. Rostow's proposal also called for moving the UN Economic Development office from New York to West Berlin and planning a new Four-Power Foreign Minister meeting.⁶⁶³ Keeping the West Germans from owning nuclear arms was less a concession to the Soviets than a reflection of the Kennedy administration's desire to control NATO nuclear forces.⁶⁶⁴

If the Soviets were not prepared to offered substantial concessions, neither were the Americans. Rostow's proposal would have the US and FRG accept GDR document stamping on

⁶⁶² Bundy memo to Kennedy, October 2nd, 1961, *FRUS 1961-63*, Vol. XIV, doc. 165.

⁶⁶³ Memo from Rostow to Bundy, JFK Library, National Security Files (Berlin and Germany series), Box 83, folder 10/1-10/4/61.

⁶⁶⁴ Trachtenberg, *A Constructed Peace*, p. 304-05.

the principle that they would be agents of the Soviets, recognize the Oder-Niesse border wanted by the GDR and Soviets, and withdraw nuclear weapons from Germany if the Soviets would do the same. Although neither the US or USSR were prepared to offer more than incremental flexibility, they were at least, as Kennan and Thompson had urged, still negotiating.⁶⁶⁵

The talks were still very tentative, while the tensions on the ground in Berlin were rising.⁶⁶⁶ Serious potential for escalation remained. While contingency planning for Berlin action was based on a credible nuclear deterrent, considerable differences had emerged among State, Defense, JCS and NATO. These disagreements were reflected in Bundy's brief for Kennedy at an October 4 meeting with General Norstad. NATO and Defense Dept. planners agreed on an immediate buildup of conventional forces in Europe, and wanted both planning and forceful action carried out by NATO, instead of the West Berlin occupying powers. Norstad was much more willing than Defense Secretary Robert McNamara or the JCS's General Maxwell Taylor to employ nuclear weapons. Bundy wanted the President to remind Norstad who was Commander in Chief.⁶⁶⁷ The meeting proved generally satisfactory but also made evident the ongoing problem of developing pre-agreed response plans with the other allies. Norstad took care to point out he did not, in fact, think that escalation could be smoothly managed in a crisis.⁶⁶⁸ Reaching NATO agreement was difficult, yet necessary because the Western powers were at odds about negotiation tactics or even the desirability of continued negotiations.

⁶⁶⁵ Foy Kohler also prepared for Bundy a draft 'Four-Power Declaration on Berlin and Germany', along generally similar lines to Rostow's proposal but with more attention to possible reunification through a pan-German plebiscite and establishment of a new East-West working group on disarmament. JFK Library, National Security Files (Berlin and Germany series), Box 83, folder 10/1-10/4/61.

⁶⁶⁶ Cable from Rusk to Clay in Berlin, October 4, 1961. *FRUS 1961-63*, Vol. XIV, doc. 170.

⁶⁶⁷ Memo from Bundy to Kennedy, October 3, 1961 re meeting w/Norstad. JFK Library, National Security Files (Germany and Berlin series), Box 83, folder 10/1-10/4/61.

⁶⁶⁸ Memo re Kennedy -McNamara-Rusk-Norstad meeting, Washington, D.C. October 3, 1961. JFK Library, National Security Files (Germany and Berlin series), Box 83, folder 10/1-10/4/61.

When Rusk briefed the Ambassadorial working Group partners (UK/France/FRG) the same day, he did not bring up contingency planning. The FRG's Ambassador Wilhelm Grewe considered the Rusk-Gromyko talks useful but thought they should be discontinued precisely because they were on the verge of including broader European security issues. France's Ambassador Alphand said that the Soviet definition of a 'free city' would be one with no political connection with West Germany, a condition that would be unacceptable in either Bonn or West Berlin. He thought that too much optimism in the press over the Rusk-Gromyko talks would only make the Soviets less likely to offer real concessions.⁶⁶⁹

President Kennedy feared the Soviets might take advantage of American desire for negotiation. He invited Gromyko to the White House on October 6th, 1961. They had met during World War II, when Kennedy was a reporter, and again at Vienna. Gromyko now told him that, when they first met, "I formed the opinion you were no ordinary newspaperman."⁶⁷⁰ Kennedy informed the Soviet Foreign Minister that the US would be consulting its allies and preparing questions, particularly regarding access guarantees and other present treaty rights. This might provide a basis for further talks Ambassador Thompson would conduct in Moscow.

Gromyko had a number of things to say himself. Reading from a prepared statement, the Soviet diplomat repeated the normalization of wartime situations rationale, outlined the peace treaty as presented to Rusk, and criticized the US for having unilaterally made peace with Japan in 1945. Gromyko said there was no set timetable for the peace treaty, but that it was inevitable. US abstinence would result in not being to participate in setting the new treaty's terms. He said the Soviet Union was guaranteeing access and offering concessions to honor Western prestige. Kennedy was willing to consider broader security issues, including nuclear non-proliferation,

⁶⁶⁹ Memo re Western Ambassador Group meeting, w/Rusk, Washington, D.C. October 3, 1961. JFK Library, National Security Files (Germany and Berlin series), Box 83, folder 10/1-10/4/61.

⁶⁷⁰ Andrei Gromyko, trans. by Harold Shukman, *Memoirs* (New York: Doubleday, 1989), p. 181.

troop reductions and removal of foreign bases, "for the cause of an international detente." He proposed demilitarizing both Germanys. While the current US/USSR bilateral talks were "extremely useful," the Soviets were also willing to consider a new Four-Power conference to conclude a peace treaty and discuss European security.⁶⁷¹

Kennedy observed that the Soviets were demanding that the US give up longstanding rights the Soviets themselves had agreed to. The token sweeteners now being offered were only superficial; the Soviets were giving up nothing. For the US, said Kennedy, this "would not be a compromise but a retreat." Gromyko said it appeared that the US and its Allies were more concerned with its occupation rights inside East Germany than in stabilizing European security and recognizing the realities of post-war Europe. There was no need to doubt Soviet guarantees on access to West Berlin's political freedom. The offers of token peacekeeping presence were an honorable concession to Western prestige, said Gromyko.⁶⁷² At the end of the general meeting which included Rusk, Menshikov and Kohler, Gromyko requested a few minutes alone with Kennedy, though apparently each simply summed up their major themes. Kennedy rejected in particular the new Soviet proposal to include their troops in the peacekeeping contingent.⁶⁷³

Though the Gromyko talks in America in September and October 1961 were much preferable to the kind of forceful confrontation Dean Acheson had proposed just weeks before, they showed that diplomacy was not an easy alternative. The official positions presented in the Rusk-Gromyko talks varied little from their governments' longstanding positions, though some wavering was visible. In an advisory memo to Rusk, Ambassador Charles Bohlen suggested that Khrushchev had realized he had "made a major misjudgment" with his early summer "shock treatment" approach for a new German/Berlin settlement. Bohlen thought the Wall and the

⁶⁷¹ Memo re Kennedy-Gromyko meeting, Washington, D.C., October 6, 1961, *FRUS 1961-63*, Vol. XIV, doc. 167.

⁶⁷² *Ibid.*

⁶⁷³ *Ibid.*

resumption of testing had been reactive decisions to Kennedy's July 25 defense buildup speech, and the dispatch of Vice-President Johnson and the reinforcement battalion to Berlin mid-July. Since early September, Khrushchev had been looking for ways to pull back from the brink of war. Changing tactics from confrontation to negotiation "is a classic Bolshevik method." The Soviets were prepared to soften original demands but not offer real concessions.⁶⁷⁴

Bohlen carefully articulated the outstanding questions on guarantees for West Berlin access and political freedom, stressing that Gromyko needed to be pressed hard on these issues. In a sign as to how flexible some in the US diplomatic establishment were becoming on Berlin, Bohlen also pointed out that he had not discussed preservation of occupation rights: "in the conversations with Gromyko, there was no reference to our intention of preserving this statute and the Soviets appear to be quite adamant on this point."⁶⁷⁵ In fact, Rusk had indicated that the West intended to keep troops in West Berlin and Kennedy would affirm this commitment to his own talks with the Soviet Foreign Minister. That an American advisor of the rank and expertise in Soviet relations as Bohlen would officially, if confidentially, discuss compromises on the occupation indicated some of the Eisenhower/Dulles-era pragmatism on Berlin still survived.⁶⁷⁶

Bohlen's observation of cracks in the Soviet leadership was bolstered by a report from NSC consultant Henry Kissinger on conversations that included American peace activist Erich Fromm and Soviet playwright, Central Committee member and Khrushchev confidant Alexander Korneichuk. Korneichuk and Soviet journalist Ilya Khrenburg "indicated that there is increasing opposition to Mr. Khrushchev in the Soviet Union because his peace policy with the West appears to be a failure."⁶⁷⁷ Supposedly, Kennedy had drawn back from concessions thought to

⁶⁷⁴ Memo from Bohlen to Rusk, October 4, 1961, *FRUS 1961-63*, Vol. XIV, doc. 168.

⁶⁷⁵ *Ibid.*

⁶⁷⁶ Hoopes, *Devil and John Foster Dulles*, p. 466.

⁶⁷⁷ Memo from Kissinger to Bundy, October 4, 1961, JFK, NSF, Box 83, folder 10/1-10/4/61.

have been offered by Eisenhower. Khrushchev was facing opposition from both public opinion and high-ranking military leaders. Negotiations were needed "very soon" or else the US might have to deal with a tougher Soviet leadership. Similar warnings had come from diplomats like Thompson and West German Ambassador Kroll, but now they were coming from well-placed Soviet source Kissinger discounted these warnings, though without saying why, but found them significant enough to pass along. Even if these sources were planted by Khrushchev's administration, though, the fact that he felt the need to go to such measures showed that he now needed negotiation to strengthen his own political position.⁶⁷⁸

Allied and Defense Criticism of Negotiations

The US and USSR may have felt that, by default, they had to turn to bilateral dialogue to resolve the problems of Germany and Berlin, but the other Berlin signatories were becoming concerned about decisions that might be made without them.⁶⁷⁹ Rusk's cautions to Gromyko about the limits of their bilateral authority were reflected in worried notes from the French and German ambassadors in Washington.⁶⁸⁰

On October 7, US Ambassador to France John Gavin reported more serious difficulties with de Gaulle, who "has been using almost every public opportunity to restate opposition to negotiations with Soviets on Berlin/Germany unless these were preceded by detente, condition regarded here as most unlikely." De Gaulle felt the US was unduly concerned about imminent danger of war and this fear was prompting a rush to negotiate. Gavin noted that de Gaulle wanted

⁶⁷⁸ Robert Slusser's book "the Berlin Crisis of 1961", which argues that Khrushchev did face significant domestic opposition in 1961 and that this opposition saw opportunities in the Premier's very public lack of progress on Berlin, Slusser points out that Korneichuk carried out specific political tasks for Khrushchev at the Party Congress just a few weeks later. Slusser *The Berlin Crisis of 1961*, p. 421. For more here on Soviet domestic criticism in September 1961, see p. 270-282.

⁶⁷⁹ Memo re Ambassadorial Group meeting, October 3, 1961, Washington, JFK, NSF Box 83, folder 10/1-10/4/61.

⁶⁸⁰ Memos headed "Questions," received by Kohler, from Alphand and Grewe, dated October 5, 1961. JFK Library, National Security Files (Germany and Berlin series), Box 83, folder 10/1-10/4/61.

to concentrate on the withdrawal of French forces from Algeria. At present, said Gavin, "French, including de Gaulle, have now indicated they might not participate in negotiations even if they are arranged." The French were concerned over how a deal might affect the FRG. De Gaulle "firmly" supported the FRG, though he was "cool to ...[FRG] ... efforts to embrace West Berlin ... (and)...lukewarm on German reunification."⁶⁸¹ Nor were they sympathetic to FRG efforts to regain territories lost to the East.

The French adamantly opposed recognition of East Germany. Their difference of opinion with Eisenhower and Macmillan on this issue had stymied efforts to present more flexible proposals in preparation for the Paris summit. The French were "nervous" over possible discussions on European security because they feared such talks would diminish the West's strength in Central Europe. Gavin tried to convince de Gaulle that a real danger existed for war over Berlin and that US-USSR talks would not prejudice French interests.⁶⁸² Gavin and de Gaulle favored a new Western Foreign Ministers meeting, and even a Western Heads of State meeting. De Gaulle was more interested in restoring French influence with the US than planning new negotiations with the Soviets.⁶⁸³

The twin currents of Berlin-related negotiation and military preparedness still created turbulence when they met. Military and hard line factions felt acceptance of a divided Europe might invite Soviet expansion.⁶⁸⁴ The JCS were worried about Allied readiness and willingness to meet forceful Eastern action on Berlin. Their "Preferred Sequence of Military Actions in a Berlin Conflict" memo to Bundy started with non-military measures like economic sanctions in the event of a blockade and proceeded through a series of conventional-force ground

⁶⁸¹ Cable from Gavin to Rusk, October 7, 1961, *FRUS 1961-63*, Vol. XIV, doc. 171.

⁶⁸² Frederic Bozo, *Two Strategies for Europe*, p. 71-72.

⁶⁸³ Caroline Davidson, "Dealing with de Gaulle," in *Globalizing de Gaulle*, Neulist, Locher & Martin, eds, p.120-21.

⁶⁸⁴ Trachtenberg, *History & Strategy* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1991), p. 226-230.

actions to restore access. The JCS and NATO wanted a faster military response than the State Dept. favored. If non-military efforts failed, they recommended either "selective nuclear attacks for the primary purpose of demonstrating the will to use nuclear weapons" or "limited tactical employment of nuclear weapons." However, "the Allies only partially control the timing and scale of nuclear weapons use, " with Soviet "unrestrained pre-emptive attack" or in-kind nuclear response being very possible.⁶⁸⁵

The NSC meeting of October 10, where Rusk reported optimistically on the talks with Gromyko, reflected disagreements about nuclear response. The President and most of advisors, especially McNamara, favored greater emphasis on conventional forces, which lessened danger of nuclear escalation and increased likelihood of effectively using these forces. Paul Nitze strongly disagreed, feeling this policy would encourage the Soviets to consider a nuclear first-strike. The US should reserve a first-strike option for itself. McNamara said first-use provided no assurance of victory. Though Rusk reminded the group of the "very grave responsibility" involved in first-use of nuclear weapons, the issue was not flatly resolved. General Norstad needed "clear guidance as to basic intentions of the United States with regard to military contingency decisions."⁶⁸⁶

The French did not want to negotiate further; the Americans were not sure whether they needed to be more concerned with negotiation or military preparations. The British, keen on negotiations but militarily weak, said little for the moment.⁶⁸⁷ British Foreign Secretary Lord Home told Bundy that de Gaulle's objections would preclude a Western Foreign Minister's meeting on Berlin, but Kennedy should keep trying to get Adenauer's support for

⁶⁸⁵ Unsigned memo for Bundy, "Preferred Sequence of Military Actions in a Berlin Conflict", filed 10/13/61, JFK, NSF, Box 83, folder 10/1-10/4/61.

⁶⁸⁶ Memo re NSC meeting w/Kennedy/Rusk/McNamara/Nitze et al, Washington, D.C., October 10, 1961, *FRUS 1961-63*, Vol. XIV, doc. 173.

⁶⁸⁷ Memo re Kohler-Lord Home meeting, October 5, 1961, JFK, NSF, Box 83, folder 10/1- 10/4/61.

negotiations at some level. Home thought Gromyko was generally "pitching his demands very high" but "showing less interest in European Security arrangements" and the West should let the issue alone.⁶⁸⁸

The West Germans voiced their objections more loudly. Adenauer wrote Kennedy on October 4 to compliment the President's UN address but complain about US willingness to accommodate the Soviets. Ambassador Grewe passed these complaints (particularly regarding GDR recognition) to Rusk, who said recognition was not on the table but acknowledgement of the GDR's existence could facilitate an interim understanding.⁶⁸⁹ Dean Acheson, who was tougher on the Berlin issue than most of the Kennedy administration Acheson cautioned against trying to incorporate West Berlin politically into the FRG or suggesting military strategy to the US. Instead the FRG needed to develop its own negotiating position and marshal the economic, political and military resources to make it credible.⁶⁹⁰

Kennedy, in his reply to Adenauer, tried to placate the Germans about overly generous concessions to the Soviets. Kennedy assured the recently re-elected Chancellor that the US had no intention of withdrawing from Berlin; he also told him that "it is not realistically in our power to prevent indefinitely the signing of a separate peace treaty between the Soviet Union and the East German regime." Referring to such an event as an "inevitability," Kennedy asked Adenauer whether it was better to simply boycott the process and have no input, or to consider negotiations that might mitigate a treaty's effects.⁶⁹¹

Kennedy said he thought Thompson should continue discussions with Gromyko or Khrushchev in Moscow, and that these discussions might lead to a new East-West foreign

⁶⁸⁸ Cover letter from Lord Hood to Bundy and attached paper "Berlin: Lord Home's Views". JFK Library, National Security Files (Germany/Berlin series), Box 83, 10/1 - 10/4/61 folder.

⁶⁸⁹ memo re Rusk-Grewe meeting, Washington, October 4, 1961, JFK, NSF, Box 83, folder 10/1-10/4/61.

⁶⁹⁰ Memo re Acheson-Grewe meeting, Washington, D.C., October 11, 1961, *FRUS 1961-63*, Vol. XIV, doc. 176.

⁶⁹¹ Letter from Kennedy to Adenauer, October 13, 1961. *FRUS 1961-63*, Vol. XIV, doc. 175.

ministers meeting. Kennedy also assured Adenauer that current UN disarmament discussions, on both conventional and nuclear forces, would not diminish the FRG's security. Ambassador Dowling later reported that Chancellor had been assured by Kennedy's letter. The French remained troublesome, refusing assent for a week-long Ambassadorial working group meeting proposed for London, starting October 19. They said that a meeting intended to work out new negotiating positions was unnecessary if there were not going to be new negotiations.⁶⁹²

Further Bilateral US-Soviet Negotiation on Berlin

French resistance to negotiation may not have been constructive, but it was not unrealistic either. De Gaulle would be later proved correct in predicting there would be no war over Berlin, though he had not fully acknowledged the possibility of dangerous conflicts like the standoff that soon developed over the Friedrichstrasse checkpoint.⁶⁹³ Although not realized yet in Washington, the talks with Gromyko had largely been a byproduct of circumstance, i.e. his being in the United States for the UN General Assembly sessions. The Soviets presented the latest version of their German/Berlin proposals, through Khrushchev's letter and the discussions with their Foreign Minister. Once this was accomplished, the West needed to respond, which it was slow in doing. Khrushchev wanted to act while the inexperienced Kennedy was still off balance from Vienna and the Wall. The tentative warming of early fall 1961 would represent the closest East-West engagement for many months to come.⁶⁹⁴

Kennedy still held out considerable hope for renewed talks when he wrote Khrushchev on October 16. His letter paralleled the Soviet premier's in several respects, commenting on the

⁶⁹² *Ibid.*

⁶⁹³ Maurice Vaisse, "De Gaulle's Handling of the Berlin and Cuban Crises" in Loth, ed., *Europe, Cold War and Co-existence*, p. 71.

⁶⁹⁴ Vladislav M. Zubok, *A Failed Empire: From Stalin to Gorbachev* (Chapel Hill: the University of North Carolina Press, 2007), p.140.

vacation weather in Hyannis Point, the disappointments of Vienna and the hope for discussion unclouded by ideological debate. The President said he liked Khrushchev's Noah's Ark analogy (Both leaders refrained from speculating on which was the 'clean' or 'unclean' side.)⁶⁹⁵ He agreed that neither side wanted war. But, where Khrushchev used this line of thought to introduce his theme of finally ending the state of war, Kennedy said the worse danger was thwarting German desires for re-unification. That frustration, said the President, encouraged the 'militarists and revanchists' Khrushchev and Gromyko warned against. Walter Ulbricht's provocations were not helping the situation either.⁶⁹⁶ As much as the US and USSR might want a unified, demilitarized Germany, conditions were not yet conducive for that, nor would a peace treaty solve the problems. Kennedy emphasized that the current stewardship of Berlin was maintaining a stable situation there. Stationing Soviet troops there could not improve the situation.⁶⁹⁷

The president told the Chairman that negotiations could help prepare the way for a demilitarized, unified situation, but would have to be prepared carefully. Kennedy would be talking with the Western allies, while the Premier would be meeting with the Party Congress. They needed to avoid "any statement, incident, or another provocation in Berlin which would make negotiation impossible." Ambassador Thompson, in Washington but about to return to Moscow, could continue the private discussions. Kennedy said "as for another meeting between the two of us, I agree completely that ...we had better postpone a decision on that until a preliminary understanding can be reached ... on positive decisions which might appropriately be formalized."⁶⁹⁸

⁶⁹⁵ Same as note 41.

⁶⁹⁶ Harrison, *Driving the Soviets*, p. 212-213 .

⁶⁹⁷ Letter from Kennedy to Khrushchev, October 16, 1961. *FRUS 1961-1963*, Vol. XIV, doc. 179.

⁶⁹⁸ *Ibid.*

Kennedy linked a visit to the Soviet Union to "a reasonable settlement on Berlin. "If the international atmosphere improves, I would take great pleasure in such a visit," said Kennedy recalling that he had visited the Soviet Union in 1939 and wanted to see "the great changes that had occurred since then." Like Khrushchev, he reserved mention of disarmament till his closing remarks; "I do not intend to relegate the achievement of complete and general disarmament to a place of secondary importance. " He thought their joint statement of principles submitted to the UN was, at least, a start toward an important and rewarding goal. Kennedy briefly touched on competition for influence in the Laos situation, and even suggested that settlement there would improve the atmosphere for Berlin negotiations.⁶⁹⁹ Kennedy's letter was briefer and more general than Khrushchev's. It was not so much a formal diplomatic reply as an acknowledgement that he had been granted some to reconsider the Berlin/Germany situation. Kennedy tried to keep the situation as indefinite but amicable as possible.⁷⁰⁰

Berlin Harassment and Allied Estrangement

The US would soon be involved in the kind of military provocations Kennedy had pleaded against in his letter. In early October, Ulbricht began to limit free movement for diplomatic personnel in East Berlin.⁷⁰¹ They also were closing check-points, at one point isolating the oft-contended Steinstücken neighborhood. On October 18, Secretary Rusk advised Ambassador Lightner in West Berlin that the White House approved a plan to use two or three

⁶⁹⁹ *Ibid.*

⁷⁰⁰ Beschloss, *Crisis Years*, p.326.

⁷⁰¹ Harrison, *Driving the Soviets*, p. 212.

tanks to clear any new check-point obstructions.⁷⁰² The same day, Clay wrote Kennedy to complain that his options to respond to provocations were overly restricted. Clay was frustrated because "I find little evidence in West Germany of the will to fight and I doubt if the West German people are as determined as we are to defend Berlin." He warned against increased nationalism that "could lead West Germany into breaking with the West."⁷⁰³ Clay affirmed his respect and loyalty to the president, but he was clearly uneasy about his position in Berlin. At the same time, Adenauer was lobbying for a Kennedy visit to Bonn, though this was not a serious possibility.

The Chancellor was now being more cooperative, offering to try and persuade de Gaulle to do likewise. Allied cohesion was still far from what it was needed for productive negotiation.⁷⁰⁴ Even the US diplomatic corps was having its doubts about Allied policy. Ambassador Bruce wrote from London that it seemed the West had forgotten its 1954 commitments to work for German reunification and never recognize the East German regime. In light of the current diplomatic stalemate and perceived lack of will, Bruce thought the best course might be to take Khrushchev up on the proposal to internationalize Berlin under UN auspices. But, said Bruce, "meanwhile, I would consider it essential that we take, and make credible decision to engage if necessary in nuclear war rather than lose West Berlin, and consequently, West Germany."⁷⁰⁵ In contrast, NSC advisor Henry Owen, part of the inner circle advising Kennedy's private approach to the Soviets, prepared for Bundy an all-Berlin plan without occupation. The purpose, he said, was to consider a West Berlin without occupation.

⁷⁰² Cable from Rusk to Lightner, October 18, 1961, *FRUS 1961-63*, Vol. XIV. doc. 180.

⁷⁰³ Letter from Clay to Kennedy, October 18, 1961, *FRUS 1961-63*, Vol. XIV. doc. 181.

⁷⁰⁴ Mayer, Adenauer & Kennedy, p. 53.

⁷⁰⁵ Cable from Bruce to Rusk, October 20, 1961, *FRUS 1961-63*, Vol. XIV. doc. 181.

Owen thought that the value of parallel peace treaties was that they would necessitate revising the occupation statutes.⁷⁰⁶

Contingency planning was hotly contested that same day at an NSC meeting, where Defense Undersecretary Gilpatric disputed Norstad's acceptance of the new emphasis on conventional forces. McNamara rejected that assertion, whereupon the President asked Dean Acheson for his opinion, and "from that point on, the meeting was dominated by Mr. Acheson's arguments." Acheson said Norstad had received unclear instructions that needed to focus on Kennedy's preference on non-military action, and air action in the event of conflict. In broader terms, Acheson argued that "the United States has been spending too much time seeking theoretical arguments with our allies ... the momentum of American decision and action is what will make the difference ... the United States should begin moving divisions in November."⁷⁰⁷

When the President asked why, Acheson said a visible deterrent would provide useful political and diplomatic leverage to influence Khrushchev productively. Kennedy was worried by the "gold drain" required for such a buildup, though Gilpatric and McNamara said this could be managed with allied cooperation. Kennedy asked Foy Kohler about current allied relations. Kohler replied that the Germans were being more helpful now but "he could make no such optimistic judgment on the French." Acheson said that, instead of asking the partners to negotiate, "we need to tell them."⁷⁰⁸ He approved of current US negotiating ideas and these needed to be presented to the allies as the firm US position. He said Adenauer would be the key. Kennedy proceeded to write Norstad to confirm the official US policy of graduated, conventional

⁷⁰⁶ Owen said the parallel treaty approach "warms my heart as I contemplate unending discussions...with the allies." Memo from Owen to Bundy. JFK Library, National Security Files (Germany/Berlin series)Box 83, 10/16-10/19/61 folder.

⁷⁰⁷ Memo re NSC meeting w/Kennedy/Rusk/McNamara/Acheson/Kohler/Gilpatric/Bundy et al, October 20, 1961, Washington, D.C. *FRUS 1961-63*, Vol. XIV. doc. 184.

⁷⁰⁸ *Ibid.*

response in a Berlin conflict. This policy would, the President said, have the most deterrent value, because it would show NATO readiness without even having to use its reserve of nuclear weapons.⁷⁰⁹

Kennedy now faced a very enigmatic situation over Berlin. The Wall's construction had eased tensions for a few weeks, but the East Germans were hardening the border closure and eliminating checkpoints.⁷¹⁰ On October 23, Lightner was stopped by East German 'vopos', despite the clear diplomatic markings on his vehicle; he called in a US military escort and successfully entered East Berlin. A Soviet political aide arrived, apologized (though protesting the military escort), and cleared him for transit. Though access was later tested without incident, Lightner observed nearby tank movements in East Berlin.⁷¹¹ US Generals Clay and Norstad were at odds, with each other and with Washington, over how to respond to these provocations and how to proceed with military preparations for a potential Berlin conflict that could lead to general war. The October 23 dispute was the beginning of more serious confrontation in the days to come.

The diplomatic momentum of early October had stalled, for the most part because of French and West German disagreements but also because of the deepening realization that the Soviets were offering very little in return for Western withdrawal from Berlin. The British supported the America initiative but worried the other Allies could derail negotiations.⁷¹² On the day Lightner was stopped in East Berlin, Ambassador Gavin called on de Gaulle who showed him a letter he had just written to Kennedy. Gavin said he thought it important to continue the ambassadorial talks but de Gaulle made it clear such talks should not be construed as providing

⁷⁰⁹ Kennedy letter to Norstad, October 20, 1961, *FRUS 1961-63*, Vol. XIV, doc.185.

⁷¹⁰ General Wheeler memo to Norstad; Norstad memo to Lemnitzer; Watson memo to Norstad, October 15-16, 1961, JFK, NSF, Box 83, folder 10/16-10/19/61.

⁷¹¹ Cable from Lightner to Rusk, October 23, 1961, *FRUS 1961-63*, Vol. XIV, doc. 186.

⁷¹² Memo re Kohler-Hood meeting, October 16, 1961, Washington, JFK, NSF, Box 83, folder 10/16-10/19/61.

guidance for Thompson's discussions in Moscow. He rejected Kennedy's idea of a Western ministers meeting in November. Gavin asked what would happen if they abandoned negotiations and the Soviets resorted to force? De Gaulle replied that negotiating under threat of force was the worst option possible.⁷¹³ On the other hand, if the Soviets were not going to use force, there was no need either to negotiate. De Gaulle did not think the Soviets wanted war and the US was in too much hurry to negotiate. He thought negotiations detrimental to the US, to Adenauer and the Germans and to the Western alliance.

Meanwhile, Ambassador Grewe was telling Kennedy that the FRG had never opposed negotiations and would help get the French on board. But Grewe also made clear that the West Germans were not happy with the new contingency plans deemphasizing nuclear use, in particular a first-strike option.⁷¹⁴ Nor were they happy with US advice to explore unification through talks with the East Germans, rather than on the principle of free all-German elections. The new policy seemed more likely to reinforce than remove political divisions. Said Grewe, "the Germans regarded the confrontation of Soviet and American forces as a desirable situation rather than as a bad one."⁷¹⁵ Kennedy said that negotiations were a much better alternative and the rest of NATO supported this view. Before Thompson proceeded very far in his Moscow talks, Kennedy thought it would be helpful for Adenauer to visit Washington again for talks.

Armored Confrontation at "Checkpoint Charlie"

On October 24, Clay wired the President that East German provocations were becoming so severe as to preclude further negotiation until the Soviets reined in Ulbricht. He would cease further attempts to enter East Berlin with an armed escort but would make an unarmed probe

⁷¹³ Memo re de Gaulle-Gavin meeting, Paris, October 24, 1961, *FRUS 1961-63*, Vol. XIV, doc. 187.

⁷¹⁴ Klaus Schwabe, "Adenauer and Nuclear Deterrence," in, Europe, *Cold War & Co-Existence*, Loth, ed, p. 46.

⁷¹⁵ Memo re Kennedy-Grewe meeting, Washington, D.C, October 24, 1961, *FRUS 1961-63*, Vol. XIV, doc. 188.

again that day. He and Lightner urged the president to immediately call Ambassador Menshikov in to make a vigorous protest.⁷¹⁶ Unhappy with Clay and Lightner's tactics, Kohler immediately wired back that they were over-reacting. Kohler said most of what he received in reply was "doubletalk," but Lightner acknowledged over-reaction and accepted the rebuke, blaming "higher authority."⁷¹⁷ He was told that negotiations depended on more important factors and to stress Washington's displeasure to Clay.

Although Lightner was considerably more hawkish on Berlin than most of his State Department colleagues, he was a loyal and experienced team player. General Clay, however, was about to demonstrate that he was considerably more independent. With his approval, unarmed probes of entry access continued and met with official harassment and denial of access. On October 25, Norstad told the JCS's General Lyman Lemnitzer, "a foundation has certainly been established for a showdown."⁷¹⁸ Despite Kohler's opposition, Ambassador Dowling, in Bonn, favored continued armed probes; Lightner reported that the West Berlin public also supported the probes, as did Bundy aide Colonel Lawrence Legere.⁷¹⁹

After another probe was stopped the next day, US personnel observed, while East German officials refused to summon Soviet political aides, Russian vehicles were circling the scene. Norstad wanted Washington to have Thompson protest Soviet refusal to intervene. On October 27, in Washington, Paul Nitze told Bundy that the JCS thought probes should continue, regardless of "Thompson's demarche in Moscow," but that McNamara disagreed. Kohler, also a member of Kennedy's private negotiating group, wanted all probes stopped immediately.

⁷¹⁶ Cable from Clay & Lightner) to Rusk, October 24, 1961, *FRUS 1961-63*, Vol. XIV, doc. 188 & 189.

⁷¹⁷ Memo from Kohler to Rusk, October 24, 1961, *FRUS 1961-63*, Vol. XIV, doc. 189.

⁷¹⁸ Cable for Norstad to Lemnitzer, October 25, 1961, JFK Library, National Security Files (Germany/Berlin series, Box 83, folder 10/20-10/25/61.

⁷¹⁹ Legere memos to Bundy, October 27, 1961, JFK Library, NSF, Box 83, folder 10/20-10/30/1961.

Ambassador Dowling in Bonn thought they should be continued. Lightner reported strong public support in West Berlin for the probes. On October 30, Bundy told Kennedy that he had denied Lightner and Clay's request for reciprocal measures against Soviet visitors to West Berlin. Kennedy decided to limit Soviets to one point of access to West Berlin.⁷²⁰

The same day British Foreign Office aide Lord Hood was telling Foy Kohler the British were still reluctant to commit to economic counter-measures in the event of total blockage to the city. Nonetheless, the British were ready to demand reciprocity on showing entry credentials, though the French were still reluctant to take this step. They noted that the Soviets would take careful note of these deliberations.⁷²¹ Aides to Undersecretary of State George Ball cast doubt on economic counter measures as an effective deterrent to Soviet actions. Measures would be difficult to coordinate, would have little short-term effect and might appear as weak-willed, thus emboldening Khrushchev.⁷²² Thompson had been instructed to make a strong protest personally to Gromyko about the Friedrichstrasse harassment and stress that negotiations could not take place under duress. Positive reaction from Gromyko would defer further probes till the matter was straightened out.⁷²³

On October 28, after another refusal of entry at this crossing, near the Brandenburg gate, dubbed Checkpoint Charlie, Clay ordered three US tanks brought within a quarter mile of the crossing. The Soviets responded, and the tanks moved forward in turn till they were visibly facing each other across the border crossing. More tanks, twenty on each side, were brought up to the checkpoint.⁷²⁴ This standoff continued overnight, but, apparently, messages conducted

⁷²⁰ Bowles cable to Dowling, October 30, 1961, *FRUS 1961-1963*, Vol. XIV, doc. 201.

⁷²¹ Memos re Kohler-Hood meetings, Oct. 28 & 30, 1961, Washington, D.C. JFK Library, NSF files, Box 83, 10/26-11/6/61 folder.

⁷²² Memo from William Elliott to George Ball, JFK Library, NSF files, Box 83, 10/26-11/6/61 folder.

⁷²³ Cable from Rusk to Thompson, November 28, 1961, *FRUS 1961-63*, Vol. XIV. doc. 198.

⁷²⁴ Hope Harrison, *Driving the Soviets Up the Wall, Soviet-East German Relations, 1953-1961* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2003), p.212-15.

through the Robert Kennedy/Georgi Bolshakov backchannel produced an agreement for each side to back off to a distance of two miles. Kennedy wrote Clay to congratulate him on his nerve. Clay answered that it was the nerves in Washington he was more concerned about.⁷²⁵

The incident brought home the seriousness of using force. Both American and Soviet forces around the world were brought to full readiness. Ulbricht was furious about Moscow's caution in the standoff and Khrushchev was angry that he had been baited into displaying more force than he wished.⁷²⁶ Despite Kennedy's congratulatory message, the incident also marked the end of Kennedy's confidence in the general. After masterminding the 1948 airlift and accompanying the Vice-President in August, Clay felt a strong personal commitment to Berlin., but his superiors worried about both his objectivity and his judgment. Rusk ordered a halt to armed probes into East Berlin. "to provide a cooling off period."⁷²⁷

Kennedy, determined not abandon negotiations, applied pressure on de Gaulle. In an October 30 letter, the President reminded de Gaulle that the US was providing most of the personnel and material support for NATO. Kennedy proposed the Western heads meet in December. However, said Kennedy, if prospects appeared dim for progress, it would be better not to meet at all. He emphasized to de Gaulle how necessary it was for the West to work together. De Gaulle sat stone-faced through Ambassador Gavin's presentation, offering only a perfunctory offer to consider the information. If de Gaulle accepted, this would be the first Western Heads meeting since Paris 1959. As with that meeting, the purpose would be Berlin resolution.⁷²⁸

⁷²⁵ Lawrence Freedman, *Kennedy's Wars* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2000), p. 91.

⁷²⁶ Frederick Taylor, *The Berlin Wall* (New York: Harper Perennial, 2006), p. 280-285

⁷²⁷ Rusk cable to Thompson, October 28, 1961, *FRUS 1961-1963*, Vol. XIV, doc. 198.

⁷²⁸ Memo from Gavin to Rusk re meeting w/de Gaulle in Paris, Oct. 30, 1961. *FRUS 1961-63*, Vol. XIV, doc. 200.

The situation in Berlin was not improving. On November 2, Lightner advised Rusk that he saw little point in either submitting to the current East German identification checks for Allied diplomatic/military personnel or admitting similar Soviet personnel to the Western sectors. To do otherwise would admit to de facto recognition of East Germany.⁷²⁹ Rusk replied that Kennedy agreed the West should not submit to identification checks but should take no further action. The Wall had demonstrated East German control of their sector, whether or not this was politically recognized by the West. Rather than wasting time contesting small issues, like identification checks, the West needed to deal with "other slices of salami which the Soviets will try to take to establish the wall as a state-frontier of the GDR."⁷³⁰ The West needed to remain focused on negotiation and military preparedness.

Allies Attempt New Negotiations

Kohler reported that the allied ambassadorial group was unable to agree on any cohesive response to the Friedrichstrasse problem. They thought "the probable next attempt to slice the salami" would have the GDR requiring identification from previously-exempt military. Kohler noted that West Germans, asked to explore intermediary relations with the GDR, were very reluctant to consider "making practical arrangements with someone from the other side. Kohler also said "Ambassador Thompson has expressed doubts concerning the wisdom of continuing the Moscow probe of the Soviet position on the Berlin and German questions."⁷³¹ With the Western ambassadorial group unable to make much progress and Thompson skeptical about his

⁷²⁹ Lightner cable to Rusk, November 2, 1961, *FRUS 1961-1963*, Vol. XIV, doc. 202.

⁷³⁰ Rusk cable to Lightner, November 3, 1961, *FRUS 1961-1963*, Vol. XIV, doc.203.

⁷³¹ Memo from Kohler to Rusk, November 5, 1961, *FRUS 1961-63*, Vol. XIV, doc. 204.

private mission, Kennedy would need agreement among the Western heads to prepare a constructive new approach to the Soviets, as well as viable contingency planning.⁷³²

In a meeting with Kennedy, Norstad made clear he understood his responsibilities as a US General took precedence over NATO loyalties. However, he also had, as SACEUR, to operate in the contentious context of the North Atlantic Council. McNamara now understood the difficulty. When asked by Kennedy what they should do if access were stopped, Norstad said he would respond with small probes and suggested appealing to the UN. When Kennedy scoffed at the UN's efficacy, the General suggested that the President might consider inviting Khrushchev "to meet him in Berlin on a specific day."⁷³³ Kennedy seemed interested in this idea; he also told Norstad that he appreciated the General had not taken advantage of the opportunity to receive more divisions in Europe. On the whole, this meeting bode well for cohesion in military planning and response. Norstad's suggestion for an unplanned one-on-one meet with Khrushchev in Berlin was an innovative idea that could have transformed the whole nature of modern summit diplomacy.⁷³⁴

Kennedy's next step would be to steer Adenauer towards realistic negotiation. The British wanted to push harder now new talks with the Soviets, without waiting for Adenauer and de Gaulle, or to see how Friedreichstrasse settled out, which could take a while.⁷³⁵ The Soviets had again lifted their deadline but might not take kindly to much delay in negotiation. The Soviets were, in fact, in no hurry to resolve the checkpoint problem. At a Kremlin reception on November 8, Gromyko told Thompson they did not intend to reply to Rusk's request for intercession since the situation had quieted somewhat. Thompson said the quiet was only due to

⁷³² Freedman, *Kennedy's Wars*, p.106.

⁷³³ Memo re Kennedy/Norstad/Taylor meeting, Washington, D.C., November 9, 1961, *FRUS 1961-63*, Vol. XIV, doc. 205.

⁷³⁴ *Ibid.*

⁷³⁵ Nigel Ashton, *Kennedy, Macmillan and the Cold War*, p. 62.

Western attempts at a cooling-off period. Gromyko said the problem had come up solely because of Western armed provocation. Thompson said the reverse was true and the West would not accept the provocations much longer.⁷³⁶ Lightner was lobbying from Berlin for a more vigorous response to show that "even though we cannot effectively resist salami tactics in East Berlin, we will resist them wherever our interests are concerned."⁷³⁷ To do otherwise would risk West Berliners' confidence in the Allied protectors. Lightner acknowledged that confrontation could harden Berlin's east-west division but felt the current position was doing that anyway.

Khrushchev Turns Tougher

Khrushchev chose this time to reply at some length to Kennedy. The Premier had had a difficult few weeks himself. The 22nd Party Congress in Moscow, drawing delegates not only from all over the USSR, but also the Peoples Republic of China, Albania, Yugoslavia and Cuba, was much more trouble than expected. Former protégés like Frol Kozlov, who had visited the US in 1959 as a counterpart to Vice-President Nixon's visit to Moscow, now openly criticized Khrushchev for both domestic and foreign policy shortcomings.⁷³⁸ Khrushchev was also criticized behind the scene for allowing Soviet defenses to lag while Kennedy bolstered American forces.⁷³⁹

President Kennedy and Secretary of Defense McNamara authorized Defense Undersecretary Roswell Gilpatric to publicly expose the gross exaggerations of Khrushchev's claims about Soviet missile strength. U-2 over-flights had been made superfluous by the new Corona reconnaissance satellite which sent back photos revealing that the Soviets had at best ten

⁷³⁶ Cable from Thompson to Rusk, November 8, 1961, *FRUS 1961-63*, Vol. XIV, doc. 207.

⁷³⁷ Cable from Lightner to Rusk, November 8, 1961, *FRUS 1961-63*, Vol. XIV, doc. 208.

⁷³⁸ Beschlopss, *The Crisis Years*, p. 355; Slusser "The Berlin Crisis of 1961," p. 431-440.

⁷³⁹ Taubman, Khrushchev, p. 513-514.

to twenty-five ICBMs, without hardened silos or easy-launch capability; this was barely enough for a first strike, let alone retaliation. Intelligence gained from Soviet Colonel Oleg Penkovsky also indicted Soviet missile strength was much weaker than imagined. In a speech to the Business Council in Hot Springs, Virginia on October 21, 1961, Gilpatric revealed this information to embarrass Khrushchev, sharpening the jibe by alluding to Soviet worries about Red Chinese competition.⁷⁴⁰ The speech was also intended to lessen the imposing technological shadow created by the Soviets' recent detonation of an unprecedented fifty megaton thermonuclear bomb.⁷⁴¹ This 'Tsar Bomba,' as it was called, was too big for most Soviet missiles or bombers to carry, but it was another first, like the Gagarin spaceflight, that caught the US by surprise. Gilpatric's exposure of Soviet weakness was only one problem for Khrushchev, though, who now faced pressure from domestic and East bloc critics.

Bad harvests, environmental blunders and administrative corruption had resulted in food shortages, embarrassing the Premier who prided himself on being an agricultural specialist. Failure to more vigorously assist 'national liberation struggles' more vigorously brought jeers at the Party Congress from the Chinese, who walked out when Khrushchev began speaking of 'peaceful coexistence.'" Hard-line delegates from Soviet Union's own Communist Party criticized the failure to win concessions over Berlin and Germany.⁷⁴² Khrushchev's further efforts at de-Stalinization were approved only after considerable debate. Although Khrushchev managed to get an overall vote of confidence, clearly domestic opposition was growing stronger. Thus, Khrushchev knew he had to renew his Berlin campaign with toughness, as well as tact.⁷⁴³

⁷⁴⁰ Beschloss, *Crisis Years*, p. 333.

⁷⁴¹ John Lewis Gaddis, *We Now Know: Rethinking Cold War History*, p. 256.

⁷⁴² William Taubman, *Khrushchev, the Man and his Era*, p. 516.

⁷⁴³ Fursenko & Naftali, *Khrushchev's Cold War*, p. 414-15.

In the new letter to Kennedy, the Premier attacked Allied strengthening of West Germany as a violation of Potsdam. He ridiculed de Gaulle for posing as the FRG's protector, when actually it was the Germans who were controlling de Gaulle's moves. The peace treaty, said Khrushchev, was the one mechanism that could resolve dissension and competition in Europe. It was not his intent to impose a socialist system on Germany nor could the West try to impose capitalism upon the East. He had hoped that the practical measures outlined in his last letter and the discussions with Gromyko would have been answered in Kennedy's reply letter or in Thompson's presentation, but that had not happened.⁷⁴⁴

The Soviet Union, he said, did not want troublesome West Berlin for itself, but all the West seemed to care for was its occupation status there. Why not take the easy, peaceful course of turning Berlin into a free city and recognizing East Germany, since the Allies already had de facto dealings with the GDR? Did the West want to keep Berlin as a base for subversion, espionage and propaganda? These, he said, were the important questions, not guaranteed access, which the West need not doubt.⁷⁴⁵ He said he also wished to discuss other matters, but they would have to wait. Though cordial, the letter was noticeably tougher, with more boilerplate language than the previous letter. Michael Beschloss has written that Khrushchev viewed the Gilpatric speech as a deliberate humiliation authorized by the President. The cold tone of his November 7 letter reflected this bitterness.⁷⁴⁶

West German Ambassador Kroll visited Khrushchev on November 11, and informally suggested a Berlin plan that basically kept the status quo, except for the Wall, on the basis of a new four-power agreement. Khrushchev sounded receptive but Kroll's superiors in Bonn

⁷⁴⁴ Khrushchev letter to Kennedy, November 7, 1961, *FRUS 1961-63*. Vol. XIV, doc. 209.

⁷⁴⁵ *Ibid.*

⁷⁴⁶ Beschloss, *Crisis Years*, p. 350-52.

repudiated the proposal.⁷⁴⁷ Thompson was briefed by Kroll but was still more concerned by Gromyko's refusal to intervene in the Berlin checkpoint problem. Acceptance of the situation seemed unlikely to improve the situation, said Thompson.⁷⁴⁸ He did not want to proceed with more serious negotiations till Kennedy spoke with Adenauer. Clay told Washington that if force proved necessary, the United States might have to proceed unilaterally. Collateral problems would ensure a pyrrhic victory at best. The Allies were so unprepared to negotiate they would certainly lose ground. Ground force would be futile unless backed by an visible readiness to use nuclear force.⁷⁴⁹ This attitude may have, in fact been realistic, but it was also a retreat back to the fearful confusion of June and July. As for Norstad's idea of an impromptu summit, Rusk offered indecisive approval, saying that "we have always had in mind ... a meeting at the highest level with the Soviet Union."⁷⁵⁰ Rusk noted pros and cons of bilateral vs. four-power Berlin summitry, but deferred actually making any recommendation.

Bringing the West Germans on Board

On the eve of Adenauer's US visit, Bundy and Kissinger told the President they did not think the Germans actually wanted negotiations. However, thought the National Security Advisor and his influential new aide, failure by the allies to pursue negotiations would result in the Soviets implementing their peace treaty which would probably find general public favor outside of Europe, more "salami tactics" to limit access to West Berlin, deepened allied division, and "possible war -conventional or nuclear." Adenauer and de Gaulle's support remained essential, no matter how difficult it was to obtain. Kennedy was being told again his own "firm"

⁷⁴⁷ Editorial Note re Kroll/Khrushchev visit, *FRUS 1961-63*, Vol. XIV, doc. 210.

⁷⁴⁸ Cable from Thompson to Rusk, November 9, 1961, *FRUS 1961-63*, Vol. XIV, doc. 211.

⁷⁴⁹ Cable from Clay via Lightner to Rusk, November 13, 1961, *FRUS 1961-63* Vol. XIV, doc. 213.

⁷⁵⁰ Memo from Rusk to Kennedy, *FRUS 1961-63*, Vol. XIV, doc. 214.

personal leadership would bring the Chancellor around. This rhetoric was becoming familiar but less optimistic with each refrain.⁷⁵¹

Kennedy's meeting with Adenauer on November 20 proved anticlimactic. The Chancellor opened with a long, if disingenuous, exposition on the Kroll's recent 'private diplomacy, saying that Khrushchev had engineered the incident and arranged for details to be leaked to the press. Adenauer said that Kroll had not been fully briefed, but still had been retired.⁷⁵² Adenauer agreed with most of Kennedy's talking points, without displaying much commitment to negotiation.⁷⁵³ He was open to a Western Foreign Ministers meeting in Paris in December and he approved of the Thompson demarche. Unlike many observers, Adenauer thought Khrushchev had "emerged from the 22nd Party Congress at the height of his power."

This 'success' had fueled the Chairman's vanity and bravado, but he really did not want war: "one must neither show fear to Khrushchev or be impolite to him." Kennedy said he agreed with de Gaulle that an unprepared or divided Western approach would be worse than no negotiations at all, but the West was now in a strong enough position to proceed. Their nuclear advantage might be much less in a couple of years. Delay would endanger West Berlin and Europe. France might isolate itself from the rest of the West. Adenauer said the general still had bitter feelings about his treatment by Roosevelt and Churchill during the wartime negotiations. The Chancellor would write de Gaulle immediately and urge his participation. Before the meeting ended, Adenauer said he had to emphasize that, in the event of a conflict, the West

⁷⁵¹ Memo from Bundy to Kennedy, *FRUS 1961-63*, Vol. XIV, doc. 215.

⁷⁵² Mayers, Adenauer and Kennedy, p. 56.

⁷⁵³ Memo re Kennedy/Adenauer meeting, Washington, D.C., November 20, 1961, *FRUS 1961-63*, Vol. XIV, doc. 216.

would be stronger militarily only "only if nuclear weapons were used from the very beginning - otherwise the West would not succeed."⁷⁵⁴

Though Adenauer gave a warm appearance of cooperation, he had avoided any specific discussion of the really difficult sticking points like recognition of and cooperation with East Germany or the Oder-Niesse as a border.⁷⁵⁵ Without serious consideration of how they could now get the Soviet Union to relax its core demands for GDR recognition and Western withdrawal from Berlin, they had agreed on negotiation only in theory. Kennedy did not press the Chancellor on specifics beyond the need to negotiate and getting de Gaulle to participate.⁷⁵⁶

Complicating things further, the West Germans had a new foreign Minister, Gerhard Schroeder, who met with Rusk on November 21 to do more practical bargaining. Rusk said they could try to get the Soviets to agree to the West Germans' preference for an all-Berlin plebiscite and removal of the wall, but there was no reason to expect any success in that direction. Schroeder acknowledged this and said their best chance lay in stressing the legal foundation for occupation rights. The Soviets had already accepted that the West was there by treaty-ratified "right of conquest" and should be held to the legally recognize status quo. This would have the most positive resonance with the public.⁷⁵⁷

Rusk agreed with this strategy, but said integrating West Berlin into the FRG would compromise the legal argument for maintaining the status quo. Schroeder accepted this objection and said the FRG would not press the issue. Rusk promised the US would "strive very hard to protect the full freedom of action to West Berlin to maintain ties with the Federal Republic." The FRG and West Berlin had already established some political links which might

⁷⁵⁴ *Ibid.*

⁷⁵⁵ Mayers, *Adenauer and Kennedy*, p. 60-61.

⁷⁵⁶ Same as 601.

⁷⁵⁷ Memo re Rusk-Schroeder meeting, Washington, November 21, 1961, *FRUS 1961-1963*, Vol. XIV, doc. 217.

have to be amended in a new affirmation with the Soviets on occupation rights. West German requests for specific guarantees on civilian rights might not be easily bundled into the occupation agreements. Undersecretary Kohler said these difficulties were more semantic than substantive. The allies would be seeking to ensure free access to the city for civilians as well as military.⁷⁵⁸

More serious questions arose to how the FRG and GDR might recognize and deal with one another. Schroeder said he did not see how West and East Germany could deal with one another on access problems without recognition. Rusk said the US had told the Soviets would not deal with the GDR on access questions, but Schroeder replied the GDR would prefer dealing with the Allies rather than West Germany. The Allies could bring more leverage to bear on access questions.⁷⁵⁹ FRG State Undersecretary Carstens (in rank and influence, similar to Kohler) noted a number of problematic situations. He also observed that the GDR would not make trouble without Soviet approval; this point was debatable since the checkpoint provocations had been instigated more by Ulbricht than by Khrushchev. Carstens disagreed with Rusk's suggestion that the UN might constructively assist in access problems. Rusk kept his patience and ended the meeting on a neutral note, saying allied access could not be brought into question.⁷⁶⁰

Adenauer and Kennedy spoke again shortly afterwards. Rusk opened the meeting with a review of his discussion with Schroeder saying "as usual, when the ministers do the talking, the experts must tidy up matters afterwards." Apparently, the problem of West Germany considering Berlin as one of its 'lands' (equivalent to a state or province) was more serious than first realized. Rusk said he recognized the sensitivity of this issue and wanted to allow the West Germans to make their position clear; Schroeder declined to add anything. Rusk outlined the

⁷⁵⁸ *Ibid.*

⁷⁵⁹ *Ibid.*

⁷⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 598-602.

strategy of framing access questions as a matter of uncontested occupation rights and potential problems in dealing with the GDR. Rusk said "the problem before us was what might happen after the Soviet Union enters into a separate peace treaty with the GDR."⁷⁶¹ The West Germans might suddenly have to deal with the GDR on a day-to-day basis, wherein it would behoove them to have some practical framework with the East. This process could be started by now preparing detailed legal briefs on the current access arrangements.

Business-like and optimistic, Kennedy said this had to be worked out in detail and that progress was already being made in this regard. When the subject turned to the UN assistance, Schroeder again became cool, saying that could lead to GDR recognition.⁷⁶² Further discussion of UN administration or peacekeepers in West Berlin brought even more objections from Schroeder. Adenauer, who had been silent so far, said that some UN involvement could have a positive psychological value for West Berlin, but UN soldiers would inspire no confidence. Kennedy invited him to speak further. Adenauer said "the constitutional status of Berlin ... (is) ... most important of all." He was a legal scholar who had helped draft the FRG's Basic Law system and had helped reconcile legal differences with the allied occupation. he was concerned also about the "80 or so" FRG offices in West Berlin."⁷⁶³ FRG political connections with West Berlin were highly valued by the city's populace: "he wanted to hear no further talk about the removal of coats of arms." Practical administrative matters might be shifted to UN auspices.⁷⁶⁴

The President, in turn, moved to build on Adenauer's cooperative tone, saying "we should start negotiating on the basis of a position of a position..which would insist on the complete freedom of Berlin to maintain its relations with West Germany." There was a catch though;

⁷⁶¹ Memo re Kennedy-Adenauer meeting, Washington, November 21, 1961, *FRUS 1961-63*, Vol. XIV, doc 216.

⁷⁶² Beschloss, *Crisis Years*, p. 340-41.

⁷⁶³ Memo re Kennedy-Adenauer meeting, Washington, November 21, 1961, *FRUS 1961-63*, Vol. XIV, doc. 216.

⁷⁶⁴ *Ibid.*

Kroll had told Khrushchev that FRG/West Berlin ties were not negotiable. Now, said Kennedy, there might be need for "some limitations on the freedom of Berlin." ⁷⁶⁵ Schroeder said this might be acceptable with sufficient guarantees. Kennedy and Adenauer withdrew for private discussions. Rusk then told Schroeder there would be no recognition of the GDR or the Oder-Niese boundary, both concessions that Eisenhower and Macmillan had tried to advance in 1959 and 1960 and both under active US discussion in the early summer and mid-autumn of 1961. By taking these options off the table, the West could not offer the Soviets any more attractive terms than in their July 1959 Western Peace Plan. The Soviets had consistently rejected that package but Rusk did not acknowledge this reality. The price for West German support in November 1961 would probably be rejection by the Soviets. ⁷⁶⁶

The Rusk-Schroeder conversation then devolved even further away from pragmatic compromises that might attract the Soviets. Rusk intoned the 'we won't buy the same horse twice' line to Schroeder, which Gromyko had pointedly ignored every time it was used. FRG defense minister Strauss showed a map showing Soviet dominance of Eastern Europe; all agreed that the West should not be pushed back any further. The German Foreign Minister brought up non-starting ideas like all-German plebiscites for unification as though it were a serious negotiating position. ⁷⁶⁷ It was as though they understood real negotiation with the Soviets was not going to happen and they might as well indulge their fantasies about an ideal settlement.

The foreign ministers may have departed from practical approaches, but in the same minutes, Kennedy and Adenauer were speaking seriously. The Chancellor said agreements needed to be as flexible as possible, but if they could guarantee "the freedom, the US need not fear any difficulties from the German side." At that very moment, Rusk was accepting very

⁷⁶⁵ *Ibid*

⁷⁶⁶ Mayer, *Adenauer & Kennedy*, p. 578-60.

⁷⁶⁷ Same as note 762.

difficult demands from Schroeder. Kennedy asked Adenauer what he thought of Walter Lippmann's statement that German acceptance of neutral reunification would result in irreversible assimilation into the East's orbit. Adenauer dismissed any such possibility. Kennedy pressed Adenauer on West German renunciation of acquiring weapons of mass destruction. Adenauer replied this would be no problem, as long as they could be assured of immediate communication with Washington in a crisis.⁷⁶⁸ The conversation ended amicably, but without any clear expressions from either leader on what the next step might be, either with among the Allies or with the Soviets.

In a summary session with the ministers to draft a joint communiqué, the failure to make any substantive progress became apparent. Disarmament and boundary questions thought already settled proved particularly awkward. Kennedy and Rusk's attempts to make the West Germans more flexible were dismissed with flat statements that the Soviet and East German assurances were not to be trusted. Glad to have at least some restoration of allied solidarity, the US accepted these objections along with Adenauer's assurance that he would work on de Gaulle.⁷⁶⁹ Kennedy told UK Prime Minister Macmillan that the meetings had been successful and had prepared the way for a Western Ministers meeting before Christmas and possibly an East-West foreign ministers meeting shortly after the new year. Kennedy also told Macmillan that, however difficult, Britain was going to have to commit to more military support.⁷⁷⁰

⁷⁶⁸ Memo re Kennedy-Adenauer private meeting, Washington, D.C. November 21, 1961, *FRUS 1961-63*, Vol. XIV, doc. 219.

⁷⁶⁹ Memo re Adenauer/Rusk /Schroeder/Kennedy meeting, Washington, D.C. November 22, 1961, *FRUS 1961-63*, Vol. XIV, doc. 221.

⁷⁷⁰ Letter from Kennedy to Macmillan, November 22, 1961, *FRUS 1961-63*, Vol. XIV.

Negotiations Stall in December

The West Germans had been more cooperative than expected but had still not agreed to the kind of practical concessions needed.⁷⁷¹ The failure to produce a workable program in Washington may have been just as well, because attitudes in Moscow were hardening against negotiation. Noting the tougher tone of the Premier's November 7 letter, Thompson told the President a few days later that Khrushchev "may have been misled by the Gromyko talks and the fact that some of his statements were not specifically rebutted." Said Thompson, "Khrushchev may have been over-encouraged by the splits within the Western ranks," specifically British willingness to recognize the GDR and some West German readiness to "sacrifice West Berlin."⁷⁷²

Having had time to reflect, Khrushchev was growing cautious. Opposition within Soviet Union and the Communist bloc, agricultural failures, and East German economic weakness further discouraged his confidence in negotiation at this time. Thompson speculated that the Premier may also have also become worried about hawks in the West ready to renew containment policies. Thompson suggested sharing the Kennedy-Khrushchev correspondence with the British so they would have a more realistic idea of the situation. Kennedy, said the Ambassador should tell Khrushchev that "there is little hope for a broad agreement at this time but ...we should make every effort to prevent war."⁷⁷³

Reports from the allies were no more optimistic. Macmillan held disappointing talks with de Gaulle. Falling ill on his return to Bonn, the elderly Chancellor's attempts to talk with the General were delayed until mid-December. In a note of apology, Adenauer sounded more interested in Western commitment to resist aggression than to pursue negotiation. In addition, the

⁷⁷¹ Rusk cable to Dowling, November 28, 1961, *FRUS 1961-1963*, Vol. XIV, doc. 225.

⁷⁷² Letter from Thompson to Rusk, November 27, 1961, *FRUS 1961-1963*, Vol. XIV, doc. 224.

⁷⁷³ *Ibid.*

letter from the Chancellor was apparently much softer on negotiations than hoped.⁷⁷⁴ Whatever momentum hoped for from the Kennedy-Adenauer meetings dissipated quickly. Minor but chronic harassment persisted at Berlin checkpoints and the access corridor.

Impatient with allied refusal to develop a unified position, the President decided he needed to write Khrushchev and salvage a deteriorating situation. Kennedy had recently been interviewed again by Khrushchev's son-in-law, journalist Aleksei Adzhubei.⁷⁷⁵ He told Khrushchev now that interviews were where people made ideological arguments; this correspondence should be more practical and constructive. Kennedy said they needed to abandon gimmicky language about 'free cities.'⁷⁷⁶ Kennedy said the fact of the matter was West Berlin wanted Western troops and not Soviet troops to protect their freedoms. Western access rights preceded the establishment of East Germany; the Soviet Union had a legal obligation to uphold those rights. The US and its allies were open to clarifying those rights but not to Soviet unilateral action to abrogate them. Khrushchev should not be misled by reports of dissent in the Western ranks. The West was preparing constructive negotiating proposals and the Soviets should do the same so that "we and you will be able to sit down in ... to reach a solution mutually satisfactory to all." The president concluded "what best serves peace, not merely prestige, must be our yardstick."⁷⁷⁷ Having replied to Khrushchev, with a toughness matching the Chairman's, the American President now had to hope the Western Ministers could salvage enough common ground to back up his message.

The Western Foreign Ministers met in Paris on December 10-12; the Heads of State meeting anticipated in October did not occur. Britain's Lord Home told the Ministers they

⁷⁷⁴ Letter from Adenauer to Kennedy, December 2, 1961, *FRUS 1961-63*, Vol. XIV, doc. 229.

⁷⁷⁵ Dallek, *An Unfinished Life*, p. 434.

⁷⁷⁶ Letter from Kennedy to Khrushchev, December 2, 1961, *FRUS 1961-63*, Vol. XIV, doc. 230.

⁷⁷⁷ *Ibid.*

needed to find some agreement before the NATO meetings a few days away. Neither the French nor West Germans were eager to discuss the de Gaulle-Adenauer talks that had just occurred. French minister Couve de Murville cast the Soviets' Berlin proposals as part of their larger, long-term design to dominate Western Europe. The French had hoped the Paris 1960 summit would provide a forum to discuss European security problems with Soviets; they were ready for another opportunity but thought it would be difficult.⁷⁷⁸

They thought Berlin was only "a means to an end" for the USSR, which was offering nothing of value to the West. Since the Soviets did not really want war, no matter how much they blustered, there was no need for negotiations. Not only were negotiations unnecessary, said de Murville, they would seriously weaken Germany and, in turn, all of Western Europe. Lord Home answered that it was still possible to negotiate on specifics with the Soviet Union.⁷⁷⁹ He cited concurrent talks on Laos, nuclear testing and disarmament, though these examples were in fact only marginal discussions. Home made an articulate argument in principle for negotiations, but did not move the French in the slightest.

De Murville contrasted the pre-Paris period when "an atmosphere of detente as generated" with the current environment of border closings and high-yield thermonuclear tests. He asked what the West expected to gain when Khrushchev was making such threats? Schroeder entered the argument on the side on negotiation, saying it was an imperfect but necessary tool to avoid catastrophe and offer hope for the city's residents. De Murville said the very nature of the occupation statutes was in question. Home said there were ways to protect those statutes. Unlike the French, he thought the stakes were too high not to attempt negotiation.

⁷⁷⁸ Caroline David, "Dealing with de Gaulle", in *Dealing with de Gaulle*, ed. Neulist, Locher & Martin, p.129.

⁷⁷⁹ Memo re quadripartite meeting, December 2, 1961, *FRUS 1961-63*, Vol. XIV, doc. 231.

If the West could not even "come away from these meetings with greater unity, then the Soviets would indeed erode our position and the unity of the alliance is unlikely to be repaired." ⁷⁸⁰

Negotiations with the Soviets did not require unacceptable concessions, said the Secretary, citing the 1949 Jessup-Malik agreement ending the airlift situation. Rusk said that Gromyko understood in September that the issue of GDR recognition was not on the table and that the deadline for the treaty had been lifted.⁷⁸¹ De Murville agreed on some points with Rusk, but said that since the French did not believe the Soviets would go to war over Berlin, that there was no need to negotiate over Berlin at the present time. Schroeder said the greatest danger that could come out of negotiations was neutralization. Rusk saw a danger of splitting the US away from Europe. Home emphasized that they needed to get better organized before they met with NATO in two days. In final sessions on December 12, the four countries could barely agree on a communiqué suggesting an East-West foreign ministers meeting.⁷⁸²

Kennedy called de Gaulle the same day to get the General to accept their final resolution: "Diplomatic contacts with the Soviet Union should be undertaken on the basis of the agreed positions of the Western powers in order to ascertain on what basis it might be possible to undertake formal negotiation at Foreign Ministers level with the Soviet government."⁷⁸³ De Gaulle rejected even this cautious language. He was not in favor of negotiations at this time. Kennedy said they would try to find acceptable language, but the conference was already breaking up. The Soviets were becoming very non-conciliatory; public speeches indicated little hope for negotiations, especially if the West was determined to return to its least flexible

⁷⁸⁰ *Ibid.*

⁷⁸¹ *Ibid.*

⁷⁸² The Ministers were also unable to present to the NATO council a common position on economic counter-measures, thus limiting a potentially valuable strategy in the event of a Berlin access stoppage. Even if the paper had been accepted, smaller countries like Iceland or Greece would have been reluctant to agree. Paper: "Berlin Economic Countermeasures" for NATO ministerial meeting, Paris, Dec. 13-15, 1961. JFK Library, National Security Files, Box 83A, folder 12/1-12/31/61.

⁷⁸³ memo re Kennedy-de Gaulle telephone conversation, December 12, 1961, *FRUS 1961-63*, Vol. XIV, doc. 239.

positions. At the National Press Club in Washington; Soviet Ambassador Menshikov had made a very tough presentation that rolled the Soviet position back to November 1958.⁷⁸⁴ On December 9, Khrushchev had made a similar speech to the world Federation of Trade Unions.

Khrushchev wrote a private letter again to Kennedy on December 13, thanking the president for his publicly conciliatory interview with Adzhubei but admonishing him for the private toughness of his December 2 letter. Taking special aim at the occupation arrangements, Khrushchev complained that the US wanted the Soviets "to play traffic cops on the roads to West Berlin and (to make) your temporary occupation status become permanent." He ridiculed the idea of a permanent occupation regime in West Berlin, saying that a German peace treaty was long overdue,. A special protocol making Berlin a free city would answer any other questions the West might have about the city's status. Khrushchev warned again against arming West Germany. Not only was the West refusing to end the last vestiges of World War II, they were potentially sowing the seeds for its resurgence. Khrushchev did not set a new deadline but neither did he make any specific suggestions on further negotiation.⁷⁸⁵

The Allies seemed to have lost all progress on Berlin made since December 1958. They had been in disarray then, but Eisenhower's Secretary of State John Foster Dulles had been able to maneuver his fellow foreign ministers into some agreement. Rusk had also gone to Europe but with more meager results. Adenauer was trying to escape blame for his failure to make de Gaulle more agreeable to negotiation.⁷⁸⁶ French indifference to his attempted intercession visibly diminished Adenauer's influence and the idea of French-German solidarity they used to keep Britain at a disadvantage in Europe. De Gaulle had gotten his way in obstructing

⁷⁸⁴ Memo(unsigned) re Menshikov speech to National Press Club, December 11, 1961, JFK Library, NSF files, Box 83A, folder 12/1-12/31/61.

⁷⁸⁵ Letter from Khrushchev to Kennedy, December 13, 1961, *FRUS 1961-1963*, Vol. XIV, doc. 240.

⁷⁸⁶ Trachtenberg, *A Constructed Peace*, p. 342

negotiations, but at serious cost to his relations with NATO, European allies and the United States. The British, keenest of all on negotiations in 1961, had not been very influential in Paris or in Washington. Macmillan and Ambassador Ormsby-Gore had good relations with Kennedy but without substantial results.⁷⁸⁷ United States leadership had increased disproportionately that its relations with smaller allies were becoming very uncomfortable. The Soviets had the same problem with allies like East Germany. Both Kennedy and Khrushchev faced significant domestic criticism over their Berlin policies. As these leaders prepared for a bilateral negotiations in 1962, they also had to consider the growing danger of nuclear escalation and the slow progress of disarmament talks.⁷⁸⁸ Ambassador Menshikov made clear, in a speech to Washington's National Press Club, that Khrushchev was still intent on signing his peace treaty, but without a new deadline.⁷⁸⁹

Conclusions

1961 marked the pivotal phase of the shift from multilateral East-West diplomacy on Berlin to bilateral engagement. Kennedy's unfamiliarity with the other leaders, disagreement with the Allies defense and trade issues, failure to notify them of the Bay of Pigs mission, and bilateral meetings at the start of the summer all helped erode the Eisenhower -era relationship. Perceiving uncertainty on Kennedy's part, Khrushchev pressed harder with his Berlin/German demands. Western disunity prevented Kennedy from framing a coherent response. Neither force nor negotiations promised successful outcomes. The Wall eased the pressure for either rushed

⁷⁸⁷ Ashton, *Kennedy, Macmillan and the Cold War*, p.62.

⁷⁸⁸ Zubok, *A Failed Empire*, p.140-143.

⁷⁸⁹ Memo re Menshikov speech, December 9, Washington, JFK, NSF, Box 83A, folder 12/1-31/61.

negotiations or a quick military buildup, but did not solve the problem of Khrushchev's peace treaty plans or his disagreements with East Germany.⁷⁹⁰

That situation prompted the United States and Soviet Unions to begin private negotiations in the fall of 1961. Khrushchev faced his own alliance problems, but the West's were more serious regarding Berlin. Disarmament prospects remained minimal, especially since NATO planning relied heavily on nuclear deterrence.⁷⁹¹ Although Berlin resolution did not seem likely, Western leaders did consider possible East-West foreign minister or heads-of-state meetings. The personal objections of de Gaulle and Adenauer prevented the West from finding a common platform or purpose. There would be no new summit. The United States, secured the agreement of the Allies for further US-Soviet talks.

From this point forward, the US and USSR would conduct the most important talks on Berlin.⁷⁹² The West Germans grew more influential, the French more independent, and the British more insulated, but still had a determining say on Berlin. So did Walter Ulbricht. Frustration with unrealistic and uncompromising allies led the superpowers to conduct Head-of-State correspondence, highest level ambassadorial talks, and foreign minister meetings on Berlin. Disarmament linkage was used by both sides to gain leverage. In the process of the next , intensive but formulaic rounds of talk, the participants - Thompson and Dobrynin, Rusk and Gromyko, Kennedy and Khrushchev, et al - got to know the other more closely than American and Soviet leaders had since the war. As unproductive, prolonged and contentious as these meetings were, it is significant that they proceeded in spite of military tension and armed confrontations in Berlin.

⁷⁹⁰ Fursenko & Naftali, *Khrushchev's Cold War*, p. 413.

⁷⁹¹ Freedman, *Kennedy's Wars*, p. 102-03; 106-07.

⁷⁹² Georg Schild, "The Berlin Crisis", in *Kennedy: the New Frontier Revisited*, p. 118-19.

The question going into 1962 was whether force might replace negotiation.⁷⁹³ The importance of nuclear weapons, including ICBMs and long-range bombers, in Allied and Soviet military strategy meant that force would be a more dangerous option than ever. This would become even clearer in the next year, as Khrushchev developed a plan to put nuclear missiles in Cuba. That, he thought, would show the United States how it felt to have missiles on its doorstep. But by introducing a new nuclear threat to the US, Khrushchev would diminish Berlin's leverage value for negotiations.

⁷⁹³ Vojtěch Mastny, "Detente, the Superpowers, and Their Allies, 1962-64," in *Kennedy: the New Frontier Revisited*, p. 217-19.

Chapter 5: "Vital Interests," January - August 1962

Introduction

The failure of the Western powers in late 1961 to agree on a practical negotiating strategy ended the last major multilateral attempt to dissuade the Soviet Union from signing a separate peace treaty with East Germany and abrogating Allied occupation rights in West Berlin. In 1962, the United States and Soviet Union continued bilateral discussions they had begun in September 1961.⁷⁹⁴ Their basic positions remained the same but their negotiating goals shifted to more pragmatic ends. The Soviets focused now on putting the occupation under a UN flag and linking a Berlin settlement to a European non-aggression pact. The United States, speaking for the West, wanted an interim agreement and an international access authority. Minimal progress on a negotiated settlement, and problems in Southeast Asia and Cuba eroded the importance of Berlin, so that the Berlin Crisis diminished in importance by late summer 1962, though the issue still held grave potential.⁷⁹⁵

Even with the bilateral approach, Western cohesion remained shaky and US-Soviet relations uncertain. Concerned over the dangers and consequences of forceful response plans that involved nuclear weapons use, President John Kennedy and British Prime Minister Harold Macmillan strongly advocated negotiations and tried to develop new options that might placate the Soviets.⁷⁹⁶ French president Charles de Gaulle, convinced that Khrushchev was not prepared to force the Allies from Berlin, discouraged negotiations, despite the increasing Soviet-approved pressure on West Berlin. West German Chancellor Konrad Adenauer could not be persuaded to

⁷⁹⁴ Andreas Daum, *Kennedy in Berlin*, p. 29-31.

⁷⁹⁵ Richard Alan Schwartz, *The Cold War Reference Guide* (Jefferson: McFarland and Co., 1997), p. 51-52.

⁷⁹⁶ Freedman, *Kennedy's Wars*, p.112.

approve even modest concessions to East Germany, but other elements in his government recognized the need for an inter-German detente.⁷⁹⁷ The British approved of the US 's diplomacy but chafed at their own diminished influence. Because France was also a signatory to the occupation agreements and West Germany's approval of any revision of the current situation was also necessary, the US could not agree to alterations in the Berlin status quo without undermining the Western alliance.⁷⁹⁸

The bilateral US and Soviet dialogue in 1962 further emphasized a trend away from the multilateralism that characterized the first two years of the Berlin Crisis. Begun soon after the Wall's construction in August 1961 and resuming in 1962, these confidential negotiations consisted of back-channel contacts between Soviet agent Georgi Bolshakov and Attorney General Robert Kennedy, private correspondence between Kennedy and Soviet Chairman Nikita Khrushchev, more personal discussions in Washington and Moscow through their respective ambassadors, Llewellyn Thompson and Anatoly Dobrynin, and extended talks between US Secretary of State Dean Rusk and Soviet Foreign minister Andrei Gromyko.⁷⁹⁹

The Soviets did not sign their peace treaty with East Germany or blockade West Berlin during these negotiations, but checkpoint and access corridor harassment increased steadily through the next several months. Contingency plans included nuclear weapons use to contest a West Berlin blockade.⁸⁰⁰ The resulting debates revealed the importance and hazards of nuclear deterrence more explicitly than at any time since the Korean War.⁸⁰¹ The resumption of Soviet testing just days after the Wall, the US revelation in October 1961 that Soviet missile strength was but a fraction of Khrushchev's claims, and the US's own resumption of testing in March

⁷⁹⁷ Mayers, *Kennedy and Adenauer*, p. 63.

⁷⁹⁸ Georg Schild, "The Berlin Crisis" in, White, ed, *Kennedy: the New Frontier Revisited*, p.120.

⁷⁹⁹ Joseph Whelan, *Soviet Negotiating Strategy*, p. 326-28, 350-51.

⁸⁰⁰ Trachtenberg, *A Constructed Peace*, p. 288-292.

⁸⁰¹ Dallek, *An Unfinished Life*, p. 464-66.

1962 underscored concerns about the nuclear arms race.⁸⁰² However, German and Berlin issues remained the most troublesome obstacle in their relations, with disarmament progress still dependent on their progress.

Eighteen-nation (East-West plus observers) disarmament talks, centering on a nuclear test ban, began in Geneva in the spring of 1962.⁸⁰³ Just as Gromyko's attendance at the United Nations sessions in October 1961 had allowed him to meet several times with Rusk, the Geneva talks provided diplomatic cover for extended discussions on Berlin between the two foreign ministers in April 1962. In the absence of a summit, these meetings were the most significant East-West discussions on Berlin since the ministers' October talks and the discussions with Adenauer in November 1961. Those talks were not productive however and even represented a hardening of positions.⁸⁰⁴ The ambassadorial and Kennedy-Khrushchev correspondence dialogues lapsed as a result and harassment increased. An ongoing impasse over Berlin, minimal progress at the disarmament conference, US resumption of testing and increased competition in the Third World signaled a retreat from detente. The severity of this estrangement is defined by Khrushchev's decision in May 1962 to station Soviet ballistic missiles with nuclear missiles in Cuba.⁸⁰⁵

Ambassador Thompson's Discussions in Moscow

When US Ambassador Thompson began discussions with Gromyko in January, he understood that resolution was unlikely in the near future. Rusk instructed him to first probe for

⁸⁰² Robert Divine, *Blowing in the Wind*, p.315-318.

⁸⁰³ Seaborg, *Khrushchev, Kennedy & the Test Ban*, p.140-42.

⁸⁰⁴ Beschloss, *Crisis Years*, p. 366.

⁸⁰⁵ John Lewis Gaddis, *We Now Know*, p. 261-63.

a productive basis for negotiation.⁸⁰⁶ Gromyko said that, although the most recent deadline had been extended for the time being, "it would be wrong to draw conclusion they are prepared to leave West Berlin situation unchanged." As for Western proposal to hold all-Berlin plebiscites to replace the Potsdam accords, "this question cannot be discussed." Gromyko made clear that since "East Berlin is completely integrated into the German Democratic Republic (GDR), West Berlin is the problem precisely because its social system is different."⁸⁰⁷ Thompson replied that the West still insisted on guaranteed access to West Berlin as a separate issue from recognizing GDR sovereignty.

Without actually stating that the West had little confidence in GDR responsibility for access, Thompson said the US was prepared to discuss an international access authority, one of the few new proposals in the 1962 dialogue. Rejection of an all-Berlin approach, a main element of the new US approach, "would greatly restrict possibility for discussion." "An agreement on access, even in absence of agreement on other matters," was essential, "if serious collision were to be avoided."⁸⁰⁸ He also reiterated the Soviet "free-city" was still not acceptable. Despite this unpromising start, Gromyko welcomed further discussion.

Reviewing the meeting, Thompson noted that Gromyko indicated no hurry to re-impose the deadline and did not malign the West Germans. Gromyko's reticence to discuss access may have reflected Soviet uncertainty about the Western position. Thompson thought that if the Soviets were aware that the West wanted more clearly defined links between West Germany and West Berlin, "discussions would be over." Thompson asked Rusk for permission to suggest a "Confederation of West and East Berlin," with both sides determining their own system but sharing some municipal administration. Because East German leader Walter Ulbricht had

⁸⁰⁶ Rusk cable to Thompson, December 29, 1961, *FRUS 1961-1963*, Vol. XIV, doc.249.

⁸⁰⁷ Memo re Thompson-Gromyko meeting, Moscow, January 2, 1962. *FRUS 1961-63*, Vol. XIV, doc. 251.

⁸⁰⁸ *Ibid.*

already proposed an all-German confederation, advancing a parallel idea might be seen as acknowledgement of Soviet prestige. This proposal might restore some unity and stability to the city, provide them with occupation rights in West Berlin, and even provide an excuse to remove the Wall. Said Thompson, "in any case I need something positive to say ... on status West Berlin at next session."⁸⁰⁹ Rusk, talking to British Ambassador David Ormsby-Gore, saw some slight signs of promise, especially regarding the international access authority. Rusk also noted "The French ... are showing a great deal more interest in these talks than they are supposed to."⁸¹⁰

Rusk replied to Thompson that the Soviet interest in further talks was encouraging, but the Soviets needed to be told that any unilateral peace treaty moves on their part would be unacceptable - Western occupation rights could not be in question. He should ask Gromyko to define how West Berlin was a threat to European peace and tell him that guaranteed access did not represent any infringement upon or interference with East German sovereignty.⁸¹¹

Thompson could note that the West had not moved to make West Berlin the capitol of the Federal Republic, while the Soviets had "first begun rearmament of Germany by rearming East Germans over Western protests." Regarding Gromyko's reference to "broader questions" in the first session, Thompson should say that the access question needed to be settled first.⁸¹² Specific details of the international access authority proposal would not be presented yet. The Soviets would first have to demonstrate they wanted to use the talks for more than just reiteration of their familiar positions.

So far, the latter was all the Soviets were showing Thompson. Gromyko opened their next discussion by reiterating the Soviets' standard free city proposal. Although they still

⁸⁰⁹ Cable from Thompson to Rusk, January 3, 1962, *FRUS 1961-63*, Vol. XIV, doc. 252.

⁸¹⁰ Memo re Rusk-Ormsby-Gore meeting, Washington, D.C. January 6, 1962, *FRUS 1961-63*, Vol. XIV, doc. 256.

⁸¹¹ Cable from Rusk to Thompson, January 10, 1962, *FRUS 1961-63*, Vol. XIV, doc. 259.

⁸¹² *Ibid.*

intended to proceed with the peace treaty, this could be preceded by an agreement on West Berlin. Gromyko "stressed that questions of formalization of existing German borders, respect for sovereignty GDR, prohibition nuclear arms for both German states, non-aggression treaty between NATO and Warsaw Pact must be considered simultaneously." An international access authority would unacceptably infringe on GDR sovereignty. Thompson responded that the peace treaty and free city proposals were unacceptable and Western occupation rights were not negotiable. He then told Gromyko that "it would seem we have come full circle and in some respects have taken a step backwards."⁸¹³ Gromyko responded that GDR sovereignty must be respected, ruling out an international access authority and an all-Berlin plebiscite. Access could only be discussed alongside the other Berlin issues. If the West believed they could improve and perpetuate their occupation rights, "all talk will be in vain." Thompson regretted the Soviets would allow the GDR to determine whether a new access agreement was acceptable; this made negotiations futile because the West would be "buying the same horse twice."⁸¹⁴

In evaluating the conversation, Thompson first reaction was pessimistic; he speculated that Gromyko's tough line may have been meant to delay the talks, possibly to bring in the Germans or to force a summit, or even scuttle discussions in favor of a separate treaty. British Ambassador Frank Roberts thought the Soviets were gauging the West, hoping to find out if Macmillan-Adenauer talks just a few days before had influenced the Americans. Thompson noted that "Gromyko asked no questions about international authority idea even for purpose of being in better position to knock it down."⁸¹⁵ Thompson did not know what to recommend as a next step. The Soviets had "tabled free city proposal even though told already it was unacceptable." He felt the US, perceived as having "made a good faith effort to resume

⁸¹³ Cable from Thompson to Rusk, January 12, 1962, *FRUS 1962-63*, Vol. XIV, doc.264.

⁸¹⁴ Cable from Thompson to Rusk, January 12, 1962, *FRUS 1962-63*, Vol. XIV, doc.264.

⁸¹⁵ Cable from Thompson to Rusk, January 15, 1962, *FRUS 1961-63*, Vol. XIV, doc. 267.

negotiations," should encourage a Macmillan visit. British softness on GDR recognition might persuade the Soviets to discuss access as a specific issue.⁸¹⁶ An Adenauer visit to Moscow might move the Soviets to offer something new. Adenauer did not like Khrushchev and wanted to talk with Deputy Premier Anastas Mikoyan, whose senior authority did not extend to foreign policy.⁸¹⁷ Thompson thought a "meeting between President and Khrushchev in present circumstances seems to me out of the question."⁸¹⁸ Thompson wanted to hold one more talk with Gromyko and then return to Washington, to buy time while Kennedy and Rusk decided what to do next.

After reading Thompson's reports, Kennedy suggested the Ambassador should be allowed to open the talks to positions not pre-agreed by the British and Germans. Kennedy thought Thompson should be asked his ideas but that maybe another channel should replace him. Assuming Thompson would probably hold one more talk with meager results, the President wondered if they should try more formal talks. The private channel proposals had to be vetted in London and Bonn first though the Americans had to actually conduct discussions.⁸¹⁹

On January 17, 1961, National Security Advisor McGeorge Bundy told the President "Berlin was the greatest issue of all ... talks in Moscow are getting nowhere, but we think it wise to keep on talking." Kennedy told the NSC the next day that "the Soviets could be expected to proceed with a separate peace treaty and there might be a direct case of nerves in the Spring." He stressed the military responsibilities involved and the need to review closely their contingency plans. He said they must "think hard about the ways and means of making decisions that might lead to nuclear war. If there were to be any such war, we must know what it is for, and know

⁸¹⁶ *Ibid.*

⁸¹⁷ Mayers, *Kennedy and Adenauer*, p. 67-69.

⁸¹⁸ Same as note 20.

⁸¹⁹ Memo from Kennedy to Rusk, January 15, 1962, *FRUS 1962-63*, Vol. XIV, doc. 268.

what other steps we can take before such war comes."⁸²⁰ The next Thompson-Gromyko meeting would have to make whatever gains could be salvaged from this round and estimate Soviet intentions on Berlin.

Rusk told Thompson to tell the Soviets they had not presented negotiable proposals. The Ambassador should ask "what will happen when they sign separate peace treaty."⁸²¹ He should signal that the West did not regard that as a desirable or an inevitable outcome. Soviet flexibility could lead to progress. The West would document their desire to negotiate by formally presenting the all-Berlin plebiscite and international access authority proposals to match the Soviet free city and GDR-favoring Protocol of Guarantees (for access). He should avoid "any implication that we considered talks had reached complete impasse and that only thing left was to proceed to improvisation for crisis situation after peace treaty." If a peace treaty signing did appear imminent, the Soviets should be made to understand that could cause a "highly dangerous confrontation."⁸²² The all-Berlin and international access authority proposals should be tabled, but immediate discussion was not necessary. He should ask for a further meeting, linking Gromyko's stated interest in "broader questions" with progress on Berlin.

In the meantime Kennedy met with a high-ranking Soviet press delegation, which included Khrushchev's son-in-law Alexei Adzhubei, editor of *Izvestia*, and Georgi Bolshakov, nominally the editor of the pictorial magazine *USSR*, but also an intelligence aide at the Soviet Embassy and back-channel Soviet conduit via Attorney General Robert Kennedy. Khrushchev's daughter Rada also attended the lunch meeting.⁸²³ Bolshakov and Robert Kennedy had become good friends. The President had granted Adzhubei an interview in November and thought him a

⁸²⁰ Editorial Note, *FRUS 1962-63*, Vol. XIV, doc. 271.

⁸²¹ Memo from Rusk to Thompson, January 29, 1962, *FRUS 1962-63*, Vol. XIV, doc. 275.

⁸²² Memo from Rusk to Thompson, January 29, 1962, *FRUS 1962-63*, Vol. XIV, doc. 274.

⁸²³ Fursenko & Naftali, *Khrushchev's Cold War*, p. 419-21.

useful conduit to Khrushchev. The President told his guests that since a final solution to Berlin and German problems might be "quite impossible" at present, an accommodation should be found to "prevent tensions from mounting."⁸²⁴ Such arrangements need not be immediate.

Kennedy pointed to Laos and the Congo as situations where arrangements had been made. Adzhubei asked if the president believed a final solution for Berlin could be found. Kennedy said this was not possible based on present positions, but the dangers of conflict impelled them to find some temporary compromise. He noted that both Gromyko and Thompson had made proposals unacceptable to the other side, and was concerned both sides had become "more and more formal and more and more incompatible failure to reach an accommodation could be fraught with serious consequences." He asked Adzhubei if the Soviets would proceed unilaterally with their peace treaty or to seek a compromise. Adzhubei replied that an all-German solution would be best. He hoped Kennedy would continue contacts with Khrushchev to that end. He thought that the US might be taking advantage of the Soviet Union's "loyalty and desire for an agreement," but "the worst peace is better than a good war."⁸²⁵

Assistant Secretary of State Foy Kohler told Rusk that the Soviets seemed less urgent regarding the peace treaty. He said "while these did not reflect any serious split in the Soviet leadership, they might conceivably make it more advisable for the leadership to reduce ... the high visibility of the Berlin crisis in a manner not damaging to Soviet prestige." Kohler thought the Soviets were trying to use the West Germans to achieve their Berlin goals. Other Berlin items of business included restoration of East-West commandant access, reassuring NATO on US troop levels and Inter-zonal trade.⁸²⁶

⁸²⁴ Memo re Khrushchev-Adzhubei meeting, Washington, D.C., January 31, 1962, *FRUS 1961-63*, Vol. XIV, doc. 277.

⁸²⁵ *Ibid.*

⁸²⁶ Kohler memo to Rusk, January 31, 1962, JFK, NSF, Box 84, folder 2/62.

When talks in Moscow resumed on February 1, Gromyko accepted the statement of principles and access authority proposals, but informed Thompson he should not think "our attitude is in any degree favorable to the documents or what you have said today."⁸²⁷ The access authority could only be considered in context of the whole Berlin situation. Gromyko said US avoidance of the occupation issue did not reflect the "current facts." The US wanted to perpetuate a wartime situation, he said, against the interests of peace and progress. Thompson then emphasized impartiality in the access authority, citing the precedent of international air service agreements which included the Soviet Union and East Germany. The US had its proposals to reduce dangerous friction and improve specific West Berlin problems, but the free city idea was not unacceptable. He asked what would happen to the occupation troops: "we did not believe it would be in the interest of peace if you did not understand what would happen if anyone tried to throw them out. The same applies to their access to and from Berlin."⁸²⁸

Gromyko replied that US proposals were unrealistic; the peace treaty was the "best solution" because it represented "facts of life in existing situation." He said the Soviets did not want West Berlin and rejected a plebiscite, saying troops had not been invited in by the German people. Thompson said West Berliners wanted the Allied troops to remain and a plebiscite would prove that. Gromyko said this was an international situation involving greater interests than just the West Berliners. Thompson said the wishes of West Berliners should be considered too. Both expressed regret that no progress had been made, but Thompson rejected the charge that the US proposals were meant to prevent agreement.⁸²⁹

The Ambassador reported to Rusk that he would wait for Gromyko to call the next meeting, but wanted guidance on how to respond. He noted that Khrushchev was not then in

⁸²⁷ Memo from Thompson to Rusk, February 2, 1962, *FRUS 1962-63*, Vol. XIV, doc. 278.

⁸²⁸ *Ibid.*

⁸²⁹ *Ibid.*

Moscow and Soviet intentions might not be clear till the Chairman returned. Thompson worried that the Soviets might have decided that the West had hardened its position under pressure from Adenauer and de Gaulle. He had briefed the other Western ambassadors who did not think the Soviets would accept the international authority without "major concessions."⁸³⁰ West German Ambassador Kroll, often considered too friendly with the Soviets, thought the Soviets were more interested in the peace treaty than in West Berlin, but Thompson doubted that Bonn was ready to accept any arrangement that would permanently divide Germany. Ambassador David Ormsby-Gore complained to Rusk the Soviets were trying to divide the Americans and British.⁸³¹

Kohler summed up the situation for Rusk prior to a White House meeting on February 9. Kohler addressed the idea that the recent Soviet intransigence signaled they might be trying to bury the issue. The impasse presented a confusing situation for military planning, but did maintain the status quo in Berlin. On the whole, said Kohler, continued delay was a more desirable outcome than a sudden unilateral move. If they signed a peace treaty but compromised on access and allowed continued occupation, that could be acceptable.⁸³² Kohler did not address probable French or German reaction, but noted that current French insistence on a detente before proceeding with formal negotiations precluded their renewed participation in exploratory talks.

Thompson could not predict whether the French would actually block any revised agreement but expected they would be consulted again soon. A summit, multilateral or US-Soviet, was unlikely at present, but Rusk might be able to accept Gromyko's invitation to visit Moscow. More probably, Rusk would hold private sessions with Gromyko while both were in Geneva for the upcoming disarmament conference. The arrival of a new and more capable

⁸³⁰ Thompson to Rusk, February 2, 1962, *FRUS 1961-63*, Vol. XIV, doc. 280.

⁸³¹ Memo ere Rusk-Ormsby-Gore meeting, Washington, February 5, 1962, JFK, NSF, Box 84, folder 2/62.

⁸³² Kohler paper "Where Do We Go From Here on Berlin" for Rusk, February 7, 1962, *FRUS 1961-63*, Vol. XIV, doc. 282.

Soviet Ambassador, Anatoly Dobrynin, in Washington would provide a better conduit than Menshikov, and comparable to Thompson's stature in Moscow.⁸³³ British Ambassador Frank Roberts was not expected to produce any better results than Thompson had, but there was still some chance that Prime Minister Macmillan might again attempt personal intervention, as he had periodically since March 1959.⁸³⁴ There was an outside chance for West German-Soviet talks, which the US would not oppose. The best immediate hope would be continued Thompson-Gromyko talks, followed by Rusk-Gromyko talks in Geneva, and cultivation of Dobrynin as a conduit.

Gromyko opened the next meeting with a long declaration that devolved into familiar arguments. Thompson said the US wanted to reduce tensions and increase areas of agreement, but there had been no change in the US position and no agreement could be approved without consulting the Allies. The US did not want West Berlin as a "military springboard" and saw no reason to allow Soviet troops there. Gromyko replied that if the US wanted to reduce tension, they should not object to a peace treaty. He said Western troops were dangerous and their presence was not obligated by the Potsdam Agreement, "which you have broken."⁸³⁵

The meeting was noticeably more formal than previous sessions. Thompson reported that Gromyko's declaration had evidently been prepared for publication, and the US should produce a corresponding statement. Thompson noted that the Soviets had paid more attention to the Oder-Neisse border (which also affected Poland) than to the internal borders. He thought the US might sweeten the plebiscite proposal by offering temporary replacement of Western troops with UN troops, but did not think the West Berliners would like the idea. He saw little

⁸³³ Anatoly Dobrynin, *In Confidence: Moscow's Ambassador to America's Six Cold War Presidents* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1995), p. 57.

⁸³⁴ See note 39; also, see note 38.

⁸³⁵ Cable from Thompson to Rusk re Gromyko meeting, Moscow, February 9, 1962, *FRUS 1961-63*, Vol. XIV, doc. 284.

grounds for continuing the talks on the current basis, though "Gromyko certainly gave impression Soviets not yet ready for break and in any event would put onus for break on us."⁸³⁶ Thompson was ready to hand over the talks to the foreign ministers in Geneva, but State Department analysts noted that Gromyko "made no attempt to end the talks."⁸³⁷

Thompson also received a letter from US Ambassador to Yugoslavia George Kennan, who was a veteran of the first US missions to Moscow and author of the 1946 'Long Telegram' warning of Soviet intentions in Europe. Kennan now warned against assuming the Soviets were bluffing and urged negotiation on grounds more acceptable to the Soviets, lest they use the impasse to provoke a more dangerous situation. Too much attention to Berlin's symbolic value, while ignoring more pressing realities, could lead to closer ties between Moscow and Belgrade, extending Soviet influence to the Eastern Mediterranean.⁸³⁸ Kennan's letter produced friendly but heated criticism from other US diplomats in Europe, who found his willingness to compromise with the Soviets unrealistic. In the face of growing Soviet interference with Berlin corridor air traffic, such accommodation seemed dangerous.

NATO Commandant Lauris Norstad told Joint Chiefs of Staff chairman Melvin Lemnitzer that their plans needed to be updated to allow fighter escorts of transport and civilian air traffic in the access corridor.⁸³⁹ Checkpoint and train travel incidents also continued, drawing concern from General Lucius Clay. US leaders needed to determine if Berlin harassment had any relation to the diplomatic standoff in Moscow. Walter Ulbricht had also gone to Moscow to pressure Khrushchev to sign the peace treaty soon.⁸⁴⁰

⁸³⁶ Cable from Thompson to Rusk re Gromyko meeting, Moscow, February 9, 1962, *FRUS 1961-63*, Vol. XIV, doc. 288.

⁸³⁷ Memo, "Assessment of Current Soviet intentions in the Berlin Crisis, February 8-14," JFK, NSF, Box 84, folder 2/62.

⁸³⁸ Letter from Kennan to Rusk, February 9, 1962, *FRUS 1961-63*, Vol. XIV, doc. 286.

⁸³⁹ Cable from Norstad to Lemnitzer, February 9, 1962, *FRUS 1961-63*, Vol. XIV, doc. 285.

⁸⁴⁰ Harrison, *Driving the Soviets*, p. 216-218.

Walt Rostow, head of State's Policy Planning Staff, summed the Berlin situation up for Rusk after meeting with policy aides and CIA representatives on February 9. These analysts thought the Soviets were still undecided on whether to back off re Berlin, sign the peace treaty, pursue negotiations realistically or use the issue as leverage for wider discussions. The Gromyko-Thompson talks would probably decide the issue, but Soviet presentations had been so opaque, the analysts could not guess which choice the Soviets would pursue. They recommended the US try to maintain the status quo in lieu of seeking a negotiated settlement. Negotiations should continue, however, with "more forthcoming" positions (these were not spelled out). They could also try again to offer discussions in other areas like disarmament to provide diplomatic cover for the Soviets.⁸⁴¹ This prescription repeated what US analysts had been suggesting for three years.

Khrushchev kept coming back with the peace treaty/free city demands as his central issue. The Sino-Soviet crisis had gotten worse than in 1959, raising hopes that the Soviets might seek to reduce tensions. Khrushchev felt he should seem tougher with the West.⁸⁴² Khrushchev also was very concerned with gaining Soviet influence in Cuba, which he regarded as a crucial link to the Communist bloc and the emerging post-colonial Third World.⁸⁴³ Gains elsewhere might compensate for indecision on Berlin and even bolster his hand there.

Rusk met with British and French delegations on February 13 to try and figure out "what what the Soviets were really up to in Berlin." French Ambassador Herve Alphand saw Soviet ambiguity, with air harassment and a tough negotiating stance balanced by good will gestures like the Adzhubei visit and an invitation to have Robert Kennedy visit Moscow. British Ambassador Ormsby-Gore thought the Soviets realized "they could not obtain their kind of

⁸⁴¹ Memo from Rostow to Rusk, February 10, 1962, *FRUS 1961-63*, Vol. XIV, doc. 287.

⁸⁴² Fursenko & Naftali, *Khrushchev's Cold War*, p.415;421.

⁸⁴³ Zubok, *A Failed Empire*, p. 144-45.

German settlement at this time." They had to balance realistic expectations against domestic and Bloc pressures, and wanted some kind of resolution before extending the dialogue to other issues. Rusk observed that they also had "to stabilize Eastern Europe" while dealing with domestic problems like agriculture and "setbacks to with regard ... to under-developed countries." They had to deal with the West's knowledge that their missile strength had been greatly over-estimated and increased US defense spending. Rusk guessed that they were "probably" not going to sign a separate treaty, but "the possibility could not be ruled out."⁸⁴⁴

Alphand wondered if the Soviets would perceive Western uncertainty. He also asked what Rusk thought about direct bilateral West German-Soviet talks. Rusk thought these might be profitable, but Alphand worried these might compromise West Germany's role in NATO. Rusk wondered why the West Germans were so reticent to deal with their weaker East German counterparts. Ormsby-Gore thought Soviet participation in the upcoming Geneva disarmament talks a positive sign, even if they were only in it for the propaganda value. Rusk discounted the Soviet interest in the talks because the Chairman had not shown any real interest in a summit for disarmament, despite his calls for head-of-state participation; Ormsby-Gore seconded that opinion.⁸⁴⁵ Overall, this meeting indicated a mix of wary uncertainty and cautious optimism that a major Soviet move was imminent regarding Berlin and Germany. It also showed that the focus of trans-Atlantic concern was about to shift towards the more positive topic of disarmament. However, Alphand's discussion with Foy Kohler two days later about Berlin air harassment, reflected the fact the Soviets were far from done with Berlin.⁸⁴⁶

Kennedy delayed answering Khrushchev's December 13 letter while waiting to see what the Thompson-Gromyko talks might produce. On January 15, he told the Chairman that the

⁸⁴⁴ Memo re Tripartite meeting, Washington, D.C, February 13, 1962, *FRUS 1961-63*, Vol. XIV, doc. 289.

⁸⁴⁵ *Ibid.*

⁸⁴⁶ Memo re Kohler-Rusk meeting, February 15, 1962, Washington, *FRUS 1961-63*, Vol. XIV, doc. 295.

formality of those talks was a disappointing reversion to the earlier phases of the Berlin crisis. While the current situation might not be satisfactory, "It is not the Western powers who are seeking a change in the status of Berlin," he said. The Western side had no intention of using force to change the situation, but the Soviets must recognize that they cannot unilaterally make changes "which would result in damage to the rights, obligations and interests of the Allied Powers and the people of West Berlin." Both sides needed a solution which would "avoid any shift favorable to one side and detrimental to the other and ensure a greater degree of stability and tranquility in the entire German situation ...if we can take those two principles as a starting point, we might ...see light at the end of the tunnel."⁸⁴⁷

Kennedy alluded to the difficult struggle to limit nuclear testing, saying it was essential to the success of the Geneva disarmament talks not to increase tensions. He noted that Thompson had protested Berlin air harassment and warned that such provocations would prevent any serious progress at the Geneva conference. He warned Khrushchev that Soviet pressure would only induce France to build up their military forces and seek independent nuclear capacities. Restraint and negotiation would be more productive. Thompson and Gromyko needed to discuss "concrete matters, "such as the international access authority. He noted that Adzhubei had said such an instrument might be acceptable with GDR participation, but did not mention Gromyko's emphatic rejection of even that concession. Kennedy closed by reaffirming his hopes that private diplomacy, though a "departure" from usual practice, could bring about the peaceful outcome he knew they both desired.⁸⁴⁸

At the same time Khrushchev was at his Black Sea *dacha* in Pitsunda, where he was conducting a review of Soviet missile progress, both for space exploration and delivery of

⁸⁴⁷ Letter from Kennedy to Khrushchev, February 15, *FRUS 1961-63*, Vol. XIV, doc. 296.

⁸⁴⁸ *Ibid.*

nuclear weapons. A new heavy booster, the UR-500 was approved, capable of carrying both space vehicles and the recently-tested thirty megaton thermonuclear device. Most importantly, new ICBM designs were commissioned to replace the first-generation R-16, which was so slow to set up it would never survive a first strike and to keep parity with the American Minuteman and Polaris missiles.⁸⁴⁹ Though development problems continued, the new ICBMs would soon give the Soviet Union a practical rapid response long range nuclear capability, which it still did not have in 1962.

Ambassador Dowling and NSC advisor Dr. Henry Kissinger met with Chancellor Adenauer in Bonn on February 17 to brief him on US nuclear capabilities, reassuring him about the ability to withstand and deliver retaliatory strikes.⁸⁵⁰ Kissinger told him both the US and USSR would share potential impact. The US saw some possibility of a NATO nuclear force, such as the proposed MLF (Multi-Lateral Force), but at present the most efficient approach for the West was extending the US's protective nuclear umbrella through closer integration of the NATO countries. Adenauer noted that Norstad's request for more medium range missiles (MRBM) had been delayed, but Kissinger said that was for technical reasons and the US was not opposed to the MLF.⁸⁵¹ Neither mentioned that political rivalries had so far stymied progress on the MLF idea.⁸⁵²

They also discussed contrary opinions within quadripartite military planning. Adenauer objected to having to clear all planning, including economic and naval counter-measures, through NATO. US estimates of 26 available Soviet conventional battalions was about a third of what really faced them. That imbalance could lead to disaster. Kissinger said that US forces

⁸⁴⁹ Sergei Khrushchev, *Nikita Khrushchev and the Creation of a Superpower* (University Park: The Pennsylvania State University Press, 2000), p. 468-76.

⁸⁵⁰ Mayer, *Adenauer and Kennedy*, p. 67.

⁸⁵¹ Memo re Kissinger-Adenauer meeting, Bonn, February 17, 1962, *FRUS 1961-63*, Vol. XIV, doc. 298.

⁸⁵² Trachtenberg, *A Constructed Peace*, p. 356-57.

were modernized and could be deployed with adequate strength to compel the Soviets to negotiations; this would also provide a strategic hedge in the event of nuclear conflict. Adenauer said that changed the situation but still preferred naval blockade to ground action in the event of conflict. Kissinger said that, at the risk of being undiplomatic, the Chancellor's attitude "might indicate the Federal Republic was unprepared to fight for Berlin if ground action or nuclear war might result."⁸⁵³ Adenauer reacted sharply to this suggestion, saying that since "consequences of nuclear war were incalculable ... every other measure should be tried before resorting to a nuclear war."⁸⁵⁴ If a blockade proved unsuccessful, he said, the FRG would support conventional ground action and whatever might follow. Adenauer expressed appreciation for US efforts to defend its friends, saying historic opportunities for cooperation were now possible. Kissinger affirmed that US leaders held the same view. The meeting ended with the Chancellor expressing profuse appreciation for US dedication to the Atlantic Community.

FRG Ambassador Wilhelm Grewe told Kennedy and Rusk how much the Chancellor has appreciated the briefing. Kennedy said he was glad the meeting went well but complained that the Chancellor needed constant reassurance.⁸⁵⁵ The President wanted to make clear that a naval blockade would do little; more serious conventional force plans were necessary. With sufficient commitment from NATO partners, a conventional deterrent could be viable and less risky than front-line nuclear defense. Grewe also assured the President that Adenauer was supportive of the ambassadorial working group, despite his sometimes disparaging remarks. Kennedy acknowledged that progress had been minimal and prospects uncertain. Rusk asked what "the

⁸⁵³ Same as note 851.

⁸⁵⁴ *Ibid.*

⁸⁵⁵ Mayer, *Adenauer and Kennedy*, p. 67-68.

German view was on next steps to be taken." Grewe said that despite the standoff, the current talks in Moscow should continue but not be "expanded."⁸⁵⁶

Kennedy said the Soviets had made clear that even if Western troops remained - temporarily - that Soviet troops would have to be included with them. Grewe said he was "not so sure" the Soviets would proceed with a treaty that might lead to a war which Khrushchev did not want. Kennedy agreed with Grewe that the US military buildup had so far stalled Khrushchev's hand, but said "a difficult spring and summer" still awaited. He asked if there was much public interest in the FRG for their own bilateral dialogue with the Soviets. Grewe said no and they wished to continue to treat West Berlin as a quadripartite (US/FRG/UK/France) concern. He also said he hoped that these powers should have a "common reassessment" of the situation before the Geneva talks commenced.⁸⁵⁷

Thompson cabled the next day to say he had encountered Gromyko at a Nepalese reception in Moscow and the Foreign Minister had initiated the subject of Berlin. Both took standard positions but Gromyko made a point of saying that if access agreement was reached and accepted by GDR, "such agreement would be carried out." Thompson replied that the West was still unprepared to accept the division of Germany and pointed out that Ulbricht had reneged on agreements for use of Tempelhof Airport. Gromyko repeated that the GDR would carry out agreements and "if were not prepared to respect GDR sovereignty, then outlook was very gloomy. The Foreign Minister made no effort to set a time limit for the talks or indicate imminent Soviet actions if resolution not found soon: "on the contrary, his concern appeared to be how we could keep talks going in view of current impasse."⁸⁵⁸ This conversation indicates

⁸⁵⁶ Memo re Kennedy-Grewe meeting , Washington, February 19, 1962, *FRUS 1961-63*, Vol. XIV, doc. 300.

⁸⁵⁷ *Ibid.*

⁸⁵⁸ Memo re Thompson-Gromyko meeting , Moscow, February 20, 1962, *FRUS 1961-63*, Vol. XIV, doc. 302.

that, however skeptical some in the West may have been about the wisdom or utility of their talks, Khrushchev and Gromyko valued them highly.

Adenauer, however, was not content with their progress and, unless the Soviets retreated from their "maximum positions", was ready to suspend them and call a Western foreign Ministers conference. He told Ambassador Dowling he did not want to proceed with FRG-USSR bilateral talks.⁸⁵⁹ Adenauer said Kennedy was "being unfair" in saying the US had already fully briefed him before the Kissinger meeting and complaining that Adenauer was not realistic. He showed Dowling a report from FRG Ambassador Kroll that suggested Thompson favored a "more flexible attitude." Dowling refuted reports that Thompson "advocated concessions beyond those agreed by four Western allies in concert." Adenauer accepted this and acknowledged that Kroll himself was thought to be more favorable to GDR recognition. Dowling thought Kennedy's frank comments to Grewe had made the Chancellor realize how far he had tested US patience; he also noted Adenauer's "frailty."⁸⁶⁰ As capable a leader as Adenauer had been for East Germany, he was proving a very difficult partner over Berlin.

Rusk told Thompson to arrange another meeting with Gromyko to "put further comments on record and link discussions with possible talks at Geneva." The Ambassador should tell Gromyko he would be accompanying Rusk at the conference and could brief the Secretary on the substance of their discussions so far, if Gromyko wanted to hold higher level talks. Thompson should state the recent Berlin air harassments "threatened to create highly dangerous situation." He should reiterate Kennedy's comments to Adzhubei that both sides should seek temporary accommodation, pending final resolution, and emphasize US serious intent. He should explain

⁸⁵⁹ Mayer, *Adenauer and Kennedy*, p.68-69.

⁸⁶⁰ Memo re Adenauer-Dowling meeting, Bonn, February 23, 1962, *FRUS 1961-63*, Vol. XIV, doc. 305.

that US focus on access resulted from a belief that access disputes could lead to conflict.⁸⁶¹ Rusk also told Thompson that, although the French had allowed the talks to go on without their direct participation, any agreement reached would still have to meet their approval. That would also be a problem if the Western Foreign Ministers met, as they would in Geneva. Ulbricht had just visited Moscow and the Soviets' Central Committee would also be meeting on March 5. Rusk doubted that Khrushchev would be making any immediate move in these circumstances. But he was telling General Clay in Berlin that it was still imperative to preserve Allied unity in West Berlin, however difficult that might be.⁸⁶²

On March 6, Thompson held his final session with Gromyko. He told the Foreign Minister that air traffic harassment did not help "when we are discussing possibility of new arrangements" regarding access. Gromyko said their fighter activity was a justifiable response to Western provocations in GDR airspace. He also said the US warnings about aggravating tensions only underscored the need for a peace treaty.⁸⁶³ Their free city proposal would not favor either side, he said, and claimed the US was only interested in supporting their own positions. He did not want to further discuss the all-Berlin plebiscite proposal. Thompson pointed out that the Soviets had just unilaterally changed arrangements in place since the end of the war and those arrangements had been designed to ensure free access to Berlin. Thompson "reiterated our conviction that resolution problems ... is impossible without satisfactory agreement on access." He understood that Gromyko wanted to have a broader discussion with Rusk in Geneva; this would only be possible with a "strong and clear settlement on access and preservation rights in West Berlin." He also said Kennedy "is determined to leave no method of

⁸⁶¹ Cable from Rusk to Thompson, March 1, 1962, *FRUS 1961-63*, Vol. XIV, doc. 309 & 310.

⁸⁶² Memo from Rusk to Clay, March 4, 1962, *FRUS 1961-63*, Vol. XIV, p. 312.

⁸⁶³ Memo from Thompson to Rusk re Gromyko meeting, Moscow, March 6, 1962, *FRUS 1961-63*, Vol. XIV, doc. 314.

discussion untried in seeking a sensible accommodation of rights and interests (of) both sides."⁸⁶⁴

Thompson complained of the vague generality in Gromyko's remarks about respect for GDR sovereignty and his use of that issue as a blocking device to backtrack on agreed points.

Thompson moved on to Soviet insistence that Western occupation rights must be terminated; this was most "serious and discouraging." If the Soviets considered this their bottom line, "any agreement between us would be impossible." Thompson said the Western troops were going to stay till "the German question is finally resolved." Gromyko did not directly respond to Thompson's declaration, but said that the Soviets had researched the air traffic issue and were sure they were legally justified. He concluded by saying that "respect for GDR sovereignty" was "not only a phrase, it was an important condition." Any agreement on access must be "in accord with GDR sovereignty."⁸⁶⁵ Thompson thought Gromyko seemed preoccupied and so did not press for further discussion. He did not anticipate another meeting before Geneva. Their Moscow talks had produced nothing, but they may have postponed the peace treaty and forestalled conflict.⁸⁶⁶

Preparations for Geneva Foreign Ministers Meeting

Both sides had an obvious and sincere interest for negotiations, for various reasons. As they prepared for Geneva, their respective governments had to determine how to defend and advance their vital interests. Some in the West, like Ambassador Dowling, were now less inclined to deal with the GDR on access, especially in light of the air harassment, lest they "make sustaining West Berlin's viability extremely difficult."⁸⁶⁷ In Berlin, Assistant Chief of the US

⁸⁶⁴ *Ibid.*

⁸⁶⁵ *Ibid.*

⁸⁶⁶ Freedman, *Kennedy's Wars*, p.114.

⁸⁶⁷ Dowling cable to Rusk, March 7, 1962, *FRUS 1961-63*, Vol. XIV, doc.315.

Mission Alan Lightner belatedly answered George Kennan's letter urging more Western flexibility: "Short of abandoning Berlin and ultimately all of Germany, what have we not done that we still could do to further peace with honor on the continent of Europe?" Lightner said Kennan's suggestion that the US need to offer Ulbricht something to create a more situation in Central Europe smacked of Neville Chamberlain's "peace with honor." Appeasement, said Lightner, was even more dangerous in a thermonuclear age.⁸⁶⁸

Kennedy's March 2 announcement that the US would resume nuclear testing underscored concern about the dangers of thermonuclear war.⁸⁶⁹ Though not discussed in the last Gromyko-Thompson talk, this decision would affect the proceedings in Geneva. The decision was a reminder that American strategic doctrine continued to require nuclear deterrence to balance Soviet advantages in conventional forces. If cuts as large as 30-50% were agreed on, the JCS was concerned that large and expensive increases in conventional forces would be necessary to maintain strategic balance.⁸⁷⁰ A major reason for the resumption of testing lay in the need to keep the nuclear deterrent viable, especially since the Soviets had also resumed tests. The Soviets had walked out on the previous round of UN-sponsored disarmament testing in 1960.

The new round of talks, the Eighteen Nation Disarmament Conference (ENDC) added eight neutral nations to the five apiece from NATO and the Warsaw Pact.⁸⁷¹ Nascent nuclear power France elected not to attend, objecting to the inclusion of non-nuclear -armed nations. The British had tried to forestall the American decision and would press for more stringent limits than the Americans preferred. Khrushchev hoped that the neutrals would support his calls for sweeping disarmament without inspections. When the conference began on March, Gromyko

⁸⁶⁸ Lightner cable to Kennan, March 8, 1962, *FRUS 1961-1963*, Vol. XIV, doc. 317.

⁸⁶⁹ Beschloss, *The Crisis Years*, p. 364.

⁸⁷⁰ Memo re "Meeting of Committee of Principles", Washington, March 1, 1962, *FRUS 1961-63*, Vol. VII, doc. 141.

⁸⁷¹ Seaborg, *Kennedy, Khrushchev & the Test Ban*, p.142.

immediately introduced the same all-or-nothing disarmament proposal the Soviets had championed since 1959. US and UK representatives offered concessions designed to make a comprehensive test-ban possible, but the Soviets rejected this offer in their informal sessions. The majority of the conference then designated the US/UK/USSR as a subcommittee to draft a test ban treaty. If France had chosen to attend, they might have been included; that would have constituted a session of Berlin signatories.⁸⁷²

Even without France, the subcommittee soon found itself mired in the same kind of deadlock that had stymied the Berlin negotiations. Although the West had reduced the number of inspections they wanted, the Soviets still rejected inspections as camouflage for espionage. The US delayed the start of its new test series but on March 2, Kennedy said the US would resume testing in April if the Soviets would not agree to a test ban first.⁸⁷³ The subcommittee discussions between the "Big Three" (US/UK/USSR) stuck closely to the test-ban topic; but also discussed Berlin Soviet air traffic interference in Berlin. When Rusk jokingly asked if Gromyko was going to call the Soviet Commandant in Berlin and ask him to change their flight plans, Gromyko said Rusk "should not prompt him on how to conduct his affairs."⁸⁷⁴

Rusk-Gromyko Sessions on Berlin at Geneva

Rusk and Gromyko began bilateral sessions in Geneva on March 12 in an uncertain climate for both sides.⁸⁷⁵ Kennedy instructed the Secretary to develop a *modus vivendi* on Berlin, i.e., a protocol to accommodate their respective interests pending final resolution.

⁸⁷² *Ibid.*

⁸⁷³ Beschloss, *Crisis Years*, p.363.

⁸⁷⁴ Memo re Rusk-Home-Gromyko conversation, March 11, 1962, Geneva, *FRUS 1961-63*, Vol. XV, doc.7.

⁸⁷⁵ Beschloss, *Crisis Years*, p.366.

Kennedy provided him with a draft proposal for a *modus vivendi* agreement; it included statements of general principles, nuclear non-proliferation, non-aggression, and an international access authority.⁸⁷⁶

Khrushchev had just sent a new, noticeably tougher letter to Kennedy, repeatedly stating Soviet intent to sign a separate treaty with the GDR. Khrushchev now offered to allow an access authority but only temporarily, under GDR supervision and with the understanding that a free city arrangement without occupation forces and in context of his separate treaty. He acknowledged that the Berlin impasse had stalled disarmament progress. Khrushchev also noted that Kennedy had referred to a possible summit and agreed this could be useful if an accommodation is reached on a number of questions" before it took place. He said that sometimes "efforts by ministers are not enough and ...heads of state and government have to join the effort."⁸⁷⁷ Khrushchev was holding out hope for a summit, but on condition of acceptance of the Soviet demands.

Kennedy amended his instructions to Rusk to take Khrushchev's counter-offer as a sign of interest despite its strict conditions; above all Rusk was to seek an accommodation agreement regardless of the air harassment.⁸⁷⁸ Rusk, Thompson, Kohler and Bohlen met with Lord Home on the eve of the new round of Berlin talks. They had some cautious grounds for optimism: the West Germans seemed supportive; Khrushchev had moved slightly on the access authority, did not set a new deadline and was distracted by the Sino-Soviet schism; and the Soviets had just granted the East Germans a large loan that might placate them. They agreed to attempt an access

⁸⁷⁶ Memo from Kennedy-Rusk, March 9, 1962, *FRUS 1961-63*, Vol. XV, doc.1

⁸⁷⁷ Letter from Khrushchev-Kennedy, March 10, 1962, *FRUS 1961-63*, Vol. XV, doc. 3

⁸⁷⁸ Kennedy cable to Rusk, March 4, 1962, *FRUS 1961-1963*, Vol. XV, doc. 4.

agreement, clearly spelling out reasonable air access rights, without seeking approval from French and German partners till a draft was ready.⁸⁷⁹

Gromyko met Rusk at a luncheon at the Soviet embassy on March 12 and brought up the Berlin topic. Rusk framed the US approach in terms of common interests and respective problems. He said that the conference attested to the hazards nuclear weapons brought to the pursuit of peace, noting the difficult progress of disarmament efforts. Common interests included mutual desire for resolution of Berlin tension, limiting the 'diffusion' of nuclear weapons, and establishing non-aggression policies. Although Rusk had just expressed frustration that Soviets had been inconsistent about "existing facts," Gromyko renewed that approach. The Foreign Minister took the same line as he had with Thompson in Moscow. Facts in Germany had changed since the Potsdam agreements; the GDR was a reality and its sovereignty must be respected; Western occupation was inconsistent with that sovereignty. The USSR felt that Berlin problems could only be solved through the peace treaty and the free city proposal would preserve the existing social order in Berlin without coercion.⁸⁸⁰

Gromyko said the idea of general principles was something new, but these would have to respect both sides' interests. Rusk replied that the occupation was a well-established fact that could not be ignored. The US was concerned that a peace treaty would negatively affect US interests.⁸⁸¹ This cordial beginning was disturbed by reports that Soviet planes had again dropped radar jamming chaff over Allied flights in Berlin air corridor. Rusk and Lord Home agreed they needed to protest to Gromyko, but not walk out on the conference.⁸⁸²

⁸⁷⁹ Memo re Rusk-Home et al meeting, March 11, 1962, *FRUS 1961-63*, Vol. XV, doc. 6.

⁸⁸⁰ Memo re Rusk-Gromyko meeting, Geneva, March 12, 1962, *FRUS 1961-63*, Vol. XV, doc. 8

⁸⁸¹ *Ibid.*

⁸⁸² Memo re Rusk-Home meeting, Geneva, March 12, 1962, *FRUS 1961-63*, Vol. XV, doc. 9.

The jamming incident did not, however, disturb the next session. Rusk opened by citing respect for "vital interest." This expression would become a signature theme of the US approach throughout the next several months. Rusk said the US had no intention of disturbing GDR sovereignty in its territory, but the GDR had no legal rights to interfere with West Berlin access. He again cited the 1955 Zorin-Bolz protocols as documentation.⁸⁸³ Gromyko said that since the access corridor was within GDR territory, they had the right to approve access arrangements, in accordance with international law. He did not accept Rusk's contention that Western rights or West Berlin's preferred social order would be diminished by the peace treaty/free city proposals.

Rusk said they were following completely different approaches. It was "one thing to propose a solution and say that it was good for the other side; it was another thing to recognize that each side had vital interests and to see how the problem could be resolved in accordance ...with those interests." He observed that both the US and USSR subscribed to various transit arrangements where the ground governments claimed no control over traffic crossing their territories. Gromyko said Rusk should understand that the Soviet proposals would be "in the interest of all concerned." He dismissed Rusk's precedents: "there were many things in the past which no longer existed." Gromyko concluded that he "liked" Rusk's statement that the "US and USSR had been allies against Germany and that Germany should not make them enemies."⁸⁸⁴

Soviet air harassment against civilian and military flights was increasing.⁸⁸⁵ Rusk said he could not manage the problem from Geneva. In Berlin, Clay clashed with Norstad over the latter's plan to reschedule civilian flights; Clay wanted to keep to schedule and provide fighter escorts. US advisors there were already discussing possible suspension of the talks with

⁸⁸³ In 1955, GDR foreign minister Lothar Bolz and USSR deputy foreign minister Valerian Zorin signed letters authorizing GDR access controls for all Berlin and the corridor. Harrison, *Driving the Soviets*, p. 55.

⁸⁸⁴ Memo re Gromyko-Rusk meeting, March 13, 1962, *FRUS 1962-63*, Vol. XV, doc. 10.

⁸⁸⁵ CIA memo re "Soviet Action in Berlin Air Corridors," JFK, NSF, Box 84, folder 3/1-3/15/62.

Gromyko. For the moment, they elected to send a sharp warning to the Soviets.⁸⁸⁶ Thompson was advising Rusk not to offer acceptance of GDR personnel at checkpoints or else the Soviets would assume Western weakness and proceed with their separate treaty. Kohler brought up the air interference problem with his Soviet counterpart Vladimir Semenov, who said the Soviet actions were legal. Semenov told Kohler that the "real reason" the Soviets wanted to change the Berlin situation was to eliminate the use of West Berlin for intelligence and propaganda operations and reduce their "organic links" with the FRG. He stressed concern about German militarism. When Kohler brought up making West Berlin the FRG capital, matching the GDR's action, Semenov replied, "You just try that."⁸⁸⁷ Kohler thought the talk a positive indication the Soviets wanted a mutually acceptable solution.

In Geneva, Rusk continued to have short talks with Gromyko, hoping his opposite number would receive instructions that might open up their discussions. Their next formal sessions were longer because Rusk and Gromyko wanted more substantial discussions before they had to return home.⁸⁸⁸ Rusk bluntly complained that the Soviet efforts were designed "to undermine and destroy the freedom of West Berlin." Neither side really wanted a crisis to develop, but they had been unsuccessful in negotiation. Now they had to figure out how to manage their disagreement: "the problem was to find a method not involving the interests of the West or requiring a formal withdrawal of Soviet proposals." Gromyko responded with recitations of his standard arguments about GDR sovereignty; Rusk responded in kind, invoking the "vital interests" rhetoric. Rusk concluded by repeating "many problems would fall in place if the

⁸⁸⁶ Memos from Berlin, March 13 & 14, 1962, *FRUS 1962-63*, Vol. XV, docs. 11 & 12.

⁸⁸⁷ Memo re Kohler-Semenov talk, Geneva, March 18, *FRUS 1962-63*, Vol. XV, doc. 14 & 16.

⁸⁸⁸ Memo, "Assessment Current Soviet Intentions in Berlin Crisis, March 15-23, 1962, JFK, NSF, Box 84, folder 3/16/62.

central questions could be resolved."⁸⁸⁹ These questions seemed no closer to answers than they had been in the talks with Thompson, the previous October's sessions in Moscow, at the Vienna and Paris summits, or even at the 1959 Foreign Ministers Conference.

Meanwhile, the Berlin situation was getting worse, with incidents of East German *vopos* wounding a British soldier and shooting at a US military vehicle.⁸⁹⁰ Because Rusk was about to leave Geneva, there was no more suggestion of breaking off those talks. Rusk wrote Kennedy that, Gromyko was not belligerent or threatening and wanted to continue talks. However, "there seems to be no movement in the Soviet position toward Western vital interests ... there is no doubt Gromyko understands conditions under which they could sign a separate peace treaty ... without precipitating crisis."⁸⁹¹ He saw no signs of an agreement but could not predict whether a crisis was imminent. He would have to see how Gromyko reacted to the *modus vivendi* idea in their final talk. The Soviets might be interested in continuing talks to keep open the possibility of a summit, which Rusk had mentioned as a possibility in delivering the *modus vivendi* paper. In Berlin, Alan Lightner protested bitterly to Washington that continued acceptance of the harassment could lead to war.⁸⁹²

In their final Geneva session, the two foreign ministers compared their working papers. Rusk said the contrast illustrated the difference between their negotiating strategies. He said the their access proposal was obviously designed to diminish US vital interests, while the US statement of principles was not so much a technical paper as way to move their dialogue forward.⁸⁹³ Gromyko said that his proposals were "aimed at a detente." The Soviets desired

⁸⁸⁹ Memo re Rusk-Gromyko meeting, Geneva, March 22, 1962, *FRUS 1961-63*, Vol. XV, docs 19 & 20.

⁸⁹⁰ Memo Dowling to Rusk, March 22, 1962, *FRUS 1961-63*, Vol. XV, doc. 21.

⁸⁹¹ Cable from Rusk to Kennedy, March 22, 1962, *FRUS 1961-63*, Vol. XV, doc. 22.

⁸⁹² Lightner memo to Rusk, March 23, 1962, *FRUS 1961-63*, Vol. XV, doc.23.

⁸⁹³ Draft texts of *modus vivendi* paper and cover memo from Henry Owen to Ball, March 20, 1962, JFK, NSF, Box 84, folder 3/16/62.

good relations with the US, he said, their German/Berlin proposals were intended to reduce tensions and they had no intent to seize Berlin. All they wanted to do was finally end World War II. He went through the US paper point-by-point, refuting each carefully crafted nuance with standard rhetoric. As usual, the simplicity and consistency of the Soviet perspective produced an opaque cover that was hard for Rusk to penetrate. Gromyko concluded by reaffirming Khrushchev's statements that Central Europe was the only area in which the US and USSR were in "direct collision."⁸⁹⁴ .

Rusk repudiated some of Gromyko's points but said he wanted to focus on specific points that experts in Washington would have to study first. In their remaining time, he wanted to focus on trying to first resolve small, fixable specific problems. They should at least affirm mutual commitment to pursue negotiated agreement before either took unilateral action. They briefly discussed their agreed goal of limiting nuclear "diffusion," and restated their basic positions: the peace treaty vs. continued occupation pending German self-determination. They concluded they would consider new bilateral contacts and study the other's proposals further. Both agreed they did not want "negotiations for the sake of negotiations."⁸⁹⁵ Gromyko invited Rusk to Moscow, noting that he himself had gone to Washington. This was a benign end to a difficult meeting and a disappointing round of talks.⁸⁹⁶ It would also mark the end of East-West foreign-minister level direct talks on Berlin. There would be no Rusk visit to Moscow, nor any further heads of state summits to resolve the German problem.

⁸⁹⁴ Memo re Gromyko-Rusk meeting, Geneva, March 26, 1962, *FRUS 1961-63*, Vol. XV, doc. 25.

⁸⁹⁵ *Ibid.*

⁸⁹⁶ Memo re ambassadorial quadripartite review of Geneva sessions, March 29, 1962, Washington, JFK, NSF, Box 84, 3/16/62.

US and Soviets Evaluate their Options

Rusk told the President "the Soviets had not changed their proposals in any significant way since the Vienna summit." Gromyko had not been threatening nor ready to end negotiations, but "opportunities to clarify completely their real intentions, specifically to discover whether they are determined to move to a crisis." Gromyko had not explicitly rejected the *modus vivendi* approach but remained insistent on their original objectives. US insistence on its own 'vital interests' represented "a formidable obstacle and they are reluctant to challenge us frontally."⁸⁹⁷ In his report to the NSC, Rusk said he saw some Soviet flexibility on access; the trick would be getting them to separate that issue from their main demands.⁸⁹⁸ Rusk still did not recognize that the Soviets were not going to de-link the access issue. They wanted negotiations to secure Western acceptance of their demands without use of force.

While Gromyko did not indicate to Rusk that the Soviets were about to implement their peace treaty, the West Berliners were beginning to lose confidence in American commitment. Rusk advised Clay that he did not anticipate imminent Soviet moves on Berlin.⁸⁹⁹ Clay replied a week later that he saw a significant change in Soviet attitudes since the talks: "I am inclined to believe that it marks the full end of the Wall crisis and that we have won this round."⁹⁰⁰ This relaxation provided an opportunity to bring Clay back from Berlin. Announcements and correspondence praised Clay's tenure, but the White House may have been relieved to have the independent and outspoken general out of the picture lest he disturb negotiations.⁹⁰¹

Such relief was soon clouded by vehement objections from Chancellor Adenauer, who objected to the recently proposed GDR participation in the access authority. In a Bonn meeting

⁸⁹⁷ Rusk to Kennedy, March 26, 1962, *FRUS 1961-63*, Vol. XV, doc. 27.

⁸⁹⁸ memo re NSC meeting, Washington, March 28, 1962, *FRUS 1961-63*, Vol. XV, doc. 29.

⁸⁹⁹ Clay cable to Rusk; Rusk cable to Clay, March 26 & 27, 1962, *FRUS 1961-63*, Vol. XV, docs. 26 & 28.

⁹⁰⁰ cable from Lightner to Rusk, April 6, 1962, *FRUS 1961-63*, Vol. XV, doc. 31.

⁹⁰¹ Klein memo to Bundy, June 18, 1962, JFK, NSF Box 84A, folder 5/62-6/62.

with Nitze, he said the West German public was disappointed at Clay's departure. Adenauer wanted a pause in the US-Soviet negotiations so the FRG could further study current proposals and prepare a response. He may have sensed that Washington was impatient with FRG rigidity, which he acknowledged may have worsened prospects for negotiations. Nitze assured the Chancellor his views would be considered and the West would not proceed without FRG agreement.⁹⁰²

In Washington, Grewe complained that the post-Geneva draft of the access authority proposal would change legal foundations of West Berlin, including the occupation rights, and would be a big step towards acceptance of a permanently divided Germany.⁹⁰³ Foy Kohler told him the British accepted the paper and that it would provide a road map for the next round of talks with Dobrynin. The document reflected ongoing remained commitment to the status quo; the Soviet papers presented at Geneva had been rejected as inconsistent with that commitment. In further meetings, Grewe expressed increasing frustration that the US was not taking FRG objections more seriously or responding in a timely manner.⁹⁰⁴ Adenauer sent Kennedy a very short, terse note complaining of American unilateralism and urging him to suspend negotiation, pending consultation "with the three great powers."⁹⁰⁵ Kennedy and Rusk had their own complaints about FRG press leaks of the secret working papers. Dobrynin was just about to arrive in Washington and the leaks could compromise chances for continued discussion. That may have been exactly what the West Germans hoped to accomplish.⁹⁰⁶

⁹⁰² Memo re Adenauer-Nitze meeting, Bonn, April 13, 1962, *FRUS 1961-63*, Vol. XV, doc.34.

⁹⁰³ Text attached to Klein memo to Bundy, April 25, 1962, JFK, NSF Box 84, 4/62.

⁹⁰⁴ Memo re Grewe-Kohler meetings Washington, April 13 & 14, 1962, *FRUS 1961-63*, Vol. XV, docs. 34 & 35.

⁹⁰⁵ Adenauer-Kennedy letter, April 14, 1962, *FRUS 1961-63*, Vol. XV, doc. 37.

⁹⁰⁶ Mayers, *Kennedy and Adenauer*, p.72-73.

Rusk-Dobrynin meet in Washington; Americans Resume Nuclear Testing

At their first meeting on April 14, Rusk outlined some of the negotiating problems for Dobrynin. The Soviets had insisted on "drawing a line under World War II" and introduced their peace treaty/free city proposals to normalize what they considered outdated arrangements. The US had responded with all-German/all-Berlin proposals as an alternative. The Soviets had said the situation needed to be changed to recognize the "existing facts" in Germany. When the US responded that occupation was also a fact, the Soviets would say the facts should be changed. The US wanted to "deal with the existence of underlying disagreement in such a way as not to move toward a dangerous crisis."⁹⁰⁷ Regarding their respective working papers on access, the US objected that the Soviet version was tied to Western withdrawal from Berlin; could Dobrynin clarify this? Rusk said the Western proposals would not "interfere with activities in East Germany." Dobrynin said the "present position" of his government linked access agreements to the troop withdrawals. He asked about broadening the discussion and Rusk told him that was possible if they could reach a better understanding on the Berlin/German problem.⁹⁰⁸ Dobrynin clearly had no instructions to depart from Gromyko's approach in the Geneva talks, nor did he signal the Soviets "were ready to move the matter to a crisis." In his memoirs, Dobrynin says he thought Kennedy was willing to recognize a divided Germany and withdraw US troops but was afraid that would be perceived as weakness.⁹⁰⁹

Other problems were clouding relations between the superpowers. These problems did not directly involve their alliance partners in the same way the German issue did.⁹¹⁰ Bilateral

⁹⁰⁷ Memo re Dobrynin-Rusk meeting, Washington, April 14, 1962, *FRUS 1961-63*, Vol. XV, doc.39.

⁹⁰⁸ Ibid.

⁹⁰⁹ Dobrynin, *In Confidence*, p. 64.

⁹¹⁰ Beschloss, *Crisis Years*, p. 395-96.

superpower rivalry was evidenced by Third World competition and the contest for nuclear supremacy. One immediate Third World concern was Laos, where Pathet Lao rebels were making strong gains. Both the US and Soviets had generally respected their recent agreements to avoid escalation, but Chinese intervention was encouraging the rebels. In response, the US had sent troops to Thailand. The Communist North Vietnamese were also intervening in the Laos conflict and making aggressive incursions in South Vietnam.⁹¹¹ In Cuba, the Americans had renewed efforts to destabilize the Castro regime through the Central Intelligence Agency's Operation Mongoose. The Soviets were offering increasing military and political support to the Castro regime, which had not only instituted communist programs in Cuba but was providing weapons and guerilla training to leftist revolutionaries in Venezuela and Nicaragua.⁹¹²

On April 25, the United States resumed atmospheric testing of hydrogen bombs.⁹¹³ The Joint Chiefs of staff and hawkish members of Congress had lobbied hard for the decision, but the president's inner circle had divided opinions. The US had notified the Soviets of this decision, noting the lack of progress in the Geneva disarmament talks. The Soviets protested, without acknowledging that they had had been the first to break the moratorium.⁹¹⁴ Domestic and international press reaction to the new US tests was generally negative, renewing the calls for a comprehensive test ban treaty.

Allied Dissension

The US needed to consult with the Allies before it started another round of bilateral talks with the Soviets. On April 28, Macmillan met with Kennedy in Washington. Macmillan was

⁹¹¹ Lawrence Freedman, *Kennedy's Wars*, p.295-97.

⁹¹² Michael Dobbs, *One Minute to Midnight*, p. 285.

⁹¹³ Seaborg, *Kennedy, Khrushchev & the Test Ban*, p. 211.

⁹¹⁴ Cable from Rusk to Thompson, April 7, 1962, in *The Kennedy-Khrushchev Letters*, ed. Thomas Fensch (The Woodlands: New Century Books, 2001) p. 241.

most interested in reviving prospects for UK production of the Skybolt missile, which had been scaled back.⁹¹⁵ They agreed that the recent relaxation in Berlin, whatever the cause might be, provided hope for better progress in the Dobrynin talks. Rusk noted, however, that initial meetings offered little evidence that the Soviets were prepared to yield on their key issues. Since the Soviets still indicated they would sign a separate treaty, the danger still lay in how they would treat the Western occupation after a treaty. Macmillan told Kennedy he had no plans to visit Adenauer himself, but would see de Gaulle in June.⁹¹⁶

They agreed that the West Germans now doubted whether the Allies were still interested in defending West Berlin and keeping the road open for unification. Macmillan said he wanted an agreement or, failing that, a *modus vivendi*. Macmillan offered a different sort of problems than those presented by the Germans or French. The British were much more cooperative and encouraged negotiations, perhaps overly so. They could not however, negotiate from strength and were treated accordingly, both within the alliance and by the Soviets. Macmillan would occasionally upset the Allied approach with solo diplomatic overtures.⁹¹⁷

On the other hand, the West Germans could sometimes act constructively and in recognition of their responsibilities as an emerging mature partner. But they chronically reverted to political immaturity, bemoaning their station in Europe and begging protection without regard to the hazards and costs their protectors faced.⁹¹⁸ The inconsistencies in their official positions, including the Berlin issue, were partially due to their own domestic divisions. Former FRG foreign minister Heinrich von Brentano's visit to Kennedy on April 30 reflected those divisions. Von Brentano acknowledged his own disagreement with the Chancellor and his successor

⁹¹⁵ Ashton, Kennedy, *Macmillan and the Cold War*, p.158-59.

⁹¹⁶ Memo re Macmillan-Kennedy meeting, April 28, 1962, *FRUS 1961-63*, Vol. XV, doc. 43

⁹¹⁷ Klaus Laure, "Britain, East Germany and Detente" in *Europe, Cold War and Co-existence*, Loth, ed, p.117-118.

⁹¹⁸ Frank A. Mayer, *Kennedy and Adenauer*, p. 70-74.

Schroeder. He stressed that he was not speaking officially for his government but expressed regret at the recent leaks. Kennedy said he was getting the feeling that the West German press "was waging a war against the United States," despite the US's expensive investments in their security and military and political risk taking.⁹¹⁹ Why were the French upheld as friends when they would only deploy a few divisions on their behalf? He said the US would be glad to let someone else take over the prolonged fruitless negotiations. Von Brentano said that he personally, and the German people generally, did appreciate US sacrifices.

They turned to the current US/UK working paper, which Adenauer had objected to.⁹²⁰ Kennedy acknowledged that the German authorities, and the French too, were not happy with US policies to limit the diffusion of nuclear arms in Europe. He said the non-aggression pact elements could be adjusted to satisfy the West Germans. Von Brentano said he had no problem on those issues, but GDR recognition was "not a prestige factor but a political question of overriding importance." GDR participation in an international access authority or joint commissions would grant East Germany a political legitimacy unacceptable to the West Germans. Worse, he said, it could lead to all-German political union that would take West Germany out of the Western alliance, "which would be disastrous."⁹²¹ Kennedy asked what it was in the current proposals that would suggest serious consequences? He pointed to recent public criticism of US policy by von Brentano and noted that the FRG had not fulfilled its defense commitments. He told the West German: "if the United States and the Federal Republic cannot reach an agreement, it would not be possible for the talks to go on with the USSR."⁹²² The FRG was being told the US would not indefinitely shoulder the burdens of negotiating a solution to their problems.

⁹¹⁹ Memo re Kennedy-von Brentano meeting, April 30, 1962, *FRUS 1961-63*, Vol. XV, doc. 44.

⁹²⁰ Klein memo to Bundy, April 15, 1962, JFK, NSF Box 84, folder 4/62.

⁹²¹ Same as note 854.

⁹²² *Ibid.*

Rusk tried to patch up the rift in talks during the May 4-6 NATO meeting in Athens. He told Schroeder there had been no questions of "broader questions" that the FRG might be apprehensive about. Nor would there be any German settlement without FRG "concurrence." He thought the French were waiting these rounds out because they did not want to make any deal that the Germans might later hold against them. Rusk asked why the FRG was so apprehensive about dealing with the much weaker GDR. They should anticipate a post-Ulbricht East Germany being more reasonable. Rusk brought up East-West cooperation on trade commission's but Schroeder downplayed the options. Were the French were ready to rejoin negotiations on Berlin? The Germans said the NATO sessions would provide the answer. They wanted Grewe restored to confidence, after his press indiscretions, with full participation in the ambassadorial working group on Berlin.⁹²³

Bundy met with von Brentano, who continued to object to the access authority. Bundy said the West Germans must be misunderstanding the position papers. The US would not compromise its vital interests, which included continued occupation and no political recognition of the GDR.⁹²⁴ Schroeder, along his advisor Dr. Carstens and the still-influential von Brentano, were mostly appreciative but the real test would be Ambassador Dowling's meetings with Adenauer in Bonn.

Kennedy's press secretary Pierre Salinger visited Moscow at this same time, and met with Khrushchev. Khrushchev received him warmly and indicated his wish for better relations, including interest in another summit. But he also informed Salinger that he was committed to his peace treaty and free city plans. There could be no place for an ongoing occupation regime in an open Berlin, nor was there any need for an international access authority. Khrushchev was

⁹²³ Memo re Rusk-Schroeder meeting, Athens, May 3, 1962, *FRUS 1961-63*, Vol. XV, doc. 45.

⁹²⁴ Memo re Bundy-von Brentano meeting, Athens, May 5, 1962. *FRUS 1961-63*, Vol. XV, doc. 46.

basically friendly though. Salinger got the impression Khrushchev did not believe the US would go to war over Berlin.⁹²⁵

Adenauer, not Khrushchev, had become the immediate problem for the Americans. Rusk told Dowling that Adenauer's pride was wounded on several counts and he might be reasonable after some assurances. He said Kennedy was still wondering why the Germans were so sympathetic to the French who risked so little for them. That question showed how Washington leaders still did not understand an important idea: emerging bonds in Western Europe could be stronger than their postwar attachment to the United States. Kennedy thought the French should appreciate that the US was assuming much of their burden not only in Europe, but in Southeast Asia. Dowling should make clear that the US would not appreciate the FRG's joining with France to block British entry into the Common Market.⁹²⁶ Fortunately for Dowling, Adenauer was contrite: "with his underlying attitude being one of injured innocence characteristic of child with hand caught in cookie jar."⁹²⁷ Adenauer went to some lengths to emphasize his good personal relations with the President and the Secretary. He affirmed his support for continued Berlin negotiations with the Soviets. When he said he only wished the French would join them, Dowling observed that Adenauer might be in the best position to do that. Adenauer said he would be visiting Paris in July and would do his best to bring de Gaulle around.

After cautioning Adenauer to be careful with the press, Dowling cabled Rusk that things had gone well, but he remained concerned. Adenauer seemed to have fallen out with Schroeder and Carstens. A fragmented West German leadership would not make a reassuring partner in negotiations with perceptive Soviets. The impressionable Chancellor's visit to the persuasive de Gaulle in Paris offered "prospects for further damage. " "Further inoculation ...in Washington"

⁹²⁵ Editorial note, *FRUS 1961-63*, Vol. XV, doc. 48; Taubman, *Khrushchev*, p. 539

⁹²⁶ Memo re Rusk-Dowling meeting, May 12, 1962, *FRUS 1961-63*, Vol. XV, doc. 49.

⁹²⁷ Dowling-Rusk, May 14, 1962, *FRUS 1961-63*, Vol. XV, doc. 50.

might be a good idea, setting the stage for yet another hopefully decisive Adenauer-Kennedy meeting.⁹²⁸ Kennedy helped by sending the Chancellor a warm note, downplaying Rusk's disappointing talk with Schroeder and assuring him that he would find current proposals would protect FRG interests. The president told Adenauer that, while a real settlement might not be possible they might be able to get "this three and half year old crisis cooled off."⁹²⁹ What he did not say was that West Germany, not just Adenauer, was becoming an adversarial negotiating participant.⁹³⁰

Khrushchev Decides to Put Missiles in Cuba

Meanwhile in May, Khrushchev was making a decision that would change the superpower relationship in ways the US could not imagine. Increasingly concerned over US-sponsored nuclear encirclement, from West Germany to Turkey, he wondered how he could project a missile force within striking distance of the United States. He considered Cuba a good partner for this venture, which could also enhance his leadership within the Communist Bloc.⁹³¹ He would present to Castro a plan to station several dozen medium and intermediate range ballistic missile sites, along with troops, materiel and advisors. Partly this could be proposed as an effort on Cuba's behalf, partly as Soviet duty to the communist cause. Not all his Presidium colleagues approved of such an adventure. Mikoyan, in particular, voiced objections.⁹³² His ambassador in Cuba, Aleksei Aleyev, doubted at first whether Castro would accept.

Surprisingly, Castro readily assented, on condition the Soviets first provide him with surface to air missile batteries. While the West was trying to develop strategy for the round of

⁹²⁸ Dowling cable to Rusk, May 14, 1962, *FRUS 1961-1963*, Vol. XV, doc. 51.

⁹²⁹ Kennedy letter to Adenauer, May 16, 1962, *FRUS 1961-63*, Vol. XV, doc. 53.

⁹³⁰ Editorial note re George Ball meeting w/Adenauer, May 23, 1962, *FRUS 1961-63*, Vol. XV, doc. 56.

⁹³¹ N S Khrushchev, *Statesman*, p. 324-26.

⁹³² Fursenko and Naftali, *One Hell of a Gamble*, p.176-181.

negotiations with Dobrynin in the summer of 1962, the Soviets were taking steps that would render most of the West's basic assumptions and options irrelevant.⁹³³

In Washington, Bundy's NSC aides Martin Hillenbrand and Henry Owen were working on a new position paper, "Next Steps in Berlin" to supplement the "Draft Principles" paper Rusk had presented to Gromyko in Geneva.⁹³⁴ The trouble was that the Soviets had not agreed to "Draft Principles," which had been offered in hopes of moving the negotiations off their dead center insistence on troop withdrawals and GDR recognition. Henry Owen advocated accepting GDR border personnel, but it was decided to reserve even this small concession unless Dobrynin offered Soviet concessions. At this point, the Americans were running out of options for new negotiating tactics. Changes in nomenclature, such as "police forces" instead of "occupation forces," would not move the Soviets, nor would another change of venue or negotiators. Part of the problem was clearing new offers with Allies, but the biggest obstacle was still Soviet insistence on their core issues. The bilateral dialogue was becoming "negotiation for the sake of negotiation."⁹³⁵ While this was preferable to conflict, it was time-consuming and futile.

Rusk-Dobrynin Discussions Begin

The Rusk-Dobrynin talks began in earnest on Memorial Day 1962. Rusk summarized their recent negotiating history, noting the Soviets had balked at even temporary "*modus vivendi*" understandings" to keep stability short of full resolution. Rusk reiterated that "there was no inherent contradiction between free access and the authority of the East Germans." He wondered why the East had undertaken more harassment recently: "a crisis over Berlin would have the gravest implications for disarmament." US suggestions for all-Berlin joint commissions, he said,

⁹³³ Freedman, *Khrushchev's Wars*, p. 162-63.

⁹³⁴ Klein memo to Bundy, May 17, 1962, *FRUS 1961-1963*, JFK, NSF, Box 84A, folder 5/62-6/62.

⁹³⁵ Memo from David Klein to Bundy, May 17, 1962, *FRUS 1961-63*, Vol. XV, doc. 54.

had been offered to foster a more cooperative atmosphere. Dobrynin responded that the US principles paper said "nothing new" and then said he was expecting a reply to the Soviets' Geneva paper. Rusk said the US needed to see more recognition of "our vital interests" to make discussion "profitable."⁹³⁶

Dobrynin backtracked to the Soviet theme of finally ending a wartime situation. He alluded to Allied disagreements and said the Soviets were not demanding de jure recognition of the GDR, only de facto measures. Technical commissions, he said, should be a matter for the Germans to decide. He acknowledged the connection between Berlin and disarmament and said he welcomed concrete proposals. Rusk dismissed Dobrynin's assertion that the West was in Berlin to fight the Soviets and said the technical commissions had been suggested to relieve tensions, thus benefitting both East and West. GDR sovereignty over Berlin was not the Soviets' to grant unilaterally. Dobrynin said the peace treaty would do just that. Rusk answered "not without our consent. " Dobrynin said "this is where we differ."⁹³⁷

Tensions in Berlin were beginning to increase again, as they had during the earlier rounds of 1962 negotiations.⁹³⁸ In early June, US contingency planners revamped their plans to deal with convoy harassment, with more discretion allowed for forceful response. These new directives reflected a more unilateral tone in US planning, even though the plans would be submitted to the Allies for their concurrence.⁹³⁹ On June 7, the Soviets sent letters of protest to the Allies, decrying what they called provocations; the Allies said shots fired into the Eastern sector were only answering fire initiated against refugees trying to escape to West Berlin. In Rusk's next session with Dobrynin, the Soviets repeatedly stressed the danger of having

⁹³⁶ Memo re Rusk-Dobrynin meeting, Washington, May 30, 1962, *FRUS 1961-63*, Vol. XV, doc. 59

⁹³⁷ Ibid.

⁹³⁸ JCS memo for JFK. "List of Actions on Berlin", April 3, 1962, JFK, NSF Box 84, folder 4/62.

⁹³⁹ Memo from Rusk to Kennedy, June 5, 1962, *FRUS 1961-63*, Vol. XV, doc. 61.

occupation troops in Berlin. Dobrynin again suggested that UN troops replace the current regime, but Rusk rebuffed the idea, saying "a lot of experience in mutual confidence was required."⁹⁴⁰

While both the US and USSR had reduced their forces in the latter 1950s, they had been steadily rebuilding during the prolonged crisis over Berlin. But, the US would still not allow West German control of nuclear weapons there, a caution which gave the Soviets some comfort.⁹⁴¹ McNamara told Kennedy that the arms buildup, along with domestic and Bloc pressures, had tempered Khrushchev's early expectations that the West would acquiesce to his Berlin demands. Khrushchev, he said, may have anticipated greater advances in Soviet and Bloc strength than had been realized. As a result, the Soviets were not expected to sign a separate treaty soon. McNamara thought they would continue "the same rigidity in negotiations without ... any serious attempt to break them off." He expected "a new round of Berlin harassments, intended primarily to keep pressure on West Berlin morale and on Western negotiators."⁹⁴²

Rusk travelled to Europe in late June to consult with Allied leaders. He met first with the French, who he found "much more relaxed on Berlin." He told de Gaulle that the latter's pessimistic view on negotiations had proved correct. De Gaulle said the talks had not caused the alliance problems he had feared. Foreign minister Couve de Murville said the French still could not "approve or participate."⁹⁴³ Rusk then visited Bonn, which the West Germans had been hoping for as a sign of respect. He told Adenauer and Schroeder that he was impressed by West Berlin morale. Schroeder said that East German unrest was due to a continuing exodus problem

⁹⁴⁰ Memo re Rusk-Dobrynin meeting, Washington, June 18, 1962, *FRUS 1961-63*, Vol. XV, doc. 64

⁹⁴¹ Trachtenberg, *A Constructed Peace*, p. 344-45.

⁹⁴² McNamara memo to Kennedy, June 21, 1962, *FRUS 1961-63*, Vol. XV, doc. 67.

⁹⁴³ Rusk cable State, July 20, 1962, *FRUS 1961-63*, Vol. XV, doc. 65.

which the Wall had not completely stopped. The East German populace, he said, was opposed to credits from Bonn because that might strengthen the GDR regime; the US would be closely consulted on the matter. Rusk said the morale risks were probably worth putting the GDR in position more amenable to negotiations. Schroder asked if recent GDR brutality at the Wall should be brought before the UN. Rusk observed that referring the problem to the UN might strengthen Khrushchev's proposal for UN peace-keepers in Berlin.⁹⁴⁴

Rusk reported home that the visit had gone well and Adenauer was generally agreeable. He noted some hints of Franco-German unease and had tried to put in a good word for British entry into the Common Market, for which he found considerable support in Bonn. However, the visit "removed any doubt that I might have had as to the inevitable growth of German pressure for nuclear weapons unless there are multilateral arrangements in NATO or ... significant steps toward disarmament." Schroeder lobbied hard to remove non-diffusion language from the current position paper. Rusk deferred action on that suggestion, pending resumption of Geneva disarmament talks in July.⁹⁴⁵ He noted that newer and more flexible voices were apparent, suggesting that the Adenauer-von Brentano leadership was waning. There were also signs that Ulbricht might also be replaced. In Washington, Kennedy's disarmament advisor John McCloy was hinting to Dobrynin that Ulbricht's removal would improve the situation in Berlin.⁹⁴⁶ Both Adenauer and Ulbricht were troublesome partners and bitterly opposed to cooperation between the two Germanys.

Personality continued to exert a strong influence on the Berlin situation. Second-tier leaders like Adenauer and Ulbricht could derail the calculations of the major heads of state. President Kennedy believed in personal diplomacy. He gained confidence in foreign affairs but

⁹⁴⁴ Memo from Rusk to State re Bonn meetings, June 22, 1962, *FRUS 1961-63*, Vol. XV, doc. 68.

⁹⁴⁵ Memo from Rusk to State re Bonn meetings, June 22, 1962, *FRUS 1961-63*, Vol. XV, doc. 69.

⁹⁴⁶ Memo re McCloy-Dobrynin meeting, Washington, July 3, 1962, *FRUS 1961-63*, Vol. XV, doc. 70.

was often frustrated by intermediaries.⁹⁴⁷ Kennedy had by this time narrowed his circle of security advisors, distancing himself from divisive personalities, right and left, like Acheson and Bowles. Robert Kennedy's influence grew however and did not always blend well with more experienced advisors.⁹⁴⁸ The President's other Cabinet members like Rusk, McNamara, and Bundy were more reserved and studious. Ambassadors Thompson, Dowling and Kohler had been involved in the Berlin crisis since its inception and their well-controlled diplomatic performance was a great help to the US.⁹⁴⁹

Macmillan was less trouble than he had been with Eisenhower, with whom he had presumed great influence. As British prestige and power waned, he was more supplicating with Kennedy, hoping to renew their countries' "special relationship." Lord Home had proved a satisfactory replacement for Harold Caccia and the new Ambassador, David Ormsby-Gore was an intimate of the Kennedy family.⁹⁵⁰ De Gaulle interfered less than he had in the earlier phases of the Berlin Crisis. Now convinced Khrushchev was bluffing, de Gaulle worried more about Algeria and development of the French bomb. His foreign minister Couve de Murville and Ambassador to the US Alphand enjoyed the general, but not complete, confidence of Washington.⁹⁵¹ The French were now less close than the West Germans to Washington. Schroeder was more businesslike than von Brentano had gotten, but was not always on the same page as Adenauer; Grewe was still not fully restored to confidence.⁹⁵² Willy Brandt was also proving more inconsistent and independent than he had been previously, at least in US perception.

⁹⁴⁷ Dallek, *An Unfinished Life*, p.612-13.

⁹⁴⁸ Brinkley, *Acheson*, p. 154; Freedman, *Kennedy's Wars*, p.38.

⁹⁴⁹ Mayer, *The Ambassadors*, p. 211

⁹⁵⁰ Beschloss, *Crisis Years*, p. 423 .

⁹⁵¹ Josephine Brain, "Dealing with de Gaulle", in, White, ed, *Kennedy: the New Frontier Revisited*, p. 169-71.

⁹⁵² Mayers, *Kennedy and Adenauer*, p. 95-97.

The most important - difficult - personality was still Nikita Khrushchev. Khrushchev vacillated between impulsive direct communications and calculated impersonal statements. His July 12 letter to Kennedy used the more formal plural voice.⁹⁵³ He noted recent Berlin tension, which he blamed on opponents of peace, and complained about US refusal to negotiate constructively. He said the peace treaty could no longer be postponed; to forestall a crisis, he was offering a proposal that would "take into account the wishes of the United States on the question of the presence of its troops in West Berlin so far as those wishes are compatible with the task of completing a general settlement." US troops could remain in West Berlin as part of a UN peacekeeping force while the peace treaty was being implemented. Warsaw pact members would also be part of this UN "police military formation," to be phased out over four years. Then, Berlin would become an independent and neutral "open city." Khrushchev cited the recent US-Soviet agreement on Laos, as an example of phased withdrawal they could build on. Both sides had maintained reasonably good faith on Laos, though they reneged somewhat after Chinese intervention changed the situation. Khrushchev dangled the prospect of a US-Soviet summit to sign a final resolution of the Berlin situation, based on the peace treaty.⁹⁵⁴ Dobrynin had hand delivered the note, but it was not presented as an official communication. Rusk decided not to answer without careful consideration, nor share it with the Allies yet. Other signs were suggesting that the peace treaty might indeed be on the horizon again.⁹⁵⁵

Dobrynin presented a formal and more detailed version of the same proposal to Rusk soon after. Except for the new concession to Western prestige, it was the same as their original demands.⁹⁵⁶ Rusk answered indirectly, saying Kennedy had come "into office as one of the few

⁹⁵³ Thomas Fensch, ed., *The Kennedy-Khrushchev Letters*, doc. 49, p. 248-56.

⁹⁵⁴ Message from Khrushchev to Kennedy, July 12, 1962, *FRUS 1961-63*, Vol. XV., doc. 73.

⁹⁵⁵ Memo from Bohlen to Rusk, July 6, 1962, *FRUS 1961-1963*, Vol. XV, doc. 74.

⁹⁵⁶ State Dept. memo for Bundy, "Soviet Intentions on Berlin," July 19, 1962, JFK, NSF Box 84A, folder 7/62.

young men in high position ... among the great powers. He was looking ahead for decades ...taking a broad historical view." Kennedy felt they faced a choice between paths of "hostility and catastrophe, and that of improved understanding leading to more normal relationship."

Kennedy wanted to take the latter path. Dobrynin said the Soviet Union also wanted peace, specifically eliminating the danger posed by troops in West Berlin. Rusk asked why the Soviets chose just West Berlin, which put the Allies on a "slippery slope."⁹⁵⁷ Dobrynin objected to the phrase as inappropriate. Rusk said if it was not the case, the Soviets would not be pursuing this course. He said Dobrynin drew an unwarranted distinction between Soviet troops in East Germany and Allied troops in West Berlin. Dobrynin demurred, saying Soviet troops could be thinned after the peace treaty. They briefly discussed all-Berlin joint commissions, which Dobrynin again called a matter for the Germans to decide for themselves. Rusk told Dobrynin he would be expecting more reciprocity when he met Gromyko in Geneva. Dobrynin simply brought up the familiar demand for the end of occupation. Rusk had his answer.⁹⁵⁸

Kennedy met with the Ambassador on July 17, telling him that he would soon be replying to Khrushchev. The current Soviet proposal was inconsistent with the "vital interests" of the United States, which included its presence in West Berlin. Dobrynin asked if he was concerned over American or German interests? "A vital US interest," replied the President, cautioning him not to doubt Western unity. Dobrynin argued that Western troops posed a danger and should be removed. Kennedy told him that withdrawal would be a "disaster" for the West, but continued occupation would not be so for the Soviets. He said the crisis had already sparked a US defense buildup and demands in Europe for nuclear weapons; confrontation could produce

⁹⁵⁷ Memo re Rusk-Dobrynin meeting, July 12, 1962, *FRUS 1961-63*, Vol. XV, doc .76.

⁹⁵⁸ Same as note 954.

"results which the Soviet Government would not like."⁹⁵⁹ Dobrynin said the Chairman would be disappointed by the US response.

Kennedy's July 17 letter to Khrushchev, while far from his last, began the close of the Berlin-related "pen pal" correspondence. From its inception in the fall of 1961, both had hoped personal letters between heads of state could enhance the work of their foreign ministers and foster a personal bond lead to a productive summit.⁹⁶⁰ The letters did not have as much effect as actual meetings but were generally friendly exchanges. The intimate tone of the earlier letters had gotten tough, devolving into the "we" of Khrushchev's last note. Kennedy's reply was equally formal. He complained the Soviet offer was incompatible with US "vital interests." There could be no question of Western withdrawal but the way should be open for all-Berlin self determination. He agreed Laos was a good starting point. He also thought Berlin and disarmament issues did have some bearing on each other. Berlin relaxation could only help disarmament talks. They could start with small, concrete steps. He hoped Gromyko would be prepared to do that in Geneva.⁹⁶¹

The personal correspondence and foreign minister/ambassadorial meetings had not brought about an acceptable Berlin resolution. On July 19, Kennedy learned that military contingency plans were still not operational. Allied consultation had been minimal, plans poorly designed and not distributed, and mobilization not yet authorized.⁹⁶² Kennedy was still not familiar with the master plan, which had grown out of Live Oak, now dubbed "Poodle Blanket,". The plan broke a potential crisis into four likely stages: access interference, outright blockade, conventional ground action, and nuclear military action. Bundy explained that they were in

⁹⁵⁹ Memo re Kennedy-Dobrynin meeting, July 17, 1962, Washington, *FRUS 1961-1963*, Vol. XV, doc.77.

⁹⁶⁰ Fensch, *Kennedy-Khrushchev Letters*, p. vii-x.

⁹⁶¹ Kennedy letter to Khrushchev, July 17, 1962, *FRUS 1961-63*, Vol. XV, doc. 78.

⁹⁶² "Report to Washington ambassadorial group on ...Bercon/Mercon Plans," 12 July, 1962, JFK, NSF, Box 84A, folder 7/62.

Phase I, harassment. To respond during Phase II, a blockade situation, they would need to begin a military buildup now and it would take about two months. Bundy said Soviet continuance of negotiations meant they need not rush into Phase II readiness.⁹⁶³

Thompson reported from Moscow that he too doubted Khrushchev would move before late fall. Thompson considered a "play for summit conference or bilateral meeting with President Kennedy likely." He thought the emphasis on the known-to-be-unacceptable issue of troop withdrawal was just for show. Said Thompson, Khrushchev now thought "successful negotiation impossible and is building up his position for signature of treaty." He said Khrushchev may have moved some towards a test ban treaty, to preserve recent gains before the Americans could advance again.⁹⁶⁴

As well as he knew Khrushchev, even Thompson did not know, nor did Ambassador Dobrynin, that the Soviets were already preparing launching sites in Cuba. They would ship missiles with nuclear warheads beginning in just a few weeks.⁹⁶⁵ Because the Cubans demanded the surface-to-air missiles be installed first, the site-building and shipments were delayed by several weeks. The harassment in Berlin and toughness in negotiations may indeed have been designed to distract US attention from the Cuban missile emplacement.⁹⁶⁶

Rusk-Gromyko July meetings in Geneva

Rusk's meetings with Gromyko in Geneva from July 23-25 broke no new ground and provided no clear indication of Soviet intentions on Berlin nor the consequences of a peace

⁹⁶³ Memo re Bundy-Kennedy meeting, Washington, July 20, 1962, *FRUS 1961-63*, Vol. XV, doc. 80.

⁹⁶⁴ Cable from Thompson to Rusk, July 20, 1962, *FRUS 1961-63*, Vol. XV, doc. 81.

⁹⁶⁵ Fursenko & Naftali, *Khrushchev's Cold War*, p. 448.

⁹⁶⁶ Fursenk & Naftali, *One Hell of a Gamble*, p.156-60.

treaty. Gromyko's negotiating line was tougher but cordial.⁹⁶⁷ Rusk thought that Gromyko was "more moderate" when not speaking from prepared statements. Gromyko seemed upset when at one point he thought Rusk had suggested suspending the talks. Rusk made oblique references to what Kennedy and Khrushchev might say to each other face to face, but Gromyko did not "raise or pursue summit." Rusk noted that when he told Polish Foreign Minister Rapacki it would be helpful "for those who have influence in Moscow to council moderation," Rapacki replied "you may be sure this is being done." Rusk thought the Western Ministers showed good unity, though they all agreed contingency plans needed urgent review.⁹⁶⁸

In his final session with Gromyko, Rusk expressed his frustration at endlessly repeating the same arguments. He asked what could they "profitably say to each other at this point." He said circumstances did not warrant a summit "there was danger two leaders reaching same point we are now ... would not be satisfactory to either side." Gromyko said the problem was still Western insistence on the occupation of West Berlin. His government had "suspended" air harassment but received no thanks. As for Rusk's pessimistic outlook for a summit, he said that was the Secretary's view but the Soviets would never accept perpetual occupation. Rusk said the US had never used the term "perpetual."⁹⁶⁹

The US, Rusk said, would uphold their responsibilities per their legal agreements. He could not imagine the Soviets would simply turn over their responsibilities to Walter Ulbricht. "Prudence required not to translate Berlin problem into sole determining issue in US-USSR relations," he said. Progress was possible on other issues, but without "reciprocity" on Berlin, "it was indeed major issue between US-USSR." Gromyko returned to standard Soviet arguments

⁹⁶⁷ State Dept. Intelligence memo. "Soviet Intentions w/Respect to Berlin ..., July 21 and 22," July 24, 1962, JFK, NSF Box 84A, folder 7/62.

⁹⁶⁸ Memos re Rusk-Gromyko meetings, Geneva, July 23-25, 1962, *FRUS 1961-63*, Vol. XV, docs. 82-85.

⁹⁶⁹ Memo re Rusk-Gromyko meeting, Geneva, July 15, 1962, *FRUS 1961-63*, Vol. XV, doc. 86.

about dangers of West German revanchism and the West Berlin regime's incompatibility with GDR sovereignty. He would not commit to talks between their Deputy Foreign Ministers, whether quadripartite or bilateral. Rusk had thought Gromyko too was signaling that negotiations had run their course for time being, since the US would not yield its occupation.⁹⁷⁰

At this same time, Llewellyn Thompson was returning to Washington after nearly five years in Moscow. He would retain the rank of Ambassador but would mainly advise Rusk and Kennedy on Soviet matters. In his final meeting with Khrushchev, the Soviet chief said he should ask Kennedy "whether it would be better for him if Berlin question brought to a head before or after our Congressional elections. He did not want to make things more difficult for Kennedy and in fact wanted to help him."⁹⁷¹ But Khrushchev also said he was disappointed at early reports from Gromyko in Geneva: "it was already clear our dialogue was coming to an end." The Soviets had to stand by their East German allies and that meant signing a separate treaty. Thompson asked what he would do if Soviet troops were in a similar position. Khrushchev responded as expected: "sign the treaty and withdraw, " but Thompson thought the remark had "some effect." The meeting was cordial, but Thompson thought Khrushchev "realized he had to move ahead and was deeply troubled."

Khrushchev repeatedly emphasized "this was the one problem standing in way of good relations ... I believe he is sincere in this."⁹⁷² Thompson told Rusk he did not think Khrushchev would push the situation to the brink of war. The West should quietly but visibly continue contingency planning and avoid provocative statements or actions. Since Khrushchev was "likely" to bring his case to the UN, the US should try to line up neutral support to prevent

⁹⁷⁰ Ibid.

⁹⁷¹ Cable from Thompson to Rusk, July 25, 1962, *FRUS 1961-63*, Vol. XV, doc. 87.

⁹⁷² Cable from Thompson to Rusk, July 26, 1962, *FRUS 1961-63*, Vol. XV, doc. 88.

unacceptable compromises being forced on the West. Thompson noted some Soviet movement, but also objections, to disarmament.⁹⁷³ He did not make references to next steps in negotiation.

While Thompson was correct in observing that the peace treaty was not imminent, he did not realize that the Soviets were beginning a new campaign of harassment. The Western powers did conduct a post-Geneva review of their contingency planning. Planning now emphasized diplomatic rather than military reaction, in hopes of minimizing the importance of a treaty. A major problem in planning a military response was the peace treaty would probably be implemented in small incremental steps, which would difficult to respond to with appropriate force. As long as the Soviets or East Germans did not take serious unilateral steps, the effects of the treaty might be easily managed.⁹⁷⁴ Rusk told Kennedy that the Western powers were now prepared to accept East German personnel substituting for Soviets in implementing existing ground access procedures. Rusk papered over significant disagreements remaining between the Allies. The Europeans still wanted early use of nuclear weapons if military operations became necessary, but balked at building up their conventional forces.

McNamara told Kennedy the Allies lacked "understanding [of] the effects of these [nuclear] weapons." Kennedy asked why the Germans still lagged in their build-up and why Adenauer had not been more helpful with the French. He asked if he could tell the Allies would agree to the early use of tactical nuclear weapons if they would build up to the 30-division level that was expected would hold off their opponents for several weeks. Henry Kissinger had recently written that even 30 divisions might not be enough to support a tactical nuclear strategy. McNamara observed that early use would require getting all the heads of government to agree;

⁹⁷³ Cable from Thompson to Rusk, July 28, 1962, *FRUS 1961-63*, Vol. XV, doc. 89.

⁹⁷⁴ Rusk memo for Kennedy "Contingency Planning for Soviet-GDR Peace Treaty," August 2, 1962, JFK, NSF Box 84A, folder 8/62.

that would "require time and some conventional defensive efforts."⁹⁷⁵ As for a US buildup, McNamara wanted to wait for Congress's upcoming summer recess to lobby for support. Not even the US was ready for major military action in Europe.

By early August 1962 neither diplomatic or military options for the Berlin problem appeared as viable solutions to the Berlin problem. Continued French and West German objections limited flexibility and kept the US on its bilateral track.⁹⁷⁶ Neither the Thompson meetings, the "Pen-Pal" correspondence, or the Rusk-Dobrynin and Rusk-Gromyko meetings had broken new ground. Nor did the 1962 Soviet focus on UN-flag occupation and the US focus on an interim *modus vivendi* solve the deadlock. As Senator Mike Mansfield told Kennedy, lack of diplomatic progress and renewed Soviet-GDR harassments in Berlin effectively stalled the negotiating track.⁹⁷⁷ By early September, intelligence information about Soviet missile installations in Cuba shifted attention away from Berlin towards new problems.

Conclusions

In the first half of 1962, the United States continued take the lead in negotiations with the Soviet Union on Berlin. This bilateral diplomacy was conducted through back channel approaches, ambassadorial talks, and foreign minister meetings conducted during Geneva disarmament talks. The shift to bilateralism was reinforced by continued poor relations with its Allied partners and Soviet interest in negotiating with the strongest Western power, the US, which controlled their nuclear deterrent. The Berlin Wall had partially stabilized the German situation, but harassments and Khrushchev's public demands for a peace treaty, well into early

⁹⁷⁵ Memo from William Smith to General Taylor re Kennedy briefing, August 9, 1962, *FRUS, 1961-63*, Vol. XV, doc. 93.

⁹⁷⁶ Tyler memo to Rusk, August 16, 1962, JFK, NSF Box 84A, folder 8/62.

⁹⁷⁷ Mansfield letter to Kennedy, August 25, 1962, JFK, NSF Box 84A, folder 8/62.

summer 1962, created tensions only the United States made serious efforts to resolve. The US became even more estranged from the other Allies, who were inflexible diplomatically and ill-prepared militarily to resolve the Berlin problem.⁹⁷⁸ Britain receded in importance, France became more isolated from NATO and West Germany's role continued to be more important, a trend that had begun in the fall of 1961. Differing positions on disarmament and atomic testing further divided the Allies and made US talks with the Soviets more vital.⁹⁷⁹

The Soviet Union had sharply different positions on disarmament as well, but its comparable nuclear strength made its arms-control dialogue with the United States effectively bilateral. Costs and dangers of nuclear weapons, as well as public pressure, renewed interest in reconvening ENDC talks in Geneva in the spring of 1962. The Geneva talks, though multilateral, allowed new bilateral dialogue. Like the fall 1961 United Nations sessions, they provided an opportunity for discussions centering on Berlin.⁹⁸⁰ Both the US and USSR continued to link disarmament progress with Berlin. Eastern harassments worsened at the same time, hindering progress on Berlin and disarmament. Like Ambassador Thompson's discussions in Moscow in January and February, Rusk's Geneva talks with Gromyko in the spring and summer were formal and repetitious. Negotiations became a delaying tactic for both sides, but disarmament, particularly a test ban, was finally emerging from the shadow of Berlin.⁹⁸¹

By mid-1962, Berlin had lost its immediacy as an issue. Talks had gone on too long, alliance partners were dissatisfied and domestic debates confused the issue till it became an indefinite threat. Kennedy and Khrushchev, both frustrated and ready to find some way out to salvage prestige, were unready to attempt another summit or continue the "Pen Pal"

⁹⁷⁸ Trachtenberg, *A Constructed Peace*, p. 355-57.

⁹⁷⁹ Vojtech Mastny, 'Detente, the Superpowers, and their Allies,' in *Europe, Cold War and Coexistence*, p. 216-18.

⁹⁸⁰ Beschloss, *Crisis Years*, p. 364

⁹⁸¹ Seaborg, *Kennedy, Khrushchev & the Test Ban*, p. 164-71.

correspondence. Real negotiation on Berlin effectively ended with the Rusk-Gromyko talks in July 1962, though Rusk and Kennedy continued to meet with Ambassador Dobrynin in the early fall to no effect. Gromyko met with Rusk again in Washington in October, but neither side attempted new proposals on Berlin. The Western ministers consulted with little more accord.

Despite late summer violence in Berlin, elimination of the Soviet commandant and likely a peace treaty signing, the German issue had taken on the character of permanent siege not a gathering storm.⁹⁸² The failure of negotiations indicated Berlin's lessening importance. The discovery of Soviet missiles in Cuba in early fall showed Berlin was being replaced by other concerns. None of these developments signaled a renewal of the proto-detente seen in 1959 through early 1961. Nor did they restore Allied unity. Berlin was a catalytic issue that brought the US, Allies, and Soviets, closer than they had been in years. In 1962, Berlin divided the Allies again. Despite their diplomatic attempts in 1962, Berlin ultimately divided the US and USSR. After loss of faith caused by the Cuban missile crisis of late 1962, Berlin negotiations would continue only as a ritual to appease Khrushchev.

⁹⁸² Beschloss, *Crisis Years*, p. 400.

Chapter Six: "A Slippery Slope," September 1962 - November 1963

Introduction

Although new confrontations in Berlin followed the collapse of bilateral negotiations in the summer of 1962, Western leaders believed Khrushchev would not sign his separate peace treaty before the US elections in November. Actions like eliminating the office of Soviet Commandant in Berlin were seen as incremental steps towards turning over their Berlin responsibilities to the German Democratic Republic and allowing the GDR to control access to West Berlin.⁹⁸³ Allied relations had frayed over the course of bilateral negotiation and there was little consensus on how to proceed. As the West tried to improve its readiness for a conflict to maintain Berlin access, attention was diverted to unexpected developments in Cuba, now a Soviet ally.

Intelligence sources had indicated in late July 1962 that Soviet surface to air missiles were being installed in Cuba. In September, analysts saw signs that medium-range ballistic missile sites were also under construction. By October 16, these rumors were confirmed and President Kennedy convened an 'Executive Committee' of advisors consider their options.⁹⁸⁴ Unlike the Berlin situation, the Cuban development placed the United States in immediate nuclear vulnerability. The resulting confrontation brought the two superpowers closer to general

⁹⁸³ Bundy memo to Sorensen, August 23, 1962, JFK, NSF Box 84A, folder 8/62.

⁹⁸⁴ CIA memo, "Recent Soviet Activity in Cuba", August 22, 1962; SNIE 85-3-62, "the Military Buildup in Cuba"; memo re ExComm meeting, Washington, October 16, 1962, in *The Cuban Missile Crisis, 1962: A National Security Archive Documents Reader*, ed. by Lawrence Chang and Peter Kornbluh (New York: the New press, 1998), docs.12, 13 & 16.

war than even the tensest periods of the Berlin crisis so far. Because the US now had little confidence in either Soviet Foreign Minister Gromyko or Ambassador Dobrynin, negotiations were conducted largely through Robert Kennedy's Soviet backchannel Georgi Bolshakov.⁹⁸⁵ During deliberations, President Kennedy and advisers gave serious consideration to how the missile crisis might affect the Berlin situation and vice versa.⁹⁸⁶ An exchange of notes between Khrushchev and Kennedy produced a settlement that humiliated the Soviet Chairman but did not provide the American president with a clear victory.

French refusal the next month to admit the British to the Common Market, an uneasy Kennedy-Macmillan summit in Nassau, and renewed difficulties with the West Germans made it unlikely by January 1963 that the Western allies could regroup to take advantage of Khrushchev's setback.⁹⁸⁷ Despite the damage done to Soviet prestige and credibility, Khrushchev continued to press his demands for Western withdrawal from Berlin and the peace treaty.⁹⁸⁸ Serious negotiations did not resume and the standoff contributed to a general decline in US-Soviet relations. President Kennedy visited Berlin in May 1963. This visit, with his famous "Ich bin ein Berliner" speech reaffirmed American commitment, but like Johnson's visit in August 1961, also served as tacit acknowledgement of a divided Germany. Khrushchev visited East Berlin on June 28, to a much more reserved reception.⁹⁸⁹

The nuclear dangers of the Cuban missile crisis and resulting damage to public relations encouraged the superpowers to redouble their efforts for a test ban treaty, which was signed in July 1963. By February, the Soviets de-linked Berlin and disarmament issues in hopes of

⁹⁸⁵ Fursenko & Naftali, *One Hell of a Gamble*, p.252-53.

⁹⁸⁶ Dallek, *An Unfinished Life*, p.554.

⁹⁸⁷ Llewellyn Thompson memo to Bundy, January 24, 1963, JFK, NSF Box 85, folder 1/63.

⁹⁸⁸ Kohler-Hillenbrand-Tyler-Knappstein meeting, February 4, 1963, Washington, JFK, NSF Box 85, folder 2/63-5/63.

⁹⁸⁹ Andreas Daum, *Kennedy in Berlin* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2003), p.186-87.

reviving negotiations on this issues, as well as recovering lost prestige.⁹⁹⁰ The Limited Test Ban treaty did not produce a summit and fell short of the comprehensive disarmament action hoped for by alliance partners and neutral nations. America's increasing involvement in Vietnam and Soviet conflicts with the People's Republic of China distracted the superpowers. Khrushchev's continued insistence on his Berlin demands further discouraged the resumption of negotiations. Both sides increased their nuclear arsenals.⁹⁹¹ With the assassination of President Kennedy in November 1963 and the sacking of Khrushchev in October 1964, US-Soviet negotiations fell into a decline that would last for the next five years.

Dobrynin Signals Stalemate; New Berlin Harassments

Berlin negotiations had already stalled by late summer 1962, just as Berlin harassments became more serious. Rusk told Lord Hood and Georg Lillienfeld, the British and West German ministers to the United States, that "exploratory talks and probes had about run their course."⁹⁹² On August 13, Dobrynin had told Rusk that the Soviets could not agree to a Deputy Foreign Ministers Conference "since it would give the appearance of negotiations which in fact would have no real chance of success." Such a conference, he said, "would actually delay settlement." Dobrynin noted Rusk had told Gromyko in Geneva that he could not imagine what they would discuss. Rusk objected, saying that the US "general principles" paper, first submitted in March, provided a basis for discussion. He said Western support for the Deputy Ministers conference was not a delaying tactic but a positive step. Rusk said the four occupation commandants should meet to work out problems, particularly incidents at the Wall. ⁹⁹³

⁹⁹⁰ UK cables, "Foreign Office to Washington", February 9, 1963, JFK, NSF Box 85, folder 2/63-5/63.

⁹⁹¹ Zubok, *A Failed Empire*, p.153.

⁹⁹² Memo re Rusk-Hood Lillienfeld, August 9, 1962, *FRUS 1961-63*, Vol. XV, doc. 92.

⁹⁹³ Memo re Rusk-Dobrynin meeting, Washington, August 13, 1962, *FRUS 1961-63*, Vol. XV, doc. 94.

With the Soviet rejection of a Deputy Foreign Ministers Conference, the door was out closed to further substantive negotiation for the foreseeable future. France and Germany were not prepared to hold another East-West Foreign Ministers Conference or attempt a summit.⁹⁹⁴ In August, Foy Kohler replaced Thompson in Moscow. Robert Kennedy and Averill Harriman objected to Kohler's appointment, saying Kohler was unimaginative and dull. Rusk and his State Department colleagues valued Kohler highly, as had Dulles. He had spent time in the Soviet Union, as well as working closely with the Allied working groups, and been involved in the Berlin crisis from the beginning.⁹⁹⁵ Kohler had the Soviets' respect and had been involved in many high level discussions on Berlin over the previous three and half years. He did not and never would have Khrushchev's confidence to the same high degree as his predecessor.⁹⁹⁶ Dobrynin would continue to meet in Washington with Kennedy and Rusk over the coming weeks, but their exchanges became cooler and more formal, as Berlin harassments increased.

Khrushchev authorized the increasing Berlin harassments to turn up the pressure on the West.⁹⁹⁷ Gromyko had told his translator in Geneva not to say that the Soviets had "stopped" air interference but only "suspended" it. That air harassment had been a dangerous aggravation, but did not produce the sharp public alarm as did increasing brutality at the Wall. On August 13, the East Germans shot a young refugee, Peter Fechter, at Checkpoint Charlie (Friedrichstrasse Crossing). He was left to die in view of the West Berliners, who responded with mobs throwing rocks at the busses carrying guards for the Soviet War memorial. Kennedy was angry at the

⁹⁹⁴ Memo re Kennedy-Grewe meeting, August 31, 1962, *FRUS 1961-63*, Vol. XV, doc. 110.

⁹⁹⁵ Mayers, *The Ambassadors*, p. 213-15

⁹⁹⁶ Gen. Clifton memo for record and attachment "Shooting Incident at Berlin Wall," August 20, 1962, JFK, NSF Box 85, folder 8/62.

⁹⁹⁷ Fursenko & Naftali, *Khrushchev's Cold War*, p. 445.

shooting and indecisive Western reaction, and at the stoning as well.⁹⁹⁸ The West strongly protested but were met by indifferent responses from the Soviet Commandant.

West Berlin public sentiment was turning against the Allies because of their moderate response to the shooting. The Soviets bristled at their war memorial guards being escorted by Western troops, but angry crowds were heckling all of them.⁹⁹⁹ Norstad told McNamara that events had gone beyond "the limits of the local military and political situation in Berlin" and "constituted an offense against humanity. He wanted to be able to offer medical assistance, even if it required force to intervene, but without the Soviets taking such action as a "challenge."¹⁰⁰⁰ In Bonn, Adenauer told Ambassador Dowling that the Allies needed to show they were prepared to intervene: "Do it soon ... and let the people of West Berlin know."¹⁰⁰¹

Tensions rose even more when the Soviets unexpectedly "liquidated" their office of occupation commander in East Berlin on August 22. Allied observers saw this as a critical first step in turning over their responsibilities for Berlin to the East Germans. The immediate effects might be minimal but would set the stage for reducing the authority of the Allied Commandants in West Berlin and erode the basis for its occupation troops.¹⁰⁰² Kennedy's military advisors saw trouble in parsing the level of acceptable provocations. General Taylor's assistant Lawrence Legere said the "vital interest" logic could lead to acceptance of 'non-vital' Checkpoint Charlie's closing because counter-actions like denying Soviet access to the war memorial could lead to closure of the 'vital' access corridor. Légere said the West "should not back down one inch." He added, with emphasis: "Above all, General Clay is so eternally right when he says that if we

⁹⁹⁸ Kennedy memo to Rusk, August 21, 1962, JFK, NSF Box 85, folder 8/62.

⁹⁹⁹ Memo re Frank Cash-Arthur Day conversation, Berlin, August 19, 1962, *FRUS 1961-63*, Vol. XV, doc. 95.

¹⁰⁰⁰ Cable from Norstad to McNamara, August 21, 1962, *FRUS 1961-63*, Vol. XV, doc. 97

¹⁰⁰¹ cable from Dowling to Rusk, August 21, 1962, *FRUS 1961-63*, Vol. XV, doc. 98.

¹⁰⁰² Cable from Hulick to Rusk, August 23, 1962, *FRUS 1961-63*, Vol. XV, doc. 100.

stand up to them like men they will back down, not bomb New York and Washington." ¹⁰⁰³ The President's Cabinet advisors were more temperate, but recognized that the Soviets were taking provocations to an new level. Dobrynin did not seem very alarmed. Bundy told Kennedy's counselor Ted Sorenson to tell the Ambassador that the Soviets should not "confuse our calmness and good manners with any weakening of our determination whatsoever."¹⁰⁰⁴

In truth, the West, primarily due to US leadership, had consistently downplayed confrontations since the February 1959 convoy detention at Marienborn. Even Western reaction to the Wall had been muted. The sole significant exception had been Clay's tank standoff at Checkpoint Charlie almost a year earlier. In those periods, negotiation was still considered a viable alternative. With negotiations in limbo, a new uncertainty accompanied incident response.¹⁰⁰⁵ In a meeting with his Berlin working group on August 28, Kennedy tried to work out some measures which might make the Soviets relent without pushing them to tougher actions. Recommended measures included not just limited access to the war memorial and restricted transit, but denial of any access by Soviet soldiers to West Berlin.¹⁰⁰⁶ They would need to review these measures with the other Allied powers, a difficult and not-secure process. The President decided this would not be a good time to send General Clay back to Berlin, especially after Clay told Rusk that he and other US officers opposed thinning their troop presence. Kennedy's advisors were correct in noting that the Soviets very much wanted continued access to West Berlin.¹⁰⁰⁷

¹⁰⁰³ Memo from Legere to Taylor, August 23, 1962, *FRUS 1961-63*, Vol. XV. doc. 101

¹⁰⁰⁴ Memo from Bundy to Sorenson, August 23, 1962, *FRUS 1961-63*, Vol. XV. doc 103.

¹⁰⁰⁵ Brubeck memo to Bundy and attachment "Soviet Intentions on Berlin...", September 7&6, 1962, JFK, NSF Box 85, folder 9/62.

¹⁰⁰⁶ Memo re Kennedy meeting with Bundy, Rusk, Nitze, Ball et al, Washington, August 28, 1962 doc. 107.

¹⁰⁰⁷ Memo re CLay-Rusk meeting, August 30, 1962 Washington, *FRUS 1961-63*, Vol. XV, doc. 109.

Allied unity on response plans was far from ideal but still encouraging to Washington. The Germans were now proving cooperative and the French not too much trouble. Western planners decided to adopt their own incremental strategy to limit Soviet access piecemeal, to stymie a broader response. Also encouraging was Khrushchev's statement in Russia to visiting Secretary of the Interior Morris Udall that there would be no peace treaty before the US election.¹⁰⁰⁸ That news provided breathing room for the contingency planners. It also served to camouflage Khrushchev's operations in Cuba. That operation was now just days away from being discovered. Khrushchev would pay a heavy price for his Berlin brinksmanship. Not only had he conducted negotiations in bad faith, he had authorized inhumane tactics in Berlin and brought tensions in central Europe to dangerous levels.¹⁰⁰⁹ Now that the negotiation had been suspended, the US would be very cautious about renewing them.

The Missile Crisis

The bilateral US-Soviet negotiations over Berlin in the first part of 1962 helped define an emerging superpower relationship accentuated by an imbalance of strength with weak and often disagreeing partners. The Allies' confused reaction to new Berlin harassment in August-September 1962 and Walter Ulbricht's continued demands on Khrushchev for stronger support created new pressure to salvage what was left of the bilateral dialogue.¹⁰¹⁰ The Soviets had hinted they would that they would turn to the UN for support of their new idea to allow Western troops to remain temporarily in Berlin under a UN flag and alongside East Bloc troops.¹⁰¹¹

¹⁰⁰⁸ memo re Udall-Khrushchev visit, September 6, 1952, Petsunda, USSR, *FRUS 1961-63*, Vol. XV, doc. 112.

¹⁰⁰⁹ Beschloss, *Crisis Years*, p. 409-410.

¹⁰¹⁰ Memos re Rusk-Brandt meeting New York, September 29, 1962; Kennedy-de Murville meeting, Washington, October 9, 1962, *FRUS 1961-63*, doc. 126 & 130.

¹⁰¹¹ Memo re Knappstein-Tyler meeting, September 13, 1962, JFK, NSF Box 85, folder 9/62.

Though the UN General Assembly did not consider this potentially troublesome proposal, their sessions did bring Gromyko to New York. Khrushchev indicated to Ambassador Kohler in Moscow that he too might travel to New York after the US elections to talk to Kennedy about a test ban agreement. He said he did want to consult about Berlin, but complained that Kennedy had lately been provocative. For the first time since the planning of the Paris summit, Khrushchev was - apparently - giving disarmament issues parity with the Berlin question, but still linking progress on the latter with the former. Khrushchev declined to discuss Berlin, or the missiles in Cuba, pending Gromyko's talks with Kennedy in Washington.¹⁰¹²

Gromyko was very cordial to the President, conveying personal greetings from Khrushchev, noticeably absent from a strident late September letter.¹⁰¹³ The Soviet minister assured Kennedy there would be no peace treaty before the elections, but the Berlin problem needed to be resolved according to Soviet terms: "in those circumstances, disarmament would also be easier to solve." Gromyko offered a summit, but was adamant that Western troops must leave Berlin. Kennedy said he would be happy to meet with Khrushchev if he came over for the UNGA sessions but, "it would be a mistake to describe such a meeting as dealing with a peace treaty and West Berlin, since others were involved in these matters and more formal discussions would be required."¹⁰¹⁴ Kennedy worried later that he should have brought up the missiles and made plain that there could be no summit in the present situation. Rusk and Thompson told the President he had been prudent.¹⁰¹⁵ Anatoly Dobrynin has recalled that Gromyko thought "it could well have been his most difficult conversation of all with nine American presidents."¹⁰¹⁶

¹⁰¹² Memo from Kohler-Rusk, October 16, 1962, *FRUS 1961-63*, Vol. XV, doc. 133.

¹⁰¹³ Khrushchev letter to Kennedy, undated (approx September 28, 1962), *FRUS, 1961-63*, Vol. XV, doc. 125.

¹⁰¹⁴ Memo re Kennedy-Gromyko meeting, October 18, 1962, *FRUS 1961-63*, Vol. XV, doc. 135.

¹⁰¹⁵ Beschloss, *Crisis Years*, p. 457-58.

¹⁰¹⁶ Anatoly Dobrynin, *In Confidence*, p. 76.

Gromyko's own meeting with Rusk was equally inconclusive; the Soviets offered an international arbitration authority for access and air, the Americans asked only for respect of existing arrangements. At one point, when Gromyko was again talking of how the occupation agreements were obsolete, Rusk said they needed to "take the peels off the banana and to look at the heart of the matter. The Soviet Union was a great power and so was the United States."¹⁰¹⁷ Rusk, usually very careful to speak in multilateral Western Alliance terms, was acknowledging that the superpowers might not be able to decide the Berlin question themselves but bore the greatest responsibility for its resolution. He again invoked mutual recognition and respect for "vital interests." But each made bitter historical references and mainly repeated their stock arguments, with only token mention of the access mechanisms or other concrete business. Though Rusk and Gromyko skirted around Cuba, White House planners were already considering possible implications - and options - for the Berlin situation.¹⁰¹⁸

By October 22, international press disclosure of the Cuban missiles had usurped Berlin's centrality in the public eye. The Cuban situation complicated the problems of Allied military planning for Berlin, and vice versa. Paul Nitze told the Western Ambassadorial Group, "one of the reasons for the use of 'quarantine' and not 'blockade' is to avoid the connection Khrushchev is trying to make between Berlin and Cuba."¹⁰¹⁹ Nitze also thought Khrushchev remained as determined as ever to proceed with his separate treaty. He said that planners had anticipated possible trouble in other regions and Berlin planning needn't be rethought. Berlin had about six months of reserves to withstand a possible blockade; it would take the US about six weeks to mobilize and transport reinforcements. Nitze's estimate would have been over-optimistic since the extent of the hazards and possible response increased over the following days.

¹⁰¹⁷ Memo re Rusk-Gromyko meeting, , October 18, 1962, *FRUS 1961-63*, Vol. XV, doc. 136.

¹⁰¹⁸ Memo "Defense of Berlin if Cuba is Blockaded," October 19, 1962, JFK, NSF Box 85, folder 10/62.

¹⁰¹⁹ Memo re ambassadorial group meeting, Washington, October 22, 1962, *FRUS 1961-63*, Vol. XV, doc. 138.

The missile sites had been identified with the help of Soviet mole Igor Penkovsky who had been providing Washington with essential intelligence about Soviet missile systems for over a year. His information had been used for Roswell Gilpatric's October 1962 expose of slow Soviet missile production. U2 over-flight photography revealed images similar to Penkovsky's pictures of MRBM and IRBM launching sites in Russia.¹⁰²⁰ It was also learned that missile-laden Soviet ships en route to Cuba. Some missiles were probably operational. Kennedy chose not to respond immediately with an attack on Cuba., but instead ordered a naval blockade which deflected most of the Soviet vessels.¹⁰²¹ Cuban SAM's took out a U2 and increased pressure for various levels of invasion and airstrikes.¹⁰²²

Kennedy chose a core group of advisors, the Executive Committee, or ExComm, mainly from the NSC, to deal with the Cuban crisis.. The group included Vice President Johnson, Secretaries Rusk, Dillon and McNamara, JCS Chair General Maxwell Taylor, Ambassadors Thompson, Bohlen and Stevenson, National Security Advisor McGeorge Bundy and his aide Paul Nitze, Dean Acheson who had been distanced by the White House for his hard-line attitudes on Berlin, and others.¹⁰²³ As a sign of his increasing foreign policy influence, Robert Kennedy was also included. This group advised on military responses, which ranged simple blockade to nuclear strikes. As tentative offers appeared from Moscow, they also advised on settlement terms.¹⁰²⁴

Khrushchev had thought up his Cuban plan in response to his perceived humiliation over the fact that his Berlin demands were not accepted, but he also had in mind NATO missiles in

¹⁰²⁰ Aleksandr Fursenko and Timothy Naftali, p. 370 & 465.

¹⁰²¹ Fursenko & Naftali, *One Hell of a Gamble: Khrushchev, Castro and Kennedy, 1958-64*, (New York: WW Norton, 1997) p.256.

¹⁰²² Soviet SA-2 & 3 missiles were also stationed well forward in East Germany, though vulnerable to ground and low-aircraft attack. It was thought use of these SAMs would give pause to both sides to avoid escalation. JFK, NSF Box 85, folder 9/62.

¹⁰²³ Beschloss, *Crisis Years*, p. 450-55.

¹⁰²⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 223-227.

Turkey.¹⁰²⁵ These missiles were first-generation Jupiters, already outdated. The West could give them up and lose little strategically, but open acceptance of such an offer would have nearly broken US-Turkish relations. Removal of those missiles would also ease Khrushchev's general fears of encirclement and provided a consolation offering to his Central Committee colleagues. Bohlen and Thompson noted the Cuba-Turkey missile linkage, but thought Khrushchev's main Cuban objective was leverage on Berlin.¹⁰²⁶

The President faced a basic choice: negotiation or forcible response. The first option, including possible Berlin linkages, received only brief consideration. Diplomatic relations would not be suspended but would be minimal. When confronted with the photographs, Ambassador Dobrynin, who had not been informed of the operation, was embarrassed but insisted they must be forgeries.¹⁰²⁷ He communicated his government's instructions on Cuba as faithfully as he did on Berlin. Because Dobrynin had not officially been in the loop on the operation, Washington now had some doubt as to his authority.¹⁰²⁸ When Kennedy announced the discovery of the missiles and the quarantine in a television address on October 22, Khrushchev realized that the element of surprise was lost. He would not be able to use successfully installed missiles as a bargaining chip in the private sessions with Kennedy he had hoped to hold before year's end. But he did not respond to Kennedy's quarantine announcement with a Berlin blockade or any other military action.¹⁰²⁹

Because the US now little confidence in official diplomatic channels. Khrushchev began to open backchannels, first by KGB operative and Embassy aide Aleksandr Feklisov through US

¹⁰²⁵ Fursenko & Naftali, *One Hell of a Gamble*, p. 195-97.

¹⁰²⁶ Taubman, *Khrushchev*, p. 530.

¹⁰²⁷ Fursenko & Naftali, *One Hell of a Gamble*, p. 231.

¹⁰²⁸ Dobrynin, *In Confidence*, p.78-84.

¹⁰²⁹ Beschloss, *Crisis Years*, p. 487-88.

journalist John Scali.¹⁰³⁰ The Soviet floated a simple offer of a missile withdrawal for a US non-invasion pledge. When the US took its time in responding and proceeded with the naval blockade, Soviet embassy aide and agent Georgi Bolshakov approached Robert Kennedy with private messages from Khrushchev for the President. ExComm was divided between factions favoring reliance on the quarantine to block further missile shipments as opposed to those wanting immediate invasion and airstrikes.¹⁰³¹ The Bolshakov backchannel was used for further exploratory offers and demands, with Dobrynin as the official channel for messages. Soviet ships, all but one, turned back at the quarantine by October 25, but missile sites already on the island were becoming operational. In Cuba, Fidel Castro and Che Guevara advocated launching the missiles, either ignorant or averse to the consequences. At the Kremlin, Khrushchev was already admitting defeat and figuring how best to cut his losses.¹⁰³²

On October 26, , the Soviets offered, through the Feklisov-Scali channel, a withdrawal and non-invasion deal. The next morning Khrushchev upped his bid, publicly announcing by radio an offer to that demanded withdrawal of the US missiles in Turkey.¹⁰³³ Kennedy decided that the out-of-date Jupiters were not worth the risk of nuclear war and agreed to Khrushchev's amended terms, on condition the Turkish-missile proviso be kept secret and delayed for a few months. Khrushchev eagerly accepted on October 28. While Robert Kennedy and others close to the president were very pleased with the outcome, the Joint Chiefs of State were not happy. They felt Kennedy had settled far too easily and set a dangerous precedent.¹⁰³⁴

When the settlement was reached on the 28th, Bundy advisor David Klein thought Khrushchev might be ready to come to terms on Berlin, but only if the US made the initiative..

¹⁰³⁰ *Ibid*, p.514.

¹⁰³¹ Naftali & Fursenko, *One Hell of a Gamble*, p. 265-67.

¹⁰³² *Ibid*, p.283-87.

¹⁰³³ Naftali & Fursenko, *Khrushchev's Cold War*. p. 484-87.

¹⁰³⁴ Beschloss, *Crisis Years*, p. 544.

Ruling out a Kennedy-Khrushchev meeting as unwise, and talks with Gromyko who was now "discredited," Klein suggested Thompson/Dobrynin talks.¹⁰³⁵ The Soviets quickly indicated they were not ready to compromise their Berlin demands. Khrushchev wrote Kennedy on October 30, saying the USSR was withdrawing its missiles and the Il-28 bombers, though he said the latter posed no threat and the quarantine should be lifted immediately. He said now was the time to make the world more peaceful. The German peace treaty was the place to start, followed by dissolution of their military alliances, adoption of a non-aggression pact in Europe and admittance of China to the United Nations.¹⁰³⁶ On November 6, Kennedy replied that the Soviets had to complete their withdrawal of all offensive weapons system before the US and USSR could move on to other matters. The President made no mention of future meetings between them or any other negotiations.¹⁰³⁷ Berlin had finally been de-prioritized in US-Soviet relations.

Attempts to Restart Berlin Negotiations After Cuban Crisis

Nevertheless, the US was considering how they could use the situation to meaningfully restart Berlin negotiations and restore Allied unity. Dean Acheson had visited de Gaulle during the crisis to show him photographs of the missile sites; this consultation was greatly appreciated and helped to repair relations with the French.¹⁰³⁸ In Washington, new options were advanced for Berlin talks. These included NATO-Warsaw Pact mutual strategic arms reduction, GDR jurisdiction over East Germany in exchange for FRG political union with the FRG, concessions to the Peoples Republic of China, and mutual pledges not to provide military support for the

¹⁰³⁵ Klein memo to Bundy. October 28, 1962, JFK, NSF Box 85, folder 10/62.

¹⁰³⁶ Khrushchev letter to Kennedy, Thomas Fensch, ed., *The Kennedy-Khrushchev Letters*, doc. 71.

¹⁰³⁷ Kennedy letter to Khrushchev, in Fensch, *Kennedy-Khrushchev Letters*, doc.74.

¹⁰³⁸ Douglas Brinkley, *Dean Acheson: the Cold War Years* (New Haven: Yale University press, 1992), p. 166-68.

Middle East.¹⁰³⁹ These ideas would require getting Allied and domestic political support, which would be difficult. De Gaulle complained to Macmillan, though, that, Acheson's visit notwithstanding, France and Britain had been inadequately consulted. De Gaulle suggested that now was the time for the tripartism he had advocated since 1958.¹⁰⁴⁰ Washington's disregard for its European partners did not bode well for Berlin negotiations. At the least, they should try to nail down a *modus vivendi* agreement to ensure stability for the foreseeable future. Thompson remained skeptical of trying to restart negotiations, saying they could just stir up trouble.¹⁰⁴¹

If talks were mandated, the West might offer some minor concessions such as modifying the legal status of the occupation troops and making the GDR signatories to new access arrangements, mutual elimination of propaganda and espionage operations, and no attempts to incorporate West Berlin into the FRG. These could be matched by Soviet acceptance of the Western troops and secure access arrangements.¹⁰⁴² Another option was a lease proposal for Berlin access, similar to an arrangement the Soviets had in Finland. The lease would be combined with troop withdrawals, to be replaced by a "police-force" of their own choosing. Thompson suggested a package of de facto recognition of the GDR, pledges against FRG incorporation, a UN presence, elimination of espionage and propaganda apparatus, anti-nuclear pledges, East Berlin access rights and other sweeteners were considered. Soviet concessions might include accepting continued Western troops, no Soviet presence in West Berlin, no espionage/propaganda/nuclear weapons in East Berlin. Khrushchev could then sign his peace treaty if he wanted, without effect on West Berlin.¹⁰⁴³ Bundy was also considering all-Berlin/all-

¹⁰³⁹ Nitze memo to Kennedy, November 3, 1962, JFK, NSF Box 85, folder 11/1-11/18/62.

¹⁰⁴⁰ Bozo, *Two Strategies for Europe*, p.86-88.

¹⁰⁴¹ Lightner memo to Rusk, November 5, 1962; Nitze memo to Kennedy, undated - about November 6, 1962, *FRUS 1961-63*, Vol. XV, docs. 148 & 149.

¹⁰⁴² Memo from Rostow to Bundy, November 9, 1962, *FRUS 1961-63*, Vol. XV, doc. 151.

¹⁰⁴³ Thompson memo, "Possible Berlin Solutions," November 9, 1962, JFK, NSF Box 85, folder 11/1-11/15/62.

German plebiscite ideas, disarmament linkage, bilateral cooperation agreements between the US and Soviets, and short and long range interim plans. The problem remained though of securing Allied agreement, as well as Soviet approval.¹⁰⁴⁴

In early November, Rusk thought there was still a chance Khrushchev would still come to the UN session and try to meet with Kennedy before he proceeded with the peace treaty. Khrushchev again advanced his idea, through British Ambassador Frank Roberts on October 12, of allowing some Western troops to stay under a UN flag. Lord Hood told Rusk the British had no intention of "being drawn in to bilateral discussions with the Soviets on Berlin." They were however, hopeful that negotiations might re-open.¹⁰⁴⁵ Kennedy had closely consulted Britain and France, contrary to de Gaulle's complaints. Macmillan hoped to capitalize on that rapprochement, especially since he wanted Kennedy's support in other areas like the EEC and Skybolt project. As always, the Prime Minister hoped Berlin negotiations would enhance British prestige.¹⁰⁴⁶

In Washington, Khrushchev's UN proposal was seen by the State Department as an indication that he wanted to resume Berlin negotiations and shift toward detente.¹⁰⁴⁷ Soviet Embassy Counselor Georgi Kornienko told Martin Hillenbrand, director of Kennedy's Berlin task force, that a Kennedy-Khrushchev summit should be arranged.¹⁰⁴⁸ Adenauer visited Washington in mid-November and told the President that Khrushchev would take new talks as a sign of weakness. The Chancellor noted the Alliance had problems, namely de Gaulle's serious political distractions. Kennedy said another problem was the FRG's failure to make agreed upon

¹⁰⁴⁴ Brubeck memo to Bundy and Attached Paper: post-Cuba Negotiating Measures with USSR," JFK , NSF Box 85, 11/1962

¹⁰⁴⁵ Memo: "Lord Home's comments," November 30, 1962. JFK, NSF Box 85, folder 11/20-12/31/62.

¹⁰⁴⁶ Ashton, Kennedy, Macmillan and the Cold War, p. 86-89.

¹⁰⁴⁷ Hilsman memo to Rusk, November 16, 1962, JFK, NSF Box 85, folder 11/1-11/16/28.

¹⁰⁴⁸ Memo re Kornienko-Hillenbrand meeting, November 13, 1962, *FRUS 1961-63*, Vol. XV, doc. 152.

purchases from the US; the dollar drain to Germany could not be ignored. He agreed, though, that the French and West Germans would be consulted before talks resumed.¹⁰⁴⁹

Khrushchev elected not to travel to the US, perhaps sensing he should not press Kennedy too hard when there were still Soviet Il-28 bombers and troops in Cuba. Kennedy was angry that Khrushchev was waffling on their removal. Instead, the more diplomatic Mikoyan visited Washington in mid-November.¹⁰⁵⁰ As in January 1959, the Soviets may have hoped Mikoyan, level-headed and diplomatic and with high authority, might be able to build trust where Khrushchev could not. Meeting with Rusk, along with Thompson and Dobrynin, Mikoyan started with the timely, if disingenuous, topic of nuclear non-proliferation, but soon brought up Germany. The USSR's position was unchanged - there must be a peace treaty soon and the occupation troops had to leave. They could remain for a short period as part of a UN force, but Berlin must become a free city as Khrushchev had demanded in November 1958. Though Mikoyan "disclaimed any intention of conducting negotiation, the US should understand "the seriousness of this issue for the USSR."¹⁰⁵¹

In Moscow, Kohler told Semenov that he was encouraged by Soviet acknowledgement that the Cuban crisis had implications for Berlin. Semenov said Mikoyan and Khrushchev had brought up disarmament. However, he said, although the Cuban crisis had been solved, FRG provocations stymied a Berlin solution. Kohler did not rise to this bait and emphasized American interest in practical measures for a peaceful situation in Berlin. Their exchange quickly reverted to boilerplate language. Kohler noted that Khrushchev had spoken to British Ambassador Frank Roberts, but no arrangements were made for further talks.¹⁰⁵² The Americans

¹⁰⁴⁹ memo re Kennedy-Adenauer meeting, November 14, 1962, *FRUS 1961-63*, Vol. XV, docs. 153 & 154..

¹⁰⁵⁰ Naftali & Fursenko, *Khrushchev's Cold War*, p. 505-07.

¹⁰⁵¹ Memo re Rusk-Mikoyan meeting, Washington, November 30, 1962, *FRUS 1961-1963*, Vol. XV, doc. 158.

¹⁰⁵² Kohler cable re meeting w/Semenov, Moscow, December 3, 1962, *FRUS 1961-63*, Vol. XV, doc. 159.

however, no longer seriously believed in any more Berlin negotiation than necessary to ward off the peace treaty.

Acting JCS Chairman General Curtis LeMay told McNamara that military leaders now favored the West turning over its responsibilities for Berlin to the FRG, just as the Soviets had done with the GDR. With access guarantees, Berlin would then become a German problem. He thought FRG and West Berlin were inclined to this solution. This arrangement would probably not have been acceptable to the Soviets. LeMay was correct in noting that that Germany might have to work out their problems themselves.¹⁰⁵³ Khrushchev wrote Kennedy on December 11 in a friendlier tone, but still blaming Adenauer for the Berlin impasse.¹⁰⁵⁴

French and West German resistance to a negotiated Berlin settlement was as much a problem as Soviet intractability. The Germans wanted a nuclear capability Kennedy would not grant.¹⁰⁵⁵ Although the British were more cooperative, and always interested in negotiation, they had difficult relations with the French. Kennedy and Macmillan had hoped to find common ground on Berlin at their bilateral summit in Nassau in December, but were distracted by Gaulle's early December decision against British entry into the Common Market with West German assent.¹⁰⁵⁶ The British thought some UN involvement would be "useful in any plan for settlement."¹⁰⁵⁷ Macmillan was also disappointed by US reluctance to proceed in joint development of nuclear delivery systems. The promised Skybolt surface to ground missile system had been scaled back and then cancelled. US offers of a partial Polaris submarine missile system helped Kennedy patch up the rift but British confidence in America suffered.¹⁰⁵⁸

¹⁰⁵³ Memo from LeMay to McNamara, December 10, 1962, *FRUS 1961-63*, Vol. XV, doc. 161.

¹⁰⁵⁴ Khrushchev letter to Kennedy, December 12, 1962, The Kennedy-Khrushchev letters, Fensch, ed, doc.83.

¹⁰⁵⁵ Mayer, *Kennedy & Adenauer*, p. 86-89.

¹⁰⁵⁶ Brain, "Dealing with de Gaulle" in *Kennedy: New Frontier Revisited*, p.1 77-80.

¹⁰⁵⁷ Memo re Kennedy-Macmillan meeting, Nassau, December 19, 1962, *FRUS 1961-63*, Vol. XV, doc. 164.

¹⁰⁵⁸ Nigel J. Ashton, *Kennedy, Macmillan and the Cold War: the Irony of Interdependence* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2002), p. 176-184.

The French were already displeased at the Americans for refusing to share missile delivery systems. They now had their own bomb and wanted an independent nuclear deterrent; NATO and the proposed multilateral force seemed too dominated by the Americans.¹⁰⁵⁹ On the other hand, NATO partners like the Belgians and Italians did not welcome de Gaulle's dream of a trilateral US-British-French alliance determining Western Europe security. The West Germans were able to exert leverage with both the French and British hoping to get their cooperation. Bonn decided Paris made a better partner, and signed a Franco-German Treaty of Friendship on January 21, 1963. The treaty did not interfere with NATO obligations, but was seen in Washington and London as a serious breach of the Western alliance.¹⁰⁶⁰

The US in a Bilateral Environment

With the refusal to admit Britain to the EEC, the signing of the Franco-German Treaty, and the US cancellation, of the Skybolt Treaty, Allied relations were too poor to sustain new Berlin negotiations. The Soviets were still expecting discussions geared towards an interim troop presence under UN auspices, leading to a "free city," but they expressed little urgency.¹⁰⁶¹ On January 26, 1963, Gromyko told Ambassador Kohler that the Soviet Union wanted to reopen talks. He also wanted to protest an American embargo on large-diameter steel pipe sales to the USSR.¹⁰⁶² The FRG was cool to the new Soviet offer, as were the French. Kennedy told Rusk, Thompson and Dowling that without Allied support, the US might have to tell the Soviets "we could not carry on with the talks." Rusk said the US should proceed anyway "if only to keep the Berlin situation under control. Thompson agreed, because otherwise the Soviets could increase

¹⁰⁵⁹ Trachtenberg, *A Constructed Peace*, p. 370-73.

¹⁰⁶⁰ Mayer, *Adenauer and Kennedy*, p. 92.

¹⁰⁶¹ State Department memo for Rusk, "Soviet Intentions on Berlin," January 8, 1963, JFK, NSF Box 85, folder 1/63.

¹⁰⁶² Kohler cable re Gromyko meeting, Moscow, January 18, 1963, *FRUS 1961-63*, Vol. XV, doc. 170.

pressure Berlin and force the US into discussions. Kennedy decided to delay response pending consultation with the West Germans.¹⁰⁶³

With only a months left in office and too frail to fight, Adenauer did not object to new talks since the Soviets had made the overture. The FRG's emerging new leadership was very cautious about Berlin negotiation, especially given their new entente with the French. Kennedy still urged their participation, and tried to assure them that the United States would not undertake new talks without some expectation of improvement.¹⁰⁶⁴ The United States did pursue those talks with the Soviets in spring and summer 1963, but alone and without improving the Berlin situation. Their disarmament dialogue, however, revived, with good progress toward a test ban, with Khrushchev finally willing, in January 1963, to accept two detection stations in both the US and USSR.¹⁰⁶⁵

That concession sparked new hopes for a test-ban, further encouraged by a Soviet invitation for US disarmament chief Glenn Seaborg to visit the Soviet Union in May 1962 and meet Soviet president Leonid Brezhnev. Brezhnev said Seaborg should tell Kennedy that Khrushchev really did want peaceful cooperation. Seaborg and Kennedy thought Khrushchev was sending a positive message on disarmament.¹⁰⁶⁶ Brezhnev had been a Khrushchev protégé but was already plotting a coup. He had an interest in arms-control and disapproved of wasting time on Berlin. He was still counted publically as Khrushchev's ally, and his messages were construed to indicate Khrushchev wanted negotiations that might not be contingent on his Berlin demands.

¹⁰⁶³ Memo re Kennedy-Rusk meeting, Washington, February 15, 1963, *FRUS 1961-63*, vol. XV, doc. 175

¹⁰⁶⁴ Rusk cable to Dowling, February 16, 1963, *FRUS 1961-1963*, *FRUS 1961-1963*, Vol. XV, do.176.

¹⁰⁶⁵ Beschloss, *Crisis Years*, p. 576.

¹⁰⁶⁶ Seaborg, *Kennedy, Khrushchev & the Test Ban*, p.203-210.

New Bilateral Talks with the Soviets

Kohler began new meetings with Gromyko in Moscow in February. Rusk advised him to avoid any discussion of Berlin. If Gromyko insisted, Kohler should look for any sign of relaxation on troop withdrawals as a sign of serious Soviet intent to find an agreement.¹⁰⁶⁷ Thompson remained cautious, speculating that Khrushchev might still be hoping for "a major UN responsibility." Khrushchev also still had to deal with pressure from Walter Ulbricht and wanted to keep the Allies at odds with each other. Since the US was indicating no more flexibility on his basic demands, and Khrushchev was not interested in an interim *modus vivendi*, further talks could provide diplomatic cover to insulate a treaty signing from military confrontation. Thompson suggested the US should avoid serious discussion of the 'UN flag' proposal. Instead, Gromyko should be asked again what was the real danger in having Western troops in West Berlin.¹⁰⁶⁸

Rusk and Dobrynin began new talks in Washington on March 26, 1963. Dobrynin noted that the East and West had been discussing a "peace settlement" and "normalizing" West Berlin: "the parties succeeded in reaching definite results on well known questions." Western troops were still unacceptable but could remain a short while longer under the UN flag. Rusk asked why UN troops shouldn't be in East Berlin too? He said "to think of Berlin as a NATO base is not realistic on either military or political grounds." He emphasized the basic Four-Power responsibility for Berlin as a stabilizing factor. Dobrynin said that arrangement was obsolete: "West Germany, East Germany and West Berlin exist as separate states." The Soviet Union, he said, was not opposed to German reunification, but first Western troops had to leave Berlin and

¹⁰⁶⁷ Rusk memo to Kohler, February 21, 1963, FRUS 1961-1963, Vol XV, doc. 177.

¹⁰⁶⁸ Memo from Thompson to Rusk, March 7, 1963, FRUS 1961-1963, vol. XV, doc. 180.

the separate treaty signed, West Berlin would exist as a "separate state," with no political ties to the FRG. The UN would oversee the transition.¹⁰⁶⁹

How long would that take, asked Rusk, noting the Soviets had suggested four years; there was also the question of a UN flag for East Berlin. Dobrynin said the Americans were well aware the USSR considered East Berlin to be East German territory. Rusk said the West had as much responsibility for East Berlin as the Soviets had for West Berlin. They should start their negotiations with a systematic review of their positions.¹⁰⁷⁰ By not presenting a new proposal, on access or any other subject, the Secretary was indicating to the Soviets that the US would offer no new substantive concessions. On the Soviet side, the UN idea dated back at least to the previous summer.

Rusk told de Gaulle that a Berlin solution was only possible through concessions unacceptable to the West. The West should maintain its "present military and diplomatic positions."¹⁰⁷¹ He did not think the Soviets were in much of a hurry. In his talks with Dobrynin on March 26 and April 12, Rusk chided the Ambassador for misleading Soviet statements indicating agreements had been reached already. He complained the Soviets had offered nothing new or acceptable. They also briefly discussed nuclear nonproliferation. The talks in Washington with Dobrynin had already reverted back to the pro forma rituals of 1962.¹⁰⁷² They would remain so for several more months, with almost no change in their positions or arguments.

Khrushchev was still determined to wrest Berlin from Western occupation, but he had other problems in the summer of 1963. Continued agricultural failures produced food shortages and left dust-bowls. New increases in military spending, to make up the 'missile gap' revealed by

¹⁰⁶⁹ Memo re Rusk-Dobrynin meeting, Washington, FRUS 1961-63, Vol. XV, doc. 182.

¹⁰⁷⁰ *Ibid.*

¹⁰⁷¹ Memo re Rusk-de Gaulle meeting, April 8, 1963, Paris, FRUS 1961-63, Vol. XV, doc. 183.

¹⁰⁷² Memo re Rusk-Thompson-Dobrynin- Kornienko meetings, March 26, 1963 & April 12, 1963, FRUS 1961-63, Vol. XV, docs. 182 & 184.

Gilpatric, sapped resources for consumer goods production. Castro was still unhappy with Soviet terms in the missile crisis and was flirting with the Red Chinese.¹⁰⁷³ Mao was openly attacking the policy of 'peaceful coexistence' and not cooperating in Southeast Asia. Military skirmishes had broken out on the long Siberian frontier with China. Hard-line opposing factions, at first led by onetime lieutenant, Frol Kozlov and then by Leonid Brezhnev, criticized his moves in the Central Committee. Mikoyan remained Khrushchev's ally, but had argued against both the Cuban and Berlin operations from the start.¹⁰⁷⁴

Khrushchev asked the advice of former American Ambassador, Averill Harriman, then visiting in Moscow. Khrushchev downplayed the importance of a peace treaty; all the Soviets wanted was the "normalization" of Berlin. Harriman told the Chairman he should leave Berlin alone then and "come to an agreement on a test ban." He should also get the Chinese on board; Khrushchev said Harriman should talk to them himself. Harriman said he'd tried already but Mikoyan blocked it. Khrushchev replied: "Mikoyan was not the foreign minister of China and could not get Harriman into China," a veiled reference perhaps to Moscow's growing estrangement from Peking.¹⁰⁷⁵ Khrushchev would take Harriman's advice on the test ban, but was not prepared yet to give up on his German program. He told Harriman: "I will give you my word that I will find a basis for a test ban agreeable to both sides provided you agree to work out the basis for a German settlement which would recognize the two Germanies as they now exist" Harriman said he "would not buy a pig in a poke."¹⁰⁷⁶ The two issues had to be discussed separately. Khrushchev joked that Harriman was "an old diplomat who knew how to talk without saying anything."

¹⁰⁷³ Taubman, *Khrushchev*, p. 578-81.

¹⁰⁷⁴ Fursenko & Naftali, *Khrushchev's Cold War*, p.528-33.

¹⁰⁷⁵ Memo re Khrushchev-Harriman conversation, Moscow, April 26, 1963, *FRUS 1961-63*, Vol. XV, doc. 186.

¹⁰⁷⁶ *Ibid.*

The new US and Soviet ambassadors, Kohler and Dobrynin, carried out rote recitals on Berlin. In a Rusk meeting with Dobrynin, Berlin had been mentioned only in passing, with most discussion about testing and disarmament issues. Rusk said the Soviets had asked for new talks but were not "pressing" hard for progress. They had proposed a NATO-Warsaw Pact non-aggression pact (NAP), which Rusk said he hoped would not turn out to be another Briand-Kellogg pact. the Allies would later regret. Dobrynin seemed more interested in the NAP than in Berlin this time, perhaps hoping for an agreement on something they could present to the world as good faith diplomacy.¹⁰⁷⁷

At a NATO meeting in Ottawa in May, Rusk discussed Berlin with Lord Home, Schroeder, and de Murville. Rusk noted Khrushchev's troubles at home, among the Warsaw Pact, and with the Chinese. Lord Home said Gromyko seemed very interested in a NAP. De Murville said a NAP could lead to GDR recognition. Schroeder it was obviously very important to the Soviets since they had introduced it at Geneva, "Khrushchev thinks he invented the NAP in Geneva in 1955". Rusk noted liberalization among the Warsaw Pact satellites might make the NAP more worth the West's attention now. Rusk told Home that Dobrynin had indicated acceptance of an NAP might facilitate a Berlin settlement, except the Soviets did not seem very interested in discussing Berlin. De Murville said "it is certainly not in the Western interest to stop a move toward a detente if there is a possibility for one." They all agreed developments in Moscow needed to be closely watched.¹⁰⁷⁸ Hardliner Frol Kozlov's demotion in April 1963 reduced pressure on Khrushchev for toughness on Berlin.¹⁰⁷⁹

One promising development in the Kremlin was the growing momentum for a test ban. In addition to conveying a message through Seaborg's meeting with Brezhnev, Khrushchev

¹⁰⁷⁷ Memo re Rusk-Dobrynin meeting, April 12, 1963, *FRUS 1961-1963*, Vol. XV, doc.184

¹⁰⁷⁸ Ibid.

¹⁰⁷⁹ Beschloss, *Crisis Years*, p. 586.

received a message from Kennedy through American journalist Norman Cousins in April 1962. According to Glenn Seaborg, Khrushchev overplayed Soviet insistence on only two inspections, but sent a clear signal that he was willing to make further concessions. Khrushchev was now prepared to seriously consider further Western proposals for a treaty. Harold Macmillan suggested to Kennedy they try a summit on arms control. Though that was unlikely, they did send a joint letter to Khrushchev, urging him to accept an emissary like Harriman to negotiate a test-ban treaty. Khrushchev replied disagreeably at the end of May, but said he was prepared to accept a representative for talks that summer.¹⁰⁸⁰

Kennedy issued a public call for better relations, including nuclear arms control, with the Russians in a June 9 speech at American University. The speech was designed to encourage Khrushchev's cooperation at a time when the Chinese were pressuring him for a tougher stance against the United States. Khrushchev appreciated Kennedy's speech and, on June 20, approved a 'hot line' direct telephone/teletype link with the United States for better crisis communications. Khrushchev would be less enthusiastic about Kennedy's remarks a week later in Berlin.¹⁰⁸¹

Kennedy in Berlin

Kennedy decided to visit Europe again in early June to repair Allied relations through personal diplomacy. He wanted to go to West Berlin as a public show of US support.¹⁰⁸² CIA reports from June 7 and June 14 indicated that the West Berlin morale was good. The Soviets were still attempting to "establish a foothold" in the westernmost sectors. They had less official presence in East Berlin, having turned over many occupation duties to the GDR. The Soviets

¹⁰⁸⁰ Seaborg, *Khrushchev, Kennedy and the Test Ban*, p. 210-211.

¹⁰⁸¹ Beschloss, *Crisis Years*, p. 598-603.

¹⁰⁸² Daum, *Kennedy in Berlin*, p. 75-79.

wanted fewer restrictions on their transit to the Soviet War memorial in West Berlin, as well as more non-military contacts. They hoped to promote an image of an "independent" West Berlin, that could still lead to a free city arrangement.¹⁰⁸³ State Department analysts thought the Soviets and East Germans were preparing to formally incorporate East Berlin into the GDR. That incremental move would not have "dramatic" effect, but could hinder access and undermine West German confidence in the Allies.¹⁰⁸⁴

In Moscow Deputy Foreign Minister Zorn told Kohler that Kennedy's plan to visit West Berlin was a provocation by Adenauer and would not help Berlin discussions. The Chancellor's official FRG presence in West Berlin was unacceptable. When Kohler met again with Zorn, the Ambassador said that Soviet distinctions between the GDR and FRG were not founded in fact or law. The Soviets did not press their objections further.¹⁰⁸⁵ In fact, Kennedy's visit was not an official state visit to either West Berlin or West Germany. It was a goodwill visit, intended to show solidarity. Economic Minister Erhard would shortly succeed Adenauer and would also have to be cultivated. The US would not use the visit to pressure the German leaders, but take clear positions on the MLF, trade issues, including British entry into the Common Market, and balance of payments. Kennedy could expect to hear much about reunification hopes.¹⁰⁸⁶

Kennedy and Rusk arrived in Bonn on June 21, 1963. The president met with the Chancellor alone, while the two foreign ministers met. Schroeder told Rusk he was concerned that the US seemed only interested in access now and had forgotten reunification - the Americans should think of Berlin in a reunification context. They should discourage any level of GDR recognition or agreements which would freeze the status quo in Europe, which Rusk was

¹⁰⁸³ CIA reports on Berlin, June 7 & June 14, 1963, JFK, NSF Box 85A, folder 6/63-11/63.

¹⁰⁸⁴ Hughes memo to Rusk, June 11, 1963, JFK, NSF Box 85A, folder 6/63-11-63.

¹⁰⁸⁵ Cables from Kohler to Rusk, May 22 & 27, 1962, *FRUS 1961-63*, Vol. XV, doc. 190 & 192.

¹⁰⁸⁶ Trachtenberg, *A Constructed Peace*, p. 393-95.

thought an allusion to the NAP.¹⁰⁸⁷ Adenauer and Kennedy's talk was more personal. The Chancellor knew he had only a few more months in office, but wanted to be at the forefront as long as possible. Kennedy tried to emphasize continuity and good faith between the US and FRG. The US remained committed to protect West Germany, but needed cooperation too. The bloom was already fading from the Franco-German entente, keeping FRG leaders mindful of the importance of good relations with the US.¹⁰⁸⁸

Kennedy and Adenauer travelled to Berlin the next day, where they were met by Mayor Willy Brandt. Rusk met with Brandt to discuss checkpoint problems.¹⁰⁸⁹ The Austrians wanted to open new air service, which Rusk approved of. The Secretary quizzed Brandt about West Berliners visiting the Eastern sectors, which Brandt thought was fine. He wanted greater tourist access and freedom for his citizens to enjoy the whole of the city, as best they could, thus "punching holes in the wall." Rusk said he had no problem with this at all, but they had to recognize they still faced the possibility of East Germany being able to control all Berlin access, which even Brandt could not accept.¹⁰⁹⁰ Brandt was more inclined to East-West cooperation than he had been in 1959, but still more conservative in this regard than he would be a few years later when, as Chancellor, he would advance his Ostpolitik policy. For the present, Brandt and Adenauer cooperated during Kennedy's visit, in solidarity against East Germany and the Wall.

The next day, Kennedy, Adenauer and Brandt arrived at Tempelhof Airport together. All appeared on the same reviewing stand and enjoyed thunderous reception by large crowds, which overflowed sidewalks along the President's motorcade.¹⁰⁹¹ Kennedy stopped briefly at Friedrichstrasse Crossing, site of Clay's tank confrontation. His famous "Ich bin ein Berliner"

¹⁰⁸⁷ Memo re Schroeder-Rusk meeting, Bonn, June 25, 1963, *FRUS 1961-63*, Vol. XV, doc. 196.

¹⁰⁸⁸ Mayer, *Adenauer and Kennedy*, p.9394.

¹⁰⁸⁹ Daum, *Kennedy in Berlin*, p. 90-91.

¹⁰⁹⁰ Memo re Rusk-Brandt meeting, Berlin, June 25, 1963, *FRUS 1961-63*, Vol. XV, doc. 197.

¹⁰⁹¹ Daum, *Kennedy in Berlin*, 125-28.

speech, declaring that the West Berliners had become worldwide symbols of freedom, was rapturously received. For Kennedy, that rapture was a little disturbing and he worried about the potentials of German reunification.¹⁰⁹² Alliance mending and public relations purposes had been served well, but, in a way, East German sovereignty had been acknowledged. Kennedy expressed abstract commitment, not new practical steps to remove the Wall, diplomatic or otherwise. The Wall would stay.

Despite the success of the Kennedy visit, political problems remained with both Brandt and Adenauer. Brandt was "not enthusiastic" about the MLF.¹⁰⁹³ Adenauer, along with other FRG leaders, had strong reservations about the Limited Test Ban Treaty which now seemed a probability. He complained to the visiting McNamara that the US was too willing to compromise with the Soviets and "the State Department had not been what it was under John Foster Dulles." Indeed, it was not. Rusk never exerted the kind of unifying foreign policy command and responsibility as Dulles. Bundy was a far more influential National Security Advisor, at Rusk's expense, than Eisenhower ever had, nor would a Robert Kennedy ever have played the same kind of role. But Rusk, not Dulles, was now Secretary and would proceed with the Test Ban Treaty, though he was unsure Harriman was the best representative.¹⁰⁹⁴

The Test Ban Treaty

The groundwork for serious test-ban negotiations had been established with the Seaborg and Cousins visits to Moscow in the spring. Harriman was chosen as the US representative, with Carl Kaysen providing assistance. The UK would also participate in the talks. Harriman was uneasy about the conjunction of test-ban talks, set to start on July 15, with Khrushchev's

¹⁰⁹² Beschloss, *Crisis Years*, p. 604-607.

¹⁰⁹³ Memo from Calhoun to Rusk, July 3, 1963, *FRUS 1961-63*, Vol. XV, doc. 200.

¹⁰⁹⁴ Beschloss, *Crisis Years*, p. 601-602.

discussions with the Chinese several days later. Khrushchev had complained to Macmillan about Kennedy's tough language in Berlin. The Chairman still might try to make a test-ban contingent on a non-aggression pact (NAP) for Central Europe.¹⁰⁹⁵

The Limited Test Ban Treaty fell short of the comprehensive ban initially sought. It produced intense political criticism in the United States and faced arduous Congressional approval. Even when its passage seemed imminent in late July, Khrushchev told Harriman, again in Moscow to finalize the Test Ban Treaty, that a German peace treaty was still necessary, along with a NAP. Harriman helped ensure the test-ban agreement, because he had the Soviets' confidence. A final sticking issue was US insistence on a withdrawal option, tied specifically to perceived breaches in treaty observance.¹⁰⁹⁶ The test-ban agreement bound signatories to suspend nuclear tests in the atmosphere, underwater and outer space, but not underground. The signatories also agreed not to assist or participate in tests by other nations. General disarmament was not discussed in depth in the treaty negotiations, because Western and Soviet positions were still as far apart as they had been in 1960 and 1961, when there had been some hope for disarmament progress at the heads of state summit meetings. Gromyko's presence, instead of the more intractable Zorin, was taken as a sign of serious Soviet intent, as was Khrushchev's own participation in opening and closing sessions..¹⁰⁹⁷

The July 16 meeting with Harriman, with Kohler, Kaysen and Gromyko also in attendance, was relaxed and friendly, but Khrushchev did bring up his German issues and the NAP.¹⁰⁹⁸ Khrushchev suggested the "possibility of US pressure prompting Germans seeking a Rapallo-type arrangement with USSR." The original Rapallo pact between Germany and the

¹⁰⁹⁵ Seaborg, Kennedy, *Khrushchev and the Test Ban*, p.228-230.

¹⁰⁹⁶ Joseph G. Whelan, *Soviet Diplomacy and Negotiating Behavior: the Emerging New Context for US Diplomacy* (Boulder: Westview Press, 1983), p. 381.

¹⁰⁹⁷ Seaborg, Kennedy, *Khrushchev and the Test Ban*, p. 237-38.

¹⁰⁹⁸ Harriman cable to Rusk, July 16, 1963, JFK, NSF Box 369 (Kaysen papers), folder 7/12-7/18/63.

Soviet Union in 1924 had been controversial since the USSR was then in diplomatic isolation and Germany was not supposed to enter into new alliances without approval from the British, French and Americans. He said a new arrangement would benefit East and West and deflect future German conflicts with the United States. Harriman said the US had no objections to better intra-German and east-West relations, but "so long as Soviets sat on East Germany, they could not expect friendship from West Germany." Harriman said there might be some connection between a NAP and progress on Germany but Khrushchev insisted these were separate interests. Khrushchev intimated that there were several areas, "corns" that could be stepped on, where the Soviets could apply pressure on the West to encourage a peace treaty. Harriman replied that "as long as Khrushchev said it with a smile, he was not taking it seriously."¹⁰⁹⁹

Harriman told Kennedy a few days later that an NAP might actually loosen Warsaw Pact ties. Thompson remained skeptical of a NAP but Harriman "pointed out consequences of a detente in permitting a further loosening of ties between the satellites and the Soviet Union." Kennedy observed "Berlin was not now in trouble and ... did not seem likely to be in the near future" but an NAP's possibility might have some bearing on improvements in Berlin.¹¹⁰⁰ He did not want to hear pessimism about NAP. The immediate problem was securing Adenauer's support for the treaty. Kennedy wrote the Chancellor that the treaty would not "create any danger of increased recognition or international status for the East German regime."¹¹⁰¹

Despite Khrushchev's relatively benign tone with Harriman and Kennedy's optimistic assessment, the Soviets were still bringing up the German peace treaty in the final negotiations for the Limited Test Ban Treaty. Although the Treaty was the most significant measure yet to control the nuclear arms race, the East-West heads of state would not convene a summit for the

¹⁰⁹⁹ Memo re Harriman-Khrushchev meeting, Moscow, July 27, 1963, *FRUS 1961-63*, Vol. XV, doc. 201.

¹¹⁰⁰ Memo re Kennedy-Harriman meeting, Washington, August 2, 1963, *FRUS 1961-63*, Vol. XV, doc. 202.

¹¹⁰¹ Kennedy letter to Adenauer, August 6, 1963, *FRUS 1961-63*, Vol. XV, doc. 205.

signing. Lord Home and Rusk met with Gromyko on August 6 because the latter wanted to discuss Germany and West Berlin. Western troops, said Gromyko, endangered peace: "What kind of freedom existed in West Berlin guarded by foreign bayonets?" He said the all-German plebiscite proposals "reeked of mothballs."¹¹⁰²

Complaining of the slow pace of negotiations, Gromyko said "No matter how capable Secretary Rusk or Ambassador Dobrynin were, this could go on for 10-25 or even 100 years." Alluding to the improved seismic monitoring which had convinced the West to lower their demands for in-country inspections, he added, "there was no known instrument that could detect progress in these discussions." Rusk said the West Berlin garrisons were necessary to ensure access and "almost a waste of time to go on if this were not accepted." He said the troops posed no threat to the "several Soviet divisions in East Germany."¹¹⁰³ He acknowledged that talks had become repetitious but "far-reaching fundamental problems involved." Although the Western Principles Paper had tried to present a basis for a comprehensive solution, he said, the East was still not showing reciprocity. Gromyko said "the Soviets did not fear the word reciprocity," but he insisted on "liquidation remnants of World War II." Gromyko also said the GDR needed tolls and tariffs for Autobahn, rail, air and communications traffic through their territory. Rusk asked why it was that the Soviets supported self-determination everywhere but in Central Europe.¹¹⁰⁴

When Khrushchev met the foreign ministers at his dacha in Pitsunda on August 9, he said they must now turn to the German problem which was the most difficult, but also the easiest facing them because it could be fixed with his peace treaty. He said Eisenhower had been inclined in this direction but wanted to slow down West German competition by making them

¹¹⁰² Memo re Rusk-Home-Gromyko meeting, Moscow, August 6, 1963, *FRUS 1961-1963*, Vol. XV, doc. 207.

¹¹⁰³ *Ibid.*

¹¹⁰⁴ *Ibid.* (August 6 meeting); Seaborg considers the Treaty basically negotiated by an August 5 meeting with Khrushchev, though August 6 discussions on Germany were strained, Seaborg, *Kennedy, Khrushchev and the Test Ban*, p. 260-61.

buy arms, an honest attitude for a soldier. Even de Gaulle, he said, acknowledged the division of Germany - Adenauer was the only holdout since the British, Americans and NATO's Spaak were coming around to accepting political recognition of a divided Germany. Rusk replied that, though the Chairman might not like hearing this, it was not up to the Soviet Union or Western allies to decide whether the Germans should accept political division. At the same time, neither the US or USSR wanted a nuclear Germany. "Sweeping disarmament" might not be feasible at the present time, but small steps could improve safety and security.¹¹⁰⁵

Khrushchev was not to be easily swayed from the German topic. The US, he said, had intervened against self-determination in Pakistan, Guatemala and South Vietnam. But he did not persist and offered no last minute objections to the Test Ban Treaty. Sergei Khrushchev says his father was very pleased with the Treaty, saying the USSR would retain an ample nuclear deterrent.¹¹⁰⁶ Vladimir Zubok says Kennedy had Harriman ask Khrushchev about possible preemptive strikes on Chinese nuclear weapon facilities, but this approach was rebuffed. Khrushchev was unwilling to do anything to upset the growing schism with his Chinese rivals.¹¹⁰⁷

Leaving It Up to the Germans

Adenauer tried to backpedal on the Test Ban Treaty at the last minute but had to acquiesce. He complained to Rusk that the withdrawal of 600 troops from Berlin was a gesture to Khrushchev that would only be interpreted as weakness.¹¹⁰⁸ Rusk was more worried about Gromyko and Khrushchev's references to "stepping on Western corns," which might indicate a

¹¹⁰⁵ Memo re Rusk-Home-Gromyko meeting, Pitsunda, August 9, 1963, *FRUS 1961-63*, Vol. XV, doc. 208.

¹¹⁰⁶ Sergei Khrushchev, *Creation of a Superpower*, p. 694.

¹¹⁰⁷ Zubok, *A Failed Empire*, p. 152.

¹¹⁰⁸ Memo re Rusk-Adenauer meeting, Bonn, August 10, 1963, *FRUS 1961-63*, Vol. XV, doc. 209.

fresh round of harassment in Berlin. He thought the East might focus next on blocking access instead of withdrawal of the Western occupation troops.¹¹⁰⁹ The West Germans had prepared their own peace plan, emphasizing reunification, which they shared with their NATO partners for consultation. Though the French seemed to favor the idea, Thompson thought the Soviets might take the proposal as a provocation.¹¹¹⁰

Rusk told Schroeder that the plan could destabilize the Western negotiating position and encourage Soviets mischief, particularly if they thought it might deflect Chinese charges of being weak with the West. He said Schroeder should first advance the West German ideas in a general audience speech instead of formal proposal to the USSR.¹¹¹¹ When Schroeder met with Kennedy in Washington on September 24, the latter emphasized the need for consultation. Schroeder agreed they needed to expedite the MLF, though he doubted British and French enthusiasm for the joint European-American nuclear force. He also said that while Berlin tensions had not led to reunification of Germany, they did keep attention on the subject.¹¹¹²

Extensive bilateral negotiations had encouraged the Soviets to put the United States in the position of speaking for all the Allies. The United States was hindered because it could not always reply directly without first consulting its partners, whereas the Soviets did not have to get Warsaw Pact approval. In early October, Gromyko returned to Washington, again raising the Germany issue, but without acrimony. Rusk asked whether a NAP would include references to West Berlin, but was told that would "swamp" the NAP which could "provide a peaceful settlement [of] all issues without exception."¹¹¹³ West German Economic Minister Erhard thought the time had come to use economic leverage, noting the Soviet and East Germans needed

¹¹⁰⁹ Cable from Rusk to Dowling, August 15, 1963, *FRUS 1961-63*, Vol. XV, doc. 210.

¹¹¹⁰ Memo from Thompson re conversation with Kennedy, August 22, 1963, *FRUS 1961-63*, Vol. XV, doc. 212

¹¹¹¹ Rusk letter to Schroeder, August 27, 1963, *FRUS 1961-1963*, Vol. XV, doc. 213.

¹¹¹² Memo re Kennedy-Schroeder meeting, Washington, September 24, 1963, *FRUS 1961-63*, Vol. XV, doc. 215.

¹¹¹³ Memo re Rusk-Gromyko meeting, Washington, October 3, 1963, *FRUS 1961-63*, Vol. XV, doc. 216.

more trade with the West. Rusk thought Erhard's understanding of Soviet political logic was a little naive, but economic leverage need not be discouraged. They agreed not to try the idea out on de Gaulle yet.¹¹¹⁴

The US not only had to deal with three other contrary sets of opinion (UK/FRG/France) in marshalling consensus, it had to deal with communication between those partners that could run contrary to US thinking. French Foreign Minister De Murville told Rusk that the danger of German reunification lay in its possible disengagement from the West. Rusk mentioned that the US was still not committed to recognition of the Oder-Niesse border, which the French favored but would also affect Poland. He also observed that Soviet relaxation over Eastern Europe would encourage reunification. De Murville said "a detente would work in the long run would to the advantage of the West ... the problem was what would happen in the short run."¹¹¹⁵

He had told Schroeder that the best one could expect from current negotiations was that they might not change the status quo, but changes like the NAP could freeze the status quo with no hope for improvement. Unlike Rusk and Schroeder, he said, the French did not think East-West relaxation was an automatic good, nor did he think the Sino-Soviet split presented problems for the West. He did not want to see the West Germans confronted by a choice between siding with the US or France. Conspicuously missing from the French minister's arguments was any mention of their other partner in Berlin, the UK. Also not discussed, was French refusal to sign the Limited Test Ban Treaty.¹¹¹⁶

When Kennedy met with Gromyko in Washington on October 10, the same day the Test Ban Treaty went into effect, the Soviet minister said the German problem still needed to be resolved. He said the Americans no longer seemed interested but the Soviets still considered

¹¹¹⁴ Memo re Ball-Erhard meeting, Bonn, November 12, 1963, *FRUS 1961-1963*, Vol. XV, doc. 240.

¹¹¹⁵ Memo re Rusk-de Murville, Washington, October 7, 1963, *FRUS 1961-63*, Vol. 218.

¹¹¹⁶ *Ibid.*

their peace treaty an important matter. Kennedy did not directly answer Gromyko and instead noted that relations had improved between their two countries, as evidenced by the Test Ban Treaty and a pact to sell wheat to the Soviet Union. Rusk said the US wanted clarification on the time frame of the Soviets UN flag Berlin-troop proposal. Gromyko said he still wondered if he could inform Khrushchev that the Americans still were seriously interested in resolving the German problem.¹¹¹⁷

The next day, Soviet armed forces detained a large convoy from proceeding on the autobahn, after already holding back a smaller detachment. Rusk told Kennedy and his Berlin task force that both Dobrynin and Gromyko "acted like a man upset" when informed of the incident.¹¹¹⁸ Their surprise may have reflected the erosion of Khrushchev's political authority in the Soviet Union; though noted in this meeting, the extent of that conflict was still not realized in Washington. Whether a rogue field commander's action or an attempt by Khrushchev to silence hard-line domestic and Chinese criticism, Rusk said the incident could signal a "major crisis" with the Soviets. Immediate allied consultation and preliminary mobilization were in order, but the convoys should attempt no actions in the meantime. This policy, which some more hawkish advisors like Nitze protested, was in line with convoy harassments going back to the February 1959 Marienborn harassment. The Kremlin would be allowed time to regain control over the situation. Thompson and Rusk agreed the incident was not directed from the top and may have been staged by dissenting factions to embarrass Gromyko in his negotiations.¹¹¹⁹

The convoy incident and conflicting Soviet attitudes thereto showed that, despite Kennedy's optimistic observations to Gromyko, the test ban treaty had so far not fostered a spirit

¹¹¹⁷ Memo re Khrushchev-Gromyko meeting, Washington, October 10, 1962, *FRUS 1961-63*, Vol. XV, doc. 218.

¹¹¹⁸ Memo re Kennedy, Rusk, et al meeting, Washington, October 11, 1962, *FRUS 1961-63*, Vol. XV, doc. 221.

¹¹¹⁹ Memo re Kennedy-Rusk, Taylor, Thompson et al meeting, Washington, October 22, 1963, *FRUS 1961-63*, Vol. XV, doc.222.

of detente. Kohler reported from Moscow that Zorin would provide no details, saying only that the Americans must not have followed procedure.¹¹²⁰ Zorin, as deputy minister, had only limited authority and always took a hard line in negotiations. Thompson asked Dobrynin's help to tell Zorin a meeting between the US and Soviet field commanders needed to be arranged at once. The more cooperative Dobrynin said it was "incomprehensible" that the convoy had been stopped.¹¹²¹ Though the convoy was released the next day, Zorin continued his tough line with Kohler, placing all the blame on the Americans. Gromyko was more conciliatory with Rusk, evidently hoping to do productive business while in the US for the UNGA sessions.¹¹²² The incident may have shown him that he needed to make gains for his country while present circumstances allowed. Gromyko was a business-like Soviet foreign minister, but he was also a member of the Central Committee. He was aware of Brezhnev's developing campaign against Khrushchev, and while not an early member, would join the plotters by the following summer.

The Americans did not know that a regime change loomed in the Soviet Union but they were pleased to welcome one in Bonn. Erhard, not Strauss, was named Chancellor to succeed the ailing Adenauer.¹¹²³ Erhard, an academic economist, did not possess Adenauer's long experience and broad perspective, but he was more flexible and forward-thinking. Rusk's congratulatory visit was appreciated and augured well for greater US-FRG cooperation. Rusk doubted Khrushchev was behind the convoy incident, but said he did not see good prospects for near-term renewal of negotiations. The Secretary "made clear that there was at the present time no detente ...only a hunting license for detente." The NAP was "dead because the Soviets would not come clean on Berlin." Similarly, there could be no agreement on nuclear non-

¹¹²⁰ Memo re Kohler-Zorin meeting, Moscow, October 11, 1963, *FRUS 1961-63*, Vol. XV, doc. 223.

¹¹²¹ Memo re Thompson-Dobrynin meeting, October 11, 1963, *FRUS 1961-63*, Vol. XV, doc. 225.

¹¹²² Memo re Rusk-Gromyko conversation, October 12, 1963, *FRUS 1961-63*, Vol. XV, doc. 227.

¹¹²³ Schwartz, *The Cold war Reference Guide*, p.99

dissemination because the Soviets objected to the MLF. Rusk said "there is no possibility of moving rapidly to a detente ... there is danger of people thinking there is a detente which does not exist."¹¹²⁴ Though Rusk did not express to his misgivings about the recent FRG proposal to offer economic incentives to relax tensions with the Soviets, Washington was still concerned. George Ball recommended to Kennedy that Erhard be gently but firmly reminded that serious overtures that might affect West Berlin needed to be cleared with all the Allied partners.¹¹²⁵

As had been the case the previous fall, Berlin negotiations had lapsed without any progress and harassment ensued in the wake. On November 4, another convoy was stopped on the *Autobahn* and this time it appeared Khrushchev had approved.¹¹²⁶ Dobrynin disclaimed any knowledge and suggested the troops were looking to make trouble. He raised the issue of whether West Berlin was covered by the Test Ban Treaty. Rusk made plain his displeased "astonishment at [the] Soviet action."¹¹²⁷ In Moscow, Deputy Premier Kosygin and Gromyko blamed Pentagon provocateurs and insisted the US respect access procedure.¹¹²⁸

New Berlin harassments disturbed a budding detente signaled by the Test Ban Treaty. While a detente could be reached only through many small steps, it might took fewer steps in the other direction to return to the distant estrangement of the 1950s. However, diplomatic contacts between the US and USSR had now become so frequent, that even when tensions worsened, the US and Soviet ambassadors and foreign ministers remained in regular contact.¹¹²⁹ This was especially true when Gromyko was in the United States for the annual UNGA sessions. Regular communication provided some assurance that crises could be controlled; both sides

¹¹²⁴ Memo re Rusk-Erhard, October 25, 1963, *FRUS 1961-63*, Vol. XV, doc. 233.

¹¹²⁵ Memo from Ball to Kennedy, October 26, 1963, *FRUS 1961-63*, Vol. XV, doc. 234.

¹¹²⁶ Dowling cable to Rusk, November 7, 1963, *FRUS 1961-1963*, Vol. XV, doc. 237.

¹¹²⁷ Rusk cable to Dowling, November 5, 1963, *FRUS 1961-1963*, Vol. XV, doc.236.

¹¹²⁸ Kohler cable to Rusk, November 7, 1963, *FRUS 1961-1963*, Vol. XV, doc. 238.

¹¹²⁹ Beschloss, *Crisis Years*, p.659-60.

realized the importance of this after the Cuban affair. Kennedy and his advisors considered whether they should match Soviet harassment without resorting to more forceful actions. Such matching harassment could entail blocking access to the Soviet War memorial and even include delays of Soviet transit through the Panama Canal. Rusk, McNamara and Kennedy decided to prepare such options but not be in any haste to take such measures.¹¹³⁰

End of Kennedy and Khrushchev Period

Washington had good reason to be cautious and cool. The difference in November 1963, and previous autumns, was that Khrushchev's authority was now in question, while the West Germans were actively interested in pursuing their own negotiating track.¹¹³¹ The British and French had marginalized themselves. The British had not had not developed enough leverage to back up their desire to negotiate. The French were still distracted by Algeria and dreams of nuclear independence and political leadership in Europe. Also, the Americans were increasingly occupied by a deteriorating situation in Vietnam. The Kennedy administration had supported Ngo Van Diem, who, though eager for Western support, had alienated both the military and the largely Buddhist populace. In mid-November, the Kennedy had to consider helping to bring about regime change lest the insurgent Viet Cong exploit the instability.¹¹³² The Test Ban Treaty had faced difficult passage in the US Senate. Kennedy's acceptance of the Wall and moderate terms for ending the Cuban missile crisis also created political pressure for a tougher foreign policy. Examples of US domestic discontent could be seen in negative newspaper advertisements and demonstrations in advance of the President's visit to Texas in late

¹¹³⁰ Rusk/McNamara memo to Kennedy, November 7, 1963, *FRUS 1961-1963*, Vol. XV, doc.239.

¹¹³¹ Dowling memo to Rusk, November 12, 1963, *FRUS 1961-1963*, Vol. XV, doc. 240.

¹¹³² Robert Dallek, *An Unfinished Life: John F. Kennedy, 1917 -1963* (Boston: Little Brown and Company, 2003), p. 681-84.

November to shore up Southern political support. When Kennedy was assassinated in Dallas in on November 22, 1963, the momentum for any kind of Berlin resolution died with him.¹¹³³

Khrushchev realized he could not easily resume negotiations. further, he had little backing from his colleagues to continue pressing a fruitless cause.¹¹³⁴ He continued to insist on his peace treaty, without urgency, till he was quietly removed from office in August 1964, the first Soviet leader ever to be painlessly demoted.¹¹³⁵ Most in the Kremlin thought, with Berlin stabilized by a Wall that was continually being strengthened, that it was better to let the Americans overextend themselves in Vietnam. President Johnson would be observed until new overtures might be made. Contacts with the West Germans would be quietly pursued, the Chinese loudly denounced and missile production accelerated.¹¹³⁶ Since there was no crisis to avert or feasible advantage to be gained, there was no need to resume close diplomatic engagement. Johnson had neither the inclination or temperament to resume negotiation. Neither he or the new Soviet leaders were willing to inflame a fairly non-threatening issue like Berlin into a cause for serious face to face negotiation. Except for a few small moments such as the Johnson-Kosygin mini-summit in Glassboro , New Jersey in 1967, detente was postponed and would remain so for the next five years.¹¹³⁷

Conclusions

Negotiations on Berlin never regained momentum after the deadlock of the July 1962 Rusk-Gromyko meetings in Geneva. The Peter Fechter killing and abolition of Soviet commandant in East Berlin did not bring the quarrelsome Allies together enough to develop a

¹¹³³ Beschloss, *Crisis Years*, p.702.

¹¹³⁴ Fursenko & Naftali, *Khrushchev's Cold War*, p.528.

¹¹³⁵ Sergei Khrushchev, *Creation of a Superpower*, p. 700-707; 734-36.

¹¹³⁶ Zubok, *A Failed Empire*, p. 192.

¹¹³⁷ Fursenko & Naftali, *Khrushchev's Cold War*, p. 540-45.

common position. The placement of Soviet missiles in Cuba, partly a reaction to the Berlin standoff, displaced the German problem as the main issue between the United States and the Soviet Union. Talks continued at the ambassadorial level, mainly as a repetitious formality.

Although the Cuban Missile Crisis worsened already tense relations between the US and USSR and did not improve Allied relations, it also helped delink Berlin and disarmament. France and West Germany's exclusion of Britain ensured there would be no joint Allied participation in Berlin talks. West Germany had become such a pivotal element, and with post-Adenauer leadership, that it was already considering bilateral approaches with the Soviet Union. Although Kennedy had disappointed Macmillan at Bermuda, British input in Test Ban deliberations restored some influence. In general relations with both Allies and Soviets, the US continued its trend towards general bilateralism. However, Khrushchev, the architect and chief protagonist of the Berlin crisis, the main constant in US-Soviet relations for nearly a decade, was losing influence.¹¹³⁸ Kennedy's term was cut short and the bilateral relationship could not proceed until new leadership was established in the Soviet Union and in the United States.

Kennedy's visit to West Berlin was an exercise in American-West German bilateralism that signaled the real end of a Western multilateral front on Berlin. This weakened Berlin as a leverage issue Khrushchev could use.¹¹³⁹ Test Ban treaty negotiations were proof that he had already decided to accept disarmament measures without concessions on Germany, though he did try to bargain while he could. These talks were the highest level successful negotiations on arms control yet between the US and USSR, but they still did not bring on detente.

The Test Ban did not bring Kennedy and Khrushchev together in another summit or initiate goodwill visits to the other's country. Nor did Sino-Soviet rivalry, Cuba or Vietnam.

¹¹³⁸ Mastny, "Detente, Superpowers, and their Allies," p. 230-32.

¹¹³⁹ State Dept. paper 'SCOPE: Germany,' June 14, 1963, FRUS 1961-63, Vol. XV, doc. 194.

Disarmament never developed the power Berlin had as a catalytic issue in US-Soviet relations. Berlin's anomalous situation still had a symbolic importance for East and West. The possibility of a solution promised progress and peace.¹¹⁴⁰ No other issue, not even disarmament, engaged the US and Soviet Union as it had from 1958 to 1962. After Berlin as an issue was neutralized by the Wall and Cuba, the US-Soviet relationship became less intense but much closer than before Khrushchev began his Berlin campaign.

¹¹⁴⁰ Daum, *Kennedy in Berlin*, p.196.

The Berlin Diplomatic Campaign: Summary and Conclusions

Western leaders often used the expression "slippery slope" during the negotiations to resolve the Berlin crisis. The words suggest potential more than active danger. Despite the implicit threats of Khrushchev's demands and the explicit Western declaration to forcibly defend 'vital interests,' neither side really wanted a battle over Berlin, much less a general war that could involve nuclear weapons.¹¹⁴¹ Khrushchev's deadline tactic indicated that really wanted was negotiations, possibly for disarmament, more than forceful confrontation.¹¹⁴² Perceiving this distinction, Western leaders over-ruled advocates of force and chose to pursue a diplomatic resolution. Although flashpoints like the U-2 incident, the troubled Vienna and Paris summits, construction of the Berlin Wall, the tank standoff at Checkpoint Charlie and Kennedy's visit to Berlin remain the focus of public and academic attention, the unprecedented level of sustained US-Soviet negotiation may be the most significant aspect of the Berlin crisis.

Though it often seemed that the superpowers - and their allies - were merely traversing a hazardous slope in vain, their patient if slippery steps prevented war and provided a template for future negotiations.¹¹⁴³ As a result of the Berlin discussions, US leaders gained familiarity with Khrushchev and Soviet thinking, which helped them respond to the Cuban Missile Crisis and enable passage of the Limited Test Ban Treaty. As serious as those events were, they did not produce heads of state summits.¹¹⁴⁴ Only Berlin led to comprehensive negotiations between the

¹¹⁴¹ Georg Schild, "The Berlin Crisis" in *Kennedy: the New Frontier Revisited*, White, ed., p. 122-23.

¹¹⁴² Eisenhower, *Waging Peace*, p. 337-342.

¹¹⁴³ William Burr, "Avoiding the Slippery Slope: The Eisenhower Administration and the Berlin Crisis, November 1958-January 1959," in *Diplomatic History*, Vol. 18, Issue 2, pages 177-205.

¹¹⁴⁴ Reynolds, *Summits*, p. 221.

US and Soviet Union. Berlin negotiations were a transformative factor in their bilateral relations in this period and rekindled the hopes for cooperation seen in the days of the Teheran and Yalta conferences but thought lost after the postwar division of Europe, the 1948 Berlin airlift, a lackluster Vienna 1955 summit and the 1956 Hungarian intervention. US-Soviet relations may have lapsed after the Berlin crisis but the 1958-1963 negotiations had renewed relations and established diplomatic templates that would help enable a more robust detente in the 1970s.¹¹⁴⁵

The 1958-63 dialogue marked a profound shift away from diplomatic estrangement and containment doctrine. Leaders who, even two or three years earlier, would have scarcely imagined long running ministerial and executive discussions with the other side pursued those discussions as one of their nation's highest priorities. They hoped to keep dangers, both military and political, as potential but avertable threats through discussions by backchannel, foreign minister level, and heads of state discussions.¹¹⁴⁶ Such discussions were not a familiar part of the political landscape in 1958. East-West relations were in limbo and Allied and East Bloc relations were strained. Berlin negotiations did not quite produce a detente that eased tensions and enabled them to cut back on military spending, but did preserve the German status quo without serious conflict or political destabilization.¹¹⁴⁷ Those dangers remained - militarily, in the emphasis in contingency planning on possible nuclear use, and politically, in the stresses on both NATO and Warsaw Pact unity and prestige.¹¹⁴⁸ The 'slippery slope' referred not only to the hazards of using force, but also unacceptable concessions that might result from negotiations.

¹¹⁴⁵ Hope Harrison, "Berlin, Ostpolitik and Detente," accessed 8/16/10, @ http://www.ghi-dc.org/files/publications/bu_supp/supp1/supp-01_005.pdf

¹¹⁴⁶ Zubok, *A Failed Empire*, p.132-34.

¹¹⁴⁷ Jack M. Schick, "American Diplomacy and the Berlin Negotiations," *The Western Political Quarterly*, Vol. 18, No. 4 (Dec., 1965), pp. 803-820.

¹¹⁴⁸ Dallek, *An Unfinished Life*, p.418-20' 428-30.

Why did Berlin, and not disarmament, Third World competition or improved trade, become the focus of diplomatic engagement? The answer may lie in the fact that the Berlin crisis was, in many ways, an invented situation. Negotiation on Berlin became a proxy conflict in which neither side was likely to take irrevocable action, but did see some chance at realizing long-held security goals through small steps.¹¹⁴⁹ By contrast, their positions in other areas of contention, like disarmament, the Third World or aid to underdeveloped countries, were simply too far apart. These 'great powers' were afraid of being compromised by agreeing to principles and arrangements with unforeseen consequences. Berlin issues, particularly the refugee exodus, were serious enough to warrant close attention and concern, but not immediately threatening.¹¹⁵⁰ Negotiations took on an indefinite, repetitious character like siege tactics.

Resolution of German and Berlin problems may have been improbable but did not seem impossible. These problems were linked to disarmament, the most likely other candidate for negotiations, because both Germanys hosted nuclear weapons by 1959. By linking disarmament to progress on German/Berlin resolution, East and West alike hoped to advance stalled low-level discussions on the former topic, which was a real concern and attractive to public opinion.¹¹⁵¹ Negotiations would hopefully stabilize the Berlin situation, which could slide into the chaos of war and political surrender.

Nikita Khrushchev's sustained demands for a separate German 'peace treaty' and making Berlin a 'free city' thus made a tense but stable situation into the major area of contention between the Soviet Union and the United States from late November 1958 to November 1962. To a great extent, Berlin was an exaggerated concern. From the time of the 1953 East Berlin riots to Khrushchev's 1958 declarations, Berlin had not been not a critical concern to the US or

¹¹⁴⁹ Gaddis, *We Now Know*, p.140-43.

¹¹⁵⁰ Reynolds, *Summits*, p.198

¹¹⁵¹ Ambrose, *Eisenhower*, p. 484-87.

the Soviets, who remained diplomatically estranged for the most part. The 1955 four-power Vienna summit dealt little with Berlin or even the alliance face-off created by the establishment of the Warsaw Pact to match NATO.¹¹⁵² The only substantial concerns that had developed by 1958 were the refugee exodus from East Germany and introduction of nuclear arms in Germany.

These were serious but manageable problems. The strain on human resources through West Berlin was destabilizing to the GDR, until stopped midway through the crisis by the simple expedient of the Wall. Kennedy and Rusk believed the Wall stabilized the Berlin issue.¹¹⁵³ NATO and Warsaw Pact stationing of tactical nuclear weapons reflected military cost cutting pressures, since nuclear weapons were cheaper than maintaining large forward-based conventional forces. Nuclear deployment was too basic to both East West and East strategic doctrine to be easily changed through negotiation. Eisenhower thought Berlin held little strategic value for the US, but its defense was a symbolic commitment that could not be compromised without serious losses to its prestige or the confidence of its NATO partners.¹¹⁵⁴ Berlin and the status of Germany were also vital interests for West Germany, France and Britain, which would face the direct results of conflict but could not match the superpowers' resources.

The United States faced difficulties throughout the Berlin crisis in dealing with the Allies, delaying negotiations and enhancing a trend towards direct talks with the Soviet Union. US desire to control nuclear weapons in Europe, and European reluctance to accept the American concept of a multilateral force, increased its distance from the Allies.¹¹⁵⁵ The US had to make the strongest commitment of personnel and hardware, but it could not make arrangements on Berlin and Germany without the approval of its Potsdam Treaty occupation co-signatories. The

¹¹⁵² Weihmuller, *US-Soviet Summits*, p.25-26.

¹¹⁵³ Beschloss, *Crisis Years*, p. 278;272.

¹¹⁵⁴ Gaddis, *We Now Know*, p. 149-51.

¹¹⁵⁵ Trachtenberg, *A Constructed Peace*, p. 214-216.

USSR had more freedom to make terms without client approval, but did face alliance pressures, both within the Warsaw Pact and from its Communist Bloc rival, the Peoples Republic of China. East German leader Walter Ulbricht's demands to solve the exodus problem and Chinese Chairman Mao Zedong's demands for a more militant stand with the West created pressure for Khrushchev to take a tougher stand on Berlin, but he did not want war. Mao and Ulbricht's criticisms plagued Khrushchev throughout the Berlin Crisis.¹¹⁵⁶ Problems with alliance partners' varying positions and the cumbersome process of reaching consensus appeared even before the first major negotiating phase, the May-July 1959 Foreign Ministers Conference in Geneva. Though the principle difficulty at Geneva was the refusal of either side to make significant concessions, the imbalance of superpowers and lesser partners also hindered resolution.¹¹⁵⁷

The stalemate of summer 1959 fostered calls for a heads-of-state meeting to resolve the differences. However, neither East or West Germany, the states that would be most affected by a change in the status quo, were Potsdam signatories. West Germany's NATO allies, the United States, France, and Great Britain were also signatories but of greatly unequal stature. Khrushchev realized this and pursued his Berlin/German objectives in great part to create sustained dissension in the West and quiet hard-line Communist rivals.¹¹⁵⁸

Promoting Allied discord was only one of Khrushchev's motives - he really wanted bilateral high-level talks with the United States. Khrushchev authority William Taubman has cited high-level discussions with the United States as one of the Chairman's primary goals. He wanted better relations with the United States mainly to reduce the cost of the arms race, allowing for more Soviet consumer production.¹¹⁵⁹ Whether or not he thought the West would ever agree

¹¹⁵⁶ Harrison, *Driving the Soviets*, p.97-98;181-82.

¹¹⁵⁷ Eisenhower, *Waging Peace*, p. 403-05.

¹¹⁵⁸ Fursenko & Naftali, *Khrushchev's Cold War*, p.191-92.

¹¹⁵⁹ Taubman, *Khrushchev*, p. 403.

to his idea for complete and immediate, but uninspected, disarmament cannot really be known but he certainly seemed to hope so. He also wanted better trade arrangements and credits from the West, as well as cultural and technical exchanges that would benefit his country. He knew that Eisenhower, as an experienced military leader, would be a tough but practical negotiator.

Though Khrushchev-Eisenhower relations never could be really called warm, they were sufficiently friendly to allow for the 1959 deputy minister level exchange of visits and for his own visit to the United States. If Eisenhower had been able to return the visit, as planned, such reciprocity would have been taken as a clear sign of detente.¹¹⁶⁰ Though both leaders stressed disarmament as a top concern, Berlin dominated their direct conversations, which had been minimal up to that point. Berlin also became the chief topic of their ministers discussions from late 1958 to late 1960.

Ministerial discussions were particularly important in the early phases of the Berlin crisis because Eisenhower's Secretary of State John Foster Dulles had a stronger influence on his nation's foreign policy than either the Allied counterparts, Britain's Harold Caccia, West Germany's Heinrich von Brentano or France's Couve de Murville. Frederick Marks argues that Dulles was even less inclined than Eisenhower to use force over Berlin.¹¹⁶¹ The Soviet Union's Foreign Minister, Andrei Gromyko, did not set policy but he acted on his executive's instructions more consistently and faithfully than any of his counterparts, providing a strong coherence to Soviet negotiating practice. When Dulles was replaced by Christian Herter, who took more of a caretaker role, US direction on Berlin became noticeably less forceful.¹¹⁶² This contributed to Allied disarray in planning the Paris summit conference in late 1959 and early 1960.

¹¹⁶⁰ Eisenhower, *Waging Peace*, p.543.

¹¹⁶¹ Marks, *Power and Peace*, p. 28.

¹¹⁶² Eisenhower, *Waging Peace*, p. 485-86.

Eisenhower's increasingly lame-duck status and Herter's softness enabled other determined executives to attempt more divergent courses. France's president Charles de Gaulle took advantage of the diluted US foreign policy leadership and pursued a more independent path that he hoped would lead to France's principle leadership in European security.¹¹⁶³ De Gaulle had come to power only weeks before the Berlin crisis began, but had already advanced his plan to supersede NATO leadership with a triumvirate of the US-France-Great Britain deciding global security matters. He wanted French leadership in Europe but would respect British and American interests in their respective regions of interest. De Gaulle was skeptical of negotiation with the Soviet Union in 1959 and would remain so throughout the crisis.¹¹⁶⁴ He did not believe Khrushchev would go to war and was afraid of being led into unnecessary concessions that could hinder French influence.

Britain's Prime Minister Harold Macmillan was much more inclined to negotiations, having travelled to Moscow alone in early 1958. The US was not pleased with that visit nor the implication, not very well founded, that the visit had enabled the Foreign Ministers Conference which averted war. Macmillan also lobbied heavily for a summit conference to do what the foreign ministers proved unable to do in Geneva in 1959. Macmillan wanted to restore British influence but also to avoid a war his country could not afford.¹¹⁶⁵ He was the first to prominently use the 'slippery slope' expression. When he used it, he was probably most worried about nuclear conflict, not political destabilization.

Germany's Chancellor Konrad Adenauer also used the Eisenhower 'twilight' to take a more independent course. The chancellor was inflexible about recognition of East Germany and

¹¹⁶³ Maurice Vaisse, "De Gaulle's Handling of the Berlin Crisis," in *Europe, Cold War and Co-existence*, Loth, ed., p.68-69.

¹¹⁶⁴ Bozo, *Two Strategies for Europe*, p.32-37.

¹¹⁶⁵ Trachtenberg, *History and Strategy*, p.201-04.

maintaining the occupation regime, but unwilling to make the military commitment the other Western leaders thought necessary. Insecure with the European Allied leaders and unable to gain as much influence as he hoped for Eisenhower and Kennedy, Adenauer's vacillations became chronic obstacle to developing a coordinated Western response.¹¹⁶⁶ Berlin brought out these leaders' least cooperative tendencies and encouraged US and Soviet leaders to concentrate on bilateral discussions.

The election of John Kennedy to succeed Eisenhower also fed the bilateral trend. Kennedy believed in the power of personal persuasion, much as Franklin Roosevelt had. Like Roosevelt, Kennedy thought a strong personal appeal to a Soviet leader could overcome a general malaise and mistrust in their relations. Like Roosevelt with Stalin in World War II, this conviction was not borne out in Kennedy's dealings with Khrushchev over Berlin. Likewise, Kennedy's hopes that Western relations could be improved by better individual relations proved largely unfounded. Much of the modern literature on Kennedy, from authors like Lawrence Freedman, Michael Beschloss, Robert Dallek and Mark White, emphasizes ideas like a new frontier extending to international relations.¹¹⁶⁷ That perspective does not always take into account the pragmatic concerns of his more experienced European counterparts. They saw an inexperienced idealist who could be manipulated more easily than they could the seasoned veteran Eisenhower. Khrushchev saw Kennedy in much the same way.¹¹⁶⁸ The Bay of Pigs disaster only encouraged that perception.

¹¹⁶⁶ Klaus Schwabe, "Adenauer and Nuclear Deterrence," in *Europe, Cold War and Coexistence*, Loth, ed., p.47-50

¹¹⁶⁷ Mark White contrasts these works and other Kennedy historiography in the introduction to his collection *Kennedy: the New Frontier Revisited*, p. 4-9.

¹¹⁶⁸ Taubman, *Khrushchev*, p. 495.

Kennedy saw a global environment ripe for detente, to ease worsening conditions in Berlin, nuclear tensions and Third World strife.¹¹⁶⁹ When Kennedy travelled to Europe a few months into his presidency, he sought a series of mini-summits, bilateral meetings with Macmillan and de Gaulle, as well as with Khrushchev. It is hard to imagine Eisenhower attempting such an independent approach with Berlin very evidently on the table and still requiring a common Western position.¹¹⁷⁰ The Berlin situation was serious enough that contingency planners emphasized real probabilities of nuclear use, probably the most articulated plans for nuclear use since Korea. Contingency planning ran parallel to negotiation all through the Berlin crisis. Military leaders like General Nathan Twining and hardliners like Dean Acheson vied with peace advocates like Arthur Schlesinger and Adlai Stevenson for their president's attention. Eisenhower, always concerned about giving momentum to contingency plans, preferred low-key diplomacy. The less experienced Kennedy, guided by the indecisive Rusk, also preferred diplomacy but was afraid of showing military weakness.¹¹⁷¹

De Gaulle and Adenauer were less interested than Macmillan in negotiation. They wanted US declarations of US nuclear readiness, and sought leverage over Kennedy's refusal to provide them with nuclear weapons.¹¹⁷² Khrushchev had already had the same nuclear-sharing problem with the Chinese.¹¹⁷³ Much has been made of the new Kennedy doctrine of flexible readiness, as though this new policy was an abandonment of nuclear strategy in favor of conventional response. In fact, flexible response involved considerations of tactical nuclear weapons, short of general nuclear war.¹¹⁷⁴ Most force planning scenarios for breaking a Soviet

¹¹⁶⁹ Same as 1093, p.10.

¹¹⁷⁰ Ashton, *Kennedy, Macmillan and the Cold War*, p.54-55; Beschloss, *Crisis Years*, p. 186-87; Dallek, *An Unfinished Life*, p.394-95.

¹¹⁷¹ Trachtenberg, *History and Strategy*, p. 222-28.

¹¹⁷² Mayer, *Adenauer and Kennedy*, p. 93-94.

¹¹⁷³ Taubman, *Khrushchev*, p. 336-37.

¹¹⁷⁴ Trachtenberg, *A Constructed Peace*, p.286-89.

blockade of Berlin included possible tactical nuclear use, after ground probes, and acknowledged a high probability of general war as a result.¹¹⁷⁵

Kennedy was unprepared for the Vienna meeting and nearly undid all the previous eighteen months worth of patient stabilization. It is worth noting that their meeting in Vienna was arranged through back channels; this informal approach called for more informal discussions than the earnest but immature ideological approach Kennedy attempted. The result led to a very slippery time. Kennedy announced a major US arms escalation and Khrushchev authorized the construction of the Wall. Nuclear use advocates made strong cases for forceful response demonstrating clear nuclear readiness and even urged Kennedy to consider preemptive action. Against that background, the largely nonviolent construction of the Wall was welcomed as a pragmatic step to resolve the refugee crisis and quiet the nuclear advocates.¹¹⁷⁶ When it quickly became apparent that neither a forceful response or emergency head of state or ministerial talks would be called, it seemed for a moment that neither course was necessary nor did a choice between the two need to be made.

The Soviet resumption of nuclear testing two weeks after the Wall and renewed Berlin harassments soon convinced Kennedy to resume negotiations. The French and West Germans adamantly opposed a new round of negotiations, despite the danger of conflict. Only Macmillan was similarly inclined, but the British were thought too willing to make unacceptable concessions regarding East Germany.¹¹⁷⁷ In September 1962, Kennedy resolved to initiate exploratory talks with the Soviets for a Berlin resolution. He also began a private correspondence with Khrushchev - the 'pen pal letters' - which both hoped would guide ambassadorial and ministerial talks. Gromyko's visits to the United States for UN General

¹¹⁷⁵ Schild, "Berlin Crisis" in *Europe, Cold War, and Coexistence*, p.116-17.

¹¹⁷⁶ Beschloss, *Crisis Years*, p.279-80.

¹¹⁷⁷ Gaddis, *We Now Know*, p. 150-51.

Assembly sessions allowed for ministerial talks. These were inconclusive but showed strong Soviet interest in negotiations.¹¹⁷⁸ Khrushchev still wanted a summit but now his prestige demanded Western acceptance of his position. For both sides, disarmament issues were explicitly hostage to the Berlin question.

The problem of Allied unity also grew more acute in the fall of 1961, and produced some of the most important (though largely unproductive) negotiations of the whole Berlin crisis. US Secretary of State Rusk had neither the temperament or inclination to manage foreign policy as Dulles had. Kennedy's inexperience demanded a stronger role than Herter had provided. Rusk was talented but inclined to consider all views and postpone decisions.¹¹⁷⁹ The splitting of policy making between the President, his newly influential National Security advisor McGeorge Bundy, the clashing instincts of advisors like Dean Acheson and Arthur Schlesinger, and the wild card influence of Attorney General Robert Kennedy produced a well informed but largely incoherent policy and decision apparatus.¹¹⁸⁰ The President had tried to rein in this process in the fall of 1961 but it proved too difficult to contain for long. Rusk ended up doing most of the significant discussions with the Allies and Soviets, with good advisors, like Thompson and Kohler sometimes, but often in private one on one talks. He advised Kennedy against an early summit, but was basically unprepared to deal with tenacious and immovable veterans like Gromyko and the shrewd young Dobrynin, or even his Allied counterparts.¹¹⁸¹

Intense efforts to get Adenauer's approval of a realistic package of proposals, much less commit to good faith support for talks, produced indifferent results. The French were even less cooperative than the West Germans. Adenauer never followed through with his eventually

¹¹⁷⁸ Beschloss, *Crisis Years*, p. 324-26.

¹¹⁷⁹ Ibid. p. 357.

¹¹⁸⁰ Freedman, *Kennedy's Wars*, p. 40-41.

¹¹⁸¹ Reynolds, *Summits*, p. 178-79.

declared willingness to get de Gaulle on board. In October, Kennedy had hoped to arrange an East-West foreign ministers meeting and possible summit by year's end.¹¹⁸² By the end of 1961, after a tank standoff in Berlin, a public humiliation of Khrushchev exposing Soviet nuclear inferiority, a rough Party Congress for Khrushchev where he was pilloried for his folly in pursuing negotiations, and the near-collapse of Allied unity on Berlin, Kennedy's diplomatic initiative was in shreds. The 'pen pal' correspondence was sometimes encouraging but vague and inconsistent. Only Soviet readiness to begin confidential talks in Moscow between Ambassador Thompson and Gromyko held any promise for diplomatic resolution of the Berlin problems. No other serious East-West discussions were underway; arms control talks were low level and intermittent. Khrushchev's public belligerence at the UN sessions had not augured well for high level US-Soviet talks on any other subject.¹¹⁸³

The resumption of bilateral discussions on Berlin in January 1962 began a long sequence that lasted several months. Thompson held the Soviets confidence, but had nothing new to offer the Soviets except a proposal for an international access authority over Berlin.¹¹⁸⁴ By this time, the US was ready to just seek an interim understanding, *modus vivendi*, to ease tensions and work on small problems that could prevent larger Berlin incidents. The Soviets soon showed that they regarded the talks as a mere formality to prepare the way for the peace treaty.¹¹⁸⁵ Their new offer was a transitional mechanism that would allow a temporary continued occupation of West Berlin under a UN flag alongside Warsaw Pact troops. Most of these sessions were held with Gromyko, but Thompson did talk briefly with Khrushchev also. By March 1962, it already seemed that negotiations could not last indefinitely.

¹¹⁸² Mayer, *Adenauer and Kennedy*, p. 58-63.

¹¹⁸³ Taubman, *Khrushchev*, p.477-82.

¹¹⁸⁴ Mayers, *The Ambassadors*, p. 208-09.

¹¹⁸⁵ Fursenko & Naftali, *Khrushchev's Cold War*, p.416-18.

Still unsure whether the Soviets would soon implement the peace treaty, Rusk began new talks with Gromyko in March. As with the previous fall's ministerial talks, these were largely the result of circumstances, with both ministers in Geneva for UN disarmament talks.¹¹⁸⁶ Neither the disarmament nor Berlin talks were productive. Allied support for the US-Soviet talks was more forthcoming but still of little practical help. Even more than even in the fall, the US realized that West Germans would be key to any solution. Even Gromyko began to acknowledge that the Germans might have to resolve the Berlin problem themselves. None of the Berlin signatories were quite comfortable yet with that prospect. Harassment in Berlin grew and then ebbed again. The Soviets gave no clear sign of whether they would sign their peace treaty or would abandon the idea. The 'pen pal' correspondence continued, though less hopefully. The new foreign minister talks had followed the same pattern as the Moscow talks.¹¹⁸⁷

As frustrating as the negotiating process was, the Berlin status quo remained basically intact. Both sides devoted great time and attention to the process but their new working papers had come to resemble theoretical exercises more than practical offers. A new series of talks between the new Soviet Ambassador Dobrynin and Rusk broke no new ground. By midsummer 1962, the ambassadorial, ministerial executive correspondence tracks had all effectively come to naught.¹¹⁸⁸ This halt may have reflected other concerns like Southeast Asia demanding more attention. The rote performance and interest on the Soviet part may be proof that they now wanted talks only to cover the Cuban adventure. No other topic replaced Berlin to continue the dialogue. Khrushchev improvised on negotiations. He may have just sensed, based in part on Gromyko's reports, that the West would offer no more concessions. Rather than just publicly

¹¹⁸⁶ Seaborg, *Kennedy, Khrushchev, and the Test Ban*, p.143-44.

¹¹⁸⁷ Beschloss, *Crisis Years*, p. 363-64.

¹¹⁸⁸ Dobrynin, *In Confidence*, p.98-99.

admit defeat, they could keep the Allies guessing on the peace treaty and fate of Berlin.¹¹⁸⁹ In the wake of the effective end of negotiations halt by August 1962, came another wave of Berlin harassments and then the Cuban missile crisis. These are not the signs of a well organized strategy on Khrushchev's part. The West did not make the same connections between Berlin and Cuba that he hoped they would.¹¹⁹⁰ The Cuban gamble indicates that his adventures were beginning to interfere with each other, instead of complementing synergistically to reach unified policy goals. Kennedy's ExComm group worried how Cuba might affect Berlin, but the overall effect was to chill US interest in negotiations.¹¹⁹¹

An improvised but sustained diplomatic campaign over Berlin seems characteristic of the impulsive but determined Khrushchev, who launched bold adventures that came to unsettling ends. The Virgin Lands scheme was a good example of a failed initiative he could not abandon easily. Was the sustained diplomatic engagement over Berlin such a gamble? His own testimony and that of many observers suggests that he was serious about his German goals. Did he realize at some point it wouldn't happen and just decided to keep on negotiating to keep the West off guard and hope it might lead to a more productive Summit opportunity?¹¹⁹² He may have just wanted to protect his prestige and not let Mao tell him what to do. Except for the Wall, all of Khrushchev's Berlin steps involved deadlines and postponements. He may have thought that negotiation alone, prodded by occasional harassment would eventually accomplish his Berlin goals. He never devoted as much attention to disarmament, even with his sessions with Harriman during the Test Ban treaty debates. He never pursued a summit over Cuba or Laos or the Congo or outer space.

¹¹⁸⁹ Fursenko & Naftali, *Khrushchev's Cold War*, 457-58.

¹¹⁹⁰ N S Khrushchev, *Statesman*, p.319-20.

¹¹⁹¹ Freedman, *Kennedy's Wars*, p. 164.

¹¹⁹² Taubman, *Khrushchev*, p. 583.

Berlin was Khrushchev's issue and he nursed it till he was deposed in 1964. He never got the Western troops to withdraw, but did succeed in launching the most sustained US-Soviet negotiating sequence up to that point, unmatched for at least five more years.¹¹⁹³ He also fostered the *Ostpolitik* dialogue Willy Brandt would later explore more fully.¹¹⁹⁴ US concern over the implications of *Ostpolitik* helped motivate Nixon and Kissinger's 1969 overtures to the Soviets. They benefitted from bilateral diplomatic templates laid out in the 1958-1963 Berlin Crisis. They used backchannel diplomacy, ambassadorial talks, foreign ministers conferences and head of state meetings, with mutual visits to the other's countries. They even continued talking about Berlin, but without deadlines¹¹⁹⁵ Khrushchev and Gromyko worked from scratch to renew US-Soviet diplomatic engagement. Brezhnev and Gromyko built on that foundation to begin a new, disarmament-centered dialogue with the Americans. They followed classic Stalin-era Soviet negotiating techniques, which were built on imperial Russia negotiating tactics. The original impetus for detente came from Nikita Khrushchev, whose impulsive and often rude tactics actually worked against his aims.¹¹⁹⁶

Individual leadership was also important on the Western side. Eisenhower's correct instinct that Khrushchev did not want war, and Dulles' concurrence, helped the West stay its guns, remain firm, and be willing, but not too eager, to negotiate. They emphasized Allied unity and were able to hold it together through the 1959 conference. Despite Eisenhower's attempts to make disarmament their priority, Berlin dominated discussions from 1958-60.¹¹⁹⁷ Even after Dulles, Eisenhower was able to sustain unity through the Paris summit, but just barely. Kennedy never had the same disposition or understanding regarding Western unity, thus hampering his

¹¹⁹³ Fursenko & Naftali, p. 525-26.

¹¹⁹⁴ Harrison, "Berlin, Ostpolitik and Detente", p. 18.

¹¹⁹⁵ Keith L. Nelson, *The Making of Detente: Soviet American relations in the Shadow of Vietnam*, p.96-97.

¹¹⁹⁶ Whelan, *Soviet Negotiating Techniques*, p. 283.

¹¹⁹⁷ Ambrose, *Eisenhower*, p. 507-08.

Berlin dealings. He also had to deal with the specific personalities of Macmillan, Adenauer, and de Gaulle, who were not only more experienced generally but particularly on the Berlin issue. But unlike those leaders, Kennedy proved the only one determined to attempt negotiations against other counsel, and who carried them through for long unpromising stretches. Lawrence Freedman says Kennedy, unlike Eisenhower, followed twin paths of rearmament and negotiation. It is debatable whether that combination was successful or not, but Kennedy did believe in and pursue diplomacy.¹¹⁹⁸

Dean Rusk also deserves credit for conducting these negotiations, without having the clear mandate of authority that Dulles had enjoyed. Acheson or Bundy in the same role might not have performed as evenly and with as much control. In the end, Rusk's unassuming reasonableness may have proved as much of a challenge to Gromyko as the latter's obdurate opacity was to Rusk. Gromyko could have been much worse too; he was more reasonable and patient perhaps than was understood at the time.¹¹⁹⁹ The role of the ambassadors was also helpful. Thompson proved invaluable in Moscow and as an advisor in Washington; he was the most needed and longest serving player on the US Berlin team. While "Smilin' Mike" Menshikov did not help much, Dobrynin earned Washington's confidence. The veteran Deputy Minister Anastas Mikoyan also helped convince the US from time to time that Khrushchev might be restrainable.¹²⁰⁰

As important as all these individuals were to the avoidance of war over Berlin, the turn to diplomacy may have been due to more than just their specific and combined influences. If theoretical perspectives guided leaders, then perhaps the theories were changing without being understood at the time. Massive retaliation doctrine did not suddenly yield to flexible response.

¹¹⁹⁸ Lawrence Freedman, *Kennedy's Wars*, p. 113-20.

¹¹⁹⁹ Gromyko, *Memoirs*, p.78-79; 196-97.

¹²⁰⁰ Fursenko & Naftali, *Khrushchev's Cold War*, p.214-15; 505-06.

Instead, the ideas of limited war served as a transition.¹²⁰¹ Marc Trachtenberg has observed that the tactical nuclear plans for defending Berlin of 1958-1962 were replaced by counter-insurgency conventional-force Vietnam strategies out of necessity, not ideology. Exercises in planning tempered ideas of limited nuclear war. Dulles, the supposed brinksman, never really wanted to risk the consequences of any kind of use of nuclear weapons.¹²⁰² Publicly, he declared nuclear-use commitment over Berlin; privately he was among the most skeptical of containable nuclear use in Germany. Eisenhower held the same views and Kennedy too, though more naively. So did Khrushchev. For both East and West, growing awareness of the dangers of nuclear war was a major reason for the turn to diplomacy over Berlin.¹²⁰³

In Paris and in Vienna, heads of state had the chance to talk about disarmament, instead of Berlin. Unfortunately, Khrushchev, despite his sincere wish for disarmament, chose to focus on Berlin instead. Perhaps the US and its Allies could have managed him better; maybe not. They did take a diplomatic rather than military course over Berlin without damage to Allied or Soviet position or prestige. Berlin discussions, though tedious, averted war and that was a major accomplishment. The slippery slope did not produce a calamitous fall. Neither did it allow access to higher points. That the negotiations were not more productively linked to progress on disarmament may be the greatest loss of the whole Berlin diplomatic sequence.

¹²⁰¹ Trachtenberg, *A Constructed Peace*, p. 288.

¹²⁰² Townsend Hoopes, *Devil and John Foster Dulles*, p. 312-13.

¹²⁰³ Taubman, *Khrushchev*, p.405-06.

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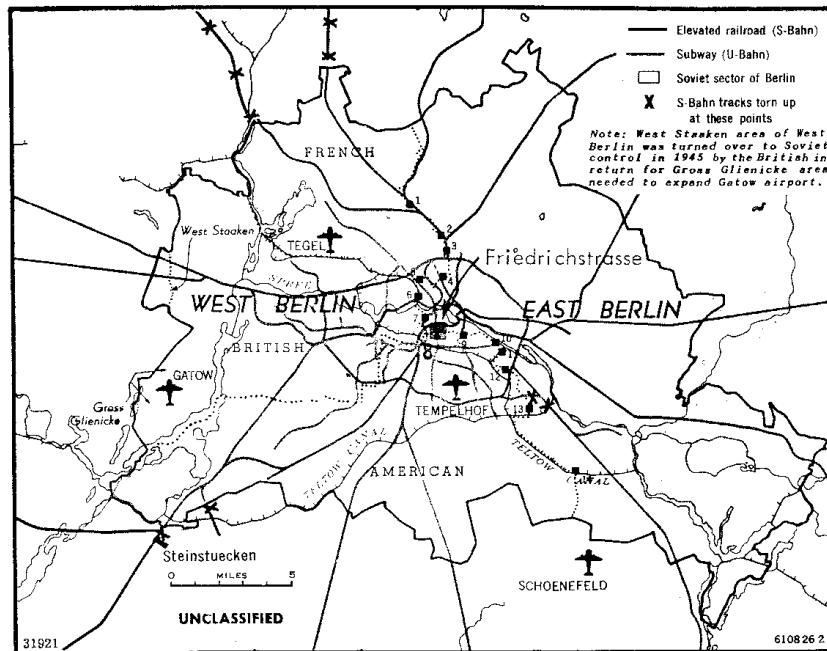
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Appendix: Sector and Crossing Point Map of Berlin, 1962

Berlin
Other copies in Lit. Rm.



AUTHORIZED BORDER CROSSING POINTS

MEMBERS OF DIPLOMATIC CORPS AND OCCUPATION FORCES ONLY

- 8. Friedrichstrasse
- WEST GERMANS ONLY
- 3. Bornholmerstrasse
- 9. Heinrich Heine Strasse
- WEST BERLINERS ONLY
- 5. Chausseestrasse
- 6. Invalidenstrasse
- 10. Oberbaumbruecke
- 13. Sonnen Allee

ORIGINAL CROSSING POINTS OF 13 AUGUST NOW CLOSED

- 1. Kopenhagenerstrasse
- 2. Wollankstrasse
- 4. Brunnenstrasse
- 7. Brandenburger Tor (Gate)
- 11. Puschkin Allee
- 12. Eisenstrasse
- 14. Rudowerstrasse

Authorized East Germans and East Berliners presumably can cross at any Border Points still open.

VITA

Richard Dean Williamson was born on September 9, 1952, in Farmington, New Mexico. He graduated from high school in June 1970 at McCallie School in Chattanooga, Tennessee. He graduated from college in August 1990, with a Bachelor of Arts degree in English from the University of New Orleans. In December 1990, he received a Master of Fine Arts, drama and communications from the University of New Orleans.

His work experience includes four years (1977-81) as a Tender/Diver with Taylor Diving & Salvage Co., Belle Chasse, Louisiana. Following graduation in English from the University of New Orleans, he worked for SubSea International, also in Belle Chasse, as a technical writer and industrial video producer. Following his MFA from UNO, he worked as a development writer for Tulane University in New Orleans from 1994-2004.

In 2004, he began graduate studies at UNO in history, concentrating on diplomatic history, with coursework in ancient history, colonial Atlantic history, and medieval history. His thesis was "The Berlin Crisis of 1958-59: A Case of Pragmatic Restraint." This thesis was presented at the 2007 ISIS conference at Mississippi State University.

In 2006, Mr. Williamson began doctoral studies in American history at Louisiana State University. He has completed coursework and passed general exams in this major field, as well as minor fields of Tudor/Stuart and Early Modern European history. Building on his master's work at UNO, Richard conducted research at the Eisenhower, Johnson and Kennedy libraries to support his dissertation, the "Berlin & the Origins of Détente: Multilateral & Bilateral

Negotiations in the Berlin Crisis, 1958-63," which was approved by his examining committee in October 2010. He anticipates graduating from LSU with the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in History in December 2010.

Some material from this dissertation was presented at the 2010 ISIS conference sponsored by University of New Orleans at the National World War II museum in February 2010 and at the LSU Graduate History Association Conference in Baton Rouge in March 2010. This material *Berlin or Disarmament: Purposes of the 1960 Paris Summit* also contributed to an article: *Berlin oder Abrüstung? - Die Prioritätenliste der verpatzten Pariser „Gipfelstürmerei“ von 1960* co-authored with Günter Bischof, to be published in 2011 in the following work: Stefan Karner – Barbara Stelzl-Marx – Natalja Tomilina – Alexander Tschubarjan – Günter Bischof – Viktor Iščenko – Michail Prozumenščikov – Peter Ruggenthaler – Gerhard Wettig – Manfred Wilke, eds., *Der Wiener Gipfel 1961: Kennedy – Chruščev* (Innsbruck: Studienverlag, 2011). It is anticipated that this work will also be published in English.