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During the first week of September 1961 a major shift took place in the Soviet power structure. For the historian this period is of exceptional interest, for it provides in concentrated form and in close succession a number of the possible variants in the configuration of power at the Soviet summit: dominance of the policy-formulating process by an internal opposition faction; collective leadership wielded by a group of nominally equal figures; temporarily reasserted predominance by the man who holds the major power positions; and an uneasy balance between conflicting and unreconciled factions.

At the outset of the period, Frol Kozlov and his supporters appeared to be firmly in control of the levers of power in the Kremlin; their actions and decisions during the final week of August had sharply altered the course of Soviet foreign policy and by a series of risky and provocative moves had brought the Soviet Union dangerously close to a direct military confrontation with the West. A week later Kozlov was on his way to the remote capital of a Soviet ally-satellite on the Pacific coast of Asia, his bid for power sharply curtailed and his immediate task the announcement of what was, in effect, the abandonment for the present of the policies he had sponsored.

At the outset of the same period Khrushchev had just returned to the Kremlin after a two-week sojourn on the Black Sea, where he had been isolated from the seat of power and forced to watch his most threatening rival put through a series of measures directly opposed to his own on internal and foreign policy. At the end of the period Khrushchev had successfully reasserted his primacy within the collective leadership and had agreed with the majority of his colleagues on a new orientation for Soviet foreign policy.

The intense and concentrated power struggle in the collective leadership, effectively masked from the outside world, took place within the framework of the Soviet-Western conflict over Berlin, with disarmament and the problem
of nuclear testing as closely related issues. As the result of urgent consultation within the Western alliance, a bold new attempt was made during this period to persuade the Soviet leadership to modify or abandon its announced policy of nuclear testing. In the background, meanwhile, a number of subsidiary but related processes and events were taking place, the most important of which was a conference of neutralist and nonaligned states in Belgrade, at the conclusion of which delegations from the conference carried urgent messages to Moscow and Washington. All of these interrelated events and processes, to a greater or lesser extent, affected the internal Soviet struggle for power and the course of Soviet-U.S. relations.

Because the period under discussion was one in which a major power shift in the collective leadership was taking place, its pattern of events presents what seems at first sight a confusing mixture of inconsistent policy moves by the Soviet Union. Actions which reflect a continuation of the Kozlov-dominated line of late August were interspersed with others representing the reassertion of Khrushchev's influence. To some extent, this confusing medley was the result of a bureaucratic lag at lower levels in recognizing and responding to the power shift at the top; from another aspect, however, the patchwork policy pattern of early September 1961 was the result of the operation of one of the Kremlin's basic policy rules, which calls for the maintenance of an appearance of continuity in Soviet policy even when—especially when—the shifts at the summit are most abrupt and precipitous. Since a major aim of the Soviet political system as a whole is to maintain security against the outside world—in other words, to conceal or disguise the real nature of its internal power arrangements—it is one of the rules of the political game on which all factions and individuals agree, that actual shifts in the power balance shall not be immediately and unmistakably reflected in sharp changes in the policy line. Rather, the line pursued by a previously dominant but now defeated faction will often be continued briefly, though without emphasis or conviction, while at the same time new measures, new initiatives, express the policy of the victorious faction or coalition.

**Khrushchev's resurgence**

The principal stages in Khrushchev's recovery of power can be demonstrated by tracing the changes in the treatment accorded him in the central Soviet press during the first week of September. On September 1 his renewed presence in the Kremlin was briefly signified by his signature, along with that of Brezhnev, to a message to North Vietnam President Ho Chi Minh and Premier Pham Van Dong. Three days later, when *Izvestia* reported Khrushchev's visit to a French national exhibition in Moscow, a photograph accompanying the article showed him in a white suit occupying the center of attention, while his more soberly garbed colleagues were pushed into the background, but the caption, in strict accordance with the principle of collective
leadership, read, “Soviet leaders at one of the pavilions of the French national exhibition.”

By September 6 Izvestia was once again giving Khrushchev top billing. Its first page on that date included three items singling out Khrushchev for special attention. A report on a visit by French communist leader Maurice Thorez, on September 4, pointedly identified Khrushchev as “First Secretary of the CPSU”; the story on Nehru’s arrival in Moscow provided an opportunity for further stress on Khrushchev, who was given credit for having extended the invitation to Nehru and who headed the party of welcome for him at the airport; and an announcement, in which the Komsomol promised to support the Soviet government’s “wise actions” to strengthen Soviet defense, was so worded as to give enhanced prominence to Khrushchev. “In answer to the call of N. S. Khrushchev,” the announcement stated, “the young citizens of our country... will increase tenfold their efforts in the struggle for the establishment of a stable peace.”

Khrushchev’s enthusiastic sponsorship of a program of growing corn (maize) in Soviet agriculture provides a convenient index to the degree and timing of his influence. Izvestia on September 6 carried a story on the harvesting of seed corn in a Ukrainian collective farm, and Pravda published an article on September 7, “One hundred dishes from corn,” in which the First Secretary was credited with recommending increased sowings of corn after the January plenum of the Central Committee. Izvestia followed with a similar article, “Menu of 100 dishes—corn at the dinner table,” on September 8.

High point and decline of the hard line

During Khrushchev’s absence from the Kremlin the initiative in Soviet foreign policy had been seized by his adversaries. The direction in which events were moving was indicated by a brief announcement from the United Nations on the evening of September 1. “Frol R. Kozlov, secretary of the Soviet Communist Party Central Committee,” the announcement stated, “… will head the Soviet delegation to this year’s United Nations General Assembly session, informed diplomats said tonight.

“Mr. Kozlov, sometimes called Premier Khrushchev’s No. 2 man, is expected to be here for the opening days of the assembly’s sixteenth session starting September 19.”

The announcement made it clear that Kozlov was preparing to appear before the world as a spokesman for Soviet foreign policy in his own right. Had he done so, the deep split in the Soviet leadership could hardly have been concealed, for Kozlov was assuredly not planning the trip to the United Nations

simply to echo Khrushchev's line. But Kozlov was fated never to head a Soviet
delegation to the United Nations; when the General Assembly met in New
York on September 19 he was on the opposite side of the world, and his plan
to attend the United Nations had been quietly shelved.

The bellicose direction given Soviet foreign policy during the brief period
of Kozlov's ascendancy in the Kremlin was vigorously maintained in a Soviet
note to the Western powers on September 2, continuing the attack on the un-
restricted use of the air corridors from West Germany to West Berlin, which
had been started with the Soviet note of August 23.4

The Soviet government, said the note, "... insists that the Government of
the United States, which together with the Governments of Britain and France
is exercising at present occupation functions in West Berlin, should put an
end to the unlawful and provocative actions of the FRG [West Germany] in
that city. The Soviet Government deems it necessary to warn the United States
Government that it bears full responsibility for the possible consequences of
the continuation of such provocative activities."5

The Western powers replied on September 8, in notes which repeated "in
the most solemn terms" earlier warnings "against any action to interfere with
flights in the air corridors to West Berlin."6

The Soviet armed forces newspaper carried forward the campaign with an
article on September 9 which charged that "... the Western powers have
created an artificial question about access to West Berlin. Instead of putting
an end to the provocative actions of the FRG [West Germany] in this ques-
tion, they are arousing a military psychosis, they are trying to create a pretext
for unleashing war against the socialist countries."7

For a brief time the Soviets resorted to direct action: "There followed a cer-
tain amount of Soviet harassment of the commercial air lines flying at night
into Berlin, and on 14 September two Soviet MIG fighters 'buzzed' two Ameri-
cy commercial air-liners in broad daylight."8

The Soviet government made no official reply, however, to the Western
notes of September 8; after the incident of September 14 its campaign against
unrestricted Western use of the air corridors to West Berlin was simply
dropped.

The September 2 note thus marked the last major Soviet attempt in 1961 to
force the Western powers to accept a restriction on their access by air to West
Berlin. Together with the September 1 announcement concerning Kozlov's

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4Text of the Sept. 2 note in Documents on Germany, pp. 776–79, citing a Soviet Em-
bassy press release of Sept. 5. Analysis and commentary, SIA, 1961, p. 260; Seymour Topping,
5Documents on Germany, p. 779.
6Ibid., p. 787; full text, pp. 784–87. The Western notes of Sept. 8 were accompanied by
a dossier of "quadripartite agreements regarding the Berlin air corridors": ibid., pp. 787–91.
7Col. I. Alekseev, "The air corridors are not for revanchists!", Krasnaia Zvezda, Sept. 9,
1961, p. 5.
8SIA, 1961, p. 262.
plan to head the Soviet delegation to the U.N. General Assembly, it marks the high point in the drive by Kozlov and the faction he headed to seize control of the direction of Soviet foreign policy. Thereafter, as Khrushchev reasserted his power, Kozlov's hard line gave place to more moderate policies—not immediately, not obviously, but nonetheless effectively.

**Kennedy and Macmillan propose a partial test ban**

The first Soviet nuclear explosion in the new test series, a medium-range blast, took place on September 1. Two days later, following hurried consultations between Kennedy and Macmillan, the two leaders issued a joint appeal directly to Khrushchev “... that their three governments agree, effective immediately, not to conduct nuclear tests which take place in the atmosphere and produce radioactive fallout.”

The Western leaders urged Khrushchev to cable his immediate acceptance of this offer, and then went on to propose that representatives of the three powers at Geneva “... meet not later than September 9 to record this agreement and report it to the United Nations.” The offer, they continued, would remain open until that date.

As we have seen, one of the major points at issue in the long East-West negotiations on a test ban agreement had been the failure of the parties to agree on control measures. In an obvious effort to overcome Soviet hesitations on this score, the September 3 proposal broke sharply with earlier Western negotiating positions and dropped all demands for international control of nuclear tests in the atmosphere. “With regard to atmospheric testing,” the statement said, “... the United States and the United Kingdom are prepared to rely upon existing means of detection, which they believe to be adequate, and are not suggesting additional controls.”

To guard against misinterpretation, however, the proposal expressed continuing Western support for a comprehensive test ban agreement: “... they reaffirm their serious desire to conclude a nuclear test ban treaty, applicable to other forms of testing as well, and regret that the Soviet Government has blocked such an agreement.”

Disregarding for the moment the gratuitous and ill-advised propaganda shot in the concluding passage, the September 3 proposal, taken as a whole, must be recognized as one of the major contributions by the Western powers to the eventual success of the test ban negotiations. The origin and underlying purpose of the proposal therefore deserve careful attention.

Available evidence points to the conclusion that the proposal originated in Washington and that the British assented to what was basically an American
initiative. The British-based *Survey of International Affairs* stresses the desire in Washington "to maintain a united Anglo-American front" as a contributing factor in the genesis of the proposal, but does not in any way suggest that the initiative for it came from the British.\(^{13}\) According to Sidey, "Kennedy had wanted to make a final plea to halt the tests. He had sought and received British Prime Minister Harold Macmillan's endorsement."\(^{14}\)

Neither Sorensen nor Schlesinger casts any light on the specific circumstances in which the proposal originated. Schlesinger traces its germ to a suggestion made by U.S. Ambassador to Moscow Llewellyn Thompson during the debate in August as to whether or not the United States should resume testing. According to Schlesinger, Thompson had recommended ". . . that we try once again for a limited ban, outlawing tests in the atmosphere and under water."\(^{15}\) For the United States, it was pointed out, such a ban would have a number of advantages: "These [tests in the atmosphere and under water] were the ones that caused fallout; they did not require inspection; and they were presumably the tests which would help the Russians the most."\(^{16}\)

A circumstantial but unsupported account of the genesis of the September 3 proposal is offered by Jacobson and Stein:

The Kennedy–Macmillan proposal was formulated in Secretary of State Rusk's office by a small group of British and American policy-makers and advisers. Their prime objective was to embarrass the USSR. The proposal was a serious offer, which the participants in the sessions were willing to implement. . . . On the other hand, none of those who formulated the September 3 proposal seriously expected the USSR to accept it. Nor did any among them see much prospect for fruitful negotiation in the future. Although the effects of the proposal on past and possible future Western positions were discussed, because of the immediate objective and the expectations about the future, such effects were accorded little weight in the final decision.\(^{17}\)

This account fails, however, to make due allowance for the motives and intentions of Kennedy himself, the prime mover in the September 3 proposal. The entire record of his administration's ultimately successful struggle to achieve an international agreement banning nuclear tests causing radioactive fallout provides convincing testimony to the genuineness of the concern which underlay the September 3 proposal.

This conclusion is reinforced when one takes into account the strong pressures which were being brought to bear on Kennedy at this time to resume

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\(^{13}\) *SIA, 1961*, p. 259.

\(^{14}\) Sidey, p. 244.

\(^{15}\) Schlesinger, p. 459.

\(^{16}\) Ibid.

\(^{17}\) Jacobson and Stein, pp. 282–83, citing Schlesinger, p. 459. Schlesinger does not, however, provide the details of the drafting of the agreement and the evaluation of its intent given in Jacobson and Stein.
testing without the slightest delay.\textsuperscript{18} With the beginning of the new Soviet test series on September 1 the demand in Congress and the press for a resumption of testing by the United States became almost irresistible, yet Kennedy still held out, hoping against hope that a direct appeal to Khrushchev might still avert a new phase in the nuclear arms race.

The Anglo–American proposal was transmitted to the Soviets on Sunday, September 3, while Kennedy was relaxing at Hyannis Port. There was no Soviet response on the following day, unless the second blast in the Soviet test series could be so regarded, but on Tuesday, September 5, TASS issued a bulletin from Geneva deriding the proposal as “deceitful, unrealistic, and propagandistic.” Only the Soviet program for general and complete disarmament, TASS maintained, could solve the problem of nuclear tests.\textsuperscript{19} A further clue to Soviet intentions was provided by the fact that the Soviet press refrained from publishing the Kennedy–Macmillan proposal.\textsuperscript{20} This was in line with general Soviet policy on the resumption of testing: the first acknowledgement by Soviet news media that the new test series was under way came in a roundabout form on September 5, when a Soviet radio broadcast in Urdu and English to south and southeast Asia commented on an article in the \textit{Times of India} which mentioned the Soviet tests.

For Kennedy, the decisive action was the third Soviet test, word of which was received in Washington on September 5. Sidey reports the President’s reaction in his own words: “I had no choice. I had waited two days for an answer to the message that Macmillan and I sent to Khrushchev. That was plenty of time. All they did was shoot off two more bombs.”\textsuperscript{21} Schlesinger quotes Kennedy as saying, “The third test was a contemptuous response to our note.”\textsuperscript{22}

Without further delay Kennedy issued a statement announcing the immediate resumption of underground testing by the United States:

\begin{quote}
In view of the continued testing by the Soviet Government, I have today ordered the resumption of nuclear tests, in the laboratory and underground, with no fallout. In our efforts to achieve an end to nuclear testing, we have taken every step that reasonable men could justify. In view of the acts of the Soviet Government, we must now take those steps which prudent men find essential. We have no other choice in fulfillment of the responsibilities of the United States Government to its own citizens and to the security of other free nations. Our offer to make an agreement to end all fallout tests remains open until September 9.\textsuperscript{23}
\end{quote}

\textsuperscript{18}For analysis of the mounting pressures on Kennedy to authorize the resumption of testing by the United States, see \textit{SIA, 1961}, pp. 257–58; Sorensen, pp. 618–19; Schlesinger, pp. 454–58.
\textsuperscript{19}\textit{Irzv.}, Sept. 6, 1961, p. 2; Seymour Topping, \textit{NYT}, Sept. 6, 1961, p. 1.
\textsuperscript{20}Note, \textit{CDSP}, XIII/36, p. 3.
\textsuperscript{21}Sidey, p. 245.
\textsuperscript{22}Schlesinger, p. 483.
\textsuperscript{23}\textit{JFK, 1961}, pp. 589–90.
Because of the lack of preparation for nuclear testing in the United States—
in part a legacy from the previous administration, in part a consequence of
Kennedy’s own strong desire to avoid ordering the resumption of testing until
forced to do so—the September 5 announcement was not followed by an imme-
diate series of test explosions. The first U.S. test took place on September 15,
and, in the words of Jacobson and Stein, “The test series which followed was
minor. The United States was not prepared to conduct major experiments!”
Contrast the brief interval between the Soviet announcement of the resump-
tion of testing on August 30 and the first Soviet test shot on September 1, as
well as the tight chronological pattern of the Soviet test series: during Sep-
tember alone the Soviets conducted tests on the 1st, 4th, 5th, 6th, 10th, 12th,
13th, 16th, 17th, 18th, 20th, and 22nd.25

* * *

Viewed as a contribution to the test ban negotiations, the September 3 pro-
posal represented a striking shift in the Western position, a fact which is ef-
fectively brought out by Jacobson and Stein.

. . . This proposal was almost revolutionary in terms of past Western posi-
tions. For the first time, the West announced its willingness to accept a ban
on testing in some environments, without the establishment of any interna-
tional control machinery. Never before had the Western powers admitted
that national detection systems would be sufficient. Whenever the Western
powers discussed a partial ban previously, they always maintained that at
least some international control machinery would be necessary.26

Later, as the test ban talks at Geneva continued, both sides would cite the
September 3 proposal in support of their positions—the Soviets to claim that
in making the proposal the Western powers had admitted that existing control
mechanisms were adequate to monitor certain kinds of nuclear tests, the
Western powers to maintain that by rejecting the proposal the Soviets had
negated the Western concession, which by its stated terms was a temporary
one. In any case, the proposal was rejected by the Soviets, in a message from
Khrushchev on September 9 which we shall consider below.

Among the President’s counsellors there were some who advocated taking
the question of nuclear testing to the United Nations. Harlan Cleveland,
assistant secretary of state for international organization matters, for example,
urged him to bring the question before the Security Council.27 Having alre-
ady made up his mind, however, that sooner or later the United States would be
forced to resume testing in response to the Soviet action, Kennedy rejected
this advice when it was relayed to him by Schlesinger, who quotes him as say-

24Jacobson and Stein, p. 283.
25Facts on File, 1961, pp. 326, 350, 379. For later tests in the Soviet series, totaling thirty-
one in all, see ibid., pp. 385, 393, 405.
26Jacobson and Stein, p. 282.
27Schlesinger, p. 481.
ing: “I don’t see how we can do it. It would look hypocritical for us to take the question to the Security Council if we have already decided to resume testing. The two things seem to me incompatible.”

But Cleveland’s suggestion of an appeal to the United Nations evoked a sympathetic response from Kennedy, coming as it did during an extended and continuing debate within his administration as to the nature of political power and the weight to be assigned to imponderables, particularly that intangible and elusive factor—world public opinion. Schlesinger quotes John J. McCloy, a supporter of the hard-headed “realist” position, as expostulating: “World opinion? I don’t believe in world opinion. The only thing that matters is power. What we have to do now is to show that we are a powerful nation and not spend our time trailing after the phantom of world opinion.”

To Kennedy, however, public opinion at home and abroad was a reality no less significant than the material instruments of power—a fact which may help to explain the worldwide response he evoked during his lifetime and the enduring legend which has grown up around him after his death.

It was thus entirely characteristic of the man that on September 5, the day he ordered resumption of underground nuclear testing by the United States, he also took a tentative decision to address the forthcoming General Assembly of the United Nations and directed several of his aides to begin work on a suitable speech.

The Belgrade conference of neutralist and nonaligned nations and its sequel—Nehru's mission to Moscow

It is likely that the timing and character of Kennedy’s reaction to the Soviet resumption of nuclear testing were significantly affected by the proceedings of a conference of neutralist and nonaligned nations which was held in Belgrade on September 1–5.

Preparations for the conference date back to the spring and summer of 1961 when Yugoslav President Tito, the originator of the idea, was joined by Egyptian President Nasser, Ghana President Nkrumah, and Indonesian President Sukarno in sponsoring a bid for the conference.

When the idea for the conference was first broached it was the general expectation among its sponsors that the major topic to be discussed would be colonialism, with condemnation of the Western powers for their alleged imperialism as its foreordained outcome. As the time for the conference ap-
proached, however, the great power conflict over Berlin tended to overshadow
the neutralist leaders' concern with colonialism and to give them a feeling that
they could exert little influence over the great issue of war or peace in the
world. The Soviet government's announcement that it had decided to resume
nuclear testing, coming as it did on the very eve of the Belgrade conference,
served to reinforce this feeling of impotence. It also led some of the neutralists,
who had hitherto tended to view with sympathy the Soviet side in the contro­
versies over disarmament and Berlin, to reassess their evaluation of the great
powers.

The Soviet resumption of testing thus produced some rather sharp criticism
from individual leaders attending the Belgrade conference. Nasser, for ex­
ample, said that the Soviet decision "shocked me, just as it shocked world
opinion," and Nkrumah concurred: "This was a shock to me as it must have
been to all of you."32

Nehru, too, expressed grave concern over the Soviet decision, which he said
had brought the danger of war nearer. To reduce this danger, Nehru strongly
advocated the resumption of negotiations between Washington and Moscow,
thereby providing a lead for the one significant action which emerged from the
conference.33

At its session on September 4 the conference approved a proposal for a joint
appeal to Kennedy and Khrushchev urging them to meet without delay, and
appointed a commission to draft a suitable message.34 The message, ready
by the following day, stressed the "deep concern" felt by the conference "at
the deterioration in the international situation and the prospect of war which
now threatens humanity," and then presented its appeal:

Having regard, however, to the gravity of the crisis that menaces the world
and the urgent need to avert the developments that may precipitate it, we
take the liberty of urging on the Great Powers concerned that negotiations
should be resumed and pursued so that the danger of war might be removed
from the world and mankind adopt ways of peace. In particular, we ear­
nestly request for [sic] direct negotiations between Your Excellency [i.e.,
Kennedy] and the President of the Council of Ministers of the U.S.S.R.
[Khrushchev], who represent the two most powerful nations today and in
whose hands lies the key to peace or war.35

Bearing this message, Nehru flew from Belgrade to Moscow on September
6, with Nkrumah arriving in the Soviet capital on a separate plane. Indonesian
President Sukarno, meanwhile, accompanied by President Modibo Keita of
the Republic of Mali, was journeying toward Washington in order to deliver a
copy of the message to Kennedy, who had agreed to meet the two emissaries
on September 12.

32Quoted, ibid., p. 380.
33Nehru's Sept. 2 speech is in DIA, 1961, pp. 612-21; his plea for renewed Soviet-U.S.
negotiations is on page 616. See also M. S. Handler, NYT, Sept. 3, 1961, p. 1.
In Washington, the prevailing view was that the Belgrade conference had failed to display true neutralism by refusing to censure the Soviets for resuming nuclear testing. "We all knew," Schlesinger writes, "... how they would have blackened the skies with resolutions if we had been the first to resume; and the contrast drove Kennedy to great and profane acrimony." Sorensen concurs: Kennedy, he writes, "... was particularly angry when the 1961 conference of neutrals at Belgrade, asserting [its right] to speak for 'the conscience of mankind,' passed the usual resolution against Western colonialism but timidly failed to condemn the Soviets for suddenly resuming nuclear testing."

Sorensen goes on to provide documentary evidence of Kennedy's indignant reaction: "His anger was reflected in a statement issued at that time upon the signing of the foreign aid bill. The administration of the bill, said Kennedy coldly, 'should give great attention and consideration to those nations who have our view of the world crisis.'"

Taking into account the fact that the President's anger with the Belgrade conference was expressed on September 4, it appears probable that this reaction was one of the factors which led him on the following day, when news of the third Soviet test shot had been received, to decide that there was nothing more to be gained by extending the period of restraint and to issue the order for the resumption of underground testing by the United States.

* * *

Leaving to a later point in the narrative an analysis of the significance of the exchange between Nehru and Khrushchev, it will be useful at this point to establish the basic chronology of Nehru's visit.

The party to greet Nehru on his arrival in Moscow on September 6 was headed by Khrushchev and included N. G. Ignatov, A. N. Kosygin, and D. S. Poliansky. (Khrushchev was also among those who met Nkrumah, but without the accompaniment of any other members of the Presidium.) A state dinner for Nehru was held in the Kremlin on the night of his arrival. The message from the Belgrade conference was presented to Khrushchev on the same evening.

The next day Nehru held a two-and-one-half-hour talk with Khrushchev from which he emerged gloomy; publicly, he and Khrushchev exchanged short speeches at a luncheon given by the Indian leader in honor of Khrushchev. The rest of Nehru's day was taken up with a ceremonial visit to Brezh-
nev as head of state, a talk with Soviet scientists, a visit to museums, and a performance of *Romeo and Juliet* at the Bolshoi Theater.

On September 8 a Soviet–Indian friendship rally was held in the Kremlin at which both Nehru and Khrushchev spoke. Nehru left the Soviet capital the next day for Tashkent, where he spent the following day talking with Uzbek officials. He returned to India on September 11, on which date a joint Soviet–Indian communiqué summing up the results of his visit was issued.

**Khrushchev grants an interview to Sulzberger**

On August 26 C. L. Sulzberger, the roving *New York Times* senior diplomatic correspondent, who was vacationing on the isolated Greek island of Spetsai, was surprised to receive a cable from Yuri Zhukov, a Soviet journalist and state official, urgently asking Sulzberger to contact him. "After unsuccessful attempts to reach him [Zhukov] on the island's single telephone," Sulzberger writes, "... I took the boat to Athens and called him Monday morning, August 28. He asked me if I would interrupt my holiday September 3 or 4, indicating that Mr. Khrushchev would see me but making no guarantee. I agreed, arrived September 3 and was received two days later."

The resulting interview, which took place on September 5, constitutes the most extensive and intensive, as well as the most significant use by Khrushchev of this mode of communication during 1961, overshadowing in importance his earlier interviews with Walter Lippmann and Drew Pearson. Both with regard to the international crisis over Berlin and the internal Soviet political struggle the Sulzberger interview occupies a central position, and it is therefore necessary to study its setting and substance with some care.

**The messenger—Yuri Zhukov**

The first point to be noted is the closeness of the ties linking Zhukov, the messenger, with Khrushchev. Georgi Aleksandrovich Zhukov (to give him his full and formal name) was a prominent Soviet journalist who since 1957 had held the position of chairman of the State Committee for Cultural Ties with Foreign Countries. He had accompanied Khrushchev to the United States in 1959, sharing in the Lenin Prize awarded in 1960 to the collective authors of the volume *Face to Face with America*, which described Khrushchev's tour. To clinch the evidence linking him with Khrushchev, his name appeared, along with that of Khrushchev's wife, in the list of sixteen vice presidents of the newly established Institute of Soviet–American Relations, on August 31, 1961 (above, p. 170).

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45Ibid.
47*BSE, 1961*, p. 561.
For Sulzberger, Zhukov was an old and trusted acquaintance, one whose role as a confidential emissary of the highest spheres in Soviet politics was well known. It was at a small dinner party given by Sulzberger at the end of December 1950, for example, that Zhukov had provided the first indications of a Russian desire to bring about a cease-fire in the Korean war.48

The timing of the invitation

What could Khrushchev have learned on or shortly before August 26 which impelled him to extend an urgent invitation to a prominent American journalist? On August 24, as we have seen, he had tried to counter the threat to Western air communications with West Berlin by a renewed call for Soviet–U.S. negotiations, making use of the services of Drew Pearson for the purpose. Something dramatic must have occurred between the 24th and the 26th to make Khrushchev feel the need for an even more extended interview with another American journalist.

The new development on August 26 may well have been the information, conveyed to Khrushchev by some trustworthy informant (Adzhubei is a likely candidate), that his adversaries in the Kremlin had not only authorized the resumption of nuclear testing but were informing the Chinese in advance of the decision and were thus launching a full-scale challenge both to Khrushchev's predominance in the formulation of Soviet foreign policy and to the character and direction of that policy.

If this analysis is correct, we are faced with the question, why did Khrushchev not simply hasten back to Moscow, assert his power by disciplining Kozlov, and reverse or modify the course of Soviet foreign policy? Two possible answers to this at first sight puzzling question may be suggested, one tactical, the other operational.

First, for Khrushchev to return precipitously to the Kremlin in order to put through a drastic, undisguised change of direction in Soviet foreign policy, accompanied by high-level personnel changes, would have been to admit openly, before all the world, that there was a deep conflict within the Soviet leadership over foreign policy. From the standpoint of Khrushchev's own power, furthermore, such an action would have been to confess publicly that he was not fully in control of Soviet policy; in fact, that his policies and wishes could be at least temporarily defied by opposition leaders in the Kremlin. Considerations of Soviet security against the outside world, as well as of Khrushchev's own power position, therefore argued against hasty action to discipline Kozlov and change the line he was implementing.

Second, the possibility must be considered that Khrushchev did not have the right to return to the Kremlin before the date set for the end of his "vacation"—in other words, that the length of his stay at Sochi had been fixed in advance by agreement within the Presidium. This possibility at first glance conflicts so flagrantly with commonly held notions of power in the Kremlin

that it scarcely seems worthy of consideration. But a little reflection will show that if the basic power structure in the Soviet political system at the time with which we are concerned was that of a collective leadership operating under certain fixed rules designed to preserve the power of the collective and prevent the re-emergence of a dictator similar to Stalin, then some form of collective control over the travels and sojourns away from Moscow of the members of the collective leadership, particularly the man best able by reason of his position to try to emulate Stalin, would be an inescapable necessity.

We have seen (above, p. 132) that Khrushchev told foreign journalists on August 11 of the timetable for his vacation. Later, however, he interrupted his journey from Moscow to Sochi in order to launch a new attack on the Albanians (above, p. 142). If that unscheduled return to the Kremlin represented an action on the part of Khrushchev not sanctioned in advance by the Presidium, we would have an additional motive for Kozlov's action in brusquely shifting the course of Soviet foreign policy away from Khrushchev's line as soon as the latter had resumed his journey to Sochi. Outraged by Khrushchev's sudden assault on the Albanians, which led to the recall of Shikin from Tirana on August 19, Kozlov responded by moving sharply in the direction of embroilment with the West and rapprochement with Peking.

Under these circumstances, Khrushchev would have an additional and very compelling reason to remain at Sochi until the allotted end of his "vacation." To rush back prematurely would entail the risk that the choleric and impetuous Kozlov, while he still controlled the levers of power, might take some further foolhardy action designed to test to the limit the Western powers' forbearance in the Berlin crisis. Acutely aware of that looming danger, conscious also of the shakiness of his own power base, Khrushchev may well have preferred to wait out the crisis with as much patience as he could muster, meanwhile laying his plans for the recovery of a larger share of power and a new shift in the foreign policy line. Part of those plans, the evidence indicates, was to be an interview with a prominent American journalist who could serve to give Khrushchev's views the widest and most resounding hearing in the Western press—and who might also be willing to serve as a confidential messenger from Khrushchev to Kennedy.

The structure of the interview

In preparation for his meeting with Khrushchev, Sulzberger had written out a list of questions. "I gave Zhukov," he reports,

... twenty-one questions I had prepared—reduced from an earlier list of sixty on the grounds such an agenda "would take three days." The selection was made by me. These questions were translated and sent to Mr. Khrushchev only an hour before he received me. I doubt if he had had time to read them carefully. In any case, I posed the questions directly and added to them as we went along. His answers were spontaneous.

I had been advised Mr. Khrushchev could spare me only an hour and a half. After I had finished the twenty-one questions he told me to continue
“because you have come a long way.” We conversed almost four and a half hours until he was visibly fatigued. So was I: I took sixty-two long pages of notes and the Soviet transcript ran to about 25,000 words. This will never be published or translated, I was told.49

More precise details are provided by Sulzberger elsewhere: “Our talk lasted from 4 P.M. until about 8:30 P.M. I was conducted to the Premier’s office by Georgi A. Zhukov . . . , and we were joined by Mikhail A. Kharlamov . . . , and by Viktor M. Sukhodrev, Mr. Khrushchev’s young interpreter, who takes shorthand notes in his own strange mixture of English and Russian . . . . Throughout the interview a battery of women stenographers quietly moved in and out of the room to keep a running account.”50

After the interview, later on the same evening, Sulzberger wrote up a lengthy and wide-ranging dispatch covering those points he considered most important and then, on the following day, September 6,

... went over it painstakingly together with Yuri Zhukov . . ., Mikhail Kharlamov . . ., and the interpreter present at my interview. The dispatch was translated into Russian and the Russian shorthand transcription was translated into English, so both sides had all the material in extenso.

There was no attempt to censor what I had written, although it was suggested that a few adjectives which apparently had a pejorative connotation in Russian be amended. But there was a meticulous comparison of all quotations with the stenographic record. I had had no English stenographer with me but compiled sixty-two pages of notes in a large note-book, as against a 25,000-word Russian text of everything said on the record.

Once the text of my dispatch had been agreed upon in terms of accuracy, it was sent to the Kremlin together with the stenographic account plus a separate text of eleven questions and answers I planned to publish verbatim.51

Thus on the evening of September 6—the same evening on which Khrushchev entertained Nehru at a Kremlin dinner—three documents relating to the interview were forwarded to Khrushchev: the agreed text of Sulzberger’s dispatch; a separate, more formal set of questions and answers taken from the interview; and the full stenographic record of the interview.

On the morning of September 7 Sulzberger was surprised to learn from Zhukov that Khrushchev had indicated a desire for several substantive changes in the record. In addition, Khrushchev sent Sulzberger “. . . a special statement dictated that morning and saying ‘he would always be glad to meet with the United States President to resolve pressing international problems’.”52

Recognizing the importance of the shift and sensing that he had the makings

49NYT, Sept. 13, 1961, p. 44.
50NYT, Sept. 8, 1961, p. 10.
52Ibid.
of a journalistic scoop, Sulzberger incorporated the changes in his dispatch, giving special prominence to the message concerning a meeting with Kennedy.

It was therefore in a somewhat modified form that the two accounts of the interview—the dispatch and the questions-and-answer text—were published in the *New York Times* on September 8. *Izvestiia* followed a day later with a meticulously accurate Russian translation of Sulzberger's dispatch, and on September 10 *Pravda* published a Russian text of the questions-and-answers—accurately reproducing the *New York Times* version except for an additional final paragraph which significantly altered the tone and import of the document.

Khrushchev, according to Sulzberger, showed a keen personal interest in the careful preparation of the interview for publication: “In my presence, the rewritten first page of my account of the interview was read over the telephone to Mr. Khrushchev Thursday [September 7]. He expressed satisfaction to me personally in the Kremlin when I saw him again there Friday [September 8].”

Over the next week or so, Sulzberger published several columns amplifying the record, describing the conditions under which the interview had taken place, and giving his overall impression of Khrushchev as a human being. On October 4 he had a long discussion with Kennedy in the White House at which the significance of the interview was analyzed.

Five years later, with Kennedy dead and Khrushchev toppled from power, Sulzberger added a vital element to the record by revealing that Khrushchev at the interview had given him a confidential message for Kennedy—thereby emphasizing the great importance which the interview had in Khrushchev's eyes and providing for the first time an adequate basis for understanding his motive in arranging it.

For purposes of analysis it will be useful to consider first the question-and-answer text published in the *New York Times* and *Pravda*, then the Sulzberger dispatch published in the *New York Times* and *Izvestiia*, together with the supplementary notes provided by Sulzberger subsequently, and, finally, the confidential message given Sulzberger by Khrushchev for transmittal to Kennedy.

The eleven questions and answers

Sulzberger's first question concerned Khrushchev's attitude toward a renewal of the test ban negotiations and the moratorium on nuclear tests. Under what conditions, Sulzberger asked, would Khrushchev agree to resumption of the talks? What was his opinion of the Kennedy–Macmillan proposal to bar atomic tests in the atmosphere?

Bypassing the query about the negotiations, Khrushchev addressed himself solely to the Kennedy–Macmillan proposal, stating that “We are preparing an answer and will send it in several days,” but meanwhile offering his own opinion “in a preliminary way.” That the Soviet government would formally

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53 Ibid.
reject the proposal was clearly foreshadowed by Khrushchev's reply, which
made three points: first, that the proposal was unsatisfactory because it said
nothing about atomic testing by France; second, that overall disarmament,
not the mere cessation of nuclear tests, must be the goal; and finally, that the
Soviet Union was behind the Western powers in the number of tests it had
conducted and therefore had a "moral right" to test.

In any case, the Soviet test series would continue, Khrushchev asserted:

We shall continue the tests that we have started because we cannot ignore
the danger which is now being created for our country and the countries of
the socialist camp by the Western countries of the NATO military bloc.
We cannot remain inactive while the United States, France, Britain, and
West Germany are mobilizing their forces, while West Germany is demand­
ing that the Bundeswehr be armed with atomic weapons, while Adenauer
and Brandt are doing their utmost to heat up the atmosphere by seeking
revanchist goals, demanding the restoration of the borders of Hitlerite
Germany and openly threatening the socialist countries. 54

Khrushchev went on to express skepticism as to the Western leaders' con-
cern over the dangers of radioactive fallout:

The leaders of the Western powers are now hypocritically complaining that
these tests contaminate the atmosphere. But we Russians have a proverb
which says that once you have lost your head, you do not cry over your hair.
Who will believe that these statesmen are seriously concerned over the
health of man, when they refuse to sign a disarmament treaty, indulge in an
all-out buildup of thermonuclear weapons, and mobilize their forces for
war? But war spells death for human beings and not just damage to their
health. 55

Sulzberger's second question concerned the 100-megaton bomb whose
existence Khrushchev had mentioned on several occasions. "I would like to
ask," Sulzberger said, "... what sense you see in creating such a superbomb.
It seems to me that that bomb is too big to be used for military purposes." 56

In reply Khrushchev maintained that possession of "several such super­
powerful bombs" by the Soviet Union "... will considerably increase the de­
fense capability of our country. Then the aggressors will think twice before at­
tacking us. They will understand that a decision to launch aggression against
us is tantamount to a decision to commit suicide." 57

The bombs, like all Soviet armaments, were exclusively for defense,
Khrushchev assured Sulzberger: "We, for our part, have repeatedly declared
that we have no intention of attacking anyone and will never do so. We are
only creating means to defend our socialist camp and secure peace." 58

54 NYT, Sept. 8, 1961, p. 11.
55 Ibid.
56 Ibid.
57 Ibid.
58 Ibid.
Khrushchev portrayed the West German government as ruled by madmen desirous of repeating Hitler's attack on the Soviet Union; it was to restrain such "new Hitlers with other names—for example, with the names Adenauer, Brandt, or Strauss—" that the Soviet Union needed these weapons, he said.

As originally delivered, according to Sulzberger's later account, Khrushchev's reply at this point included the categorical assertion that the Soviet Union already possessed the 100-megaton bomb and intended to test it.59 This was one of the substantive points in the record of the interview, however, on which Khrushchev requested a change on the morning of September 7, so that in its revised, published version, his reply at this point reads: "Let those who dream of new aggression know that we will have a bomb with a power equivalent to 100 million tons of TNT—and we already have this bomb, and shall test the exploding device for it—and that if they attack us, it will mean complete ruin for them."60

In his third question Sulzberger asked whether the Soviet Union would agree never to be the first to use atomic weapons in warfare. The Soviet Union, Khrushchev replied, will "... never be the first to start a war against any country. We want to live in peace with all nations and do not want to attack anyone."61

But he was careful to avoid a categorical commitment not to initiate the use of atomic weapons if war broke out:

... it would be untimely at present to say that in the event of war, atomic weapons would not be employed. Anyone who made such a statement would turn out to be untruthful, even though when making such a pledge he is sincere and does not lie. Let us assume both sides were to promise not to employ nuclear weapons, but retained their stockpiles. What would happen if the imperialists unleashed war? In such a war if any side should feel it was losing, would it not use nuclear weapons to avoid defeat? It would undoubtedly use its nuclear bombs.62

Blandly disregarding the standard Soviet assertion that the defeat of Japan in World War II was caused not by the U.S. use of the atomic bomb but by the entry of the Soviet Union into the war against Japan, Khrushchev cited this example in support of his position: "At the close of World War II the United States was considerably stronger than Japan and was waging successful offensive action against it. Yet, to bring victory closer, the United States dropped atomic bombs on Japanese cities. All this goes to show that if atomic weapons are preserved and if war is unleashed it will be a thermonuclear war."63

60NYT, Sept. 8, 1961, p. 11; emphasis supplied.
61Ibid.
62Ibid.
63Ibid.
The sovereign remedy, as usual, was general and complete disarmament: "... world peace must be assured not by pledges to refrain from the use of nuclear weapons, but by a radical solution of the cardinal issues. The best guarantee of peace is the destruction of armaments and the elimination of armies—in other words, disarmament."^{64}

Sulzberger's **fourth question** probed into a sensitive and significant area: the relation between Soviet policy in the Berlin crisis and Soviet internal development: "I would like to ask whether you consider that your long-range plans set forth in the party's draft program might be endangered as a result of the situation that is taking shape through the West's interpretation of your policy over Berlin and on nuclear tests."^{65}

Khrushchev's reply provides a revealing example of his technique of sidestepping or ignoring awkward or dangerous questions. He disposed of the internal aspects of the question in a single uninformative sentence: "I think the present crisis, as you call it, will not hinder the fulfillment of our program."^{66} He then went on to explain at length why he felt the Western powers would eventually accept the Soviet demand for a peace treaty with Germany and the replacement of the occupation regime in West Berlin by the status of a free city. All the well-worn Soviet arguments in favor of this solution of the Berlin and German questions were advanced, together with the usual threats against those nations containing U.S. military bases. The Soviet strategy of attempting to split the Western alliance by nuclear threats was displayed with brutal candor:

I think neither France, Britain nor Italy will ever go to war over the signing of a peace treaty. Even if reckless heads in the United States try to force the President into war over the signing of a peace treaty, I am sure the statesmen of those countries will display sufficient statesmanship and political responsibility to prevent matters from going that far. After all, they know that if war broke out their countries would be destroyed because they have American military bases that we would be compelled to hit. And they cannot but know that if the United States pushed their countries into war it would be tantamount to pushing them into an abyss, to death and destruction. I think they appreciate this and will oppose attempts to unleash war in reply to the signing of a German peace treaty.^{67}

In his **fifth question** Sulzberger took up the problem of Soviet support for so-called "wars of liberation." Did not the Soviet position provide a justification, he asked, for other nations to make war against communist states under the guise of "wars of liberation"? The Soviet position on this question, Khrushchev replied, was different from the one depicted by Sulzberger: "We do not recognize the right of any nation to wage war for the liberation of

^{64}Ibid.
^{65}Ibid.
^{66}Ibid.
^{67}Ibid.
another country.” The Soviets, he continued, “. . . recognize the right of a people for its own liberation—this is a completely different matter.” Such wars—that in Algeria, for example—“are sacred popular wars against enslavement, against a colonial regime. And we are in favor of such wars. We sympathize with peoples who are fighting for their freedom and consider that they have the right to count on the aid of all freedom-loving peoples.” Adroitly but inaccurately associating this position with that of Abraham Lincoln in the American Civil War, Khrushchev reaffirmed the Soviet intention of coming to the aid of “peoples who are fighting for their liberation.”

Sulzberger’s sixth question dealt with the Soviet proposal for a three-man secretariat in the United Nations and in the administrative machinery to supervise a nuclear test ban agreement. The Soviet position on these questions, Khrushchev explained, was that

. . . in setting up disarmament controls there should be no veto and no “troika.” There should be the strictest control and no one should limit it. If an agreement on disarmament is reached, and if disarmament is carried out in practice, there will be no need for state secrets, which are necessary only to protect one’s country from the danger of war. If an agreement on disarmament is reached, and disarmament is effected, then far from there being any need for secrets, it will be necessary to know in the greatest detail what is going on in another country, so that it would not be able to threaten the peace. The “troika” principle will be necessary only in the event that international forces are set up. The command of these forces should be based on this principle. This would be necessary to guarantee that no state or group of states could use the international U.N. forces to the detriment of any other state or group of states.

The United States would be wise, Khrushchev added, to recognize the trend in international affairs which was inevitably leading toward acceptance of the troika principle in all operational posts at the United Nations.

The possibility of U.S.–Soviet agreement on the regulation of questions concerning the use of outer space was taken up in Sulzberger’s seventh question. The U.S. proposal for an international organ to deal with such questions was sensible, Khrushchev replied, but it could not be acted upon until general disarmament had been carried out because it was impossible to separate the exploration of space from the military development of intercontinental ballistic missiles. (In Soviet administrative practice there was—and is—a direct link between the space exploration program and the armed forces.)

What is the difference, Sulzberger asked in his eighth question, between “peace” and “peaceful coexistence” in Soviet usage?, thereby giving Khrush-
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Krushchev an opportunity to set forth in broad terms his concept of the principles on which relations between the capitalist and socialist states should be based: "Noninterference in each other's internal affairs, the recognition of sovereignty, refraining from war and ensuring peace—these are what constitute the coexistence of states with different social systems."73

With the possible exception of the question on the 100-megaton bomb, Sulzberger's questions thus far had elicited from Khrushchev few new insights into Soviet policy. His ninth question, however, broke new ground by raising the possibility of Soviet military aid to Yugoslavia in the event of an attack on that country. Khrushchev began his reply by saying: "We would like that there should be no military attack and no need for retaliatory blows."74 He then went on to remind Sulzberger that Yugoslavia was not a signatory of the Warsaw Pact and was therefore not eligible for Soviet aid under the guarantee given to members of that alliance by Marshal Malinovsky in 1960. With deceptive nonchalance Khrushchev then executed a sharp turn in the Soviet foreign policy line: "But we, of course, consider Yugoslavia a socialist country, and should she be attacked by an imperialist state and appeal to us for help I think we would not turn down the request and would come to her help."75

Since one of the most hotly contested doctrinal issues in the Soviet-Chinese and Soviet-Albanian disputes concerned the precise nature of the Yugoslav regime, with the Chinese and Albanians stoutly denying the claim on the part of the Yugoslavs to be practicing a form of socialism in their country, Khrushchev's assertion, as William E. Griffith has pointed out, amounted to a direct affront to the Chinese and Albanians.76 Of greater immediate relevance, however, was the fact that Khrushchev's statement was a sign that he was making a clean break with the policies of the opposition faction which had pursued the pro-Peking line of late August.

What about Cuba?, Sulzberger asked in his tenth question—"Castro considers that he is socialist." "As far as I know," Khrushchev replied, "... Castro is not a member of the Communist Party. He is a revolutionary, a patriot of his motherland. If he were to join the Communist Party I would welcome him. ... But this depends on him alone."77 Again raising the possibility of Soviet military aid to Cuba, Khrushchev continued: "We have no treaties with Cuba but if it appeals to us for aid in case of aggression against it, we of course will not leave this request without an answer."78

The pledge of July 1960, as reinterpreted in October of that year, was thus implicitly renewed. But Khrushchev shied away from the idea of an actual military confrontation with the United States: "What is needed in interna-

73Ibid.
74Ibid.
75Ibid.
76Griffith, *Albania*, p. 86.
77*NYT*, Sept. 8, 1961, p. 11. For further details, see ibid., Oct. 27, 1972, p. 39.
78Ibid., Sept. 8, 1961, p. 11.
tional relations is restraint and patience.” Look at the Soviet Union in its relations with Iran, he continued: although the latter country is dominated by the United States, the Soviet Union is exercising patience and restraint in its policies toward Iran. The sensible thing for the United States to do, Khrushchev recommended, would be to liquidate its overseas bases, since they have lost their significance as the result of the development of space vehicles by the Soviets.

In his eleventh question Sulzberger asked Khrushchev whether communists, as atheists, fear war more than people with a religious belief in an afterlife. Khrushchev’s reasons for selecting this question to conclude the question-and-answer text become obvious from the character of his reply, which stressed the positive side of his policies and voiced a renewed plea for peaceful coexistence. The version of the text published in the New York Times ended on a note of international reconciliation and harmony: “So let us live reasonably and work so that no one should start a war. Let us employ our strength to ensure world peace. Let us compete in developing our economies and creating the good things of life for our peoples. That system will triumph which provides more material and spiritual benefits for its people. So let history pass its judgment without war.”

When the Russian-language text was published in Pravda two days later, however, someone had added a bellicose final paragraph which significantly altered the tone of Khrushchev’s reply, and with it of the document as a whole: “Thus we communists, not believing in a life beyond the grave, want to live and develop in peace, but if we are attacked, we will fight like lions against imperialism, against aggression.”

Sulzberger’s dispatch

Far more than the rather stiff and formal question-and-answer record of the interview, Sulzberger’s dispatch of September 7 gives a direct and vivid impression of Khrushchev the man. His characteristic mannerisms, his facial expressions, even the clothes he was wearing, are described with the observant eye of a trained journalist. Moreover, the dispatch contains material of the greatest value for analyzing Khrushchev’s real position on certain key issues, as opposed to the official position which he sometimes voiced or sponsored. Both with regard to foreign policy, especially the central issues of Soviet relations with the United States and China, and with regard to the internal processes of Soviet policy formulation, the statements attributed to Khrushchev in the dispatch are highly revealing. What gives the dispatch its special importance, of course, is the fact that it was published in full in Izvestiia after being translated with the textual care usually reserved for treaties or other state documents.

79 Ibid.
80 Ibid.
81 Pravda, Sept. 10, 1961, p. 3.
82 The Russian text of the dispatch was also broadcast over Radio Moscow on Sept. 9.
In form the dispatch as published is an amalgam, with Khrushchev's message of September 7 affirming his willingness to meet again with Kennedy tacked on at the beginning. The main body of the dispatch as prepared by Sulzberger on the night of September 5 then follows, with the change requested by Khrushchev in his reply to the question on the 100-megaton bomb. This section in turn is divided into two approximately equal parts, of which the first deals with the twenty-one questions approved in advance and the second with the discussion carried on after completion of the approved questions. Since there is a significant difference in tone and content between the three parts of the dispatch, it will be useful to take them up in that order.

In his original dispatch, Sulzberger later wrote, he had said "... that Mr. Khrushchev saw 'no use' in another meeting at this time with President Kennedy unless the President is ready to agree at least to the essentials of a settlement along such lines—meaning Soviet concepts for a German and West Berlin formula." On the morning of September 7, however, just as Sulzberger was getting ready to send off the dispatch, Khrushchev sent him "... a special statement dictated that morning and saying 'he would always be glad to meet with the U.S. President to resolve pressing international problems'." For this, Khrushchev said, he "would spare neither strength nor time. But the main thing is that such a meeting must be fruitful."

The statement continued:

The first meeting has already taken place in Vienna. In the course of that meeting the two sides compared their viewpoints. The task now is to find solutions for the major international issues now causing concern. And if President Kennedy agrees to a meeting with Premier Khrushchev it will be important that both sides display understanding of the need to resolve such important matters as the signing of a German peace treaty and the solution on this basis of the question of West Berlin as well as the problem of disarmament under strict international control.

Khrushchev's concept of a new meeting with Kennedy was developed more fully in the main part of Sulzberger's dispatch (unfortunately, it is not clear from the dispatch as published just which portions of Khrushchev's statements on this subject are based on his September 7 message and which were made at the September 5 interview). In a new meeting, Khrushchev indicated, there should be genuine discussion, not merely the exchange of fixed positions known in advance:

"I met the President in Vienna and had comprehensive talks. It was our introduction, in which we, so to say, felt each other out. We parted after the meeting, each sticking to his position."

"That is natural for a first contact," the Premier went on. "But if at a second meeting we were to limit ourselves to an exposition of each other's

84 Ibid.
86 Ibid.
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position, which both of us know, the situation will of course not improve but, on the contrary might even deteriorate.”

“It would be another thing if both sides were to come to the meeting prepared to relieve tension and reach agreement on the conclusion of a German peace treaty, on giving West Berlin the status of a free city, and especially on the more important problem of disarmament.”

“In that case we could achieve important positive solutions and that would be a great happiness for our peoples. I consider that we must spare neither our strength nor time for achievement of this goal.”

There are several puzzling aspects to these remarks. First, at Vienna it had been Khrushchev, not Kennedy, who had limited himself to an exposition of his position; it had been Khrushchev’s “oddly circumscribed behavior” which had struck Isaac Deutscher and other observers. Khrushchev, therefore, seemed to be hinting that at a new meeting he would have greater freedom of action. But at the same time he appeared to be dictating not only the agenda for any new meeting but also the foreordained basis for eventual agreement—Berlin, the German peace treaty, disarmament on Soviet terms.

A possible explanation of the apparent discrepancies in Khrushchev’s remarks may be suggested along the following lines: Khrushchev was urging Kennedy to agree to a new meeting at which he, Khrushchev, would have greater freedom to negotiate and introduce modifications into the Soviet position than he had enjoyed at Vienna. He was unable, however, because of the pressures on him from the other members of the collective leadership, to say this openly and was even forced to blunt the apparent meaning of his words by reiterating the standard Soviet position as the basis for agreement. No wonder Kennedy was cautious in picking up this olive branch!

Since the remainder of the dispatch dealt with a number of points already covered in the question-and-answer report, without substantially modifying or adding to them, our analysis can be limited to the new topics introduced in the dispatch and to significant modifications or elaborations of points made in the other document.

At the outset of the interview Khrushchev made an odd statement concerning vacations for Soviet officials: “Mr. Khrushchev commented that he had ordered all Soviet officials to take at least a month’s holiday each year, but he added ruefully: ‘As so often happens, the man who makes the rules is the first to break them’.” By calendar count, Khrushchev had already, as it happens, spent more than a month on vacation in 1961. Was he alluding obliquely to his action in “breaking the rules” by returning to the Kremlin in mid-August?

Sulzberger opened the serious discussion with the first of his twenty-one questions (one not, however, included in the question-and-answer text): “Mr. Khrushchev,” I inquired, “do you believe war is still neither inevitable nor

87 Ibid.
88 Ibid.
desirable?" Khrushchev's reply embodies a good deal of his general concept of international relations:

"Yes, and very profoundly, too," he replied. "In spite of the acute crisis which, as you say, has now taken shape, I believe in the common sense of statesmen who bear the responsibility for the destiny of their countries. They cannot but understand that in our day wars must not be a means of settling any issue and I hope they come to the conclusion that it is necessary to resolve urgent international problems peacefully—first and foremost the German problem. This can and must be settled by conclusion of a peace treaty with the two German states actually in existence."

Nowhere in the question-and-answer text was China directly mentioned, and there was no reference, direct or indirect, to Soviet–Chinese relations as reported therein. In the dispatch also Khrushchev was portrayed as saying nothing about China directly. Sulzberger, however, inserted a comment of his own on China which assumed the significance of an explicit policy statement approved by Khrushchev because of its appearance in the text of the dispatch as published in Izvestiia. Following his comments on possible Soviet military aid to Yugoslavia and Cuba, Khrushchev "... said that all Soviet nuclear warheads and long-range missiles were under Soviet military control and stationed on Soviet territory. However, he made this exception: 'Possibly there is something in [East] Germany. If not, there might eventually be. But these are dangerous weapons and we are very careful.' To this Sulzberger added the comment: "It would follow specifically that there are no such weapons in Communist China." Even more than Khrushchev's identification of Yugoslavia as a "socialist" nation, this passage, the only place in the published records of the interview which directly names China, must be read as a deliberate action by Khrushchev to signal the shift in Soviet policy away from the pro-Peking line pursued by the Soviet government in late August.

This passage is also interesting for what it reveals with regard to Soviet policy in Germany. Evidently as early as September 1961 the Soviet leadership was considering the possibility of stationing nuclear weapons and long-range missiles in East Germany. The obvious purpose would have been to threaten the nations of western and southern Europe in order to weaken or split the Western alliance and facilitate the settlement of the Berlin and German questions on Soviet terms. Elsewhere in the dispatch Sulzberger quoted Khrushchev as describing France, Britain, and Italy as "hostages" to the Soviets against war—a stronger term than that used in the corresponding passage in the question-and-answer text (above, p. 197).

A considerable part of the dispatch was taken up with Khrushchev's comments on possible ways to improve Soviet–American relations. He indicated,

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89 Ibid.
90 Ibid.
91 Ibid.
92 Ibid.
for example, that the Soviet government was considering the possibility of freeing Francis Gary Powers, the pilot of the U-2 spy plane shot down on May 1, 1960: "Mr. Khrushchev said, furthermore, that there was provision in Soviet law for the early release of prisoners but that he was not sure whether this could technically apply to Francis Powers, the U-2 pilot. Nevertheless, he hinted that Mr. Powers, who is serving a ten-year sentence, might be released if and when relations between Moscow and Washington should improve."^93

Current U.S. policies, however, said Khrushchev, made such an action impossible at present:

"His sentence could be appealed to the Supreme Soviet, but such a step would be misunderstood right now by both Americans and our own people. . . . The time has not come for such a move," the Premier declared. "After all, when Mr. Kennedy was elected, we freed the two RB-47 fliers. . . . We had hoped this display of goodwill would be correctly understood and relations would improve."

"That would have led to the release of Powers, too. But to our regret, our relations at present are in such a state that it prevents any possibility of releasing Powers."^94

Khrushchev made it clear that he did not hold Kennedy personally responsible for the obstacles to better Soviet-U.S. understanding: "It is difficult for me to indulge in speculation," Mr. Khrushchev went on. "Nevertheless my impression after our Vienna meeting was that Mr. Kennedy understands the need to improve relations between our countries. But evidently he is meeting with many difficulties. . . . If you want to know what these are, I suggest you ask him."^95

The direction being projected for the Soviet space program and the difficulties it was facing were indicated by Khrushchev's comment, in Sulzberger's paraphrase, that "there was not yet any fixed schedule for the landing of a Soviet citizen on the moon." (Kennedy, by contrast, had already committed the United States to landing a man on the moon by 1970.) Khrushchev gave this explanation: "It is not a question of mooning him [the lunar explorer] but of demooning him. Our national emblem is already on the moon, but we don't want to place a coffin beside it. We are now studying the possibility of such a flight, but I cannot yet say when it could be scheduled. We can fly a man to the moon, but the difficulty is getting him away from there."^96

Khrushchev went on to contrast U.S. and Soviet prowess in space exploration in a rather garbled Darwinian metaphor: "You remember Darwin's theory on the maturation of species—from those which crawled, like reptiles, to those which jumped and those which flew. Well, you are still in the jumping stage, while we have already learned how to fly, and to land again. . . . But that is

^93 Ibid.
^94 Ibid.
^95 Ibid.
^96 Ibid.
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still insufficient. We still have to learn how to land on other planets and then to take off from them back to this earth."\footnote{97}{Ibid.} As the history of the next ten years would show, it was to be the United States, not the Soviet Union, which solved this problem.

Khrushchev’s comments on space exploration concluded the part of the interview covered by the twenty-one questions selected in advance. When Sulzberger complimented Khrushchev on the “frankness” with which he had answered, Khrushchev responded: “We want to be strong in politics, but to do that you must be frank. . . . I do not remember who it was who said that a diplomat is given a tongue in order to conceal his thoughts,” he said. “He who does that is no diplomat, but a cheap politician. His policy is bound to end in failure. I do not belong to that sort.”\footnote{98}{Ibid.} And with this preface to the second, less formal half of the interview, Khrushchev proceeded to talk, if not with entire openness, at least more frankly than he had done earlier. His most significant revelations about Soviet policy come from this portion of Sulzberger’s dispatch.

The dominant motif throughout this portion of the interview was Khrushchev’s desire for better relations with the United States:

After some reminiscing, Mr. Khrushchev expressed hope that the United States and the Soviet Union would never fight each other and said he had told this to former President Dwight D. Eisenhower.

“We would consider it a great happiness if the soldiers of these two countries should never stand face to face but always shoulder to shoulder,” he declared. “We are the strongest countries in the world and if we unite for peace there can be no war. Then if any madman wanted war we would but have to shake our fingers to warn him off.”\footnote{99}{Ibid.}

Khrushchev then proceeded to dissociate himself from the Soviet decision on the resumption of nuclear testing: “Now the United States is arming and we are, too. We are spending money and energy in preparations to destroy people. We are making nuclear tests. . . . But what the hell do we want with tests? You cannot put a bomb in soup or make an overcoat out of it. Nevertheless, we are compelled to test.”\footnote{100}{Ibid.}

Thus Khrushchev in effect answered Sulzberger’s earlier question about the effect of Soviet policy in the international crisis on his internal economic goals—and answered it this time frankly and honestly, not evasively.

Continuing with a consideration of various ways to reduce international tension, Khrushchev “. . . expressed the hope that ‘we should agree to revoke our orders we both have given to strengthen our military forces’.”\footnote{101}{Ibid.} Thus in short order Khrushchev made it plain that he regretted the decision to resume
nuclear testing and that he would like to rescind the decision on the strengthening of the Soviet armed forces—the two decisions announced by the Soviet government at the end of August.

Sulzberger commented that “... the United States was a strong nation and did not like to be threatened or bullied. I said that I thought his methods of seeking a German settlement were of that nature, that the United States felt he was threatening.” Khrushchev conceded the point: “That is true. I understand it and take it into account.”

But since he could not openly admit to Sulzberger that the real reason for the threatening character of Soviet policy lay in the internal split in the Soviet leadership, Khrushchev was reduced to making a plea for mutual comprehension and forbearance: “We must reciprocally spare each other’s feelings. The West wants to threaten us with force and deny us the right to sign a peace treaty. But nothing will come of that. We will sign it just the same, because we also have strength.”

The last substantive matter taken up in the discussion was the situation in Laos, where a three-way squabble between the Laotian leaders was providing a tumultuous background to the stalemated Geneva negotiations. Sulzberger “... ventured the opinion that the United States was disappointed by Soviet failure to appreciate its change of policy in the civil war in Laos.” Khrushchev “implied acceptance of this complaint,” and then went on to lay the blame on the Laotian leaders themselves:

“We reached agreement on this in Vienna, Kennedy and myself. We reached agreement speedily. But it is difficult for us to apply this agreement quickly. But we are both evidently facing difficulties. It is not us, Russia, which is negotiating in Laos. What can I do with those three Princes? or Kennedy? They decide, the three Princes. We can only advise.”

“But I feel the ice is beginning to melt on this question. I feel we are approaching a solution. We are seeking no goals of our own there. I told this to President Kennedy. We want nothing in Laos. Far from impeding matters, we are trying to help.”

By now it was almost dark in the Kremlin office where the interview was being conducted. Both Khrushchev and his guest were tired. After calling for lights, Khrushchev concluded the interview with what amounted to a personal invitation to Kennedy to visit the Soviet Union: “We hope that we shall be able to resolve reasonably all the questions at issue between our two countries. Thereby the possibility would present itself for me to invite President Kennedy to this country as our guest. We will give him a warm reception and all the honors that are due to him as a President and a guest.” It was on
that note, deliberately chosen by Khrushchev as his parting message, that the interview ended.

*The confidential message to Kennedy*

In 1966 Kennedy's press secretary, Pierre Salinger, published his memoir, *With Kennedy*, in which he described how Mikhail Kharlamov, Soviet Foreign Ministry press chief, got in touch with him in September 1961 in order to deliver an urgent personal message for Kennedy from Khrushchev. After surprising Salinger by his opening words—"The storm in Berlin is over"—Kharlamov "... came straight to the point of his visit. Earlier that month in Moscow, Khrushchev had given an exclusive interview to Cyrus L. Sulzberger, Paris correspondent of the *New York Times*. But he had also given a most urgent message for JFK. Had Sulzberger delivered it yet? I said I didn't know. 'Then I will repeat the message to you,' said Kharlamov, 'and you will deliver it to the President.'"108

Shortly after the publication of Salinger's book, Sulzberger gave his own account of how Khrushchev had made use of his services to convey a confidential message to Kennedy. "The story was hitherto confidential," Sulzberger wrote,

... but since Salinger has some of it wrong, and since I served as the messenger, I feel qualified to straighten out the record. On September 5, in Moscow, Khrushchev asked me to tell Kennedy: "I would not be loath to establishing some sort of contact with him to find a means, without damaging the prestige of the United States, to reach a [German] settlement—but on the basis of a peace treaty and a free Berlin. And through such informal contacts the President might say what is on his mind in ways of solving the problem."

"If he does wish to make such contact he can express his opinions on the various forms and stages of a settlement and how to prepare public opinion so as not to endanger Kennedy's prestige and that of the United States."109

Feeling that a message of this importance could best be dealt with through the regular diplomatic channels, Sulzberger "... urged Khrushchev to send his message through Ambassador Llewellyn Thompson, but he asked me to take it personally, saying, 'Thompson is very able but he is an Ambassador. He would have to send such a message to Secretary Rusk. Rusk would tell Kennedy what was wrong with it before he told him what the message was and Kennedy would end up wearing Rusk's corset. Kennedy could not get a fair initial reaction and Rusk is just a tool of the Rockefellers.'"110

Khrushchev then went on to explain more fully what he had in mind: "I believe if we can settle the Laos question it will improve the atmosphere for Berlin and Germany. That appeals to Kennedy; it doesn't affect my position.

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108 Salinger, p. 191.
110 Ibid.
I want to help Kennedy. I am hopeful that I shall be the one to welcome him in this country as a guest."

Khrushchev's confidential message, it will be seen, fits neatly into the final portion of the Sulzberger interview, paralleling the last two subjects taken up there—a negotiated settlement in Laos and a visit by Kennedy to the Soviet Union. The tactical plan behind the message can be deciphered fairly readily: by using Soviet influence to help reach a settlement in Laos—an area in which the Soviet Union was "seeking no goals of [its] own"—Khrushchev hoped to prepare the way for U.S. agreement to a settlement in Berlin and Germany on Soviet terms. This triumph for Soviet foreign policy in turn would strengthen Khrushchev's internal position sufficiently to enable him to invite Kennedy to the Soviet Union, thereby setting in place the keystone in the arch of Soviet-American rapprochement of which Khrushchev aspired to be the builder.

Thus analyzed, however, the defects of the scheme become all too apparent. It amounted to trading Soviet influence in Laos—for the Soviets, an area of minor significance, for the United States a troublesome but far from vital area—for a Western pull-back from Berlin, which Kennedy had defined as a vital element in the Western political and diplomatic position. Furthermore, the neutralization of Laos would be meaningless without a settlement at the same time of the deepening conflict in Vietnam. By his support to the North Vietnamese communists in their aim of reunifying the country by force, however, Khrushchev had effectively nullified the value of any concession he might make with regard to Laos. Moreover, the unsatisfactory sequel to the agreement on Laos, which he and Kennedy had reached at Vienna, greatly diminished the attractiveness of a new offer of the same shopworn goods.

The inherent weaknesses of Khrushchev's hare-brained scheme were thus sufficient to weaken it seriously once it was available for Kennedy's scrutiny. In addition, the unorthodox means Khrushchev chose for conveying the offer contributed nothing to its success. Anxious perhaps not to risk his standing with the diplomatic hierarchy and mindful of the responsibilities placed on him by Khrushchev's commission, Sulzberger promptly told Ambassador Thompson about Khrushchev's overture: "On September 6 I saw Thompson and, strolling in his garden to reduce the risk of eavesdropping, said the Soviet leader had asked me to take a message to the President, bypassing him. Thompson told me not to feel embarrassed."

Wary of any kind of back-stairs deal, the administration in Washington was determined to negotiate with the Soviets only through the standard diplomatic channels. Its reaction to the published text of the Sulzberger interview was one of guarded and watchful anticipation: "Llewellyn E. Thompson, Jr., United States Ambassador to Moscow . . ., has been waiting in the wings during the Moscow festivities honoring Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru of India. He has instructions to get from the Soviet leaders any indication of their.

111 Ibid.
112 Ibid.
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willingness to 'negotiate' settlements for Berlin, Germany, and Central Europe on terms broader than they have so far suggested. But he has got nowhere so far, officials said."

Thompson, we may reasonably assume, had lost no time in cabling a report to Washington on the confidential message about which Sulzberger had told him on September 6. In any case, on September 9 Sulzberger himself sent a letter from Paris "by a special diplomatic courier to the President's adviser, McGeorge Bundy," so that the message was available for Kennedy's consideration by the 10th at the latest. "The President studied this," Sulzberger reports, "... with Bundy, Charles Bohlen, then his Soviet expert, Rusk, and Attorney General Robert Kennedy."

Their evaluation of Khrushchev's proposal can be deduced from their action, or lack of action: the proposal lacked any official sanction; it might be a trap to trick the Americans into making an overly generous offer on Berlin; it took no account of America's responsibilities to its allies; it made no sense in terms of the prevailing U.S. interpretation of power relationships in the Soviet leadership. Obviously, the best thing to do was to wait for some more formal, more concrete overture from the Soviets through the regular diplomatic channels. It was the lack of response from Washington, of course, which led Khrushchev to surmise that the message had not been delivered by Sulzberger, with the result that he followed it up with the second out-of-channels message sent via Kharlamov and Salinger.

On October 4 Sulzberger, back once more in the United States, had a long discussion with Kennedy in which the possible significance of Khrushchev's message was explored. Sulzberger recalled later that Kennedy had said "it was hard to figure precisely what Khrushchev meant." Knowing something of the deviousness of the Russian mind, Sulzberger suggested an ingenious interpretation: "I said that to me the only way of interpreting this was in terms of Aesopian language and that one must stress the point of prestige. But wherever the word 'Kennedy' was used the word 'Khrushchev' must be substituted and where the word 'Rusk' was used the word 'Gromyko' must be substituted. I felt Khrushchev wanted to ease pressures and do a deal but to make the arrangements outside normal official channels and thus avoid embarrassment to himself."

It was not merely, however, the officials of the Soviet Foreign Ministry whom Khrushchev's unorthodox maneuver was designed to circumvent, but his own colleagues in the collective leadership. The principal motive behind the gesture was evidently Khrushchev's desire to achieve a personal triumph in foreign policy through a direct man-to-man deal with Kennedy, which he could then present to his colleagues as proof of the success of his methods.

113 NYT, Sept. 9, 1961.
114 NYT, Nov. 6, 1966, sec. 4, p. 10.
115 ibid.
116 ibid.; emphasis in the original.
Sulzberger's October 6 talk with Kennedy concluded on a somber note: tension in Berlin seemed to be easing—Khrushchev, said Kennedy, "had been 'much softer' in his approach to the Berlin problem"—but the gain in Berlin was offset by trouble in Vietnam: "The President thought the situation in Southeast Asia was getting rapidly worse, above all in South Vietnam. He said that at least in Europe over the Berlin Crisis it was perfectly plain how we would have to fight a war if war broke out, but it is far more difficult to face the problem of fighting a war in Southeast Asia."\(^\text{117}\)

The Khrushchev–Sulzberger interview provides an unusual opportunity to observe at close range the Soviet collective leadership engaged in the decision-making process during a period of rapid change. It is clear that some high-level discussions must have been held and some basic decisions reached in the interval between Sulzberger's arrival in the Soviet capital on September 3 and the moment four days later when he cabled the revised text of his dispatch to New York. Before we attempt, however, to analyze the problem, it will be necessary to consider concurrent developments in a number of related areas.

**The Soviet reply to the Kennedy–Macmillan proposal**

In his September 5 interview with Sulzberger, Khrushchev, as we have seen, offered his preliminary evaluation of the Kennedy–Macmillan proposal to ban nuclear tests in the atmosphere. In so doing, he provided unambiguous evidence that this was a subject which the collective leadership already had under consideration, by saying: "We are preparing a reply and will send it in several days, but I am ready in a preliminary way to voice my opinion."\(^\text{118}\)

Khrushchev had then presented three arguments against accepting the Western leaders' proposal: that it did not extend to France; that a test ban agreement would be useless without general and complete disarmament; and that the Soviet Union had a "moral right" to test as long as the total number of tests it had conducted fell short of the total number carried out by the Western powers.

These arguments, and the rejection of the proposal to which they pointed, were duly repeated in the formal reply by the Soviet government issued on the day the Western offer expired, September 9, over Khrushchev's signature as chairman of the USSR Council of Ministers.\(^\text{119}\) For good measure, some additional arguments were adduced, for example, that in their proposal Kennedy and Macmillan "... make no mention whatever of the critical nature of the time we are living through, of the tension in the international situation, although one would think it would be clear to them that the state of affairs with regard to nuclear testing cannot possibly be considered in isolation from the international situation."\(^\text{120}\)

\(^\text{117}\)Ibid.
\(^\text{118}\)NYT, Sept. 8, 1961, p. 11; emphasis supplied.
\(^\text{119}\)Text, Izv., Sept. 9, 1961, pp. 1–2; CDSP, XIII/36, pp. 3–5.
\(^\text{120}\)CDSP, XIII/36, p. 3.
Proof of Western hypocrisy was found in the fact that Kennedy had ordered the resumption of U.S. underground testing on September 5, "the day after their [Kennedy's and Macmillan's] approach to the Soviet Union" (calculating no doubt from the official date of delivery and ignoring the fact that the offer was broadcast from the United States and therefore received in Moscow on September 3). Ignoring also the fact that Kennedy in his September 5 statement had explicitly reaffirmed the validity of the Western offer until September 9, as well as the fact that no U.S. tests had yet been conducted (and of course ignoring completely the Soviet test shots of September 4 and 5), the statement accused the United States of unbecoming haste: "The U.S. government was seized with such impatience that evidently it never even crossed its mind to wait, if only for propriety's sake, for the Soviet government's reply to the Anglo-American statement. Is it not clear from this that from the very beginning it had no intention of suiting its actions to the Soviet Union's forthcoming reply to this statement?" 121

Unfortunately for Soviet credibility, there was available by this time the official report of Khrushchev's September 5 interview with Sulzberger in which he had authoritatively forecast the Soviet rejection of the Western offer, and even the specific arguments to be employed in the Soviet reply. Thus the reference to Kennedy's September 5 statement was mere camouflage designed to conceal the fact that the Soviet leadership from the beginning had had no intention of responding favorably to the Western appeal, or even of considering it on its merits. Once the decision to resume testing had been taken, the Soviet leadership—including Khrushchev—treated it as an irreversible action which must proceed to its foreordained conclusion.

The real reason for the Western proposal, the Soviet statement declared, was to secure a unilateral advantage for the Western powers in continuing to perfect their nuclear arsenal by testing underground and in outer space. "Needless to say," it needlessly said, "... the Soviet government cannot and will not accede to such a deal, which is desired by those whose policy is built on deception of the peoples, on playing at negotiations." 122

As for the Soviet decision to resume testing, it had not been undertaken lightly:

In deciding to resume tests, the Soviet government was, of course, aware that there might at first be people who would be unable to appreciate just how complicated the international situation is and would show a certain amount of misunderstanding of this move of the Soviet Union's. It was clear to us in advance that some people in the West would be sure to seize upon this to try to make propaganda capital. And yet the Soviet Union could not act otherwise. Having weighed all the pros and cons, the Soviet government was forced, with a feeling of anguish, with an aching heart, to undertake the resumption of experimental explosions. 123

121Ibid.
122Ibid.
123Ibid.; emphasis supplied.
Western concern with the dangers of radioactive fallout, the statement charged, "... turns out on closer inspection to be feigned, specious." The only solution to the problem of nuclear testing was the one championed by the Soviet Union—universal and total disarmament: "Once this problem has been solved, no one would be tempted to test nuclear weapons on the ground, underground, in the atmosphere or in outer space, and in fact there would be nothing to test, since all weapons, and nuclear missiles first of all, would have been scrapped. Life itself has linked these two questions in one indissoluble whole." 

The Soviet government, however, saw no signs of Western recognition of these principles: "Unfortunately, as the bilateral Soviet–American talks show, the U.S. government does not even want to approach universal and total disarmament with the establishment of the strictest international control over the actions of states in this sphere." 

The statement concluded with a recapitulation of Soviet demands: "Universal and total disarmament with the elimination of the entire war machinery of states, conclusion of a German peace treaty without delay and the writing of finis to the second world war—this, in the present circumstances, is the straight road to deliverance of the peoples from war and from the miseries and affliction it brings people. We call upon the governments of the United States and Great Britain to set foot on that road." 

In a document which charged the Western leaders with manipulating the issue of nuclear testing for propaganda purposes, it is noteworthy that no reference whatever was made to the actual terms of the Western proposal. (As we have seen, the text of the Kennedy–Macmillan proposal was not published in the Soviet press.) The Soviet statement showed not the slightest recognition of the fact that the Western powers had made a significant concession in dropping their demand for some form of international inspection over nuclear tests in the atmosphere. Neither did the statement mention the fact that the proposal explicitly reaffirmed the Western leaders' "serious desire to conclude a nuclear test ban treaty applicable to other forms of testing as well." As distorted in the Soviet statement, the Western proposal for a ban on atmospheric testing was made to appear as an end in itself rather than as an emergency measure aimed at heading off an immediate threat to world health. The conclusion to be drawn is that the statement issued by the Soviet government on September 9 was nothing but an exercise in propaganda designed to conceal the fact that the Soviet leadership had no intention of halting the test series which it had been preparing for so long and on which it had embarked.

On receipt of the Soviet statement rejecting their proposal Kennedy and Macmillan issued a brief statement expressing their "deepest regret" at the

124 Ibid.
125 Ibid.
126 Ibid.
127 Ibid.
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Soviet action, which, they said, “contrasts vividly with the Soviet Union’s own repeated expressions of concern as to the health hazards of such testing,” and then reaffirmed their nations’ readiness “... to negotiate a controlled nuclear test ban agreement of the widest possible scope.”

On the same day the three-power test ban negotiations in Geneva adjourned for an indefinite recess after Tsarapkin, head of the Soviet delegation, had read into the record the Soviet reply to the Kennedy–Macmillan proposal and had then refused to accept a proposal by the Western delegations that the recess should be a temporary one and that negotiations should be resumed after conclusion of the forthcoming debate on nuclear testing in the U.N. General Assembly.

Kozlov at Pyongyang

After September 1 nothing more was heard of the plan to have Frol Kozlov head the Soviet delegation to the sixteenth session of the U.N. General Assembly (above, p. 181). During the first week in September the Soviet press observed a total blackout on all mention of Kozlov. He seemed to have disappeared from view completely—he took no part in any of the official or public ceremonies performed by the Soviet leadership as reported by the Soviet press and radio during this period, for example, the visit of the collective leadership to the French industrial exhibition on September 4, the funeral of U.S. communist leader William Z. Foster on September 5, the receptions for Nehru and Nkrumah on September 6, or the entertainment and festivities for Nehru on September 7.

The temporary eclipse of Kozlov ended on September 8 when Pravda reported a luncheon, held evidently on the preceding day, at the North Korean embassy in honor of a delegation from the CPSU which was to attend the forthcoming IV Congress of the Workers’ Party (Communist party) of North Korea. Kozlov, it was disclosed, was to head the delegation, the other members of which were figures of secondary importance.

The departure of the delegation from Moscow was reported on September 9, and its arrival in Pyongyang on the evening of the same day.

It was in Pyongyang on September 12 that Kozlov delivered a speech which marked the real end of the Soviet campaign to force Western acceptance of its demands on Berlin and Germany by the end of 1961. The core of the message Kozlov had been sent to Pyongyang to deliver, almost buried in a

128 Documents on Disarmament, 1961, p. 404.
130 Pravda, Sept. 8, 1961, p. 4. The other two members of the delegation were Raisa Fedorovna Dement’eva, secretary of the Moscow City Committee of the CPSU, and Lev Nikolaevich Tolkunov, deputy chief of the Central Committee department for liaison with ruling communist parties.
heavy shroud of rhetoric, was a brief statement with regard to Berlin: "Our proposals are not an ultimatum."\textsuperscript{133} "The Soviet Union," Kozlov continued, "... is ready, together with interested countries, to discuss and consider any reasonable amendments to our draft treaty."\textsuperscript{134}

Thus Kozlov announced the lifting of the Soviet Union's self-proclaimed deadline for the signing of a German peace treaty by the end of 1961. Only gradually, however, did the West come to realize that an important shift had taken place in Soviet policy.

Before we take up the wider significance of Kozlov's statement, the reasons why it was made, and the reception it was accorded in the West, it will be convenient to consider several other noteworthy passages in his speech.

Homage to Khrushchev as the party leader was duly rendered by Kozlov at the outset of his speech. Addressing his hosts, the delegates to the North Korean party congress, Kozlov said: "We are grateful to you for the high evaluation of the successes of our people in the building of a communist society, achieved under the leadership of the Leninist Central Committee of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union headed by Comrade N. S. Khrushchev [stormy applause]."\textsuperscript{135}

Kozlov pledged Soviet support for North Korean efforts to reunify the country: "If the American troops left the southern part of the country, providing the Korean people with the opportunity to decide their own fate, Korea would long since have been unified by the hands of the Koreans themselves. The Soviet Union firmly supports the demand of the Korean people for the immediate withdrawal of American troops from South Korea [stormy applause]."\textsuperscript{136}

He evoked laughter by ridiculing U.S. space efforts: "... look at what is taking place in America, in that citadel of imperialism. They are unable to fly around the earth and only hop in one place and fall back in another [laughter in the hall]."\textsuperscript{137}

Turning to more serious matters, Kozlov took up the question of relations among socialist nations, with particular reference to the touchy matter of Soviet preeminence in economic and social development. The new draft Party Program called for the transition to full communism in the Soviet Union by 1980, and there were many critics of Khrushchev's policies—including the Chinese communists—who regarded the draft program as the expression of a self-centered, complacent nationalism on the part of the Soviet Union. On this point Kozlov expressed a point of view which distinguished him clearly from Khrushchev and brought him close to the position of the Chinese communists:

The building of communism in the U.S.S.R. is viewed by our party as an integral part of the establishment of a communist community of nations of

\textsuperscript{133}Pravda, Sept. 13, 1961, p. 2.
\textsuperscript{134}Ibid.; emphasis supplied.
\textsuperscript{135}Ibid.
\textsuperscript{136}Ibid.
\textsuperscript{137}Ibid.
the entire world socialist system. The Soviet Union is moving forward, to communism, not in isolation but in close cooperation with the other socialist nations. The comradely cooperation and fraternal mutual aid will assist our countries to utilize better all the wealth of their lands, to accelerate the tempos of construction, to improve the life of our peoples. The Soviet Union sees its duty in aiding by its experience, its example, its support, the fraternal peoples to shorten the time for the construction of socialism, in every way to bring about a more or less simultaneous transition of these nations into the communist society [prolonged applause].

On the subject of the Soviet decision to resume nuclear testing Kozlov was brief and concise, but managed to convey an entirely different rationale for the decision and an entirely different attitude toward it from those of Khrushchev:

With regard to the peoples of the socialist countries it would be unforgivable to do nothing in such a responsible moment of history, to sit with folded hands, relying on the mercy of god and the “good sense” of military maniacs. The strengthening of the defense power of the socialist camp corresponds not only to the interest of the toilers of our countries, but to those of all the peoples of the earth. Our love of peace does not mean, as some people mistakenly believe, that we are weak. Our defence strength is growing from day to day, and for every one who tries by force to test the fortress of our boundaries there waits inevitably full and final destruction [stormy applause].

Apparently the only Western newspaper which showed an awareness of the importance of Kozlov’s speech was Le Monde in Paris. Citing a Reuters dispatch based on a Radio Moscow broadcast of the speech, Le Monde singled out for emphasis the key passage in which Kozlov announced the lifting of the deadline for signature of a German peace treaty. The brief account of the speech given in the New York Times was also based on a Reuters dispatch, but had been cut down to the point of inanity: “Frol R. Kozlov, a Soviet Communist Party secretary, said today the Soviet Union was ready to hold talks on a peace treaty with Germany.”

Beyond this, Kozlov’s speech apparently stirred no interest in the West. No one in Washington paid any attention to it; neither Sorensen nor Schlesinger mentions it, nor shows any awareness that a major shift in Soviet policy in the Berlin crisis occurred as early as September 12. It was only with the advantage of retrospect that the authoritative Survey of International Affairs was able to recognize the speech as a turning point in Soviet policy on Berlin.

Despite the West’s failure to spot the significance of Kozlov’s speech, however, the fact that a softening of the Soviet position had set in soon became ap-

138 Ibid.; emphasis supplied.
139 Ibid.; emphasis supplied.
parent. The evidence came first in the form of a favorable Soviet response to Kennedy's patient reiteration of Western willingness to enter into negotiations on Berlin. On September 13, at the end of the two-day White House visit of Sukarno and Keita (the emissaries of the Belgrade conference), Kennedy issued a statement reaffirming his willingness to negotiate: "... we are ready to discuss these matters with other governments, including the Government of the Soviet Union, and to search for the means to preserve an honorable peace. If that is the purpose on all sides, there is no need for resort to force."¹⁴³

Going beyond familiar generalities, Kennedy made a concrete proposal for Soviet–U.S. talks:

The Foreign Ministers of the Western powers are meeting in Washington tomorrow. Next week the Secretary of State will head the United States Delegation to the General Assembly of the United Nations. We understand that Foreign Minister Gromyko will be present. This will provide an opportunity for serious talks about Germany and other problems if the Soviet side proves willing. The channels of diplomacy are open for the exploration of constructive steps toward a reduction of tension. Other means are available when they can serve a useful purpose. Meanwhile, it is clearly of the utmost importance that there be no unilateral acts which make peaceful progress impossible.¹⁴⁴

The British Foreign Office quickly gave its approval to the proposal, a fact noted in a statement by the Soviet Foreign Ministry issued by TASS on September 14:

In view of the aforesaid desire of the Government of the United States and President Kennedy personally, and taking into consideration the positive attitude to this proposal of the United Kingdom, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the U.S.S.R. is authorized to state that Andrei Gromyko, the Minister of Foreign Affairs of the U.S.S.R. . . . is ready to enter into a relevant exchange of opinions with Dean Rusk, the Secretary of State of the United States.

The Soviet Government proceeds from the assumption, as its head Nikita Khrushchev emphasized more than once, that the sides will display a serious attitude to the talks and will jointly search for a solution of the problem of the conclusion of a German peace treaty and a settlement on its basis of the situation in West Berlin.

Such is the Soviet Government's reply to the statement by the President of the United States and the British Foreign Office.¹⁴⁵

The significance of the Rusk–Gromyko talks, which duly got under way on September 21, lay not in their substance—they led to no real Soviet–Western agreement on Berlin—but in the fact that they were held at all. While the talks were in progress the tension over Berlin gradually subsided and the great powers drew back from the brink of nuclear catastrophe.

¹⁴³JFK, 1961, p. 601.
¹⁴⁴Ibid., pp. 601–2.
¹⁴⁵Documents on Germany, p. 796.
Kozlov had flown from Moscow to Pyongyang, making the journey in a few hours, but he seemed to be in no hurry to return to Moscow. On September 20, the day after the conclusion of the North Korean party congress, TASS reported his arrival in Vladivostok, where he attended a party conference of personnel of the Pacific Ocean fleet, and on the following day noted his arrival in Khabarovsk. (On the same day Gromyko was appearing at the U.N. General Assembly as head of the Soviet delegation, the position Kozlov had aspired to at the beginning of the month.) Kozlov and the members of his delegation returned to Moscow on September 22.

Soviet military leaders provide camouflage

Western failure to recognize that the Soviets had lifted the deadline in their demand for a German peace treaty can be understood and condoned in the light of an extensive and concerted campaign mounted by Soviet military leaders at this time to stress Soviet armed power and readiness to fight if war broke out over Berlin. “If Frol Kozlov’s speech of 13 September was intended as the first tentative display of the olive branch by the Soviet leadership,” the Survey of International Affairs comments, “... its effect was quickly countered by senior officers of the Soviet armed forces in a very different vein.”

The campaign was launched on September 13—the date of publication of Kozlov’s speech—with an article in the Soviet army newspaper by Marshal K. S. Moskalenko, commander-in-chief of Soviet rocket troops. The series of articles of which this was the first was characterized by a common pattern: first, warnings of the imminence of war, as the result of the aggressive policy of the Western powers, followed by praise of a particular branch or service of the armed forces, and concluding with staunch affirmations of the readiness of Soviet military men to fight and die, if need be, in the defense of the Soviet Union. Moskalenko, for example, began by portraying “the ominous clouds of war [which] are gathering on the approaches to our motherland’s borders, as they did 20 years ago,” a situation he attributed to the aggressive policy of the West: “The constant threats of war from U.S. imperialist circles and their allies in the military blocs, the rebirth of militarism and revanchism in West Germany, the unceasing arms race and the creation of military bases around the Soviet Union and the socialist camp countries have obliged us constantly to strengthen the country’s armed might and to give a great deal of attention to developing the armed forces.”

146 Krasnaia Zvezda, Sept. 21, 1961, p. 2.
149 S/IA, 1961, p. 263.
Moskalenko went on to praise the power of the Soviet rocket troops in superlative terms:

The world knows no intercontinental missiles or other types of missiles to compare with those now in use by the Soviet Army.

Our long-range ballistic missiles are capable of delivering nuclear warheads to any point on the globe at any time of the day or year and under any weather conditions. They make it possible to strike powerful blows at a considerable number of targets simultaneously, and at the same time they are invulnerable to modern countermeasures. The great ranges and speed of these missiles make it possible to alter the direction of fire rapidly and to move the main effort from one set of fronts or theaters of war to another and to exert decisive influence in order to change the situation in our favor. 152

To make sure that the target of his observations was clearly understood, Moskalenko cited an American general's testimony in support of his claims: "The power of our missile weapons is also recognized abroad. General Thomas Power, head of the U.S. Strategic Air Command, openly stated that at the present time any target, even ones at a range of 8000 to 10,000 km., could be destroyed with an accuracy of 95%. Powers concluded: 'For all practical purposes the Soviets need only 300 missiles to put all of our atomic armament out of commission. All of this can be done in about 30 minutes'." 153

The development of Soviet missiles, Moskalenko claimed, had destroyed the value of U.S. military bases abroad: "Now that there are nuclear weapons and missiles, U.S. military circles can no longer attach any importance to their bases in NATO countries. Operational-tactical missiles would suffice to destroy them; long-range ballistic missiles would not even be necessary." 154

To drive the point home, Moskalenko referred to the testing of "still more powerful and improved versions of multistage carrier rockets, which are to be launched between September 13 and October 15 in the central Pacific." 155

Moskalenko concluded with praise for the Soviet rocket troops: "The motherland has entrusted Soviet missile troops with the most powerful and highly developed weapons we have. Missiles are collective weapons. Success in their use depends on the knowledge and mastery of every man in the unit. This is why increased demands are being made of missile troops in their combat and technical training." 156

On the day following the publication of Moskalenko's article Soviet Marshal R. Ya. Malinovsky, minister of defense, in a Pravda article ostensibly devoted to a discussion of the draft Party Program, mounted a vigorous attack on the Western position, portraying the United States in particular as incorrigibly aggressive and imperialistic:

152 Ibid.
153 Ibid., p. 13.
154 Ibid.
155 Ibid. The TASS announcement of the forthcoming Pacific range rocket tests was published in Pravda on Sept. 11; CDSP, XIII/37, p. 31.
156 Ibid., p. 13.
In our times the role of chief savior of capitalism has been assumed by U.S. imperialists. Hiding behind the false banner of freedom and democracy, the American imperialists are actually playing the role of a world gendarmerie. The recklessness and aggressiveness of the U.S. ruling circles' policy appears in especially bold relief in Europe.

The U.S.A. and its partners in the aggressive NATO bloc are attempting to use the vestiges of World War II and the absence of a German peace treaty for adventuristic purposes—the establishment of their own world domination. To this end they wish to make the occupation regime in West Germany and West Berlin permanent and to transform the Federal German Republic into the chief striking force in order to swallow the German Democratic Republic at a convenient moment, then to seize from Poland and Czechoslovakia lands that were returned to these countries under the terms of the Potsdam agreement, and finally, to enter their chief claim: the liquidation of the socialist camp.*

The imperialists' answer to the peaceful proposals of the Soviet government—to eliminate the vestiges of World War II, to conclude a peace treaty with Germany and to normalize the situation in West Berlin—has been to threaten the unleashing of a new world war.157

A new world war, Malinovsky warned,

...if the imperialists unleash it, will be in political essence a decisive armed clash between two opposing social systems. It must be completely clear to us that the distinct class nature of such a war will foreordain the extremely decisive nature of the military and political goals of the combatant sides. On the other hand, the use of weapons of mass annihilation and demolition will impart to the war an unprecedentedly destructive aspect. It is for such an intense, difficult and exceptionally violent war that we must prepare our armed forces.158

Malinovsky concluded by praising the party's concern for building up the Soviet armed forces: "The Leninist Party Central Committee and N. S. Khrushchev personally give daily attention to the problems of building and further strengthening our armed forces, to their technical equipment, to improving the quality of the military training of fighting men and to intensifying Party political work in army units and in the navy."159

Moskalenko and Malinovsky were followed on September 16 by Marshal K. A. Vershinin, commander-in-chief of the Soviet air force. Like his colleagues, Vershinin portrayed the Western powers as bent on driving the world to war:

The events of the most recent times give evidence of the constantly increasing aggressiveness of the policy of the NATO military bloc, the

*Note the similarity between this portrayal of Western aims and that given by Khrushchev in his military speech of June 21, 1961 (above, p. 15).


158 Ibid., p. 12.

159 Ibid.
strengthening of military preparations by the United States of America and its allies in answer to the proposal of the Soviet Union concerning conclusion of a German peace treaty. The imperialists, especially the Americans, have been seized by an unrestrained military psychosis. . . .

Today it is clear to every citizen, and even more to us military men: the aggressors have set their course towards the unleashing of a third world war. A real threat has been created to the Soviet Union, to the socialist camp, to the cause of peace in the entire world.\textsuperscript{160}

Vershinin gave details of technical improvements in the Soviet air force, saying, “We have not sat with hands folded for 16 years since the war.”\textsuperscript{161}

A representative of the land forces, General of the Army A. S. Zhadov, made his contribution to the campaign on September 20. “Leading figures in the U.S.A. and other nations forming part of the NATO military bloc” Zhadov charged, “. . . have literally lost their head and have reached the point of openly threatening the Soviet Union with war if it concludes a peace treaty with the German Democratic Republic.”\textsuperscript{162}

Zhadov admitted that “the main role” in a new world war “will be played by the strategic rocket troops as the basic force for the employment of atomic weapons,” but consoled himself with the thought that “. . . the successful defeat of the adversary in war can be achieved only by the combined efforts of all the branches of the armed forces. A very important role in the attainment of the complete defeat of the enemy will belong to the infantry troops.”\textsuperscript{163}

Soviet Marshal S. S. Biriuzov, commander-in-chief of the anti-aircraft forces, weighed in with an article on September 22, in which he charged that: “Matters have reached the point where leading figures in the U.S.A. and other nations of the aggressive NATO bloc have resorted to direct threats to take up arms and unleash war against the Soviet Union and the entire camp of socialism.”\textsuperscript{164} “Under such circumstances,” he continued, “. . . there is demanded from our Armed Forces, including the anti-aircraft defense of the country, as never before, high watchfulness and complete combat readiness.”\textsuperscript{165}

A spokesman for the marines, Admiral A. G. Golovko, added his voice to the chorus on September 29, charging that: “The American military complex, having been given by the government almost unlimited freedom of action, has set its course towards the unleashing of a third world war. The proposals of


\textsuperscript{163}Ibid.


\textsuperscript{165}Ibid.
the U.S.S.R. to conclude a peace treaty with Germany have evoked from the West a new fit of military hysteria."\textsuperscript{166}

In its later stages the series of "preparedness" articles by Soviet military leaders was modified by a significant revision of U.S. intelligence estimates of Soviet military capabilities. As we have seen, Moskalenko, in his September 13 article which opened the series, cited General Power's statement concerning the annihilating power which the possession of 300 long-range missiles would give the Soviet Union, thereby tacitly implying that the Soviet armed forces actually had this number of missiles. Some Western military analysts still accepted inflated claims of this kind, e.g., the influential British military writer B. H. Liddell Hart, who at about this time asserted flatly that "The Soviet Union has surpassed the U.S. in rocket production."\textsuperscript{167} More and more frequently, however, challenges to such views were being voiced. The West Germans, it appeared, took a much more modest view of Soviet capabilities than did some Western analysts. According to \textit{New York Times} military specialist Hanson W. Baldwin: "Despite the sometimes inflated estimates of Washington intelligence sources, relatively low capability is attributed in West Germany to Soviet missile strength and tactical nuclear weapons."\textsuperscript{168}

The West German estimate, Baldwin reported, was not only lower than that of the United States in tactical weapons but also in overall strategic power: "In the larger missile field the Russians appear to have a far more limited capability than has been estimated in the past in Washington. . . . Soviet intercontinental ballistic missiles are believed to be numbered in two figures."\textsuperscript{169}

Discounting the importance of the current Soviet test series, General Curtis LeMay, U.S. air force chief of staff, told the 15th annual convention of the Air Force Association that the Soviet Union was behind rather than ahead of the United States in "superbombs." If the United States had wanted to build a 100-megaton bomb, said LeMay, it could have done so "a long time ago."\textsuperscript{170}

The most precise and influential published report on the revised Western evaluation of Soviet strategic power was an article by Joseph Alsop. "Prior to the recent recalculation," Alsop wrote,

\ldots the maximum number of ICBMs that the Soviets were thought to have at this time was on the order of 200—just about enough to permit the Soviets to consider a surprise attack on the United States. The maximum has now been drastically reduced, however, to less than a quarter of the former figure—well under 50 ICBMs and therefore, not nearly enough to allow the Soviets to consider a surprise attack on this country. The number of Soviet


\textsuperscript{167}German translation of an article by B. H. Liddell Hart, "Why we cannot defend West Berlin," broadcast by Radio Moscow to West Germany, Sept. 15, 1961.

\textsuperscript{168}\textit{NYT}, Sept. 19, 1961, p. 11.

\textsuperscript{169}Ibid.

heavy bombers of intercontinental range meanwhile remains unchanged, at
about 150.\textsuperscript{171}

An awareness that Soviet policy could no longer be based on claims for
Soviet missile superiority was reflected in the formulation adopted in a second
article by Marshal Biriuzov which appeared on October 3: "If the U.S. im-
perialists who are threatening the Soviet people with thermonuclear war
should dare to unleash one they will have to pay for it. Neither the oceans
surrounding the shores of North America nor the deepest atomic shelters now
so strenuously advertised by the monopolistic press will save them from \textit{just
and inevitable retribution}."\textsuperscript{172}

In place of earlier claims, actual or implied, for a specific number of long-
range missiles, Soviet military spokesmen and political leaders in the autumn
of 1961 began to employ the formulation that such weapons were available in
"sufficient" or "necessary" numbers.\textsuperscript{173}

In the minds of Soviet military leaders, the fact that the Soviet Union was
known by U.S. planners to lack the means for launching a successful surprise
attack on the United States carried with it the corollary that the reverse possi-
bility—a surprise attack on the Soviet Union by the United States—might be-
come a reality. It is not mere coincidence, therefore, that the latter theme was
also stressed at this time in statements by Soviet military leaders. In the series
of "preparedness" articles which we have cited, this note was sounded for
example by Malinovsky: "We cannot sit with folded hands and look on with
indifference at the way in which the ruling circles of the Western powers are
pushing the world toward war. We do not want to find ourselves in the position
in which we were in 1941. This time we shall not allow the imperialists to catch
us unawares."\textsuperscript{174}

"We must constantly sharpen [our vigilance] in order to frustrate the plans
of the imperialists for a surprise attack on our country and to prevent a repeti-
tion of the sorry lessons of the initial period of the last war."\textsuperscript{175}

\textbf{Stoking the fires}

Military spokesmen and political leaders on both sides contributed to the
crisis atmosphere of early September 1961 by inflammatory statements and
provocative actions. On September 3, for example, the USSR Ministry of De-
fense announced that "training exercises" by the northern fleet, jointly with
rocket troops and air force units, would be held in the Barents and Kara Seas
from September 10 to November 15, 1961.\textsuperscript{176}

the evidence on which the reassessment was based, see Philip J. Klass, "Keeping the nuclear
\textsuperscript{172}S. Biriuzov, \textit{Sovetskaia Rossiia}, Oct. 3, 1961, cited by Horelick and Rush, p. 89; em-
phasis supplied.
\textsuperscript{173}Ibid., p. 99.
\textsuperscript{174}Pravda, Sept. 14, 1961; Horelick and Rush, p. 92.
\textsuperscript{175}Krasnaia Zvezda, Sept. 20, 1961; Horelick and Rush, p. 92.
\textsuperscript{176}“In the interests of security,” Izv., Sept. 3, 1961, p. 4; \textit{CDSP}, XIII/35, p. 28.
At a press conference on September 5, French President de Gaulle called on the West to resist by force if necessary the menace of what he called the Soviet "totalitarian empire." He attributed the Berlin crisis, which he called "arbitrary and artificial," to the Soviet desire to divert attention from unrest in the Soviet Union and in the communist bloc.177

An Izvestia article on September 6 described the factory in the Urals which produced rockets of the kind which, the article claimed, brought down the U-2 plane in May 1960. "If the dreaded hour strikes," the author of the article warned, "... all the means of defense created by the labor and talent of the workers, engineers and technicians at this remote plant in the Urals will be thrown against the foul enemy, will wipe him from the face of the earth and will reduce him to ashes."178

On September 7 Paul H. Nitze, U.S. assistant secretary of defense for international security affairs, in an address to the Association of the U.S. Army on the Berlin situation, summarized U.S. military planning and expressed confidence in the capacity of the United States and its allies to meet successfully the Soviet challenge:

In summary, first, we have great nuclear capabilities. We are not particularly impressed with the Soviet threat to develop nuclear weapons in the 100-megaton range. We are not interested in arms of a terroristic nature, but rather our nuclear capability is tailored to specific tasks.

We have a tremendous variety of warheads which gives us the flexibility we require to conduct nuclear actions from the level of large-scale destruction down to mere demolition work. I could not, of course, give specific numbers, but I can say that the number of nuclear delivery vehicles of all types which the United States possesses provides the flexibility for virtually all modes and levels of warfare. Second, at the same time, we have a growing nonnuclear capability with a large growth potential. The economic base represented by the United States and our Western European Allies far outdistances that of the Communist bloc.179

Nitze warned that "determination, will and sacrifice" would be required "to offset fully the Communist conventional power," but expressed confidence "that the American people will respond as they always have when their leaders lay great issues before them, and that our Allies will do their share."180 Reflecting the apocalyptic view of the situation taken by some officials in Washington, Nitze said that the events of the next ninety days might decide the future of the world for the next century.181

The defense ministers of the Warsaw Pact nations held their first publicly announced meeting on September 8-9 in Warsaw, with the participation of

177NYT, Sept. 6, 1961, p. 1; SIA, 1961, p. 262.
179NYT, Sept. 8, 1961; Documents on Germany, pp. 783-84.
180Ibid.
the chiefs of staff of the nations' armed forces. Soviet Marshal A. A. Grechko, commander-in-chief of the combined armed forces of the Warsaw Pact countries, served as chairman of the meeting. The communiqué issued after the meeting stressed the military build-up being undertaken by the Warsaw Pact nations to meet the threat of war:

The conference noted that the countries of the aggressive North Atlantic military bloc (NATO) have greatly stepped up their military preparations recently, are fanning the arms race and increasing the size of their armies, and in reply to the proposals of the socialist countries on concluding a German peace treaty are even threatening to unleash a new war.

In view of the present situation, and guided by the directives of their governments, the Defense Ministers and chiefs of staff reviewed specific questions of strengthening the combat readiness of the troops that make up the combined armed forces of the Warsaw Pact countries.¹⁸²

British Defense Minister Harold Watkinson, in a speech on September 9, announced the formation of an army division to be maintained at “a high state of readiness” for assignment to West Germany if the Berlin crisis grew more acute. British officials were quoted as saying that this was Britain's response to Khrushchev's assertion (in the Sulzberger interview) that Britain, France, and Italy were “hostages” to the Soviet Union and would not support the United States if war broke out over Berlin. Khrushchev, said Watkinson, had “... completely miscalculated the resolution of the British Government and of the British people to fulfill in concert with our allies, our international obligations.”¹⁸³ Also on September 9, the United States announced the despatch of 40,000 troops as reinforcements to its garrison in West Germany.¹⁸⁴

Khrushchev, in a speech dedicating a new electric power station at Volzhsky on September 10, reacted sharply to the challenge launched in de Gaulle's September 5 press conference:

... the President of France should be asked about something he neglected to mention: Just what would be left of his country should the imperialists plunge the world into war? President de Gaulle is after all a military man and is well aware that so huge a country as the Soviet Union cannot be destroyed, whereas for France, as well as West Germany, Britain and other countries with a dense population and great cities and industrial centers concentrated in a small territory, there will be no surviving a thermonuclear war.¹⁸⁵

Khrushchev used the occasion to demonstrate his close links with the military; as described in Pravda: “(... N. S. Khrushchev heartily embraces [Marshals] A. I. Yeremenko and V. I. Chuikov and kisses them affectionately. Shouts: Hurrah!)”¹⁸⁶

¹⁸⁴ Ibid.
¹⁸⁵ Pravda, Sept. 11, 1961, p. 3; CDSP, XIII/37, p. 6.
¹⁸⁶ Ibid., p. 3.
Despite its bluster and bragging, however, the dominant note of Khrushchev's September 10 speech was the attainment of peace through negotiation:

... to judge from pronouncements by leading Western statesmen, encouraging signs have now appeared. United States President Kennedy and British Prime Minister Macmillan, it is known, are in favor of negotiations. General de Gaulle and Chancellor Adenauer, who have often been described in the press as opposing negotiations, are also declaring for peace negotiations.

We have right along proposed peace negotiations. And had the Western statesmen listened to the voice of reason, the present particularly acute international tension would not exist, there would not be the war psychosis that currently reigns in the West. The most compelling problems causing that tension would long since have been solved, and the way would have been cleared for cooperation among states. But it is never too late to do a good deed. We therefore hail those who are advocating peaceful coexistence and the settlement of issues by peaceful means, through negotiations and not with weapons.187

It was on September 10, however, that TASS announced that Soviet rocket tests would be held in the central Pacific in the period September 13-October 15, and warned foreign planes and ships to stay out of a designated area.188

Meanwhile the explosions of Soviet nuclear tests were following one another at brief intervals—two on September 13, which the U.S. Atomic Energy Commission estimated in the low-to-intermediate range.189 The threat of a direct Soviet-Western air clash over Germany was added on the following day when two Soviet MIG fighters buzzed two American commercial airliners en route to Berlin,190 and when two West German jet fighters strayed briefly over the air space of East Germany before landing at a West Berlin airport. The latter incident was made to be the subject of a stiff protest on September 17 by the Soviet government, which, the note said, "... gives warning that in the future in such cases intruder war planes which fail to comply with the demand to land at an indicated spot will be destroyed with every means, including missiles."191

To help prepare the American people for the grim possibility of a nuclear-missile war with the Soviet Union, the President wrote an article for the September 15 issue of Life magazine, urging the large-scale construction of fallout shelters.192 It was on the same day that the first U.S. nuclear explosion in the new series was carried out at the underground proving grounds in Nevada. The Soviets, also on the 15th, announced that their rockets in the new

187Ibid., p. 6.
190SIA, 1961, p. 262.
191Documents on Germany, p. 803.
Pacific test series, which had begun on September 13, had landed "less than one kilometer from the target, which confirms the high accuracy of the rocket's guidance system."\textsuperscript{193}

**Breakthrough in the McCloy-Zorin talks**

In the crisis atmosphere of mid-September 1961 few Americans would have ventured to predict that the Soviet Union and the United States would shortly reach agreement on the basic principles of disarmament. Yet to the surprise of many—including Kennedy himself\textsuperscript{194}—this is exactly what happened.

The bilateral Soviet–U.S. talks on disarmament, it should be noted, had been broken off on July 29, following Khrushchev's stormy reaction to Kennedy's speech of July 25 (above, p. 90). When the talks resumed in New York on September 6, the United States submitted a draft statement on principles stressing two points which McCloy, the chief American negotiator, "... had made the center of his argument—that the process [of disarmament] should take place in stages 'under such strict and effective international control as would provide firm assurance that all parties are honoring their obligations,' and that it should go hand in hand with the development of international peace-keeping institutions."\textsuperscript{195}

A crucial point in the U.S. draft was the proposal that verification of disarmament measures should cover not only weapons destroyed but those retained: "Such verification should ensure that not only agreed limitations or reductions take place but also that retained armed forces and armaments do not exceed agreed levels at any stage."\textsuperscript{196}

Both the TASS bulletin and the Soviet–American communique announcing resumption of the talks were strictly factual and noncommittal, but there was a cautious note of optimism in Izvestiia's heading to its story on the event, "Dialogue has been resumed."\textsuperscript{197}

Evidence that some high-level Soviet rethinking on the talks might be under way came when the meeting scheduled for September 12 was cancelled at Soviet request.\textsuperscript{198} On the resumption of the talks on September 14, McCloy was ready with a carefully worked out summary of the whole course of the discussion, from its onset in March down to the break-off at the end of July.\textsuperscript{199} In addition, the September 14 memorandum recapitulated and amplified the principles set forth in the U.S. draft of September 6. As a statement of the U.S. position on disarmament which had Kennedy's full endorsement, the September 14 memorandum repays careful study.

\textsuperscript{193} *Pravda*, Sept. 15, 1961, p. 1; *CDSP*, XIII/37, p. 31.
\textsuperscript{194} Sorensen, p. 519.
\textsuperscript{196} Ibid., p. 361.
\textsuperscript{197} Izv., Sept. 8, 1961, p. 1.
\textsuperscript{198} NYT, Sept. 12, 1961, p. 2.
\textsuperscript{199} *Documents on Disarmament, 1961*, pp. 431–48.
Its first point was the importance of working out a “total over-all program for complete disarmament.” This, of course, sounded very much like the ceaselessly reiterated Soviet proposal for “general and complete disarmament.” The difference between the two positions was made clear in McCloy’s memorandum: “. . . the United States cannot accept a situation where nothing concrete can be done until the very last word has been agreed for the total program. Consequently, it urges acceptance of the proposition that without prejudice to eventual development of the total program an attempt must be made to find the widest possible area of agreement—including any individual measures or groups of measures—and to implement such measures just as soon as they are agreed.”

Second, the memorandum continued, “. . . the United States stresses the inseparable relationship between the drastic scaling down of national armaments and the building up of international peace-keeping machinery and institutions.” Such measures, in the U.S. view, . . . would be within the framework of the United Nations as part of the program for general and complete disarmament in a peaceful world. These procedures and institutions would not permit nations to invoke doctrines of sacred or just wars in behalf of unilateral military action since they would ensure that no one really seeking justice or the fulfillment of legitimate aspirations will need to have recourse to their own force. They would not permit arbitrary revisions of established international agreements and infringements of other nations’ rights. The United States believes firmly that nations must be prepared to moderate gradually the exercise of unrestricted sovereignty and to abide by the decisions and judgments of tribunals and other bodies, even if such decisions at times may not meet with a particular nation’s approval.

Most vital, in the U.S. view, was its third principle:

. . . the United States insists upon effective verification of disarmament measures from beginning to end. The fundamental precept guiding the United States is that the implementation of every obligation entered into must be subject to effective verification in order to provide each participating State with confidence that every other State is fulfilling its commitments. Verification only of the process of reducing or destroying particular elements of military strength, as proposed by the Soviet Union, does not meet the criterion of effective verification of all obligations entered into. What must be certain is not only that nations are removing certain numbers of forces and armaments from their military establishments, but also that they are not maintaining forces and armaments or engaging in activities in excess of those permitted at a given step or stage in the disarmament program.

Taking up the frequently voiced Soviet assertion that the Soviet Union would be willing to accept any control procedures demanded by the Western

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200 Ibid., p. 433.
201 Ibid., p. 434.
202 Ibid.
203 Ibid., pp. 434–35.
powers, if the latter would first accept the Soviet demand for general and complete disarmament, the U.S. memorandum pointed out the difficulties which would nullify in practice the effectiveness of any agreement concluded on this basis:

The phrase frequently used in Soviet statements that "under conditions of general and complete disarmament the most thorough control must be implemented" is ambiguous and does not adequately reflect the necessity for effective verification at every step and stage of the disarmament process. Indeed, it must be pointed out that if, as the Soviet Union suggests, control can be "most thorough" only "under conditions" of general and complete disarmament, but not during the process of implementing the measures leading to general and complete disarmament, it may never be possible to determine whether the "conditions" of general and complete disarmament have in fact arrived or to protect a complying party against the consequences of violation or evasion of a disarmament agreement by others.\(^{204}\)

McCloy's memorandum proceeded to spell out in detail the kind of "inspection machinery" which, in the U.S. view, would ensure "effective verification." The Soviet demand for a three-headed executive for the central body was rejected as administratively unworkable: "Sound administrative practice the world over and the requirement of effective verification demand efficient administration of the disarmament verification machinery. For this reason the United States rejects firmly the concept of some sort of multi-headed administrative machinery."\(^{205}\) The memorandum concluded with a consideration of the vexed and disputed questions of the stages of disarmament and the composition of an international forum in which general disarmament negotiations could be resumed.

There was no immediate response from Zorin to McCloy's temperate and closely reasoned memorandum of September 14, but there were renewed indications that the Soviets were giving serious consideration to the U.S. initiatives. On September 15 it was reported that the Soviets had again requested a postponement of a scheduled session of the bilateral talks.\(^{206}\)

Then, suddenly and unexpectedly, came the breakthrough. At the session of September 18, Zorin on behalf of the Soviet government accepted the American draft Statement of Principles of September 6, with the exception of the clause concerning verification of retained armed forces during disarmament. Rather than let the lack of agreement on this single—though vital—point stand in the way of at least a limited degree of Soviet–U.S. understanding, McCloy on September 19 agreed to delete the clause to which the Soviet Union objected, thus enabling the two nations to reach agreement on a broad statement of principles just in time for presentation to the sixteenth session of the U.N. General Assembly. Both sides, in letters exchanged on September

\(^{204}\text{Ibid., p. 435.}\)

\(^{205}\text{Ibid.}\)

\(^{206}\text{NYT, Sept. 16, 1961, p. 2.}\)
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20, reiterated their stands on the disputed clause—McCloy describing it as "... a key element in the United States position which we believe is implicit in the entire joint statement of agreed principles that whenever an agreement stipulates that at a certain point certain levels of forces and armaments may be retained, the verification machinery must have all the rights and powers necessary to ensure that those levels are not exceeded, ..." while Zorin charged that in defending this position "... the United States is trying to establish control over the armed forces and armaments retained by States at any given stage of disarmament, ..." and that such control "... which in fact means control over armaments, would turn into an international system of legalized espionage, which would naturally be unacceptable to any State concerned for its security and the interests of preserving peace throughout the world." Both sides recognized that a basic question of principle was involved and that failure to agree on this question would inevitably be reflected in the form of complications at any future disarmament negotiations. Nevertheless, the achievement of the negotiators in the bilateral talks was an impressive one. At a time when the two most powerful nations in the world seemed to be teetering on the brink of an atomic war, their ability to reach a broad though limited agreement on the principles of disarmament came as a welcome indication of the fundamental sanity and commitment to peace of their leaders.

The Belgian diversion

Up until the beginning of September it had been the Italians who had seemed to offer Khrushchev the most promising opening for bringing at least one of the Western powers to the negotiating table, but Italian indignation over the Soviet resumption of nuclear testing had closed off that avenue of approach (above, p. 168). Never an easy man to rebuff, however, Khrushchev as late as September 12 was still courting the Italians, with yet another letter in what by that time had become a one-sided correspondence. It was at just this point, however, that another possible Western negotiating partner for the Soviets appeared on the horizon. On September 12, Belgian Premier Paul-Henri Spaak "... publicly appealed to the West to make a greater effort of unity without delay to clarify their objectives and reach a positive policy of negotiations with the Soviet Union." The Soviets lost no time in exploiting this promising opening. On September 13 Radio Moscow announced that Spaak would visit the Soviet Union for a meeting with Khrushchev on the 19th, a report which was promptly confirmed from Brussels.

207 *Documents on Disarmament, 1961*, p. 442.
208 Ibid., p. 443.
209 Ibid.
211 Ibid., p. 264.
Summarizing Western press comment, the *Survey of International Affairs* provides a useful insight into the purpose behind the Belgian statesman’s trip:

M. Spaak’s motives, it emerged, were a combination of resentment at the way the smaller N.A.T.O. powers had been excluded from the most important inter-allied consultation and a conviction common to the non-Communist left in Europe that to fight a war over Berlin would be criminal. He seemed also to be convinced that time was running short and that unless something was done, Mr. Khrushchev would be forced to make some gesture at the 22nd Party Congress due to meet in Moscow in the third week of October.\(^{213}\)

A favorable augury for the Belgian visit was provided on September 15 when former French Premier Paul Reynaud emerged from a three-hour visit with Khrushchev to say: “I arrived in Khrushchev’s study very pessimistic and I left confident of the future. . . . The impression I have is there is no impasse and there is a hope of getting out of what was considered an impasse.”\(^{214}\)

In reporting Reynaud’s visit, the *New York Times* added: “Western diplomats here [Moscow] also reported that Soviet officials in private conversation had expressed optimism about the possibility of a settlement that would arrest the danger of war.”\(^{215}\)

After this build-up, the actual discussion between Khrushchev and Spaak came as something of an anticlimax. Spaak was later reported to have told a NATO council meeting in Paris, on September 24, that Khrushchev denied ever having placed a deadline on Western acceptance of Soviet demands for a German peace treaty and free-city status for West Berlin, but that aside from that concession he showed no willingness to budge from previously announced Soviet positions.\(^{216}\)

The only clear outcome of the Belgian Premier’s initiative thus seemed to be the demonstration that the Soviets had no real desire to negotiate seriously with the West on Berlin at this time, and had used the Belgian visit simply in order to gain time and to give the appearance of reasonableness. For those who had missed the significance of Kozlov’s Pyongyang speech, however, Spaak’s September 24 report to the NATO Council came as the first indication that the Soviets might be relaxing their demands on Berlin.

“**The Storm in Berlin is over**”

Aside from Soviet acceptance of the U.S. proposal for talks on Berlin between Secretary of State Rusk and Foreign Minister Gromyko, Kozlov’s dis-


\(^{214}\) *NYT*, Sept. 16, 1961, p. 2; Sept. 29, 1961, p. 4.


closure in his Pyongyang speech that the Soviet deadline on Berlin had been lifted was not followed by any dramatic Soviet action indicating a real willingness to end the Berlin crisis. The two- or three-week period which followed the speech was characterized rather by a confused medley of Soviet statements on Berlin, the German peace treaty, nuclear testing, and disarmament, from which the prevailing impression emerges of a continuing high-level struggle for the control of Soviet policy, in which conflicting and even contradictory statements could be made by Soviet spokesmen with little or no regard to consistency. Any attempt to impose unity on the expression of Soviet policy during this period can be successful only at the cost of ignoring the tangled welter of policy statements and selecting only those which support a simplistic, rationalized interpretation.

Certain consistent lines, nevertheless, run through the period, and provide a basis for sorting out the various forces which were at work. Khrushchev's policy goals, for example, were defined with relative clarity in a series of statements. In his reply to the message brought to him by Nehru and Nkrumah from the Belgrade conference, which was dated September 16, though for some reason the Soviet press did not publish it until the 22nd, two passages stand out for their note of personal involvement amid much that is routine and stereotyped. With regard to the measures recently taken by the Soviet government to strengthen its military power, Khrushchev expressed unfeigned regret: "I should like to tell you directly and frankly, although it will be no news to you, that the Soviet Union does not wish to follow the rut of military rivalry with the Western powers. This is not our policy, it is not our path and we should prefer not to follow this path if we were not forced to do so." 217

And in answer to the central theme of the Nehru–Nkrumah message, the plea for direct U.S.–Soviet negotiations, Khrushchev expressed full assent: "You know, of course, that the Soviet Union has always favored settling outstanding issues by negotiation. Naturally, now too we believe that talks between states, especially between the U.S.S.R. and the U.S.A., the mightiest and most influential states, can and should play an important role in clearing the international atmosphere. In the name of ensuring peace, we are ready for negotiations at any time, in any place, and at any level." 218

True, the force of this hearty assent was seriously weakened when Khrushchev went on to make it clear that the Soviet Union would enter negotiations only when the agenda and conclusions were to its liking:

. . . I want you to understand me correctly. The Soviet government is ready to take part in negotiations that are really aimed at the speediest solution of pressing international problems—in the first place, in a peace conference on the question of concluding a German peace treaty and normalizing the situation in West Berlin on this basis. It is convinced that the sooner such serious negotiations begin, the better. It would be an expression of great states-

217 Pravda, Sept. 22, 1961, pp. 1–2; CDSP, XIII/37, pp. 9–10; emphasis supplied.
218 Ibid., p. 10; emphasis supplied.
232  The Berlin Crisis of 1961

manship if such a treaty were concluded on an agreed basis in the shortest time.219

On September 21 Pravda and Izvestia published a short interview with
Khrushchev by two of their correspondents in which he seized on an opening
provided by Pope John XXIII, in a recent speech in which he had voiced his
concern over the danger of war, to reiterate his (Khrushchev's) belief in the
responsibility of statesmen to avoid actions which might lead to war:

In our times, when the most destructive means of annihilation have been
created, it is especially inadmissible to play with the fate of the peoples.
Here of course it is not a matter of fear of "God's judgment," about which
the Roman Pope speaks. As a communist and an atheist, I do not believe in
"divine providence," but I can say one thing firmly: the great responsibility
of governments to their peoples, to humanity, demands that they make
every possible effort and undertake joint efforts for the path leading to the
liquidation of the remnants of the second world war, to the elimination of
hotbeds of tension, to the curbing of the torchbearers of a new world con­
flagration.220

Khrushchev went on to make a direct allusion to two prominent Western
statesmen who were Catholics: "... Do such adherents of the Catholic faith
as J. Kennedy, K. Adenauer and others listen to the 'sacred warnings' of the
Pope of Rome?"221

*   *   *

The news of U.N. Secretary-General Dag Hammarskjöld's death in a plane
crash in the Congo was brought to Kennedy on September 18. For months the
Soviet Union and its allies had been waging a propaganda war against
Hammarskjöld of such unrestrained bitterness and violence that the term
"character assassination" would be none too strong a designation for it. In
addition, the Soviet Union had been attacking the office of secretary-general
itself, in its existing form, and demanding that it be replaced by a three-man
secretariat to include representatives of the West, the Soviet bloc, and the
nonaligned states. The Soviet attack on the office, of course, was directly
linked with its attack on the character and policies of the man who held it, for
it had been Hammarskjöld's unwavering labors to make the secretary-general­
ship the center of U.N. efforts at maintaining peace in the Congo and else­
where that had earned him the unrelenting hostility of the Soviet bloc.

Although he had already given several of his aides instructions to prepare
a speech for him to deliver at the forthcoming U.N. General Assembly (above,
p. 187), Kennedy had not yet made a final irrevocable decision to attend the

219Ibid.; emphasis in the original.
220Pravda and Izv., Sept. 21, 1961, p. 1. In a speech on Sept. 10 the Pope had called on
leaders on both sides to negotiate their differences over Berlin in order to remove the threat
of war. He urged them to "face squarely the tremendous responsibilities they have before the
tribunal of history and, what is more, before the judgment seat of God." NYT, Sept. 21, 1961,
pp. 1, 11.
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session. Asked on September 17 to comment on reports that the President would attend, White House press secretary Pierre Salinger replied, "I found those reports a little hard to understand in view of the fact he has made no such decision."\(^{222}\)

A number of well-informed observers agree that it was the news of Hammarskjöld's death, with the ominous implications it carried for the future of the United Nations itself, which provided the final stimulus for Kennedy's decision to address the General Assembly.\(^{223}\) The decision was announced by the White House immediately after the President had issued a brief statement paying tribute to Hammarskjöld, James Reston reported, with the additional comment:

Originally, President Kennedy had withheld an announcement about going to the United Nations personally pending the outcome of the forthcoming conversations between Secretary of State Dean Rusk and the Soviet Foreign Minister, Andrei A. Gromyko, on the German problem. This afternoon, however, after talking on the telephone to Secretary Rusk and Adlai E. Stevenson, United States delegate to the United Nations, he decided to redraft his speech and attend the General Assembly in order to pay his respects to Mr. Hammarskjöld and to reassure the delegates that the United States would support all efforts to uphold the authority of the Secretary General's office.\(^{224}\)

The decision was not taken lightly, however, or without strenuous debate. Ambassador Arthur H. Dean reports that: "Theodore Sorensen telephoned me on September 18, 1961, to say that the President was being counseled not to make his disarmament speech, on which Mr. McCloy and I had worked, to the UN General Assembly on September 25. Distressed by this information, I sent a telegram to Mr. Kennedy at Hyannisport, urging him to view disarmament in the long-term perspective."\(^{225}\)

It was to be expected that the Soviets would take advantage of the opportunity provided by Hammarskjöld's death to push with renewed vigor their demand for a three-man secretariat, and Soviet news media were not slow in producing evidence to support this expectation. Just as word of the Secretary General's death was received in the Soviet capital, in fact, a broadcast over Radio Moscow was declaring that "the time is ripe for structural changes" in the United Nations.\(^{226}\) An article in Izvestia on September 21 claimed that:

\(^{222}\)NYT, Sept. 18, 1961, p. 12.
\(^{223}\)Schlesinger, p. 484; Sidey, p. 250.
\(^{225}\)Arthur H. Dean, Test Ban and Disarmament. The Path of the Negotiations (New York and Evanston, Harper & Row, 1966), p. 26 (hereinafter cited as Dean). Dean's dates are frequently garbled. Sorensen, p. 520, also implies a conflict over the question of whether or not the President should address the United Nations.
\(^{226}\)Seymour Topping, NYT, Sept. 19, 1961, p. 5, comments that the broadcast was "probably written before word reached here [Moscow] of Mr. Hammarskjöld's death."
The U.N. circles recognize that it may be difficult to concentrate the executive power of the U.N. once again in the hands of one man, not only for political reasons but also because the U.N. Secretary General’s death in the line of duty left the organization without a leader and without a successor.

The U.N. circles admit that the most important task will be to decide on what form the new U.N. leadership is to take. They express the view that Hammarskjöld’s sudden and tragic death may lend weight to the Soviet proposal for a “troika,” replacing the U.N. Secretary General with a committee of three, i.e., representatives of the East [sic], the West and the neutral countries.227

By September 21 Kennedy’s decision to address the General Assembly was firm, but debate still continued among his advisers as to the substance of what he should say, in particular, whether he should make a plea for general disarmament as a major part of his speech. According to Dean: “Throughout the day there was much discussion, which he [Kennedy] finally resolved by deciding to make the speech putting the United States on record for general and complete disarmament in a peaceful world. President Kennedy was a man firmly anchored in reality, but he had the rare quality of not allowing the reality of a particular moment to paralyze his capacity to take bold, imaginative, and courageous steps.”228

On the evening of Friday, September 22, Kennedy flew from Washington to Hyannis Port for the weekend. According to Sorensen:

... the speech [for the United Nations] was written and rewritten over an intensive weekend at Hyannis Port. I worked with the President at his cottage, on the phone and, finally, on his plane as it flew in heavy fog from Cape Cod to New York. Because both the Presidential and passenger cabins were crowded and noisy, we squatted on the floor in the bare passageway between the two, comparing and sorting pages. He suggested that we each write a peroration and then take the best of both. In New York he read the latest draft aloud to Rusk and his UN team—an unusual practice for him—and then made his final revisions that night [i.e., Sunday, September 24].229

* * *

A recurring worry to Kennedy was the fear that the policies and goals of the United States under his administration were not being fairly and fully presented to the Soviet people. This worry was by no means groundless. We have

227“A possible successor to Hammarskjöld,” Izv., Sept. 21, 1961, p. 4; CDSP, XIII/38, p. 17; emphasis in the original.
228Dean, p. 26. Dean’s testimony is confused as to location (he puts Kennedy in New York on Sept. 21) but appears to be correct in substance.
229Sorensen, p. 521. For reports on Kennedy’s whereabouts and actions during the period from his arrival at Hyannis Port on the evening of Friday, Sept. 22, to his departure for New York on the evening of Sunday, Sept. 24, see the NYT, Sept. 24, 1961, p. 46 (Tom Wicker), and Sept. 25, 1961, pp. 1, 5. Care in the dating of this period is essential because Pierre Salinger, as we shall see presently, has quite a different version of how Kennedy was occupied at this time.
noted for example, that the Soviet press failed to publish the actual text of the Kennedy–Macmillan test ban proposal of September 3, substituting for it a distorted and mutilated paraphrase.

On the afternoon of September 19 or 20, Kennedy held a long discussion with James Wechsler, editor of the New York Post, in the course of which he frankly expressed his hopes and fears about the prospects for world peace.230

It was Wechsler, according to Schlesinger, who came up with the proposal “. . . that he write a column about Kennedy's thoughts on war and peace and challenge the Soviet press to republish it. Pierre Salinger thought this a good idea, and the President personally approved the Wechsler text.”231 Surprisingly enough, Kennedy, usually a fast learner, had not yet fully grasped the potentialities of the controlled and directed newspaper interview as a vehicle for the expression of his policy views, despite Khrushchev's repeated demonstrations of the flexibility and value of this form.

Wechsler's report appeared in two parts, the first of which was concerned primarily with the strong internal pressures being brought to bear on the President, in particular a slashing attack delivered a few days earlier by former President Dwight D. Eisenhower on Kennedy's conduct of foreign affairs.232

For his second article Wechsler turned to the field of foreign affairs, in particular Soviet–U.S. relations. The proposal for Soviet reprinting was voiced at the very outset: “. . . it is my hope that Pravda and Izvestiia will reprint this portrait of the President of the United States, or some reasonable facsimile thereof. This may seem both a wistful and immodest suggestion, but it is made in all solemnity at a time when all our lives may hinge on the capacity of these two men [Kennedy and Khrushchev] to keep open the lines of communication.”233 Wechsler then offered a portrait of Kennedy after eight months in office:

The first and perhaps crucial thing to be said about John F. Kennedy is that he has no illusions about the nature of victory in nuclear war. If the worst happens, he does not propose to lose, but he has no relish for the role of presiding over an atomic wasteland. He has set modest sights for his place in history. He has no simple-minded view that the deep discords of our time can be deftly and finally resolved by diplomatic gamesmanship. He is aware that any honorable settlements he may negotiate will subject him to know-nothing cries of “appeasement” in many local places. He is genuinely disturbed by the frustrated fury of many of his countrymen who believe our national manhood can be affirmed only by some act of bloody bluster, in Cuba or Laos or almost anywhere on earth.

230Schlesinger, p. 400. The approximate date of the interview can be fixed by Wechsler's reference to a state dinner for President Manuel Prado y Ugarteche of Peru which occurred on the same day. For Prado's visit to the White House on Sept. 19–21, see JFK, 1961, pp. 607–13.
231Schlesinger, p. 400; emphasis supplied.
He is prepared to risk the storm of domestic political strife that agreements short of victory will invite. This is one of the changes I detect in the man: occupancy of this terrible, lonely office for less than a year has made him far more conscious of the awesome burdens he bears, of the limited goals he can seek, and the transient quality of public applause.\(^{234}\)

The President, Wechsler continued, recognized and accepted the fact that "... any narrow accommodation he may—and must—achieve will subject him to lower-depth assault from those who believe we can whip the world with a smaller budget."\(^{235}\) What he was not prepared to accept, however, was "... to be the target of a campaign of humiliation. If that is Mr. Khrushchev's design, we are all in trouble. Mr. Kennedy is not disposed to play the role of a stooge and he has, I believe, achieved a certain composure about the brutal nature of the choice he may have to face in the solitude of some ghastly night."\(^{236}\)

In words directed specifically at Khrushchev, Wechsler portrayed Kennedy's broad views on negotiations: "Nothing in his view is non-negotiable except the dignity of free men; to put it another way, there can be full negotiations about the future of Germany and of China and almost any explosive area if Mr. Khrushchev is ready to negotiate rather than to dictate."\(^{237}\)

Wechsler concluded his portrait of Kennedy on a "personal note" which unconsciously echoed the words with which Sulzberger had ended his report on his interview with Khrushchev: "In the twilight of a gray afternoon I sat with a man one year younger than myself whose decisions may be the final ones of our century."\(^{238}\)

Since Khrushchev's evaluation of Kennedy was, in Wechsler's (and in Kennedy's own) view a crucial element in Soviet-U.S. relations, Wechsler devoted his final efforts to ensuring that an accurate image of Kennedy the man, stripped of all ideological camouflage, should be presented to the reader, including, he hoped, that of the Soviet press.

He [Kennedy] is the son of a very wealthy man, and therefore the perfect caricature for the Communist propagandists who like to equate all our deeds with the mischievous plots of "Wall Street imperialists." If that doctrinaire rubbish is what Mr. Khrushchev believes, he is mad and we are all doomed.

John F. Kennedy may be utterly wrong in some matters and fallible on others, but what he seeks is an honorable peace. Caught in the crossfire of Russian intransigence and domestic Know-nothingism, he is both keeping his head and sustaining his nerve.

There are things I wish he would say to the country that he has not said. He may be unduly sensitive to domestic pressures—as I believe he was in his

\(^{234}\)Ibid.
\(^{235}\)Ibid.
\(^{236}\)Ibid.
\(^{237}\)Ibid.
\(^{238}\)Ibid.
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decision to resume nuclear tests so soon after the unilateral Russian move. He may be too modest about the capacity of his own voice to rise above the clamor and frenzy. But I have no doubt about the authenticity and depth of his desire for rational settlements in a world that has trembled on the brink so long. Russian papers, please copy.\textsuperscript{239}

Four days later, “considerably to our surprise,”\textsuperscript{240} the Russian papers did just that. (For an attentive reader of the Soviet press, it would have come as no surprise to find the Soviet press selectively reprinting important U.S. newspaper or magazine articles on U.S. policy. On September 21, for example, \textit{Pravda} published a translation of a recent Drew Pearson column analyzing differences of opinion within the U.S. government on policy toward Germany under the title, “Time and events are against the U.S.A.”)

Schlesinger notes that the Russian translation of Wechsler’s article included “... even the suggestion that Khrushchev was a madman if he considered Kennedy a Wall Street imperialist, ...”\textsuperscript{241} thereby implying that the Russian translation was complete and accurate. Except for some minor omissions of no great importance it was in fact, complete, but it was not accurate. By a single tendentious and obviously deliberate mistranslation the Russian text altered the tone and significance of the entire article. Where Wechsler had described Kennedy as a man “whose decisions may be the final ones of our century,” the Russian version of this passage read: “... a man ... whose decisions may be the final ones \textit{for our country} [chelovekom ... ch'i resheniia mogut stat' reshauushchimi dla nashei strany].”\textsuperscript{242}

Thus altered, the import of Wechsler’s portrait of Kennedy was that of a man who was prepared to face internal criticism as the price he must pay for making concessions to the Soviets in order to reach agreements in the absence of which his own country—not the entire world—would face destruction.

* * *

On the same day that the second part of the Wechsler interview appeared, the U.S. Embassy in Moscow sent a note to the Soviet Ministry of Foreign Affairs in which it pointed out that

... the full texts of the major communications of the Government of the Soviet Union on the question of Berlin have been carried by major daily newspapers in the United States. Furthermore, Crosscurrents Press, which is a firm chartered in the United States, but registered with the Department of Justice as an agent of the Soviet state export monopoly for publications and thus a channel for the views of the Soviet Government, has recently published in the United States, as one of a series of pamphlets containing Soviet materials, a mass edition of a pamphlet entitled “The Soviet stand on

\textsuperscript{239}Ibid.

\textsuperscript{240}Schlesinger, p. 400.

\textsuperscript{241}Ibid.

\textsuperscript{242}Pravda, Sept. 26, 1961, p. 5; Izv., Sept. 27, 1961, p. 2; emphasis supplied.
Germany." This contains a collection of documents presenting Soviet views on the Berlin question, with an introduction by the Chairman of the Council of Ministers of the U.S.S.R., Nikita S. Khrushchev.\textsuperscript{243}

The note complained that, although the Soviet press had published some official statements of the U.S. government on the Berlin problem, "... the Soviet people have had no opportunity to study the American viewpoint on the Berlin problem in a fashion similar to the opportunity given the American people to study the Soviet viewpoint as presented in the pamphlet published by Crosscurrents Press."\textsuperscript{244} To remedy this situation the U.S. note proposed "... that the Government of the Soviet Union make available to the United States Government facilities for the distribution at this time of comparable material presenting American views on the Berlin question. In this way, the Soviet people will have an opportunity, as the American people have had, to study in some depth both sides of this question, which is of such great importance."\textsuperscript{245} The note concluded with an expression of the hope "... that the Government of the Soviet Union will give its immediate attention to making the requested facilities available."\textsuperscript{246}

One can hardly fail to be struck by the air of futility and naïveté which pervades the U.S. note of September 22. Particularly striking was its failure to base its case on specific factual evidence, as it could easily have done by citing, for example, the failure of the Soviet press to publish the Kennedy–Macmillan limited test ban proposal of September 3. Equally striking was the note's failure to recognize that tight state control of the press, as well as other information media, has always been a fundamental principle of the Soviet system of government. To expect that the state-controlled Soviet press would readily make available its pages for the presentation of policy statements which might undermine the Soviet government's own position was equivalent to expecting the Communist party voluntarily to abdicate and make way for some more liberal form of rule.

Publication in the Soviet press of Wechsler's interview with Kennedy four days after the U.S. note of September 22 might be regarded as an implicit admission by the Soviets of the justice of the U.S. case, but in view of the tendentious distortion in the Russian-language version of the Wechsler article, it seems more likely that the two events were not causally related. Furthermore, as we shall see presently (below, p. 254), September 26 was a day which fell in a period of Khrushchev's absence from Moscow and the resurgence of his most intransigent adversary, Frol Kozlov. In republishing the Wechsler interview, with its (by Soviet standards) shockingly disrespectful references to the Soviet premier, Khrushchev's internal opponents were thus able to score a point in the factional struggle.

\textsuperscript{243}DSB, 45 (1961): 718.
\textsuperscript{244}Ibid.
\textsuperscript{245}Ibid.
\textsuperscript{246}Ibid.
When the Soviets did reply directly to the U.S. note, on October 12, their response took the form of a bland refutation of the complaint lodged in the American note and an outright refusal to take any steps to change the situation in the direction requested by the U.S. government.247

* * *

Pierre Salinger, Kennedy’s press secretary, states that he accompanied the President to New York on September 22 (a Friday).248 There, on the night of their arrival, Salinger reports, he received a call from Georgi Bolshakov, a Soviet official whom Salinger describes as “a one-man troika in himself . . . interpreter, editor, and spy.”249 It was most urgent, Bolshakov said, that Salinger “. . . have dinner with Kharlamov, who was in town as press spokesman for Andrei Gromyko, chief Soviet delegate to the UN.”250 Already tied up for that evening, Salinger arranged to see Kharlamov privately at his hotel room on the following night (i.e., Saturday, September 23). The Russian’s opening words, which we have already quoted (above, p. 207), were, “The storm in Berlin is over.” Kharlamov then inquired whether Kennedy had received the confidential message sent him by Khrushchev via Sulzberger, and on Salinger’s reply that he “didn’t know,” Kharlamov said, “Then I will repeat the message to you, and you will deliver it to the President.”251

“The message,” Salinger continues, “. . . was urgent. Khrushchev saw the increase in our military forces in Germany as an imminent danger to peace. He was now willing, for the first time, to consider American proposals for a rapprochement on Berlin. He was eager for an early summit but would leave the timing up to JFK because of the President’s ‘obvious political difficulties’.”252

Salinger provides his own gloss on Khrushchev’s reference to “difficulties”: “What he meant, in effect, was that I, Khrushchev, have total freedom of action in negotiating with you, Mr. President. I don’t have to concern myself with political opposition or public opinion. But you do. You must prepare your country for the compromises a settlement of the Berlin question will require, and I am willing to give you time to do that.”253

Salinger thus took at face value the term employed in Khrushchev’s message, a straightforward approach which contrasts sharply with the more subtle suggestion by Sulzberger that Khrushchev’s references to “difficulties” could best be understood as Aesopian language referring to his own position. Perhaps it would be fair to say that both interpretations contained some truth:

247Ibid., pp. 718-19.
248Salinger, p. 190.
249Ibid., p. 191. Bolshakov at this time was editor-in-chief of USSR and was later named a director of radio and television for the Novosti news agency. Ibid., p. xv.
250Ibid., p. 191.
251Ibid.
252Ibid.
253Ibid., p. 192.
Khrushchev knew that both he and Kennedy faced internal "difficulties" which stood in the way of agreement between them.

Kharlamov stressed the need for speedy action: "There was intense pressure on Khrushchev from within the Communist bloc to recognize East Germany. But apart from that, the danger of a major military incident in Berlin was too great to delay a settlement very much longer."\footnote{Ibid.; emphasis supplied. Salinger's reference to Soviet "recognition" of East Germany is a slip for "conclusion of a peace treaty" with the GDR.} To conclude his message, Kharlamov "... had one final word from Khrushchev. 'He hopes your President's speech to the UN won't be another warlike ultimatum like the one on July 25. He didn't like that at all.'\footnote{Ibid.}"

After Kharlamov had delivered his message he and Salinger settled down to a friendly discussion over scotch-and-sodas. Salinger complained of the Russians' failure to follow through on their promise to rebroadcast the Soviet-American television debate on freedom of the press (above, p. 34), to which Kharlamov somewhat lamely replied that the tapes sent for rebroadcast had proved to be incompatible with Soviet equipment. He promised, however, that "When you come to the Soviet Union with your family to visit Adzhubei next summer, I will put you on live television and you can say whatever you want."\footnote{Ibid.} Kharlamov added that there was "great interest" in Moscow with regard to Salinger's proposal that Kennedy and Khrushchev engage in a series of TV "debates," and that "he would have an answer for me soon."\footnote{Ibid., p. 193.}

Salinger then brought up the question of interviews in the foreign press as a vehicle for the expression of policy views:

All the Russian Premier had to do to command a direct audience of millions in this country was to invite an American correspondent to his office. In addition to Sulzberger, Walter Lippmann and Drew Pearson had been given recent interviews and all received tremendous circulation in the American press. But until now the Kremlin had never permitted a Soviet journalist to interview President Kennedy. I told Kharlamov the time had come for a little reciprocity. JFK was entirely willing to receive a prominent Russian reporter. When could he expect one?\footnote{Ibid.}

Kharlamov demurred: "It would be most difficult. You have chosen a very bad time to ask."\footnote{The immediate difficulty, it appeared, lay in the State Department's alleged refusal to grant visas to fifteen Soviet correspondents who had been scheduled to cover the U.N. General Assembly.} The immediate difficulty, it appeared, lay in the State Department's alleged refusal to grant visas to fifteen Soviet correspondents who had been scheduled to cover the U.N. General Assembly.\footnote{For Soviet comment on this incident, see Pravda, Sept. 28, 1961, p. 6; CDSP, XIII/39, p. 21.}
In return for Salinger's promise to try to clear up the problem of the correspondents, Kharlamov agreed to work on the possibility of a Soviet interview with President Kennedy. An ideal interviewer, he suggested, would be Khrushchev's son-in-law, Adzhubei, editor of Izvestia.

On the night of Salinger's talk with Kharlamov, Kennedy, according to Salinger, "... had gone to a Broadway play, was having a late supper with friends, and wouldn't return to the hotel until after midnight."261

On his return to his hotel Kennedy called Salinger at 1 A.M. and then listened to the message from Khrushchev. Salinger asserts flatly that: "He [Kennedy] hadn't heard from Sulzberger. This was his first knowledge of Khrushchev's message and he had me repeat the key points a number of times."262 Salinger quotes Kennedy as saying: "There's only one way you can read it [Khrushchev's message]. If Khrushchev is ready to listen to our views on Germany, he's not going to recognize the Ulbricht regime—not this year, at least—and that's good news."263 Kennedy then talked by telephone with Rusk before dictating "... a memorandum that I [Salinger] was to read to Kharlamov the next morning."264

Knowing from the Khrushchev-Sulzberger message that what Khrushchev had in mind was a new U.S.-Soviet agreement on Laos as a prelude to an accord on Berlin (a fact of which Salinger was ignorant), Kennedy made this the central point in his reply: "The President was cautiously receptive to Khrushchev's proposal for an early summit on Berlin. But first, he said, there should be a demonstration of Soviet good faith in Laos... [He] told Khrushchev that if the Kremlin was now willing to honor its commitments in Laos, a summit on the much more difficult question of Germany would be more likely to produce significant agreement. We would be watching and waiting."265

Before turning in for the night, Kennedy, according to Salinger, "... took a long look at his UN speech. He didn't change a word. It was already moderate in tone—not at all the 'ultimatum' Khrushchev was afraid it might be."266

Shortly before he left for the United Nations on the morning of Monday, September 25, Kennedy "... gave his approval to the typescript of his memorandum to the Russian leader. A half hour later, I [Salinger] read it to Kharlamov and Bolshakov in my room."267

Salinger meanwhile had been able to clear up the matter of the visas for the fifteen Soviet correspondents: "I informed Kharlamov of this fact and said I would now expect him to follow through with Adzhubei on the interview with

261Salinger, p. 191.
262Ibid., p. 193.
263Ibid.
264Ibid., pp. 193-94.
265Ibid., p. 194.
266Ibid.
267Ibid., p. 195.
President Kennedy. He said he would but couldn’t resist a final swipe at State [Department] for its ‘stupidity’ in not admitting the correspondents in the first place.”

Thus the groundwork was laid for Kennedy’s first venture into the novel realm of policy exposition by means of the journalists and press of a foreign nation.

Salinger’s account of his confidential meetings with the Russians is inaccurate as to dates and requires emendation before it can be fitted into the sequence of events. Kennedy, as we saw earlier (above, p. 234), flew from Washington to Hyannis Port on Friday, September 22, and spent the next two days there, and therefore could not have arrived in New York with Salinger on the 22nd.

Salinger’s testimony, however, is too important to be discarded simply because of its inaccuracies. It can be salvaged if we assume that his first discussion with Kharlamov took place on the night of Sunday, September 24, i.e., the night before Kennedy was to deliver his speech to the United Nations. Kennedy, as we know, was in New York that evening, having just flown in from Hyannis Port. Salinger, we must assume, is in error not only as to the date but also in stating that he came to New York with the President. If in fact he came a day earlier, he could have received the call from Bolshakov on Saturday, September 23, and set up the appointment with Kharlamov for the following evening. It will be noticed, incidentally, that Salinger does not provide in any way for the events of Sunday the 24th, portraying Kennedy as going directly to the United Nations on the morning after he, Salinger, had delivered the message from Khrushchev.

Indications that the Soviet position on Berlin was softening had meanwhile reached the alert ears of Max Frankel, Washington reporter of the New York Times. The Soviets, Frankel wrote, had indicated “. . . in a number of quiet ways that their threat and deadline on Germany might be subject to another temporary delay. Communist diplomats were reported as saying that the West did not have to feel itself under an artificial ‘deadline’ if serious negotiations were undertaken. Khrushchev was also reported as saying that Western access might be guaranteed in a separate treaty between the two Germanys, and that the treaty could be registered with the UN.”

In his address to the U.N. General Assembly on September 25, Kennedy brought together all the major foreign policy issues and concerns of his administration in an organized, logical manner. In direct and forthright language, largely devoid of propaganda or rhetoric, the speech was one of Kennedy’s most effective and helped establish his reputation as a world leader.


The President opened with simple words of grief for Dag Hammarskjöld, coupled with an affirmation of his abiding faith in the cause for which the Secretary-General had lived and died—strengthening of the United Nations as an instrument for world peace and security. The alternative, Kennedy warned, was war, and in the modern age, war could no longer be limited to the great powers: “For a nuclear disaster, spread by wind and water and fear, could well engulf the great and the small, the rich and the poor, the committed and the uncommitted alike. Mankind must put an end to war—or war will put an end to mankind.”270

The chief immediate threat to the United Nations, Kennedy maintained, lay in the proposal (he did not specifically identify it as a Soviet proposal) for a three-man executive to replace the single general secretary. Shrewdly, Kennedy built his case not on the interests of the United States as a great power but on the need for a strong, effective executive to provide security for the smaller nations: “Whatever advantages such a plan [the troika proposal] may hold out to my own country, as one of the great powers, we reject it. For we far prefer world law, in the age of self-determination, to world war, in the age of mass extermination.”271

Kennedy then summarized the new U.S. program for “general and complete disarmament under effective international control,” prefaced by a warning of the dire situation in which humanity found itself: “Today, every inhabitant of this planet must contemplate the day when this planet may no longer be habitable. Every man, woman and child lives under a nuclear sword of Damocles, hanging by the slenderest of threads, capable of being cut at any moment by accident or miscalculation or by madness. The weapons of war must be abolished before they abolish us.”272

Noting the newly signed Soviet–U.S. accord on disarmament principles as an encouraging augury, Kennedy nevertheless warned that “... we are well aware that all issues of principle are not settled, and that principles alone are not enough.”273

The new U.S. disarmament program, he continued, represented a challenge to the Soviet Union “... to go beyond agreement in principle to reach agreement on actual plans.”274 The U.S. plan, he said,

... moves to bridge the gap between those who insist on a gradual approach and those who talk only of the final and total achievement. It would create machinery to keep the peace as it destroys the machinery of war. It would proceed through balanced and safeguarded stages designed to give no state a military advantage over another. It would place the final responsibility for verification and control where it belongs, not with one’s adversary

272Ibid., p. 620.
273Ibid.
274Ibid.
or one's self, but in an international organization within the framework of the United Nations. It would assure that indispensable condition of disarmament—true inspection—and apply it in stages proportionate to the stage of disarmament. It would cover delivery systems as well as weapons. It would ultimately halt their production as well as their testing, their transfer as well as their possession. It would achieve, under the eyes of an international disarmament organization, a steady reduction in force, both nuclear and conventional, until it had abolished all armies and all weapons except those needed for internal order and a new United Nations Peace Force. And it starts that process now, today, even as the talks begin.275

"The logical place to begin," Kennedy urged, would be a nuclear test ban. In addition, the new U.S. disarmament plan provided a number of proposals "to halt the spread of these terrible weapons, to halt the contamination of the air, to halt the spiralling nuclear arms race . . .":

—First, signing the test-ban treaty by all nations. This can be done now. Test ban negotiations need not and should not await general disarmament.
—Second, stopping the production of fissionable materials for use in weapons, and preventing their transfer to any nation now lacking in nuclear weapons.
—Third, prohibiting the transfer of control over nuclear weapons to states that do not own them.
—Fourth, keeping nuclear weapons from seeding new battlegrounds in outer space.
—Fifth, gradually destroying existing nuclear weapons and converting their materials to peaceful uses; and
—Finally, halting the unlimited testing and production of strategic nuclear delivery vehicles, and gradually destroying them as well.276

To provide security in a disarmed world, Kennedy called on all member nations of the United Nations to strengthen the U.N. Emergency Force, and pledged that for its part the United States would "... suggest a series of steps to improve the United Nations' machinery for the peaceful settlement of disputes—for on-the-spot fact-finding, mediation and adjudication—for extending the rule of international law."277

The rule of law, Kennedy urged, must be extended to outer space. Hailing the "brave cosmonauts of the Soviet Union" (significantly, one of the few passages in the entire speech in which he referred directly to the Soviets), Kennedy called for an extension

... of the United Nations Charter to the limits of man's exploration in the universe, reserving outer space for peaceful use, prohibiting weapons of mass destruction in space or on celestial bodies, and opening the mysteries

275bid., pp. 620–21.
276bid., p. 622.
277bid.
and benefits of space to every nation. We shall propose further cooperative efforts between all nations in weather prediction and eventually in weather control. We shall propose, finally, a global system of communications satellites linking the whole world in telegraph and telephone and radio and television.278

Turning his attention from outer space to the earth itself, Kennedy advocated cooperative efforts within the framework of the United Nations to develop the earth's resources, "... to enable all nations, however diverse in their systems and beliefs, to become in fact as well as in law free and equal nations,"279

In the most polemical section of his speech Kennedy took up the challenging issue of colonialism, an issue to which Soviet spokesmen had given great emphasis in their foreign policy. "We agree," said Kennedy, "... with those who say that colonialism is a key issue in this Assembly."280 But he immediately went on to call for "full discussion ... of that issue." First, he said, the record showed that great progress had already been made in this area: "... since the close of World War II, a worldwide declaration of independence has transformed nearly 1 billion people and 9 million square miles into 42 free and independent states. Less than 2 percent of the world's population now lives in 'dependent' territories."281

As to the "remaining problems of traditional colonialism which still confront this body," Kennedy predicted that they "will be solved with patience, good will and determination," and he pledged that the "sympathy and support" of the United States would be extended to "that continuing tide of self-determination which runs so strong."282 But the United States, once itself a colony, knows from experience what colonialism means, the President continued: "... the exploitation and subjugation of the weak by the powerful, of the many by the few, of the governed who have given no consent to be governed, whatever their continent, their class, or their color,"283 And colonialism in this broad sense, he charged, still exists in "... the Communist empire where a population far larger than that officially termed 'dependent' lives under governments installed by foreign troops instead of free institutions—under a system which knows only one party and one belief—which suppresses free debate, and free elections, and free newspapers, and free books and free trade unions—and which builds a wall to keep truth a stranger and its own citizens prisoners."284 Let the debate on colonialism include these areas too,

278Ibid., pp. 622–23.
279Ibid., p. 623.
280Ibid.
281Ibid., p. 623.
282Ibid.
283Ibid.
284Ibid.
he urged: "Let us debate colonialism in full—and apply the principle of free choice and the practice of free plebiscites in every corner of the globe."285

Kennedy concluded his speech with a brief analysis of "two threats to peace." First, "The smoldering coals of war in Southeast Asia": "South Viet-Nam is already under attack—sometimes by a single assassin, sometimes by a band of guerrillas, recently by full battalions. The peaceful borders of Burma, Cambodia, and India have been repeatedly violated. And the peaceful people of Laos are in danger of losing the independence they gained not so long ago."286

Explicitly rejecting the argument on which the Soviets based their military aid to North Vietnam, Kennedy declared that: "No one can call these 'wars of liberation.' For these are free countries living under their own governments. Nor are these aggressions any less real because men are knifed in their homes and not shot in the fields of battle."287 The problem, he maintained, concerned all the United Nations: "The very simple question confronting the world community is whether measures can be devised to protect the small and the weak from such tactics. For if they are successful in Laos and South Viet-Nam, the gates will be opened wide."288

Disclaiming any special U.S. interests in Southeast Asia—"The United States seeks for itself no base, no territory, no special position in this area of any kind"—Kennedy reaffirmed his support for the concept of a neutral Laos on which he and Khrushchev had agreed at Vienna. But peace in Southeast Asia was not yet in sight: ". . . the negotiations over Laos are reaching a crucial stage. The cease-fire is at best precarious. The rainy season is coming to an end. Laotian territory is being used to infiltrate South Viet-Nam. The world community must recognize—and all those who are involved—that this potent threat to Laotian peace and freedom is indivisible from all other threats to their own."289

The Berlin crisis formed the final substantive subject dealt with in Kennedy's speech. Without naming the Soviet Union, he made it clear that in his view the crisis had its real origin in Soviet actions and policies: "If there is a crisis it is because an existing peace is under threat, because an existing island of free people is under pressure, because solemn agreements are being treated with indifference. Established international rights are being threatened with unilateral usurpation. Peaceful circulation has been interrupted by barbed wire and concrete blocks."290

Kennedy made it clear that the basic issue was not (as Soviet spokesmen had been repeating ad nauseam) the Soviet proposal to sign a peace treaty

286Jbid., p. 624.
287Jbid.
288Jbid.
289Jbid.
290Jbid.
with East Germany: “It is absurd to allege that we are threatening a war merely to prevent the Soviet Union and East Germany from signing a so-called ‘treaty’ of peace. The Western Allies are not concerned with any paper arrangements the Soviets may wish to make with a regime of their own creation, on territory occupied by their own troops and governed by their own agents. No such action can affect either our rights or our responsibilities.”

“If there is a dangerous crisis in Berlin,” he continued, “—and there is—it is because of threats against the vital interests and the deep commitments of the Western Powers, and the freedom of West Berlin.” But there was no real need for the Berlin crisis, Kennedy maintained:

The elementary fact about this crisis is that it is unnecessary. The elementary tools for a peaceful settlement are to be found in the charter. Under its law, agreements are to be kept, unless changed by all those who made them. Established rights are to be respected. The political disposition of peoples should rest upon their own wishes, freely expressed in plebiscites or free elections. If there are legal problems, they can be solved by legal means. If there is a threat of force, it must be rejected. If there is desire for change, it must be a subject for negotiation and if there is negotiation, it must be rooted in mutual respect and concern for the rights of others.

In words which strongly implied flexibility and a willingness to reach new international arrangements for Germany and Berlin, Kennedy continued: “We are committed to no rigid formula. We seek no perfect solution. We recognize that troops and tanks can, for a time, keep ‘a nation divided against its will, however unwise that policy may seem to us. But we believe a peaceful agreement is possible which protects the freedom of West Berlin and allied presence and access, while recognizing the historic and legitimate interests of others in assuring European security.”

For all its somberness, Kennedy’s speech to this point had been straightforward and matter-of-fact. In its concluding passages, however, he resorted to apocalyptic terms which make plain the intense strain which the international crisis through which he had been living had imposed on him: “The events and decisions of the next ten months may well decide the fate of man for the next ten thousand years. There will be no avoiding those events. There will be no appeal from these decisions. And we in this hall shall be remembered either as part of the generation that turned this planet into a flaming funeral pyre or the generation that met its vow ‘to save succeeding generations from the scourge of war’.” To help avoid disaster, Kennedy pledged “every effort this Nation possesses”: “...I pledge you that we shall neither commit nor provoke aggression, that we shall neither flee nor invoke the threat of force,

291bid.
292ibid., pp. 624–25.
293ibid., p. 625.
294ibid.
295ibid.
that we shall never negotiate out of fear, [but that] we shall never fear to negotiate.” 296 He closed with an eloquent appeal to the members of the United Nations to save mankind: “Ladies and gentlemen of this Assembly, the decision is ours. Never have the nations of the world had so much to lose, or so much to gain. Together we shall save our planet, or together we shall perish in its flames. Save it we can—and save it we must—and then shall we earn the eternal thanks of mankind and, as peacemakers, the eternal blessing of God.” 297

In linking the problems of Laos and Berlin in the final section of his speech, was Kennedy hinting at a connection between them, knowing that Khrushchev had already done so in his confidential message sent via Sulzberger? At least one of the President’s listeners thought it likely. In a commentary on the speech, Sulzberger wrote: “By inference, the President connected the troubles in Laos with the Berlin crisis when he spoke of the ‘smoldering coals of war in Southeast Asia.’ This implies to Mr. Khrushchev that the atmosphere would be far more favorable for a German settlement were it preceded by a Laotian settlement. And Mr. Khrushchev seems to recognize this fact. He recently implied readiness to arrange a peace in that tormented kingdom.”298

Thus without actually disclosing that Khrushchev had made a confidential approach to Kennedy, Sulzberger managed to put on the record the substance of Khrushchev’s proposal and thus do his part in furthering Soviet–American understanding.

* * *

Among those who appeared to be totally unmoved by the President’s words was Soviet Foreign Minister Andrei Gromyko. When he in his turn addressed the General Assembly on the day following Kennedy’s speech, Gromyko showed no sign whatever of recognizing Soviet responsibility for the Berlin crisis. “The true reasons for the heightening of international tensions,” he maintained, “... must be sought in the aggressive nature of the policies of the powers of the NATO bloc.” 299

Gromyko offered a lengthy but one-sided analysis of the situation in the two Germanys, winding up with an uncompromising presentation of the Soviet formula for a German settlement—just as though Kozlov had never signaled the relaxation of the Soviet deadline on signature of a German peace treaty: “Where then is the way out of the existing situation and how can the threat of war in connection with the present situation in Germany and in West Berlin, where there still exists the occupation regime which has long since outlived itself, be staved off? There is a way out. The way out is to sign already in 1961 a German peace treaty and to normalize the situation in West Berlin on

296 Ibid.
297 Ibid., p. 626.
299 Documents on Germany, p. 813.
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its basis by turning it into a demilitarized free city and promptly to call a peace conference for this purpose."\(^{300}\)

"These," Gromyko added redundantly, "are the well-known proposals of the Soviet Government."

Heartened perhaps by Gromyko's intransigent stand, the official East German newspaper, *Neues Deutschland*, on September 27 warned the Western powers that: "Whoever wants something from the G.D.R., including agreements on access routes to West Berlin, must negotiate with us."\(^{301}\)

In its report on the President's speech to the United Nations, *Pravda* limited itself in the main to a factual summary, with frequent quotations from Kennedy's actual words.\(^{302}\) An article in the Soviet army newspaper, however, was highly critical of Kennedy's speech; his statement that war must no longer be a way of settling international disputes and his challenge to the Soviet Union to enter into a "peace race," the article charged, "... do not tally at all with what actually goes on in the country [the United States]. At every turn, an objective observer here will encounter a feverish arms race, troop maneuvers and deafening militarist propaganda."\(^{303}\)

The article portrayed the Pentagon, not President Kennedy, as the actual master of U.S. policy: "The 'ultras' of the Pentagon, disregarding the new winds in international relations, as well as the new correlation of forces in the international arena, tirelessly shout about a supposed threat to the Western powers in connection with the proposal to conclude a peace treaty with Germany. Everything indicates that the Pentagon, methodically and in a planned manner, is preparing for a rocket and nuclear war."\(^{304}\)

The article devoted particular attention to Kennedy's portrayal of South Vietnam as threatened by external aggression, a charge which it dismissed as "an old myth that the reactionary U.S. press has been spreading for many years," and which had "not a grain of truth in it."\(^{305}\) The true situation in Vietnam, the writers maintained, was that: "The American imperialists in effect have transformed South Vietnam into their own colony. With American help, the butchers are exterminating fighters for the independence and national unity of the country."\(^{306}\)

On September 29 Pierre Salinger returned from a round of golf in Newport to find a message waiting for him from Georgi Bolshakov in New York. Bol-

\(^{300}\)Ibid., p. 817; emphasis supplied.

\(^{301}\)NYT, Sept. 28, 1961, p. 1.

\(^{302}\)Pravda, Sept. 27, 1961, p. 5; CDSP, XIII/39, p. 20.

\(^{303}\)Lt. Colonel A. Kascheev and Major S. Vladimirov, "What the U.S. President did not mention.—Colonialists 'pacify' South Vietnam," *Krasnaia Zvezda*, Sept. 29, 1961, p. 4; CDSP, XIII/43, p. 27.

\(^{304}\)Ibid.; emphasis supplied.

\(^{305}\)Ibid., p. 28.

\(^{306}\)Ibid.
shakov, contacted by phone, "... said it was urgent that he see me immediately and he was willing to charter a plane and fly up that evening."

To avoid the complications that the sudden appearance in Newport of a Russian editor might cause, Salinger put off the meeting until his return to New York the following day. There, on the afternoon of the 30th, Bolshakov brought Salinger a twenty-six-page personal letter to Kennedy which Khrushchev had sent from his Black Sea vacation retreat on September 29. While the text of the letter is not available, two of the men who were privileged to read it, Sorensen and Salinger, have provided summaries of it which serve to characterize its content and general tone. According to Salinger, "... Khrushchev's first letter was a direct response [to Kennedy] on Laos but sections of it also dealt with the high[ly] volatile situation in Berlin. Khrushchev was now ready to back off from the unconciliatory positions he had taken at Vienna. He saw no reason why negotiations in good faith could not produce settlements in both Southeast Asia and Germany. He was willing, if JFK was, to take another look at positions that had been frozen hard through fifteen years of cold war."

As to the tone of the letter, Salinger reports:

... it was remarkable not only for its contents but for its candor. In contrast to the sterile gobbledygook that passes for high-level diplomatic correspondence, Khrushchev wrote with almost peasant simplicity and directness. He said, in effect, that you and I, Mr. President, are the leaders of two nations that are on a collision course. But because we are reasonable men, we agree that war between us is unthinkable. We have no choice but to put our heads together and find ways to live in peace.

Sorensen's account in general confirms that of Salinger and provides some additional details:

Khrushchev had planned to write, his first letter said, earlier in the summer after Kennedy's meeting in Washington with his son-in-law and a Soviet press officer. But Kennedy's July [25] speech to the nation on Berlin had been so belligerent in its nature that it led to an exchange of militant actions taken, he said, under pressure in both countries which must be restrained. He emphasized almost pridefully the special burdens resting on their shoulders as the leaders of the two most influential and mighty states. It might be useful to have a purely informal, personal correspondence, he wrote, which would by-pass the foreign office bureaucracies in both countries, omit the usual propaganda for public consumption and state positions without a backward glance at the press. If Kennedy did not agree, he could consider that this first letter did not exist. The Chairman [Khrushchev] in any event would not refer to the correspondence publicly. The letter, which

307 Salinger, pp. 197-98.
308 Sorensen, p. 552.
309 Salinger, pp. 198-99.
310 Ibid., p. 199.
had opened "Dear Mr. President," was signed: "Accept my respects, N. Khrushchev, Chairman of the Council of Ministers of the U.S.S.R."

Acutely aware of the opportunities as well as the dangers which this overture presented (Sorensen quotes Bohlen as saying, "The answer to this letter may be the most important letter the President will ever write."), Kennedy took two weeks to draft a reply. In it he adopted the same familiar tone used by Khrushchev. According to Sorensen,

... he opened with a chatty note about his retreat, the children and their cousins, and the opportunity to get a clearer and quieter perspective away from the din of Washington. He welcomed the idea of a private correspondence, though making clear that the Secretary of State and a few others would be privy to it. A personal, informal but meaningful exchange of views in frank, realistic and fundamental terms, he wrote, could usefully supplement the more formal and official channels. Inasmuch as the letters would be private, and could never convert the other, they could also, he added, be free from the polemics of the "Cold War" debate. That debate would, of course, proceed, but their messages would be directed only to each other.

The president "kept his letter cordial and hopeful," Sorensen notes, "... with a highly personal tone and repeated first-person references (which were rare in his speeches). He agreed with the Chairman's emphasis on their special obligation to the world to prevent another war. They were not personally responsible for the events at the conclusion of World War II which led to the present situation in Berlin, he added, but they would be held responsible if they were unable to deal peacefully with that situation."

The tone of Kennedy's reply, like that of Khrushchev's letter, was easy and informal: "Having opened with 'Dear Mr. Chairman,' he closed with best wishes from his family to Khrushchev's and the expression of his deep hope that, through this exchange of letters and otherwise, relations between the two nations might be improved, making concrete progress toward the realization of a just and enduring peace. That, he said, was their greatest joint responsibility and their greatest opportunity."

Thus was inaugurated a unique private correspondence between the world's two most powerful political leaders. Normal diplomatic channels were bypassed, Salinger or another trusted aid of Kennedy and Bolshakov continuing to serve as intermediaries. Khrushchev, Salinger writes, "... would always initiate the exchange of letters. If I was in Washington, I would have a call from Bolshakov, who would tell me simply that 'there is a matter of

311 Sorensen, p. 552; emphasis supplied.
312 Ibid., p. 553.
313 Ibid.
314 Ibid.
315 Ibid.
urgency.' We would agree on a rendezvous, either on a Washington street corner or in a bar. If I wasn't available, the Russian would contact the President's brother, Bob, Ted Sorensen, or another White House staffer. When I was the courier and JFK's answer was ready, I would call Bolshakov and arrange to deliver it to him."

At his meeting with Salinger in New York on September 30, Bolshakov also reported that Khrushchev had approved the proposal for an interview of Kennedy by a prominent Soviet journalist: "... either Aleksei Adzhubei or Pavel Satyukov of Pravda would fly over for that purpose within the next two months."

Salinger was cautious: "I told Bolshakov we would expect the interview to run in full in the Soviet Union, and after agreement on our part that the Russian translation was accurate. He saw no difficulties."

Taken in conjunction with the first letter to Kennedy from Khrushchev, the latter's approval of the interview plan did indeed mark a turning point in Soviet-American relations. While it was still too early for anyone in a position of responsibility in Washington to breathe easily—there was to be an acute flare-up of the Berlin crisis in mid-October—it was apparent that a definite shift in the Soviet attitude had occurred and that in this sense, Kharlamov's words, "The storm in Berlin is over," had some validity.

In addition to its great substantive value, Khrushchev's confidential letter of September 29 to Kennedy is useful for the clue it provides as to its author's whereabouts at this time, since Soviet communications media provided strikingly spare indications on the subject. The last date in September 1961 recorded in the contemporary Soviet press for Khrushchev's public appearance in Moscow is the 21st, when he accompanied a group of his colleagues to the airport to see off Cuban President Dr. Osvaldo Dorticos. A few days later two new ambassadors arrived in Moscow, but were unable to see Khrushchev: the ambassador from Pakistan on September 24 and the ambassador from Mexico on the 25th.

While Khrushchev's location and activities during the last nine days of September are obscure, those of Kozlov were extensively reported in the Soviet press. On the 22nd he and the other members of the delegation to the North Korean Party Congress returned to Moscow from the Far East and were met at the airport by a group which included two candidate members of the Presidium—Mzhavanadze and Voronov. The next press reference to Kozlov

316Salinger, p. 200.
317Ibid., p. 199.
318Ibid.
319Pravda, Sept. 22, 1961, p. 1. Other members of the group at the airport were Ignatov, Kosyg in, Suslov, and Shelepin. On the same day Brezhnev left Moscow for a state visit to Finland. Ibid.
came on the 27th, when he took part in a conference of the Moscow city party committee, along with Kosygin, Kuusinen, Poliansky, Suslov, Mme. Furtsева, Shvernik, and Voronov. On September 29 Kozlov was unusually active: he participated in a conference of the Moscow oblast party committee, along with Ignatov, Kosygin, Kuusinen, Poliansky, Suslov, Mme. Furtsева, Shvernik, Pospelov, and Grishin and on the same day delivered an important speech at a reception at the Chinese People's Republic embassy in honor of the twelfth anniversary of the establishment of the CPR. (We shall consider presently the substance of his speech.) When Brezhnev returned to Moscow on September 30 at the conclusion of his state visit to Finland, Kozlov was on hand to meet him at the airport, along with Ignatov, Kosygin, Kuusinen, Poliansky, Suslov, Mme. Furtsева, Shvernik, Pospelov, and Grishin.

During this same period the only indications provided by the Soviet press of Khrushchev's presence in Moscow were two telegrams: one to Tunisian President Habib Bourguiba, dated "Moscow, the Kremlin, September 25," which was not, however, published until October 5; the other, dated "Moscow, the Kremlin, September 30, 1961," signed by Khrushchev and Brezhnev, conveying congratulations to the Chinese People's Republic on its twelfth anniversary. (On the 25th Khrushchev also sent a long message to Japanese Premier Ikeda, replying to one dated August 26.)

Unlike Khrushchev's telegram of August 16 to Sukarno which we have cited as evidence for his presence in the Kremlin on that date (above, p. 142), the telegrams of September 25 and 30 do not carry the same conviction, primarily because there is no evidence from the sphere of Soviet policy formulation which would serve to confirm that Khrushchev actually was in the Kremlin on those dates. The long delay in publication of the September 25 telegram looks suspicious. Even stranger are the circumstances surrounding the telegram of September 30. If Khrushchev and Brezhnev both signed a telegram of congratulation to the Chinese on that date, why was Khrushchev the only member of the Presidium who failed to go to the airport to meet Brezhnev on his return from Finland, and—more important—why did he boycott the reception at the CPR embassy?

Khrushchev's confidential letter to Kennedy, as we have seen, puts the Soviet Premier at Sochi on September 29. It is reasonable to suppose that the earlier confidential message to the President, sent orally via Kharlamov on the 22nd or 23rd, originated at the same spot. If we throw out the two suspect

324 Ibid.
328 International Affairs (Moscow: Nov. 1961), pp. 6–8; place of origin not indicated.
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Telegrams of September 25 and 30 we are left with no evidence for Khrushchev's presence in Moscow between September 21 and October 6, when a message from Khrushchev was sent to Souvanna Phouma, signed and dated from the Kremlin. By October 9, Khrushchev's full operational presence back in the Kremlin was indicated by his reception of three ambassadors, those of Afghanistan and Mexico (who had been waiting since September 25) and the United Arab Republic.

It is noteworthy that in early October Khrushchev wrote a series of short letters to various kolkhoz members, congratulating them on their agricultural achievements. Taken as a group, these letters indicate that Khrushchev's mind in early October was taken up with questions of internal policy.

To sum up, it seems highly probable that Khrushchev was absent from the Kremlin from September 22 to October 6. We know that Kozlov was active during at least part of this period, both in the fields of internal and foreign policy. There is no recorded occasion during this period in which Khrushchev and Kozlov were seen in public together. Was this the result of an agreed division of labor, or did it reflect the operation of some kind of exclusion principle, some mutual antipathy, which led Khrushchev voluntarily to absent himself from the Kremlin during Kozlov's presence there?

The scarcity of any kind of hard evidence for Khrushchev's whereabouts during this period points to the conclusion that his "vacation" this time, unlike that in August, was not one decreed in advance by the Presidium, but resulted from his own decision not to take part in the proceedings of the collective leadership at this time. Yet at the same time he made no important statements and took no actions in the field of foreign policy. The result was a virtual paralysis of decision-making in the collective leadership during a crucial phase of the Berlin crisis. It was clear that Khrushchev was lying low, perhaps preparing himself for some dramatic move at the now imminent Twenty-second Party Congress.

In his speech at the CPR embassy reception on September 29 Kozlov began by paying fulsome tribute to Khrushchev: "Closely united around their own native Communist Party and its Leninist Central Committee headed by the tireless fighter for the happiness of the peoples, the true Leninist N. S. Khrushchev, the Soviet people are performing noteworthy deeds, are accomplishing an upsurge of work in the name of the victory of communism."

In the main body of his speech, however, Kozlov expressed views on Soviet foreign policy and international relations sharply at variance with those known to be held by Khrushchev. "In the settlement of questions of contemporary international relations," said Kozlov, "... the role of the Chinese People's

330 Khrushchev, Kommunist, 1: 355.
Republic is great. Its authority has grown immeasurably in the entire world. After all, it is clear that without the participation of the C.P.R. it is impossible to settle important international problems today.”

To Khrushchev, by contrast, it was only the United States and the Soviet Union which really counted in world politics; “We are the strongest countries in the world,” he had told Sulzberger (above, p. 205), “and if we unite for peace there can be no war.” The same thought, which was basic to Khrushchev’s world outlook, evidently found expression in his confidential letter to Kennedy on September 29, the same day on which Kozlov affirmed that the CPR’s participation in the settlement of “important international problems” was indispensable.

**Gromyko’s talks with Rusk and Kennedy**

On September 14 TASS announced that Soviet Foreign Minister Gromyko, who was to leave shortly for New York to attend the fifteenth session of the U.N. General Assembly, was “ready to enter into a relevant exchange of opinions” with his American counterpart, Secretary of State Dean Rusk (above, p. 216). The idea of a series of exploratory talks at the foreign minister level had been suggested by Kennedy in his reply to the message from the Belgrade conference of nonaligned nations; the TASS announcement of September 14 was made in direct response to this suggestion.

While the British showed alacrity in endorsing the American bid for exploratory talks, the other principal nations in the Western alliance, France and West Germany, greeted the idea with a notable lack of enthusiasm. At a meeting of the four Western foreign ministers in Washington on September 15–16, an agreement was nevertheless reached “that an effort should be made to ascertain if there exists a reasonable basis for negotiations with the Soviet Union.”

It was as the authorized representative of the Western alliance, therefore, rather than merely that of the United States alone, that Rusk held his three meetings with Gromyko on September 21, 27, and 30. This fact was explicitly acknowledged by British authorities when Gromyko held a separate discussion with British Foreign Secretary Lord Home on September 28. According to a report in the *New York Times*: “British sources emphasized that Lord Home’s talks with Mr. Gromyko were quite separate from those between

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333Ibid.; emphasis supplied.

334On French coolness, see *SIA. 1961*, p. 263, citing a speech by French Foreign Minister Couve de Murville, *Le Monde*, Sept. 19, 1961. The West German position on negotiations throughout the Berlin crisis was close to that of the French.

335*Documents on Germany*, p. 801.

336For contemporary press reports of these meetings, see (1) *NYT*, Sept. 22, 1961, pp. 1, 3 (Thomas Hamilton); (2) ibid., Sept. 28, 1961, pp. 1, 9 (unsigned); (3) ibid., Oct. 1, 1971, pp. 1, 4 (Thomas Hamilton); and (4) ibid., Oct. 6, 1961, p. 4 (Robert Doty). *SIA. 1961*, p. 266, misdates the third meeting Oct. 3.
Mr. Gromyko and Mr. Rusk, and that the latter constituted the principal Western effort to ascertain Soviet intentions."  

Neither Soviet nor U.S. sources have published any official records of the Rusk–Gromyko talks, nor were joint communiqués issued during the talks or at their conclusion, a fact which in itself testifies to their barrenness. The resulting unsatisfactory situation with respect to historical analysis has been characterized by the *Survey of International Affairs* in words which still (1972) remain true: ‘The conversations were to be so surrounded by rumours, so bedevilled by *ballons d’essai* and leakages, so confused by reports put out by non-participants in the hope of seeing them denied, that it is almost impossible to give an accurate account of them at this stage.’

Despite the paucity of solid information on the talks, however, their general outline is tolerably clear. At a news conference on October 18 Rusk provided some light on the substance, if not the details, of the talks. Noting that in his opening speech to the Twenty-second CPSU Congress Khrushchev had indicated that the Soviets would not insist on the conclusion of a peace treaty with Germany in 1961, Rusk commented, ‘This confirms publicly what has been said in private talks, including our talks with Mr. Gromyko.’ In answer to a question at the conference, Rusk said: ‘I think that we have indicated publicly, as well as privately, that the framework of negotiation to which the Soviets most frequently refer is too narrow, that a discussion about a peacetime treaty with Germany and a solution of the problem of West Berlin on that basis is too restrictive an agenda for serious discussions of the problems of Germany and Berlin.’

Sorensen adds a useful detail when he notes that in his talks with Gromyko, Rusk stressed that ‘... the West would not sign an agreement giving concessions [on Berlin] in exchange for nothing more than its present ill-defined rights. ‘That,’ he said, ‘would be buying the same horse twice’.’

While the three talks between Rusk and Gromyko produced absolutely no evidence of promising areas for negotiation, they were judged by the Americans to have been sufficiently worth while to warrant a meeting between Gromyko and President Kennedy before the Soviet Foreign Minister returned to Moscow on October 9. The substance of the discussion between Gromyko and Kennedy, which took place in the White House on October 6, is somewhat better known than is the case with regard to the Rusk–Gromyko talks, thanks to the fact that administration spokesmen, including the President himself,

340 *ibid.*, p. 748.
342 Sorensen, p. 599.
provided the press with reliable data on it.\textsuperscript{343} (That the press reports on the whole range of talks with Gromyko were substantially accurate was testified to by Kennedy in his press conference on October 11, when he stated that “a good deal of information on the talks has already been printed in the press,” and characterized the available information on them as “quite lucid and only slightly inaccurate.”)\textsuperscript{344}

Improving on the technique employed by Khrushchev at the Vienna meeting, Gromyko not only came to the White House prepared with a lengthy and dogmatic position paper but took up an entire hour—half of the time available for the meeting—to read it and have it translated.\textsuperscript{345} This left little scope for any genuine exchange of opinions on even an exploratory basis, and the meeting was no less barren than its predecessors. Kennedy summed up the situation in a homely simile predestined for inclusion in most historical accounts of the meeting: “You’ve offered to trade us an apple for an orchard,” he said. “We don’t do that in this country.” The remark evidently pleased him, for he later repeated it to “... close associates ... and said it seemed to him to summarize the present state of diplomacy over Berlin and Germany.”\textsuperscript{346}

Bearing in mind the confidential message from Khrushchev for which Sulzberger had served as courier, Kennedy linked a Soviet–U.S. agreement on Laos with the chances for a settlement in Berlin:

There was considerable discussion, too, of Laos and again the President conveyed to Premier Khrushchev his anxiety over developments there.

Mr. Kennedy made it quite plain that he considered the attempt to pacify and neutralize the Southeast Asian kingdom to be very important. ... It would be extremely helpful, Mr. Kennedy is reported to have declared, if the Soviet Union and the United States reach an equitable solution of the Laotian problem and in this way demonstrate their ability to negotiate in good faith. As in his United Nations speech two weeks ago, the President implied that a settlement in Southeast Asia was a kind of “test” of the two sides’ good faith that had an important bearing on the German problem as well.\textsuperscript{347}

To this Gromyko replied as graciously as his dour nature permitted, that “Moscow, too, was in favor of solving the Laos problem.”

On the crucial problem of Germany and Berlin, however, Gromyko showed absolutely no willingness to budge. Faced with the blank wall of Gromyko’s unresponsiveness, Kennedy strove to convey two points in particular: first, that the Western powers would not agree to negotiate on Berlin under the

\textsuperscript{343}See especially two reports by Max Frankel, \textit{NYT}, Oct. 7, 1961, pp. 1, 2, and Oct. 8, 1961, pp. 1, 3.


\textsuperscript{345}\textit{NYT}, Oct. 8, 1961, p. 1.


threat of a Soviet deadline for conclusion of a German peace treaty, and second, that Khrushchev "had embarked on a collision course in Berlin and would have to reverse engines to avoid disaster."348

The absence of reliable documentary evidence on Gromyko's talks with Rusk and Kennedy is made less critical for the historian by the simple and obvious fact that the talks did serve their primary purpose: to ascertain whether in fact any realistic basis existed for Soviet-Western negotiations on Berlin and Germany. The West, despite French foot-dragging, West German nervousness, and differences of opinion in the U.S. administration, was ready for serious negotiations; the Soviet Union was not. This fact, which stands out as the principal result of the talks, throws a revealing light on Soviet policy throughout the Berlin crisis of 1961. The will to negotiate had never been present on the Soviet side. There was only one Soviet position on Berlin, and it never varied, from the onset of the crisis to its muffled conclusion. Not negotiations but Western capitulation was the goal of the Soviet campaign in Berlin, and when it became clear to the Soviet leadership that the West could not be bluffed or intimidated, they simply called the campaign off, keeping their demands in readiness for revival at some later time.

On his way home from Washington, Gromyko stopped off in England, where he had a brief conversation with Prime Minister Macmillan. The result was simply to underline the result of Gromyko's talks in the United States: according to the New York Times' London correspondent, Gromyko "reiterated the standard Soviet position on Berlin" in a way which led Macmillan, following the talk, to remark that he did not believe that "any firm basis" for negotiations had emerged from the discussions between Gromyko and Western leaders.349 From London, Gromyko flew on to Moscow to report to the Soviet leadership, accompanied by his deputy, Vladimir S. Semyonov, a specialist on German affairs who had been present at the talks with Rusk and Kennedy.350

Timed to coincide with Gromyko's return to the Soviet capital were a number of other significant arrivals: from East Germany there came Marshal Ivan S. Konev, commander-in-chief of Soviet troops in East Germany, and Mikhail G. Pervukhin, Soviet ambassador to the GDR. Concerning these events, New York Times Moscow correspondent Seymour Topping reported that observers there believed that "... Premier Khrushchev had undertaken a major review of the Berlin crisis and recent efforts to find a basis for negotiations with the Western powers."351 Strengthening this belief, Topping reported, was the fact that "... the Soviet press and radio displayed reluctance to comment on the exchanges between the Soviet Union and the Western powers on Berlin and

348 Ibid.
350 For Semyonov's presence, see NYT, Sept. 22, 1961, p. 3, and Oct. 7, 1961, p. 2. Soviet Ambassador Mikhail Menshikov was also present at the Kennedy-Gromyko talk, as were Rusk and State Department Soviet specialist Foy Koyler (ibid.).
Germany. This is the usual indication here that a policy review is under way."352

The Soviets drop their demand for a three-man secretary-generalship in the United Nations

In sharp contrast to the Soviets' intransigence on Berlin was their unexpected reasonableness in another area of acute international tension—the search for a successor to Dag Hammarskjöld as secretary-general of the United Nations. Ever since Khrushchev in September 1960 had introduced the Soviet proposal for a troika to replace the single secretary-general, the Soviets had trumpeted this demand with all the fanfare appropriate to a major policy objective.

The Kennedy administration from the outset had promptly and vigorously taken up the cudgels in defense of the office of the secretary-general as defined in the U.N. Charter and as it was currently being exercised by Hammarskjöld. When Khrushchev, at a luncheon honoring Kwame Nkrumah on July 11, bellicosely backed up his demand for a troika with a blunt assertion of Soviet power, Rusk issued a prompt rejoinder warning that the United States would use its veto in the Security Council to block any attempt to carry out the Soviet demand.

During the summer and early autumn of 1961, Soviet scholars and journalists kept up a steady fire of criticism, both of Hammarskjöld himself and of the existing structure of the office he held.353

The Soviet campaign for a restructuring of the office of secretary-general was being furthered in the Soviet press at the very moment when word of Hammarskjöld's death reached Moscow (above, p. 233). At the United Nations itself, the report set off an impromptu Soviet proposal for "... rotating the Secretaryship among three under-secretaries representing the major blocs (Ralph J. Bunche, Georgi Arkadiev, and Chakravarthi Naramsimhan). Jointly the three would form a 'coordinating committee,' which would constitute a step in the direction of the troika. The proposal could presumably be carried out immediately—a clear advantage over the full Soviet reorganization proposals, which required Charter amendment."354 But this attempt to achieve a coup while the delegates at the United Nations were still stunned and bewildered by the news of Hammarskjöld's death was unsuccessful; before the Soviet proposal could be debated, an informal conference of medium-sized and small noncommunist states had reached agreement that a single successor to Hammarskjöld should be elected and that there should be no deviation from

352Ibid.


the established procedure of having the Security Council recommend the appointment of a new secretary-general to the General Assembly.\textsuperscript{355}

In Washington, the news of Hammarskjöld's death clinched Kennedy's decision to address the General Assembly and reaffirm U.S. support for the integrity of the United Nations against the Soviet challenge (above, p. 233). It was entirely appropriate, therefore, that in his September 25 speech to the General Assembly Kennedy included a passage uncompromisingly rejecting the \textit{troika} proposal: "However difficult it may be to fill Mr. Hammarskjöld's place, it can better be filled by one man rather than by three. Even the three horses of the Troika did not have three drivers, all going in different directions. They had only one—and so must the United Nations executive. To install a triumvirate, or any panel, or any rotating authority, in the United Nations administrative offices would replace order with anarchy, action with paralysis, confidence with confusion."\textsuperscript{356}

What made the President's stand on this issue appealing to the great majority of the members of the body he was addressing was that it was based not merely on arguments of administrative convenience or efficiency, or that it represented the views of one of the great powers. Kennedy skillfully and effectively portrayed preservation of the integrity of the office of secretary-general as a matter of vital concern to \textit{all} members of the United Nations, particularly the small and weak: "The Secretary General, in a very real sense, is the servant of the General Assembly. Diminish his authority and you diminish the authority of the only body where all nations, regardless of power, are equal and sovereign. Until all the powerful are just, the weak will be secure only in the strength of this Assembly."\textsuperscript{357}

Kennedy's stand was strengthened, moreover, by the fact that it was not motivated simply by the blind desire to oppose anything the Soviets proposed. Taking implicit account of the Soviet demand for larger representation in the staffing of U.N. agencies, and recognizing "the enormous change in membership" which had taken place in the United Nations since its founding, Kennedy pledged U.S. support for "any effort for the prompt review and revision of the composition of United Nations bodies."\textsuperscript{358}

To break up the top executive position of the United Nations, he warned, however: "—to give this organization three drivers—to permit each great power to decide its own case, would entrench the Cold War in the headquarters of peace. Whatever advantages such a plan may hold out to my own country, as one of the great powers, we reject it. For we far prefer world law, in the age of self-determination, to world war, in the age of mass extermination."\textsuperscript{359}

When Gromyko followed the President to the speaker's stand on the following day, he proved to be unexpectedly conciliatory on the \textit{troika} issue.

\textsuperscript{355}JFK, 1961, p. 619.
\textsuperscript{356}Ibid.
\textsuperscript{357}Ibid.
\textsuperscript{358}Ibid., pp. 619–20.
Without specifically identifying the Soviet proposal he reaffirmed it in general terms: "We stand for the immediate solution of the administration of the United Nations Secretariat on a basis corresponding to the actual situation in the world." When he came down to specific details, however, Gromyko dropped the *troika* demand: "We call upon the States, Members of the United Nations, to solve this problem by agreement. *Let it be a provisional solution for the beginning* but one which, instead of deepening the rift between the States, will provide a still firmer basis for their cooperation within the framework of the United Nations."361

There followed a complex and unpublicized series of negotiations at U.N. headquarters in which U.S. Ambassador to the United Nations Adlai Stevenson played a major role, along with his Soviet counterpart, V. A. Zorin.362

A major factor in leading the Soviets to abandon, at least temporarily, their campaign for a three-man secretaryship was the clear evidence that the overwhelming majority of the members of the United Nations was firmly opposed to any attempt to do away with the office of secretary-general in its existing form. (According to the *Survey of International Affairs*, the Soviets carried out a "private 'opinion poll' of all 90 non-communist delegations at the U.N." on the *troika* proposal toward the end of September, which convinced them that the idea enjoyed no popularity in the General Assembly.)363

By the beginning of October the Soviets were preparing formally to abandon the *troika* campaign. A statement submitted by the Soviet delegation in the General Assembly on October 1 accepted the principle of a provisional one-man appointment to the office of secretary-general, and called only for the appointment of three deputies who would serve in an advisory capacity and who would be expected to "strive for mutual agreement on the basic questions" and "to act in the spirit of concord."364

Despite the accumulating evidence that the Soviets were by now in full retreat on their *troika* demand, the President considered it to be one of the issues likely to be taken up by Gromyko in their talk scheduled for October 6, and prepared himself appropriately. According to a circumstantial and probably accurate account of the talk by *Time* correspondent Hugh Sidey, the *troika* proposal was in fact taken up toward the end of the two-hour meeting. When Gromyko raised the issue, "... the President casually picked up a book from a nearby table, thumbed through it until he found the place he wanted. Then he silently handed it to Gromyko to read."365

The passage to which Kennedy directed Gromyko's attention was a fable by the Russian poet Ivan Krylov, "The Swan, the Pike, and the Crayfish,"

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360 *Documents on Germany*, p. 823.
361 Ibid., pp. 822–23; emphasis supplied.
362 The course of the negotiations from the Soviet standpoint is explored in Dallin, pp. 174–75. For an analysis setting developments in a broader context, see *SIA, 1961*, pp. 285–95.
363 Ibid., p. 293.
365 Sidey, p. 262.
which drew the obvious moral from the unsuccessful efforts of the ill-assorted trio to draw a cart. Kennedy's use of the fable was an effective move, all the more so since the text chosen was that of a Russian classic. But there is no reason to believe that it served to sway either Gromyko or Soviet policy in general; the direction of Soviet policy toward a compromise solution of the question was already set before the October 6 meeting. (By contrast, a *New York Times* dispatch from U.N. headquarters, published on October 8, quoted a "reliable source" as stating that Gromyko had not brought up the troika proposal at his meeting with Kennedy, to the President's surprise, and that "When he did not do so, the President did not mention it either.")

The way in which the President came to use Krylov's fable to make his point was disclosed some nine years later.\(^366\) The fable was called to his attention by Walter Bestermann, a legislative staff assistant to the House Judiciary Committee, a few days after Kennedy's address to the United Nations (above, p. 243), in which he had made plain his opposition to the troika proposal. Recognizing the fable's aptness to the controversy, and delighted to be able to use a Russian classic to prove his point, Kennedy had several deluxe reproductions of the volume of Krylov's fables which Bestermann had sent him printed on parchment for use in his talk with Gromyko. A few days after the talk he sent Bestermann one of the copies inscribed, "For Walter Bestermann—this won the argument—with thanks and best wishes—John F. Kennedy. October 12, 1961."

According to Norman Cousins, the decisive shift in the Soviet attitude came after this incident: "Several days later, the President received a reply [from the Soviets]. The Soviet Union would withdraw its opposition to the election of a single successor to Dag Hammarskjöld."\(^367\)

As we have seen, however, the Soviet decision to abandon, at least temporarily, the campaign for a three-man secretary generalship had already been formed before October 6 (Gromyko's September 26 speech and the agreement on a single secretary-general on October 1 are clear evidence to that effect). The major value of the incident for the historian, therefore, is the light it casts on Kennedy's own perception of the Soviet position.

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Step by step the difficult and delicate negotiations at the United Nations proceeded, centering around such issues as whether or not the newly appointed acting secretary-general should be required to make a declaration of intent (proposed by Zorin on October 13),\(^368\) or the exact relationship between the secretary-general and his three assistants. Zorin, also on the 13th, acknowledged the right of the secretary-general to act on his own responsibility, even in cases where he disagreed with one or more of his assistants.\(^369\)


\(^{367}\)Ibid., p. 20.

\(^{368}\)SIA, 1961, p. 294.

October 13, the day which saw this important concession by the Soviets, was also marked, however, by a sudden flurry of irritation on their part directed against Dr. Andrew Cordier, principal adviser to Dag Hammarskjöld in the Secretariat and a particular *bête noire* of the Soviets ever since his role in the events surrounding the fall of Lumumba in September 1960. Cordier, the Soviet delegate now charged, had carried out a “seizure of power” in the Secretariat which made him its real though illegitimate master. The Secretariat promptly countered Zorin’s charge with a strong statement by the under-secretaries, “. . . indicating that ‘there has been no change whatsoever in the responsibilities of each of the under-secretaries,’ and that even their meetings had been held without a chairman.”

Aside from this brief flare-up, progress toward a resolution of the crisis proceeded steadily. Khrushchev himself, the originator of the *troika* proposal, mentioned it in only the most muted form in his opening speech to the Twenty-second Party Congress on October 17, calling merely for “an essential improvement in the mechanism of the United Nations.” The final hurdles were cleared on October 23 when compromise agreements were reached on the problem of the relationship between the acting secretary-general and his deputies and on the timing of a declaration of intent by the nominee. By this time, Burma’s principal U.N. delegate, Dr. U Thant, had emerged as the man on whom all interested parties could most easily agree.

The final formalities ending the crisis took place on November 3. In the morning the Security Council formally nominated U Thant for the post of acting secretary-general, and in the afternoon he was elected by a unanimous vote in the General Assembly. Showing a sound political instinct, U Thant promptly named as his principal advisers representatives of the two superpowers—Ralph Bunche of the United States and Georgi Arkadiev of the USSR.

In a statement congratulating the new Acting Secretary-General, Ambassador Zorin maintained the line which had characterized Soviet policy on this issue ever since Gromyko’s speech to the General Assembly on September 26: insistence on the basic correctness of the Soviet demand for an eventual restructuring of the office of secretary-general, combined with a willingness to accept “a temporary solution to this problem in view . . . of the necessity of taking speedier action here and now to ensure that the work of the Secretariat is effectively directed. . . .”

How is Soviet policy in the U.N. crisis of the autumn of 1961 to be evaluated? Alexander Dallin provides a balanced judgment which emphasizes both the immediate losses and the long-term gains of the Soviets: “The ap-

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371 Dallin, p. 177.
373 Ibid.
pointment [of U Thant] marked a triple Soviet failure: Instead of a *troika*, a single individual was named; he was not required to make any prior commitments to the states sponsoring him; his authority was not circumscribed either by agreement or by the impinging prerogatives of political deputies. 375

Viewed in long-term perspective, however, the Soviet attack on Hammarskjöld and on the office of secretary-general has paid handsome dividends:

In agreeing to the election of U Thant, the Soviet Union acknowledged its failure to achieve its expressed aim—the tripartite reorganization of the Secretariat. Yet it had accomplished several things. The U.N.'s new official was bound to have less authority than his predecessor had built up over the course of years. The temporary tenure of U Thant added to the precariousness of his position in office. After the object lessons of Trygve Lie and Dag Hammarskjöld, any Secretary-General was bound to give more weight to the attitudes of the Great Powers—especially the U.S.S.R.—or else invite dismissal. Under the new dispensation there was likely to be a strong temptation for the Secretariat to equate neutrality with passivity—all of which was perfectly all right with the U.S.S.R. 376

The *Survey of International Affairs* puts matters in a broader context, while essentially agreeing with Dallin's evaluation:

The end of the year thus saw the main Soviet effort to capture the U.N. Secretariat and prevent any future independent action on its part formally and directly defeated. The battle had, however, left its scars on the Secretariat, and it cannot be said that the "neutral" members of the U.N. had either accepted or necessarily understood the development of the Secretariat as its architect, Mr. Hammarskjöld, had envisaged it. His death represented a major set-back to the cause of the development of the United Nations. 377

Finally, how is Soviet policy in the U.N. crisis of autumn 1961 to be explained in terms of the dynamics of the Soviet political process? Why, after making the *troika* proposal a major issue for an entire year, did the Soviets tamely drop it just when the opportunity to press it most vigorously presented itself? Why, at a time (October 13) when they were already well launched on the course of compromise and concessions, did the Soviets show a sudden hardening which, however, was not permitted seriously to impede progress toward an agreed solution of the crisis?

We must not expect, of course, to find explicit answers to these or similar questions on the pages of Soviet publications or in the public statements of Soviet leaders. But we can assemble some indirect evidence from which reasonable answers can be deduced.

A major clue is the fact that the Soviet demand for a three-man secretary-generalship was an improvisation devised by Khrushchev to cover up an em-

375Dallin, p. 176.
376Ibid., pp. 178–79.
barrassing setback in Soviet foreign policy, the September 1960 fiasco in the Congo. The decision to launch the demand for a *troika* was taken by Khrushchev while on the high seas en route to New York, and it therefore did not have the sanction of the collective leadership as a whole. Khrushchev thus retained control of the issue in a way which was not true of those questions on which the Presidium reached an agreed position after debate.

This circumstance helps to explain why the Soviet delegation at the United Nations was in a position to offer an impromptu "solution" to the problem created by the death of Dag Hammarskjöld as early as September 18 (above, p. 259); in the absence of any standing instructions from the Presidium on this issue, the Soviet delegation enjoyed a certain latitude for maneuvering within the general parameters of Soviet policy—with which it was, of course, adequately acquainted.

We have already presented evidence for the conclusion that no meeting of the Presidium could have taken place between September 21 (the last day of Khrushchev's proven presence in Moscow) and October 6 (the first certain day of his return). This was precisely the period, however, when the main lines of Soviet policy on the U.N. structural crisis were being worked out. The inescapable conclusion is that the policy of back-tracking on the *troika* demand represented a personal decision on the part of Khrushchev rather than one agreed to by the collective leadership. This conclusion is strengthened by our earlier conclusion that the demand for a *troika* in its inception represented a personal initiative on the part of Khrushchev. Having begun it himself he was in an excellent position to call it off when it suited him to do so.

What were the reasons which led Khrushchev to decide to call off the *troika* demand in the autumn of 1961? The answer lies in the field of Soviet internal politics as much as in the field of international relations. In September–October 1961, Khrushchev was embroiled in a sharp conflict with the hardliners in the collective leadership, who had shown that they were willing to exacerbate Soviet relations with the West up to the brink of war, if need be, in the hope of forcing a showdown over Berlin. Convinced that this line carried the very real danger of an all-out war between the great powers, Khrushchev had already begun to search for a way out of the crisis. To press the *troika* demand at this point, however, and thereby to keep international tension at fever pitch, would have been to play into the hands of his internal opponents.

If the general trend in Soviet policy toward a compromise settlement of the U.N. structural problem can be explained in these terms, how are we to account for the brief flare-up of Soviet intransigence on October 13? For an answer to that question we must turn to a consideration of Soviet internal politics during this period. Khrushchev's domestic foes, it will be seen, had achieved a significant advantage over him just at the moment when the Soviet stance at the United Nations manifested its sudden stiffening.

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378 For an analysis of the considerations which made continuation of the *troika* campaign appear unadvisable to the Soviets, see Dallin, p. 176.
The Berlin Crisis of 1961

The pattern of Soviet politics from late August to early October 1961

We are now in a position to undertake an analysis of the pattern of Soviet politics during the period of the first climax in the Berlin crisis of 1961. One thing is clear at the outset: what was involved was not a single meeting of the Presidium at which a sudden, dramatic shift in policy was decided on, but at the very least several meetings at which a new policy was hammered out by a process of successive modifications. It is likewise clear that the final outcome of the process was not a clearcut policy line on which all members of the collective leadership agreed, but a stand-off in which conflicting views were temporarily suspended rather than being reconciled or settled by the unambiguous victory of one policy over another.

September 4 is the first date for which we can postulate with some confidence a meeting of the Presidium. At that point two important questions required the attention of the collective leadership: first, the Kennedy–Macmillan proposal of September 3 for a limited test ban agreement, and second, Khrushchev's plan to grant an interview to the American journalist, C. L. Sulzberger. (Sulzberger had arrived in Moscow on the 3rd.)

In his interview with Sulzberger on September 5, Khrushchev said, "We are preparing an answer [to the Kennedy–Macmillan proposal] and will send it in several days" (above, p. 194), thereby providing a solid indication that the Presidium had already met to consider the proposal. Moreover, Khrushchev in effect divulged the actual decision taken—to reject the proposal—and even provided an advance indication of the arguments which would be employed to justify the rejection (above, p. 195).

That the Presidium concerned itself in advance with the Sulzberger interview and reached certain decisions concerning its form and content is indicated by the interview itself. The careful choice of a limited number of questions out of the sixty originally submitted by Sulzberger is evidence of a preceding high-level policy decision, as is the obviously deliberate exclusion of any questions concerning China—an exclusion which Khrushchev adroitly evaded and in effect nullified by conveying to Sulzberger the important information that no Soviet nuclear weapons or long-range missiles were stationed in the CPR (above, p. 203).

The meticulous care displayed in the preparation of the Russian versions of the question-and-answer text and Sulzberger's dispatch likewise points to the concern of the Presidium with the interview. Recalling the three-part division of the interview (above, p. 201), we can recognize the skill with which Khrushchev maneuvered within the restrictions imposed on him by the Presidium in order to state some of the personal views for which he would have been unable to obtain the sanction of his colleagues. The question-and-answer text can be recognized as that part of the interview which had the explicit advance sanction of the Presidium and which formed the center of its attention. The tendentious paragraph added to its conclusion in the Pravda version,
which shifted its emphasis from the prospect of peace to the threat of war (above, p. 200), represented the views of those members of the Presidium who disagreed with and distrusted Khrushchev’s desire for better relations with the United States.

In the question-and-answer text Khrushchev was operating under tight restrictions, and even in the more relaxed first portion of Sulzberger’s dispatch he was still bound to some extent by the agreed twenty-one questions. Only in the second, more personal, “franker” part of the interview did he feel free to state his own personal views—on Soviet nuclear testing, on the build-up of the Soviet armed forces, on Laos, and on the prospects for a visit by Kennedy to the Soviet Union.

Close study of the question-and-answer text enables us to postulate one of the specific points decided on by the Presidium at its September 4 meeting. It will be recalled that in one of his replies to Sulzberger Khrushchev defined Yugoslavia as a “socialist” country and indicated that the Soviet Union would come to its defense if it were attacked by the West, if Yugoslavia requested it to do so (above, p. 199). Immediately after making this pledge to Yugoslavia, Khrushchev extended a similar pledge to Cuba, even though he stopped short of characterizing Cuba as a “socialist” nation. The symmetrical, complementary nature of these two pledges strongly suggests that they reflect a bargain struck in the Presidium: in return for the inclusion of Yugoslavia in the “socialist camp” and the indirect pledge of Soviet military aid to it (a score for Khrushchev), a similar pledge was extended to Cuba (a point for Kozlov). The background and implications of the pledge to Cuba merit further consideration in their own right.

On the morning of September 5, shortly before the interview with Sulzberger, Khrushchev held a “cordial” conversation with Blas Roca, first secretary of the Cuban Communist party, in which the two “... exchanged opinions on international problems, and also on other questions of interest to the Soviet Union and the Republic of Cuba.”

In his interview with Sulzberger, Khrushchev hinted at the possibility that Soviet long-range missiles with nuclear warheads might be stationed now or at some future time in East Germany (above, p. 203), and we have suggested that the purpose of such a move could only have been to put pressure on nations within the Western alliance in order to facilitate a settlement of the Berlin problem on Soviet terms.

On September 8 it was reported from Havana that the Castro regime had executed five members of the invasion force which had been defeated at the

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379 Radio Moscow, Sept. 5, 1961; Pravda, Sept. 6, 1961, p. 1. Technically speaking, Blas Roca at this point was simply “one of the Cuban revolutionary leaders,” the Cuban communist party having been officially absorbed into the Integrated Revolutionary Organization (ORI) which was set up in July 1961. Also present at the discussion on Sept. 5 were Kosygin, Suslov, and Boris Ponomarev.
Bay of Pigs in April 1961. In March 1962 the Castro regime put on trial the remaining survivors of the invasion force. President Kennedy, who felt a personal sense of responsibility for the fate of the men who had fought against Castro at the Bay of Pigs, at some point not far from Havana’s announcement of the March 1962 trial, let Castro know through diplomatic channels that if the death penalty were imposed on the prisoners “it would touch off such a storm of protest in the United States that the President would be forced to take drastic new action against Cuba.”

This veiled but unmistakable threat of possible U.S. military action against Cuba came at just about the point when the Soviet leadership is believed to have been considering the fateful decision to move long-range missiles into Cuba.

Thus the general outlines of Soviet strategy in the Cuban missile adventure of 1962 were dimly visible as early as September 1961, and some of the principal elements which would enter into that drama had already manifested themselves.

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The September 4 meeting of the Presidium led to no significant modifications of Soviet policy toward Berlin and in its decision to reject the Kennedy-Macmillan test ban proposal represented a continuation of the hard line toward the West. A few days later, however, Khrushchev was able to win a major victory in the Presidium which led to the most substantial modifications in the Soviet foreign policy line since mid-February 1961. There are a number of converging lines of evidence which indicate that a major decision on foreign policy was taken by the Presidium at some time on September 6—probably during the evening.

The most obvious indication of the shift comes from Sulzberger’s report of the message he received from Khrushchev on the morning of September 7, just as he was preparing to send off his report of the interview. Khrushchev, it will be recalled, requested two changes in the report: first, that a statement be added expressing his willingness to meet with Kennedy and second, that his comment on the scheduled explosion of a 100-megaton bomb be amended to refer only to the testing of the explosive device for the bomb, not to the bomb itself (above, p. 196). These changes, it is clear, represented concessions which Khrushchev had won from his colleagues. What clinches the case for a victory by Khrushchev, however, is the unambiguous evidence that Kozlov suffered a defeat. In his Pyongyang speech on September 12 Kozlov was forced to announce the lifting of the 1961 deadline on conclusion of a peace treaty with

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382 Ibid., p. 275.
383 Tatu, p. 233, dates the decision “probably in April 1962.”
Germany, thereby signaling the end of the Soviet campaign on Berlin for 1961. In doing so, Kozlov was being required to play the classic role of a member of the collective leadership whose policy has been voted down by his colleagues—to preserve at least the appearance, if not the substance, of unity by himself announcing the policy measure which he had unsuccessfully opposed.

The first sign that Kozlov was slated to go to North Korea was his presence at the luncheon given by the North Korean Embassy on September 7 (above, p. 213). Since some advance coordination with the North Korean communists must have preceded this affair, we can be fairly certain that the decision to send Kozlov to Pyongyang must have been reached at the latest by the evening of the 6th.

What part did the message brought to Khrushchev by Nehru from the Belgrade conference play in the Presidium decision to lift the deadline on signing a peace treaty with Germany? Nehru had dinner at the Kremlin on the evening of September 6 and delivered his message to Khrushchev on that occasion, and Sulzberger was inclined to attribute the shift in Soviet policy (which he assumed to be a shift in Khrushchev's personal views) to Nehru's influence.384

At most, however, Nehru's message could only have played the role of a catalyst in the process of change in Soviet policy which was already under way. Khrushchev may well have used the prestige of Nehru and his recognized high standing in world public opinion as an additional argument with his colleagues for a policy change which they already had under debate, but it is highly unlikely that Nehru, alone, or the message he brought from Belgrade, really caused the change. The reasons for this conclusion are, first, that the decisions reached went far beyond the policy modification requested by the Belgrade conference—an indication of willingness on the part of the Soviets to negotiate the Berlin problem with the United States—and second, that in his personal appeal to Khrushchev for a halt in the Soviet nuclear test series, Nehru got nowhere.385

The core of the Presidium decisions of September 6 was the lifting of the 1961 deadline for signing a peace treaty with Germany. Working backward, we can reconstruct to some extent the context within which this decision was taken and suggest some of the reasons which lay behind it.

The basic prerequisite for the decision was the fact that the conditions imposed on Khrushchev at the February session of the Presidium had been

384 NYT, Sept. 11, 1961, p. 26: “The Thursday changes were changes in Mr. Khrushchev's own attitude . . . I assume Mr. Nehru's arguments induced Mr. Khrushchev to soften his stand.”

385 See the report of Nehru's speech on arriving in Moscow, in which he criticized the Soviet tests as a peril to world health (SIA, 1961, p. 385) and his later characterization of the tests as "very harmful—a disastrous thing" (ibid., p. 441). See also the report of his conference with Khrushchev on Sept. 7 from which he emerged gloomy, saying, "Once again the foul winds of war are blowing. There are atomic tests and the world grows fearful." NYT, Sept. 8, 1961, p. 1.
fulfilled. While the West had not been forced to yield its position in West Berlin (the maximum objective of the Berlin campaign), the immediate threat to the stability of the East German regime had been removed by the construction of the Berlin Wall (the minimum objective). Furthermore, the optional corollary to this adoption of the minimum objective—Soviet resumption of nuclear testing—had been implemented. Clearly the majority in the Presidium had no desire to go back on this decision, either in answer to the Kennedy–Macmillan test ban proposal or in response to Nehru’s anguished plea. The most Khrushchev was able to obtain from his colleagues was the concession that the 100-megaton bomb would not actually be exploded as the climax of the series.

Another necessary condition for the decision on lifting the deadline on a German peace treaty was the evidence that the West clearly was not preparing for an aggressive war against the Soviet Union, but on the contrary, particularly in the statements and policies of President Kennedy, was steadfastly showing its readiness to solve the Berlin crisis by negotiation.

The conditions imposed on Kozlov, the loser in the September 6 Presidium debate, carried unmistakably punitive implications. Not merely was he required to announce the shift of Soviet policy on Berlin, but he was instructed to do so in a way and at a place which removed him completely from Moscow for two weeks—from his departure on September 8 to his return on the 22nd. His colleagues thus saw to it that his stridently anti-Western and pro-Chinese voice would be temporarily muted just as the Berlin Crisis seemed to be approaching its climax.

Kozlov’s September 12 announcement of the shift in Soviet policy was not, however, intended to be recognized by the West as an “olive branch” (to use the expression of the Survey of International Affairs); its real function was to serve as a coded indication of a Soviet policy decision designed primarily for the instruction of communists in the Soviet party and abroad. Proof of this assertion lies in the well-coordinated and carefully planned series of “preparedness” articles by service chiefs, the first of which (Biriuzov’s) was published in the Soviet press on the same day as Kozlov’s Pyongyang speech. Thanks to the general failure of Western observers to understand the nature of the Soviet political process at this point, this piece of camouflage served its purpose nearly perfectly: Kozlov’s statement on a German peace treaty was almost totally ignored in the West, while the “preparedness” series of articles received wide attention. The “preparedness” articles, together with various bellicose Soviet actions in the period immediately following Kozlov’s Pyongyang speech, were thus intended to mask what might otherwise have been recognized in the West as a sign that the Soviets had decided to beat a retreat in their Berlin campaign.

The evident animus against Kozlov which the implementation of the September 6 decision indicated provides a basis for hazarding a guess as to another aspect of the motivation behind the decision, as well as some indication of the actual line-up of votes in the Presidium. The most interesting
figure in this connection is Mikhail Suslov, who shared some policy views with Kozlov—notably in regard to internal resource allocation—but who is known to have differed with him on the question of the policy to be adopted toward the Chinese communists.

By informing the Chinese in advance of the Soviet intention to resume nuclear testing and by shaping the announcement of the decision in such a way as to provide justification for eventual Chinese development of the bomb (above, p. 162), Kozlov had caused Soviet foreign policy to lurch sharply in the direction of Peking. If, as seems probable, Suslov was unwilling to support him in this risky venture, the emergence of an anti-Kozlov majority at the September 6 Presidium meeting would be readily explainable.

In this connection it is suggestive that Soviet press reports of early September 1961 portray Suslov as frequently appearing in public in company with Khrushchev (Kozlov, as we have noted, was conspicuous by his absence from the Soviet press during the first week of September). Examples are the visit of the collective leadership to the French national exhibition on September 5;\(^\text{386}\) Khrushchev's discussion with Blas Roca on September 5;\(^\text{387}\) the ceremony honoring the late William Z. Foster, also on the 5th;\(^\text{388}\) and the state dinner for Nehru on the 6th.\(^\text{389}\)

As a consequence of the shift in Soviet foreign policy decided on at the September 6 Presidium meeting, the secret police were instructed to drop the case of the “CENTO documents,” as we know from the fact that on September 9 the Soviet government quietly yielded to Turkish pressure and abandoned its announced plan to exhibit the “documents” in Turkey (above, p. 140).

The next indication, or series of indications, of high-level Soviet decisions on foreign policy comes from the area of the U.S.–Soviet bilateral negotiations on disarmament. After a long interval, these talks resumed on September 6—providentially, just as the Presidium was about to reassess its policies in the Berlin crisis and, by extension, toward the West in general. It was this favorable conjunction, evidently, which serves to explain the success achieved in this phase of the talks, a success which came as a surprise to the President and his advisers (above, p. 226).

No decision in favor of reaching an agreement with the United States in the talks was taken at the September 6 meeting of the Presidium, however, as we know from the fact that in the Soviet government statement of September 9, rejecting the Kennedy–Macmillan limited test ban proposal, the failure thus far to reach an accord in the talks was cited as proof that “the U.S. government does not even want to approach universal and total disarmament with the establishment of the strictest international control over the actions of states in

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\(^{387}\) Pravda, Sept. 6, 1961, p. 1.
\(^{388}\) Ibid.
\(^{389}\) Pravda, Sept. 7, 1961, p. 2.
this sphere" (above, p. 212). If the Presidium had decided in favor of a limited agreement with the United States at its September 6 session, reference to the bilateral talks would either have been omitted entirely from the September 9 statement or couched in a less negative form.

That the policy to be adopted toward the talks was under high-level review, however, was indicated by the Soviet requests on September 12 and 15 for cancellation of scheduled sessions (above, p. 226). Comparison between developments in the talks in late July and those in September serves to identify Khrushchev as the principal advocate of agreement with the United States in the talks; as we have seen, he had been on the point of putting through an agreement at Sochi just as Kennedy's July 25 speech rendered his plan abortive. This time, however, nothing intervened to block the attainment of a limited agreement on the principles of disarmament.

Was the decision to reach agreement with the United States in the bilateral talks one taken by the collective leadership as a whole, or did it represent a one-man initiative on the part of Khrushchev? The fact that Kozlov, the number two man in the party hierarchy, was absent from Moscow from September 8 to 22, the period during which the decision was taken, strongly militates against the view that it was a collective one. More likely, the Presidium was not consulted directly on what we have identified as a personal policy goal of Khrushchev. The two delays requested by the Soviets in scheduled sessions of the talks would then correspond to consultations between Khrushchev and specialist advisers as to how much of the U.S. draft proposal of September 6 could be accepted without endangering Soviet interests. No session of the Presidium would have been needed to spot the danger to Soviet security in McCloy's "key" proposal for international inspection of retained weapons, and even with this provision eliminated, it seems doubtful that Khrushchev could have won a majority in the Presidium at this time for agreement on the U.S. draft.

The Presidium session of September 6, thus, was probably the last meeting of that body (at least on foreign policy) until the second week in October at the earliest, for not only is there reason, as we have seen, to believe that Khrushchev was away from Moscow during the period September 22-October 6 (above, p. 254), but there are no clear indications during this period of the continuing functioning of any coherent machinery of Soviet foreign policy formulation. The most striking manifestation of the lack of direction of Soviet foreign policy during this period comes from the actions and statements of Foreign Minister Gromyko, who operated at this time as a virtually autonomous agent, under no fixed instructions and on occasion (as in his wilfull attempt at resurrection of the moribund 1961 deadline on conclusion of a peace treaty with Germany in his September 26 speech to the United Nations), virtually making policy in his own right. Incidentally, Gromyko's behavior during this period serves to identify him as a proponent of the hard line in Soviet policy on Germany, and thus enables us to specify one of the elements of
“pressure” on Khrushchev which created “difficulties” for him in his efforts to reach agreement on Berlin with Kennedy.

Why was Khrushchev willing to leave Moscow, for the second time in less than a month, just as Kozlov was returning from Pyongyang? Should he not have feared a renewal of the kind of provocative actions and risky policies which Kozlov had carried through during his period of brief dominance in the Kremlin in late August?

For several reasons, this danger could be regarded as remote. First and most important, Kozlov had just sustained a defeat at the hands of his colleagues which in effect constituted a reprimand for his pro-Peking policies of late August. Then, too, U.S.-Soviet negotiations on Berlin had actually been initiated, in the form of the Rusk-Gromyko talks, a fact which provided a certain degree of insurance against the outbreak of hostilities in Berlin through accident, even though Gromyko himself was a hard-liner and could be expected to reduce the talks to futility by his unyielding posture.

Probably Khrushchev’s major reason for absenting himself from the Kremlin after September 21, however, was the realization that if the Presidium continued to concern itself with the Berlin question—especially now that Kozlov had returned—it might well swing back to a tougher position vis-à-vis the West. Better to permit matters to drift, Khrushchev may have reasoned, than risk a return to Kozlov’s hard-line position. Meanwhile Khrushchev devoted his attention to the always congenial field of Soviet agriculture and made his last-minute preparations for the Twenty-second Party Congress.

How close did contemporary observers in the West come to understanding the power struggle in the Soviet leadership which caused and explains the confusing surface pattern of Soviet foreign policy in the period from late August to mid-October 1961? The answer is, surprisingly close in places—some key pieces of the puzzle were recognized and correctly identified and the general outlines of the conflict were glimpsed by a few observers, though fleetingly and in somewhat distorted guise. There was no attempt, however, at an overall synthesis of the evidence; some major pieces of the puzzle were inaccessible to contemporary observers, or were overlooked; and the basic theoretical postulate on which virtually all Western analysis was based—that Soviet foreign policy formulation, whether it proceeded from the mind of a single dominant leader or was the result of a process of discussion and debate within the collective leadership, was a rational, coherent process—effectively blocked insight into the real nature of Soviet politics at this period.

For official Washington the most baffling aspect of the problem was the Soviet decision to break the nuclear test ban. “The motives that prompted the Soviet decision to resume nuclear testing,” Max Frankel reported from Washington immediately after the announcement of the decision,

... preoccupied and in some measure puzzled Washington today. The basic questions were: Why did Moscow feel compelled to resume testing? Why was it willing to accept the onus for resuming testing before the United
States? Why, in any case, did it time the announcement to coincide with a meeting of neutralist leaders in Belgrade and precede the gathering of delegates to the United Nations General Assembly?

Officials felt the Soviet decision was especially puzzling because of the obvious pressure building up here for the United States to take the initiative in a resumption of testing. . . . Why, it was asked, did Moscow feel it could not wait a few weeks or even months more?  

Attempts in Washington to solve the riddle, Frankel reported, took one of several lines:

The widely accepted but by no means unanimous view was that the military necessity of catching up with the United States in nuclear development coincides with an opportunity to terrorize the world at the height of the Berlin crisis. This view, apparently shared for the time being by the White House, held that Moscow's main purpose was to impress the world with its might, to lend credence to Soviet contentions that the balance of power had shifted to the Communist world, and thus to bring pressure on the West to yield to Soviet formulas for stabilizing Central Europe.

Some observers in Washington took a different view, however. According to Frankel, “. . . there were officials here today who dissented sharply. . . . They saw the Soviet decision as the culmination of an extensive shift in Moscow's military thinking essentially unrelated to events in Berlin. They felt that the decision really was made six months ago [N.B.!] and that its announcement now betrayed Moscow's realization that the United States could not be goaded into making the first nuclear tests.”

Very striking in this report is the pinpointing of the decision to begin active preparations for the current Soviet test series six months earlier—i.e., late February 1961. That an estimate in this general range enjoyed quasi-official standing in the Kennedy administration is indicated by the phrasing of an official note sent by the United States to Japan on September 13, in reply to a Japanese protest of September 6 on Kennedy's decision to resume nuclear testing. “The Soviet Union's program of testing,” said the U.S. note, “. . . is progressing rapidly, suggesting that extensive secret preparations for test resumption were undertaken during a major portion of this year's session of the Geneva conference.”

In reporting this note, the *New York Times* added: “This formal accusation of bad faith followed earlier statements by various administration officials that Moscow must have decided on a new test program several months ago, probably as long ago as last March.”

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391 Ibid.
392 Ibid.; emphasis supplied.
Apparently no one in Washington, however, made any sustained effort to work out the implications for Soviet politics which this insight carried; official Washington rested content with the observation that the Soviet decision to resume testing proved the hypocrisy of their behavior at the Geneva test-ban talks.

Another New York Times reporter, Harry Schwartz, came within hailing distance of working out the Chinese aspect of the problem, but failed to bring all the elements into focus. In an article of September 3, from which we have quoted extensively (above, p. 176), Schwartz cited evidence pointing to some kind of interaction between Peking and Moscow just prior to the Soviet announcement on test resumption. All that was lacking was an insight into the mechanism whereby the influence was transmitted and recognition that the impulse came from Moscow rather than from Peking. Two days later, in reporting on the August 26 Soviet–Chinese supplementary trade agreement (above, p. 149), Schwartz had in his grasp the key piece to the puzzle, but missed its significance because he interpreted it in the light of the Sino–Soviet controversy, the Chinese trade deficit vis-à-vis the Soviet Union—and most damagingly—the implicit belief, shared by even the most intrepid Western analysts, in the existence of a unitary, rational modus of Soviet foreign policy formulation.

A direct challenge to this belief, as it happened, had been launched in a New York Times dispatch from Belgrade on September 4. “One of the best-informed East European sources on the inner workings of the Soviet Communist Party and Government,” M. S. Handler reported from the Yugoslav capital, “... said today that certain dangerous developments in the Soviet system had a direct bearing on the events that produced the Berlin crisis and the Soviet decision to resume nuclear testing.”

The identity of his source, Handler stated, could not be revealed “because of the position he occupies,” but he made clear the source’s serious concern with conveying the urgency of the situation to policymakers in the West:

Carefully weighing his words in response to questions on the situation in the Soviet Union, the East European source said: “There is a process going on in the Soviet Union today that could create the conditions for the emergence of a military clique.” He reiterated this several times so that there would be no possible conclusion that a military clique already existed.

Asked if there were any clearly identifiable military figures who might form the clique, the official said it was premature to say. But he added that it was urgently necessary to pay attention to this power development in the Soviet system because it constituted a process which, if it ran its normal course, could produce the conditions from which a military power group might emerge.

395 NYT, Sept. 5, 1961, p. 5.
396 Ibid.
The conclusion which the unidentified “East European” source obviously wished to convey was that Khrushchev’s power position was shaky and that his overthrow or the serious weakening of his position might lead to a dangerous shift in Soviet politics: “The situation in the Soviet political system is such that any weakening of Premier Khrushchev’s control could accelerate the emergence of a military group, he [the source] declared.”

Having thus gone to the very brink of revealing the true facts about the power struggle in the Kremlin, Handler’s unidentified but well-informed source took out protective insurance to safeguard his own position (which might be seriously threatened if Khrushchev’s internal opponents won their battle for control of Soviet policy) by throwing in several false leads: “The official said that it would be a serious mistake to identify this or that member of the Soviet Communist Party’s Presidium or Central Committee as Mr. Khrushchev’s personal rivals and therefore his critics. The criticism, he continued, is in the nature of a general climate of party opinion that Mr. Khrushchev has been weak in dealing with the issues of Berlin, Germany, and disarmament.”

Furthermore: “The source cautioned against any assumption that the power process in the Soviet Union had any relationship to purely domestic affairs. The process, he said, was set in motion solely by external issues, in which Mr. Khrushchev’s policies and methods had failed to satisfy the Communist Party.”

Thus disguised, the valuable information provided in Handler’s report could make little significant contribution to Western enlightenment on the structure of Soviet politics. The “East European” source’s partly false clue pointing to a “military clique,” and his outright denial that any single member of the collective leadership might be Khrushchev’s rival and critic, as well as his assertion that only questions of foreign policy were involved in the power struggle, seriously impaired the usefulness of the report, which could all too easily be read as an attempt to weaken the West’s resistance to Soviet pressure on the grounds that Khrushchev’s internal position was insecure and that if he fell, in consequence of Western refusal to yield to his demands, Soviet policy would become even more belligerent.

These negative considerations do not apply to a report which the New York Times published almost exactly a month after Handler’s dispatch. “An informed Italian Communist . . . who is in a position to know the topics under discussion in the inner councils of the Italian Communist party,” Paul Hoffman reported from Rome on October 3,
... predicted today that the Communist parties of Western Europe would support Premier Khrushchev against "Maximalists."

The source said many Communists have believed that Mr. Khrushchev would need such backing at the forthcoming twenty-second congress of the Soviet Communist Party and at the conferences of international communist leaders which will be held simultaneously in Moscow. The opposition to Mr. Khrushchev was said to be made up of Stalinists in the Soviet Union, radicals in Communist China and their admirers elsewhere in international communism.  

The conflict was said to be directly related to Soviet policy in the Berlin crisis, Hoffman reported: "The source said [the] opposition to Premier Khrushchev tended to broaden the East-West conflict over Berlin into a worldwide showdown, regardless of the risks of nuclear war."  

The report from the "East European" source who had talked to Handler could be suspected of being a deliberate ruse to weaken the West's firmness, but it was impossible to discount the report by Hoffman's unidentified Italian communist source on this basis: not the influencing of Western policy but the desire to provide an authoritative inside explanation of the motives guiding the Italian Communist party's policies vis-à-vis the Kremlin was clearly his dominant motive. The accuracy of his information, furthermore, was vouched for by the fact that the PCI (Italian Communist party) was acting in accordance with precisely the analysis of Soviet politics which he provided: the PCI delegation to the Twenty-second CPSU Congress, it had just been announced, would include as its ranking member, after PCI Secretary-General Palmiro Togliatti, a right-wing communist named Umberto Terracini, whom Hoffman described as "... a Communist who got into trouble with his party in Stalin’s time when he advocated peaceful coexistence between the Communist and capitalist camps. ... Signor Terracini has recently been kept in the background by his party. His inclusion in the official delegation to Moscow caused surprise and was seen as indicative of the Italian communists’ aversion to Maximalist currents in international communism.”  

The explanation of Terracini’s appointment to the PCI delegation, it should be noted, was not to be found in any internal conflict or rivalry between him, or a faction he represented, and the party's strong man, Togliatti, for the latter had already publicly revealed his disapproval of the Soviet atomic tests by saying, "We are against all nuclear tests, of any nature.”  

The report by the well-placed but unidentified Italian communist source, taken together with Togliatti's statement on nuclear testing (a statement he

401 NYT, Oct. 4, 1961, p. 6. In the dispatch Hoffman explained that the term "Maximalism" had "entered Italian political parlance, where it stands for Left-wing extremists."

402 Ibid.

403 Ibid.

404 NYT, Sept. 11, 1961, p. 11 (a Reuters dispatch from Rome citing a speech by Togliatti in Siena as reported by an Italian news agency).
would hardly have made if he had not been aware that there were differences of opinion in the Soviet leadership on the subject), as well as the appointment of an advocate of "peaceful coexistence" as second in charge of the PCI delegation to the Twenty-second CPSU Congress, provides reliable evidence that the inner circle of the Italian Communist party believed that it was essential to come to Khrushchev's aid because his position, both in the Soviet party hierarchy and in the international communist movement, was threatened by "Maximalist" communists who "tended to broaden the East-West conflict over Berlin into a world-wide showdown, regardless of the risks of nuclear war." It would be hard to find a more concise characterization of the views and policies of the hard-line faction in the Soviet Communist party, whose most highly placed representative was Frol Kozlov.

Disregarding the unorthodox and challenging insights into Soviet politics provided by its reporters, the editorial staff of the *New York Times* meanwhile was vigorously propagating the view that Khrushchev, enjoying unchallenged dominance over Soviet foreign policy formulation, was deliberately pushing the world to the brink of atomic warfare. Typical of the Times's approach was an editorial on September 1 denouncing the Soviet decision to resume nuclear testing: "In an action that shocks the world and edges it closer to the brink of atomic holocaust, Premier Khrushchev announces that the Soviets are resuming nuclear testing to produce monstrous super-bombs capable of being dropped at any point on the globe from space. This marks another climax in the Soviet ruler's campaign to terrorize the world and cow it into submission in his plans for world domination."\(^{405}\)

The Times's continuing torrent of editorial denunciation of Khrushchev, liberally sprinkled with epithets like "Caesar" and "Hitler," moved C. L. Sulzberger (who after all had just seen Khrushchev at close quarters) to enter a demurral. In a dispatch from London on September 15, Sulzberger warned that ". . . we should not lose sight of the fact that he [Khrushchev] is a very human man with a liking for distinctly normal things."\(^{406}\)

Taking direct issue with his newspaper's editorial staff, Sulzberger continued: " . . . he [Khrushchev] is not a 'Hitler.' Hitler was an abnormal man; Mr. Khrushchev is normal, even if both are associated with abnormally ambitious policies."\(^{407}\)

Sulzberger then offered his own evaluation of the complex figure who held the most powerful political position in Soviet Russia: "I believe Mr. Khrushchev is tough, relentlessly ruthless, coldly scheming and controlled, convinced by what I personally consider his miscalculation that the tide of


\(^{407}\)Ibid.
history is immutably with him. But, unlike Hitler, I consider him entirely normal and human.”

Useful though it was as a corrective to emotion-laden rhetoric, Sulzberger’s portrait of Khrushchev was deficient in one crucial respect: it made no effort to evaluate Khrushchev’s power position within the Soviet leadership or the strength of any possible opposition to him. Lacking an insight into that aspect of the problem, Sulzberger was in effect reduced to saying, Khrushchev the man is eminently human, even though the policies he is pursuing are undeniably dangerous for the world.

For help in solving this baffling enigma, the Times turned to the world of scholarship. In an article addressed to the problem of the degrees and kinds of ignorance about Soviet politics which beset Western observers, Leon Goure, an analyst for the RAND Corporation, observed that: “The exact extent of Khrushchev’s power and the factors affecting his [sic] policy decisions have been much debated. The public image of Khrushchev in the West has undergone many startling changes in recent years.”

After recapitulating some of the analyses, theories, and guesses which had been propounded to define the nature and extent of Khrushchev’s power, Goure came out in favor of the position held by the majority of Western scholars: “A more sober analysis, supported by events [sic], indicates that Khrushchev has a firm grip on power and that, far from being threatened by any Stalinist faction, he has succeeded in consolidating and expanding his position.”

The most Goure was willing to concede was that Khrushchev had not yet achieved a position equivalent to that of his most prominent predecessor: “Nevertheless, it is generally agreed that Khrushchev does not wield the same degree of power as Stalin did.”

A few American journalists, as we have seen, gave serious thought to the motives behind the Soviet decision to resume nuclear testing; they came close to recognizing the nature of the link between Moscow and Peking, and they provided searching, though flickering, light on the Soviet struggle for power. The impetus which their valuable and challenging reports could have provided for a fundamental reevaluation of the nature of Soviet power under Khrushchev was lost, however, primarily because of the prevailing belief in the West that in the Soviet political system, one-man rule is the norm—established by Lenin, perfected by Stalin, and currently exemplified, though not perhaps in its full extent, by Nikita Khrushchev. Blinded by this belief, Western observers failed to give adequate attention to the role played by other actors in the Soviet drama. In particular, Kozlov’s key role escaped their no-

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408 Ibid.
410 Ibid.
411 Ibid.
Preface entirely, even when he publicly proclaimed the major turning point in Soviet policy on Berlin on September 12.

Contemporary observers are always at a disadvantage in attempting to analyze current Soviet politics. What of the scholars—the historians, the political scientists, the specialists in international affairs—who later made an intensive study of Soviet foreign policy during this period? This is not the place to undertake a full-scale review of everything that has been written by scholars in the West on Soviet foreign policy in the early 1960's. Fortunately the relevant point can be established by a selective survey of a few writers. It can safely be assumed that the majority of Western scholars, in discussing Soviet foreign policy in this period, followed the well-worn path of attributing all major foreign policy initiatives to the generally recognized "leader," i.e., Khrushchev, and that they explained the sharp turns and twists in Soviet foreign policy by reference either to shifts in his own views, to ambiguities and inconsistencies in his foreign policy objectives, or—at most—to various forms of institutionalized pressure brought to bear on him.

What is surprising, nevertheless, is to discover that even scholars who consciously challenged to a greater or lesser extent the orthodox concept of Soviet politics, nevertheless implicitly accepted it as the basis for their analysis. Three examples will establish the point.

In his pioneering and still standard study of the origins and early development of the Sino-Soviet conflict, Donald S. Zagoria traces the course of events down to the summer of 1961, when tension between the two powerful communist states had reached a new peak, and then jumps directly to a consideration of the conflict as it affected the Twenty-second Congress of the CPSU, in October 1961, ignoring almost completely the intervening period, with its puzzling but unmistakable evidence of some kind of interaction between Moscow and Peking. A major reason for Zagoria's failure to grasp the significance of the Soviet swing toward Peking in late August 1961 is his unquestioning assumption that the decision to resume nuclear testing was taken by Khrushchev personally. Quoting the Soviet announcement of August 30, Zagoria describes it as a statement made by Khrushchev, "after the USSR resumed testing."412 Strangely, Zagoria recognized that the Soviet announcement expressed "Chinese opposition to a test-ban agreement between the USSR and the United States," but in the light of his unsupported assumption that the decision was Khrushchev's personally, this recognition was not followed by a deeper insight into the conflicts within the Soviet leadership over policy toward Peking.

Carl Linden, in his book, Khrushchev and the Soviet Leadership, 1957-1964, takes issue with the orthodox view of Soviet power in order to show that "... despite his primacy, Khrushchev in the years after 1957 continually engaged in an intensive and complex battle behind the scenes to sustain and extend his power within the leading group."413

412 Zagoria, p. 439; emphasis supplied.
413 Linden, p. 1.
In his analysis of the events of the late summer of 1961, however, Linden falls back on the traditional view of Soviet power, attributing to Khrushchev alone the initiative for the major twists and turns of Soviet foreign policy. He recognizes that there was a fundamental contradiction between Khrushchev's internal economic goals and the power imperatives of Soviet foreign policy in the Berlin crisis, but attempts to combine the two by a reference to "the inherent dilemma of Khrushchev's policy." Recognizing that a number of Soviet actions in the field of foreign policy at this time "were in conflict with the goals of Khrushchev's political program at home," Linden seeks for an explanation of the discrepancy in the direction of "pressure" on Khrushchev, primarily from the military but also "from within the leadership." In the final analysis, however, according to Linden, it was still Khrushchev who was the real architect of Soviet foreign policy: "In sum, Khrushchev's erratic behavior during the summer of 1961, stoking the Cold War one day and dampening it down the next, was more a sign of weakness than of strength. He was not in so secure a position that he could pursue a single and consistent course; he could not ignore the powerful pressures and cross pressures of the internal politics of the Soviet ruling group."

Even more directly than Linden, the French journalist and scholar Michel Tatu, in his book, *Power in the Kremlin*, set out to challenge the orthodox concept of Soviet politics and to replace it by a more realistic one in which the tensions and conflicts in the Soviet leadership would find adequate expression. Surprisingly, however, Tatu also unquestioningly accepts the view that in the period of the Berlin crisis of 1961, Khrushchev personally and unilaterally was responsible for the direction of Soviet foreign policy, with all its glaring inconsistencies and sudden shifts of direction.

In a paragraph summarizing the course of the crisis, Tatu gives Khrushchev sole credit for "launching" it, "brandishing his rockets with unprecedented fierceness," and "topping it all off during the [Twenty-second] Congress with the blast of the super-bomb of over 60 megatons, the most powerful ever tested."

Assuming that foreign policy was Khrushchev's "personal area," Tatu feels justified in skipping lightly over the international conflict of the summer and early autumn of 1961: "We need not pursue the diplomatic intricacies of the crisis, which subsided in the same way as it had broken out, i.e., when its instigator [i.e., Khrushchev] so willed."

In sum, then, neither well-informed contemporary observers nor scholars studying the evidence at a later date have hitherto succeeded in penetrating the heavy shroud composed in approximately equal parts of Soviet secrecy,
faulty or fragmentary information, and Western preconceptions which obscured the true nature of the Soviet political process.

The explanation of this problem offered here gains additional strength from a comparison with events in Soviet internal and foreign policy which took place almost exactly twenty-five years earlier.

**Stalin and the internal opposition in 1936: the twenty-five-year parallel**

In the summer of 1961 the Soviet Union confronted a nation possessing a stronger economic base, greater military power, and a socioeconomic system regarded by many staunch communists as the antithesis of that which had been established in Soviet Russia. In his evaluation of this situation, the dominant figure in the Soviet political system, whose real power lay in his position as first secretary of the Communist party of the Soviet Union (although he also held, for good measure, the post of premier), was motivated primarily by the desire to safeguard his nation against what he regarded as the threat of disaster should war with the stronger power break out. The avoidance of such a war was thus the primary foreign policy goal of the most powerful Soviet political figure. His attempts to achieve this goal, however, were characterized not only by a willingness to make concessions to the stronger power but also by a clearly marked personal affinity, combining admiration, a rudimentary kind of trust, and even a certain personal affection, for the dominant political figure of the stronger nation.

Sharply differing from the party First Secretary in their view of the situation were the members of a faction united above all by their passionately held conviction that any kind of compromise with or conciliation of the stronger power was not merely morally wrong—a betrayal of the ideological essence of the communist faith—but also shortsighted and, ultimately, suicidal for the Soviet Union since, in the view of this faction, underlying the ideological differences between Soviet communism and the socioeconomic system of the stronger power lay an irreconcilable, total conflict which would ultimately lead to an armed clash which, from the Soviet standpoint, might better come sooner than later, since the adversary was meanwhile straining every sinew to prepare for what he, too, believed would be an inevitable and decisive showdown.

During the temporary absence from the Kremlin of the First Secretary, the opposition faction seized the opportunity to put into effect measures which reflected its view of the world situation, thereby breaking sharply with the policy of restraint and prudence which the First Secretary had hitherto pursued and greatly increasing the likelihood of that very armed confrontation with the stronger power which the opposition faction considered unavoidable.

The scenario we have outlined, which describes the struggle over foreign policy in the Soviet leadership during the Berlin crisis in the summer of 1961,
could be applied with only minor changes to the struggle over foreign policy which took place in the Soviet leadership in the summer of 1936, exactly twenty-five years earlier. Some details, of course, would have to be altered, but in their essential structure the two situations are strikingly similar. For the United States in 1961, read Nazi Germany in 1936; for Khrushchev, read Stalin; for a hard-line opposition faction headed by Frol Kozlov, substitute an unorganized but strongly motivated group in the party which had its intellectual spokesman in Nikolai Bukharin and its most highly placed representative in Sergo Ordzhonikidze.

The actions taken by the hard-line faction during its temporary dominance in the Kremlin during the late summer of 1961 included: (1) launching a direct challenge to the Western powers' right of unrestricted access to West Berlin by air (the Soviet note of August 23); (2) reversing Khrushchev's policy of making no further build-up of Soviet armed strength (the announcement on retention of service men in the armed forces of August 29); (3) the decision to violate the de facto nuclear test ban by resuming nuclear testing (announcement of August 30); (4) the preceding clandestine report of this decision to the Chinese Communist leadership (August 26); and (5) the decision to name the principal figure in the opposition faction, Frol Kozlov, to head the Soviet delegation to the sixteenth U.N. General Assembly (announcement of September 1).

The principal actions taken by the unorganized oppositionists in the summer of 1936 were to intervene clandestinely on the side of the Loyalists in the Spanish Civil War, in defiance of Stalin's publicly announced policy of non-intervention, and to quash a criminal investigation against Bukharin and several of his associates which had been undertaken at Stalin's insistence.

The evidence for the internal party struggle over foreign policy in the summer of 1936 has been set forth in an essay by the author, and need not be repeated here. Heretical in the eyes of most scholars at the time the essay was first published, the thesis it advances is still too unorthodox to have won general acceptance. It has, however, recently been incorporated into a textbook, without specific identification, as part of the established interpretation of Soviet foreign policy. In Robert G. Wesson's book, *Soviet Foreign Policy in Perspective* (1969), the Soviet decision to intervene in the Spanish Civil War is explained as follows: "Fighting [in Spain] began in late July [1936], but not until September [more probably, some time in August] was the decision taken to send military aid—a decision taken in Stalin's absence from Moscow and perhaps contrary to his wishes, by those whose internationalist idealism was stronger than his."420

In 1936–37, open defiance of the General Secretary's wishes was followed by a major purge, in which not only were those who had ventured to challenge him systematically routed out and destroyed, but hundreds of thousands of

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party and government officials as well, together with uncounted multitudes
of ordinary Soviet citizens—everyone, in fact, who could be remotely suspected
of still harboring any lingering tendency to doubt the wisdom of the policies
decided on by the First Secretary.

Would the defiance of the First Secretary's wishes in the summer of 1961
lead to a similar holocaust as the means to destroy the opposition, actual or
potential, and establish his power on the basis of unrestrained terror? This
was the question which would be answered at the Twenty-second Congress of
the Communist party of the Soviet Union, an event to which we must now turn
our attention.