The Defense of Berlin

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While the Russians had Berlin to themselves, the Western Allies fell to debating how best to begin Germany’s four-power occupation. As has been noted, President Truman’s cable to Prime Minister Churchill announcing Washington’s decision to withdraw the Allied forces from the Soviet zone was dispatched on May 14. Two days later, on May 16, General Eisenhower returned to London to review the situation with Mr. Churchill and the British Chiefs of Staff.

As Eisenhower explained it, the problem of dealing with Germany needed settling quickly. First, the present occupation setup was impossible. Everyone knew the area of Germany they were to occupy but as yet no order to do so had been given. Not even the four-power Control Council had been established. SHAEF, he said, was still in command of the entire Western front and was having to administer not only the three Western zones but a great deal of the Soviet zone as well. This was creating numerous problems and was only delaying the establishment of a workable four-power occupation. Equally important, Eisenhower said, the terms of the surrender had not yet been announced. Until they were, the occupation could not go forward on a
legal basis. The problem of governing Germany was thus still hanging fire.¹

Eisenhower recommended to Churchill that SHAEF (the joint headquarters for the Allied troops) be dissolved and that the United States, Britain and France immediately assume the responsibilities for their particular zones. As long as the SHAEF command structure remained, Eisenhower said, he was still the military superior both of Field Marshal Montgomery and General de Lattre de Tassigny, the designated British and French Commanders-in-Chief. Clearly, this arrangement would not work if all four zones were to be considered politically equal.

General Eisenhower also pointed out to the Prime Minister the difficulty which the present situation created in dealing with the Soviets who at that time had to refer everything to Moscow for decision. Eisenhower felt that once four-power government was established the Russian High Command would be able to act on its own initiative—greatly facilitating the handling of occupation problems. Accordingly, he proposed to Churchill that the four-power Control Council designed for governing Germany be activated as soon as possible.²²

¹ Much earlier in the war, General Eisenhower had favored the continuance of SHAEF to govern the occupation of Germany as a combined command but had been turned down in Washington. See Forrest C. Pogue, The Supreme Command, pp. 348–51; Lucius D. Clay, Decision in Germany, p. 10; Dwight D. Eisenhower, Crusade in Europe, p. 218.

²² The Allied Control Council for Germany had been authorized in the “Agreement on Control Machinery in Germany” drafted by the European Advisory Commission and signed in London on November 14, 1944. Under the provisions of this agreement, supreme authority in Germany was to be exercised by the four military Commanders-in-Chief, “each in his own zone of occupation, and also jointly, in matters affecting Germany as a whole. . . .” When acting jointly, the four Commanders-in-Chief would constitute the Allied Control Council. The precise nature of the Control Council was spelled out in Article 3 of the EAC agreement. It stated:

Article 3.

(a) The four Commanders-in-Chief, acting together as a body, will constitute a supreme organ of control called the Control Council.

(b) The functions of the Control Council will be:

(i) to insure appropriate uniformity of action by the Commanders-in-Chief in their respective zones of occupation;

(ii) to initiate plans and reach agreed decisions on the chief military, political, economic and other questions affecting Germany as a whole, on the basis of instructions received by each Commander-in-Chief from his Government;

(iii) to control the German central administration, which will operate under the direction of the Control Council and will be responsible to it for ensuring compliance with its demands;
Prime Minister Churchill agreed that the situation in Germany was urgent, but he did not feel that SHAEF should be abolished just yet. The Prime Minister said he did not wish to make any move which might give the Soviets grounds for demanding the withdrawal of Allied troops from their advance positions in the Russian zone. He therefore told Eisenhower that he thought they should just wait and see how the situation developed. In the meantime, SHAEF should continue as a tactical headquarters with all Allied troops remaining under its control.2

It is clear that Churchill was still worried about Russian expansion. Eisenhower, who did not share the Prime Minister's alarm, reported Churchill's reaction to Washington and, with noticeable irritation, remarked that the Prime Minister "did not appear to be in any real hurry" to have four-power occupation begin.3

The Supreme Commander waited a week, however, before raising the issue again. Then, on May 23, he advised Washington that he "could not carry out his mission much longer" in the absence of four-power government. He suggested that SHAEF be abolished and that the withdrawal from the Russian zone begin immediately.

The British, of course, were opposed. The following day the Foreign Office recommended a compromise. The four Commanders-in-Chief, they suggested, should convene in Berlin the next week in order to establish the Control Council and then continue to meet as they deemed necessary. According to the British plan, however, the Control Council would only consider organizational matters and in the meantime, the Allied forces should remain in place under SHAEF's control until certain "outstanding questions" were discussed with the Soviet Government.4

London had agreed to a meeting of the Commanders-in-Chief, hoping thereby to persuade the United States to postpone the early with-

(iv) to direct the administration of "Greater Berlin" through appropriate organs.

(c) The Control Council will meet at least once in ten days; and it will meet at any time upon request of any one of its members. Decisions of the Control Council shall be unanimous. The chairmanship of the Control Council will be held in rotation by each of its four members.

(d) Each member of the Control Council will be assisted by a political adviser, who will, when necessary, attend meetings of the Council. Each member of the Control Council may also, when necessary, be assisted at meetings of the Council by naval or air advisers. [Italics added.]
drawal of Allied troops from the Soviet zone. But in Washington their proposal fell on deaf ears, and the War Department, with the approval of the President and the Joint Chiefs, went ahead with their plans for the dissolution of SHAEF and the return of American troops to the designated U.S. zone.

Washington did agree with the British, however, that the four military Commanders-in-Chief should meet as soon as possible. After another exchange of cables, the meeting was arranged for Berlin on June 5, 1945.

On June 2, preparatory to the Berlin meeting, General Eisenhower asked Washington for a definite date on which Allied forces would withdraw from the Soviet zone. To General Marshall he cabled:

It is anticipated that one of the questions which will be raised at Berlin meeting, will be date on which forces will begin their withdrawal from the Russian zone. It is possible that the Russians may establish such withdrawal as a corollary to the establishment of the Control Council on a functioning basis in Berlin and to turning over the several zones [sectors] in Berlin to the forces to occupy these zones [sectors]. Any cause for delay in the establishment of Control Council due to the delay in withdrawal would be attributed to us and might well develop strong public reaction. We have as yet no instructions covering such withdrawal. It is believed desirable that separate instructions be given to me as American Commander and to the British Commander prior to Berlin meeting as to how we should reply to this question if it is raised.

The following day, the Joint Chiefs of Staff, with President Truman's approval, told Eisenhower that the Allied troops should not withdraw from the Soviet zone before the establishment of the Control Council, or the take-over of the sectors in Berlin. Instead, the Council itself, once established, should handle this as a matter of military convenience. "If the Russians raise the point," General Marshall stated, "you should state in substance that the matter of withdrawal of forces to their own zones is one of the items to be worked out in the Control Council. As to the actual movement of U.S. Forces, you should state that this, in your view, is primarily a military matter; its timing will be in accordance with U.S. ability to withdraw their forces from other than their own zone and British and Russian ability to take over."

On June 4, one day before the meeting of the four military Com-
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manders-in-Chief was to take place, Prime Minister Churchill repeated his misgivings to President Truman over “the retreat of the American Army to our line of occupation in the central sector, thus bringing Soviet power into the heart of Western Europe and the descent of an iron curtain between us and everything to the eastward. I hoped that this retreat, if it has to be made, would be accompanied by the settlement of many great things which would be the true foundation of world peace. Nothing really important has been settled yet, and you and I will have to bear great responsibility for the future.”

Washington was not impressed, however, and on June 5, the four Commanders-in-Chief met in Berlin as scheduled. Each of the three Western commanders looked forward to their first encounter with Marshal Zhukov, the great military leader of the Red Army. But in a somewhat different and perhaps more prophetic vein, General Lucius Clay, who accompanied Eisenhower that day, recalls: “When we climbed into the planes [at Frankfurt] we remembered Soviet reluctance to participate in the first surrender ceremony in Rheims and Soviet insistence on a second ceremony in Berlin, and we could not but wonder what might lie ahead.”

The three Western Commanders-in-Chief landed separately at Tempelhof airfield in Berlin on the morning of June 5. Upon arrival, each was escorted to Marshal Zhukov’s headquarters in Karlshorst, one of the suburban districts in the eastern part of the city. The meeting itself was scheduled to convene at twelve noon.

In preparation for the meeting the European Advisory Commission had drawn up three separate documents for the military commanders to sign. The first of these was a “Declaration Regarding the Defeat of Germany”; it amounted to the assumption of supreme authority by the Allies as a result of Germany’s unconditional surrender. The second document divided Germany into four zones of occupation and provided for the joint occupation of Berlin. The third established various organs of control machinery to be used by the Allies during the course of the occupation. Under its provisions, supreme authority in Germany was to be exercised by an Allied Control Council made up of the four Commanders-in-Chief. Decisions of the Council were to be unanimous and its chairmanship was to rotate on a regular basis.

Instead of commencing the conference at the scheduled hour, however, the Russians began to delay. Each of the three Western Com-
manders-in-Chief, General Eisenhower, Field Marshal Montgomery and General de Lattre de Tassigny was kept waiting in his respective quarters until late in the afternoon. Gradually becoming angry at the delay, Eisenhower and Montgomery finally sent a joint ultimatum to Zhukov demanding that the conference begin or else they would leave. According to Field Marshal Montgomery:

That produced quick results and we were summoned to the conference, which was held in a clubhouse nearby. But, on arrival, there was a further delay owing to Russian objection to one word in the English text which disagreed with the Russian version. I had no idea what the word was, or what effect it had on the general problem. But I was so fed up with the whole affair that I suggested the offending word be deleted from the text; this suggestion was at once agreed to by the Russians and by everyone else, and to this day I do not know what difference it made.¹⁰

With the texts reconciled to the Russians' satisfaction the ceremony began, and in the glare of arc lamps, each of the four Commanders-in-Chief signed the documents. Afterward, they withdrew for a private meeting. Marshal Zhukov, who was presiding at this meeting, asked if there were any other matters to be discussed, and Eisenhower replied, "The installment of the Control Council in Berlin."

"No," answered Zhukov, "not until your troops will have been evacuated from the areas in the Soviet Zone they now illegally occupy."

"Why not then talk about both questions?" asked Eisenhower.

"No," Zhukov replied, "I cannot discuss the first until the second is settled." He said he could not do so "until all forces in Germany had been homed within their zones, or at least a date fixed for that event."¹¹

For all practical purposes this meant that the Allied Control Council for Germany could not get underway for some time. As Eisenhower had suspected, the Soviets were making the establishment of the Control Council contingent upon the withdrawal of Allied forces from the Soviet zone.

As the meeting concluded, General Eisenhower said that American and British troops would withdraw from the Soviet zone at the same time they entered Berlin, but Zhukov would not discuss this until the date of the withdrawal had been settled. According to General Clay, Eisenhower did not press the issue further "since it was obvious that Marshal Zhukov was not prepared to discuss it." The meeting in Berlin
ended with the agreement that the problem of the redistribution of forces was one which would be settled at the governmental level. Each of the military Commanders-in-Chief was to refer it to his respective government for further action.12

Following his return to Frankfurt that evening, General Eisenhower advised Washington that he thought the Russians would not agree to the activation of the Control Council in Germany until they had been satisfied about the withdrawal of Allied troops from the Soviet zone. He also pointed out that Allied Military Government had become a fact in Germany with the signature of the declaration establishing supreme authority, and requested that SHAEF be dissolved as soon as possible.

At this time, both General Eisenhower and his political adviser, Mr. Robert Murphy, thought it would be unwise to continue to keep the American forces in the Soviet zone. Murphy's own report to the State Department after the meeting in Berlin stated:

For the Department's secret information I believe that General Eisenhower does not consider that the retention of our forces in the Russian zone is wise or that it will be productive of advantages. I believe that it is pretty obvious to all concerned that we really are desirous of removing our forces and that it is only a question of time when we will inevitably do so. The Russians on the other hand may well be content temporarily to consolidate their present position in the territory they hold. In the interim, no progress would under such circumstances be made in the organization of the quadripartite control of Germany, to which we are committed.

On June 8, 1945, three days after the Berlin meeting, Harry Hopkins, who had stopped off in Frankfurt on his return from Moscow, informed President Truman of General Eisenhower's preference for an early withdrawal. The Supreme Commander was convinced, Hopkins reported, that the present "indeterminate status for the date for withdrawal of Allied troops from area assigned to the Russians is certain to be misunderstood by Russia as well as at home." Until such a withdrawal was carried out, Hopkins advised the President, the Allied control machinery could not be started and any delay in the establishment of the control machinery "would interfere seriously with the development of government administrative machinery for Germany."
Hopkins suggested that in the withdrawal firm arrangements should be made with the Soviets for the simultaneous arrival of Western troops in Berlin. "As a concurrent condition to our withdrawal," Hopkins said, "we should specify a simultaneous movement of our troops to Berlin under an agreement between the respective commanders which would provide us unrestricted access to our Berlin area from Bremen and Frankfurt by air, rail and highway on agreed routes." 13

In spite of a further warning from Prime Minister Churchill on June 9 that they should not withdraw, President Truman adopted the Eisenhower–Hopkins proposal. Unconsciously anticipating the American decision by one day, Churchill advised the British Foreign Office on June 11 that he was "still hoping that the retreat of the American centre to the occupation line can be staved off till 'the Three' meet. . . . Of course at any moment the Americans may give way to the Russian demand, and we shall have to conform. . . . We ought not to let ourselves be hurried into a decision which touches issues so vast and fateful." 14

The following day, the Americans gave way. President Truman pointedly told the Prime Minister that he did not feel it possible to delay the withdrawal of United States forces for political purposes. "In consideration of the tripartite agreement as to zones of occupation in Germany, approved by President Roosevelt after long consideration and detailed discussion with you," Mr. Truman stated, "I am unable to delay the withdrawal of American troops from the Soviet zone in order to use pressure in the settlement of other problems."

Referring to the report he had just been given by Hopkins, the President said that "advice of the highest reliability is received that the Allied Control Council cannot begin to function until Allied troops withdraw from the Russian zone."

"I am also convinced," Mr. Truman continued, "that the military government now exercised by the Allied Supreme Commander should, without delay, be terminated and divided between Eisenhower and Montgomery, each to function in the zone occupied by his own troops."

"I am advised that it would be highly disadvantageous to our relations with the Soviets to postpone action in the matter until our meeting in July."

Truman then proposed a message to Stalin (written by General Marshall) stating that he was prepared to order all American troops
in Germany to start their withdrawal to the American zone on June 21, in accordance with arrangements to be made “between the respective commanders.” These arrangements were to include provisions for the simultaneous movement of the Allied garrisons into Greater Berlin and for the free access to Berlin by air, road, and rail from Frankfurt and Bremen. Mr. Churchill was asked by the President for his concurrence in the draft message before it was dispatched.\(^{15}\)

“This struck a knell in my breast,” Churchill later recalled, “but I had no choice but to submit.”\(^{16}\) On June 14, he sent his reply to Washington. “Obviously,” Churchill said, “we are obliged to conform to your decision, and the necessary instructions will be issued.” The Prime Minister quickly took issue with part of Truman’s message, however. “It is not correct to state,” he said, “that the tripartite agreement about zones of occupation in Germany was the subject of ‘long considerations and detailed discussion’ between me and President Roosevelt. References made to them at Quebec were brief, and concerned only Anglo-American arrangements which the President did not wish to raise by correspondence beforehand. These were remitted to the Combined Chiefs of Staff and were certainly acceptable to them.”

“I sincerely hope,” Churchill concluded, “that your action will in the long run make for a lasting peace in Europe.”\(^{17}\)

In Washington, Churchill’s surrender to the American decision caught the White House by surprise. According to Admiral Leahy, “Churchill’s action in agreeing to our withdrawal was entirely unexpected. His acceptance of the President’s decision, after repeated British insistence that we remain in the Soviet zone, indicated to me a possibility that the great Englishman was not in vigorous health. It was...\(^*\)

*In writing subsequently of this immediate postwar decision, Prime Minister Churchill magnanimously has indicated many of the considerations which prompted President Truman’s action. According to Churchill:

It must not be overlooked that President Truman had not been concerned or consulted in the original fixing of the zones. The case as presented to him so soon after his accession to power was whether or not to depart from and in a sense repudiate the policy of the American and British governments agreed under his illustrious predecessor. He was, I have no doubt, supported in his action by his advisers, military and civil. His responsibility at this point was limited to deciding whether circumstances had changed so fundamentally that an entirely different procedure should be adopted, with the likelihood of having to face accusations of breach of faith. Those who are only wise after the event should hold their peace.

not in his nature or in accord with his past performance to give up so easily, even when he was plainly wrong,—as he was in this matter.”  

As soon as Churchill’s reply was received in Washington, the draft message to Stalin setting the date for the American withdrawal from the Soviet zone on June 21, was dispatched. The Prime Minister reluctantly sent a similar message to Moscow in which he stated that he was prepared to act in conjunction with the United States and that, if arrangements could be made between the tactical commanders, he would order General Montgomery to begin the withdrawal of British troops simultaneously. Both messages were received by the Kremlin on June 15.

On the following day, Marshal Stalin replied. His answer shocked both Washington and London. The Russians were not ready for the Allies to come to Berlin. July 1 would be better, Stalin said. Marshal Zhukov was wanted in Moscow for a parade on June 24, and would not return to Germany until June 28 or 30. Also, according to Stalin, “some of the districts of Berlin have not yet been cleared of mines, nor can such mine-clearing operations be finished until late June.” But, of course, it was reparations, not “mines,” of which Berlin was being cleared and the Soviets needed several more weeks to complete the process.

In spite of this, Stalin’s request for postponement was accepted. President Truman directed the Joint Chiefs of Staff to instruct Eisenhower to begin the evacuation from the Soviet zone on July 1. The final details of the movement together with the arrangements for American access to Berlin were to be handled by General Eisenhower as Supreme Commander.  

In commenting later on these instructions, former President Truman has stated that:

It was my own opinion that it would be silly if these arrangements were to lead to an isolated Berlin . . . to which we would have no access. I asked Stalin, with Churchill’s backing, in my cable of June 14 for free access by air, road, and rail to Berlin . . . as part of the withdrawal of troops previously agreed to by Roosevelt, Churchill and Stalin.

At my forthcoming meeting with Churchill and Stalin I intended to call for the setting up of a centralized Allied-controlled government. I was opposed to the breaking up of Germany into several Allied segments. . . . At no time did I believe that Ger-
many should be split into several rival territorial divisions or that its capital should become an island shut off from the rest of the country.*

Prime Minister Churchill also emphasized the importance of access rights to Berlin in his message to Stalin on June 15. "I also am ready," Churchill stated, "to issue instructions to Field Marshal Montgomery to make the necessary arrangements . . . for the similar withdrawal of British troops into their zones in Germany, for the simultaneous movement of Allied garrisons into Greater Berlin, and for the provision of free movement for British forces by air, rail, and road to and from the British zone to Berlin." In his reply to both Churchill and President Truman, however, Marshal Stalin made no reference to Allied access to Berlin, but the omission was not considered significant at the time; some in the West were led to believe that the matter of access was taken for granted.

On June 25, in preparation for the Allied withdrawal, General Marshall informed Eisenhower of the importance President Truman attached to the question of access to Berlin. "In accordance with the President's message to Stalin," Marshall stated, arrangements for access should be made "simultaneously with arrangements for other adjustments." Marshall assumed that "appropriate Russian commanders have been instructed accordingly," and requested Major General John R. Deane, Chief of the U.S. Military Mission to Moscow, to check this out "with the Soviet Staff."

Later that day, June 25, 1945, General Deane advised both Marshall and Eisenhower that, "I have requested General Antonov [Chief of the Russian General Staff] by letter to confirm fact that Soviet Commanders have been authorized to agree with American Commanders on freedom of access by road, rail, and air to Berlin . . . as directed in your . . . [message] of 25 June. Will meet with either Antonov or his representative today and hope to get an answer at that time."

The Russian military passed Deane's inquiry on to their political leaders in the Kremlin and later in the day, Andre Vyshinsky, then

*As has been noted (see Chapter II), the question of access to Berlin was considered both in Washington, and by the American delegation to the European Advisory Commission in London. For a variety of reasons, however, no specific assurance of Allied access to Berlin had been provided. Instead, the issue was to be handled as a purely military matter by the commanders once the hostilities were over.
Deputy Soviet Foreign Minister, told Ambassador Harriman that Zhukov had been authorized to discuss the matter of access with General Eisenhower. On June 27, two days later, General Antonov reported the same thing to General Deane and suggested that a meeting take place in Berlin on June 29. Deane relayed the message to General Marshall adding: “It is my opinion that when our representatives meet with Zhukov there will be little difficulty in arranging for free access for our troops in Berlin.”

On June 28, the day before the meeting with Zhukov, Eisenhower gave General Clay a summary of the American and British requirements for access to Berlin. Clay, who was to be the American representative at the meeting, was instructed to forward the requirements to Marshal Zhukov so that the Russians would be prepared to act on them the following day. The main features of these requirements were as follows:

First, the unrestricted right to use two highways between Berlin and the Western zones, “including the right to repair and construct surfaces and bridges.” These, if possible should be the autobahns Berlin-Magdeburg-Hanover and Berlin-Halle-Frankfurt.

Second, the right to use three designated rail lines, including the maintenance of rights of way, and the right to use British and American trained rail crews and similarly supervised German civilians.

Third, unrestricted air travel, including the right of fighter escort, between the American and British zones and the Staaken, Tempelhof and Gatow airfields in Berlin.

Fourth, an agreement that all Allied traffic on authorized rights of way be free from border search or control by customs or military authorities.

The meeting with Marshal Zhukov took place as scheduled in Berlin on June 29. Accompanying General Clay in the American delegation were Major General Floyd C. Parks, who had been designated the new commandant of the American sector in Berlin, and Robert Murphy, General Eisenhower’s political adviser from the Department of State.

Great Britain was represented by Lieutenant General Sir Ronald Weeks. No French officers were present at the meeting since the location of the French sector in Berlin had not yet been agreed upon.

Marshal Zhukov, who was presiding, announced that the first item on the agenda was the withdrawal of American and British troops
from Thuringia, Saxony and Saxony-Anhalt. According to General Clay’s account, agreement was quickly reached. The evacuation would begin on July 1, and would be completed within four days. Soviet troops would be allowed to follow the withdrawing Allied forces at intervals of not less than one kilometer; liaison representatives were to be exchanged between the various commanders along the front, Soviet reconnaissance parties would be permitted to enter the areas to be evacuated, and similar Allied parties would be allowed to proceed to Berlin.27

Having agreed to the arrangements for the Western withdrawal, the ensuing negotiations over access to Berlin became a great deal more difficult. Although he did not realize it at the time, General Clay was witnessing what Prime Minister Churchill had feared. In agreeing to the withdrawal of Allied troops from the Soviet zone, the West had played its high cards in Germany. As a result, Clay and Weeks now had to take what Zhukov offered and this, as it turned out, was not very much.

Zhukov informed the British and American generals that the Soviet Union considered access to Berlin as a privilege which they were granting the Allies, not as a right to which they were entitled. The Western demands which General Clay had given him the previous day, Zhukov said, were excessive. When Clay stated that the United States had not expected exclusive use of the facilities which he had mentioned but only the right of access over them, Zhukov remained adamant. He had instructions from Moscow, he said, which were explicit. The Allies could use one highway, that between Berlin and Hanover (through Helmstedt), one railroad, and one air corridor.28 The air corridor, Zhukov said, might have two branches once it reached Magdeburg. One of these could continue on towards Hanover in the British zone while

* Previously, in tentative discussions between the Allied and Soviet commands, a nine-day period for the withdrawal had been agreed upon. General Clay reports that Zhukov “believed this much too long,” and that he agreed with him.

Subsequently, there has been considerable speculation that the reason for the sudden Soviet reversal was due to a fear that the Western Allies would have that much more time to loot the areas from which they were withdrawing. See Frank Howley, Berlin Command, pp. 42-43; Field Marshal Montgomery, Memoirs, p. 344; Lucius D. Clay, Decision in Germany, p. 25.

** In his Memoirs, President Truman cites this as the autobahn “Hanau-Magdeburg-Berlin.” Although this was the phrase used by Ambassador Murphy in his cable to the State Department, it is in error. The correct reading should be “Hanover-Magdeburg-Berlin.” Cf. Harry S Truman, Year of Decisions, p. 307.
the other could veer in the direction of Frankfurt in the American zone. As for airfields in Berlin itself, the Russians stated that according to their maps, Gatow and Tempelhof were in the Western sectors and so the Allies were free to use them. Staaken was not and therefore was not available. This was the extent of Russia’s offer, and Zhukov remained affable but could not be budged. He had orders from Moscow, he said, which he could not exceed.

Generals Clay and Weeks were now in an extremely unenviable position. As Lieutenant Generals they were acting only as the agents of their chiefs, General Eisenhower and Field Marshal Montgomery, respectively. To some extent, they undoubtedly felt obliged to bring home an agreement and were certainly not as free as their principals would have been to break off negotiations at this point. Also, they were clearly outranked. Zhukov was a Marshal of the Soviet Union, and Russia’s greatest military hero. Neither Weeks nor Clay had been combat soldiers. While the question of relative rank probably would not have disturbed a trained civilian negotiator, it was a subtle consideration which could not help entering into the judgment of a professional soldier. It was a technique which the Russians were to follow repeatedly during the next several years of Allied dealings in Berlin.

In spite of the factors at work against him, General Clay at first declined to accept the Russian proposal and Weeks supported him. When Zhukov then said that the arrangement might be considered a temporary one and could be brought up later in the Control Council, Clay reluctantly agreed to accept it. In referring to the incident afterwards, General Clay stated: “Therefore Weeks and I accepted as a temporary arrangement the allocation of a main highway and rail line and two air corridors, reserving the right to reopen the question in the Allied Control Council. I must admit that we did not fully realize that the requirement of unanimous consent would enable a Soviet veto in the Allied Control Council to block all of our future efforts. . . .” 28

As a result of General Clay’s decision, the United States and Great Britain were to withdraw from the Soviet zone in return for only the most minimal Russian guarantees of access to Berlin. To General Clay’s credit, he has courageously acknowledged his part in these proceedings. Writing in 1950 he stated:
I think now that I was mistaken in not . . . making free access to Berlin a condition to our withdrawal into our occupation zone. The import of the issue was recognized but I did not want an agreement in writing which established anything less than the right of unrestricted access. We were sincere in our desire to move into Berlin for the purpose of establishing quadripartite government which we hoped would develop better understanding and solve many problems. Also we had a large and combat-experienced army in Germany which at the moment prevented us from having any worries over the possibility of being blockaded there.29

"General Eisenhower," Clay continues, "had delegated full authority to me to conduct the negotiations and the responsibility for the decision was mine." Although General Clay discreetly did not mention it, perhaps he also was aware of the maxim of the military service which cautions that while authority may be delegated, responsibility never can.

The limited arrangements for access, to which Generals Clay and Weeks verbally agreed on June 29, were never recorded in an official document. As Clay has stated, "we did not wish to accept specific routes which might be interpreted as a denial of our right of access over all routes." There is considerable merit in General Clay's position. He—and his military and civilian superiors as well—thought it would be possible to work together amicably with the Soviet representatives in the Allied Control Council. By not putting what was considered a temporary agreement into writing, Clay felt that it would be easier to obtain revisions when the Control Council met.

As a result of the Clay-Weeks-Zhukov discussions, the armies of the United States and Great Britain began their withdrawal from the Soviet zone on July 1, 1945, followed by masses of refugees and others seeking safety from the Red Army. In the words of Winston Churchill, "Soviet Russia was established in the heart of Europe. This was a fateful milestone for mankind." 30

At the time of the Western withdrawal, my wife, then a child of seven, was living with her family in Blankenburg/Harz, a mountain village in Saxony-Anhalt which was to be evacuated. She has since described the fear and dread with which the older people anticipated the coming of the Russian Army. It made an indelible impression upon her and can be appreciated, perhaps, only by those who have lived through a similar experience.
Simultaneously with the American evacuation of the Soviet zone, advance elements of the American Military Government sped towards Berlin. Colonel Frank Howley, who later succeeded General Parks as Commandant of the American sector in Berlin, has described the scene as it appeared to him at the time.

On July 1, 1945, the road to Berlin was the highroad to Bedlam. It was packed with tanks, trucks, and other vehicles, Military Government people and troops, all hurrying toward the previously forbidden city. Russian officers... raced up and down our columns to see that we weren’t escaping with plunder from the territory we had surrendered. . . . A disagreeable summer rain was pelting down when we finally straggled into Berlin late in the afternoon. The Russians had not allowed us to look over our sector before coming in, although that had been in the agreement, and none of us knew exactly where to go once we arrived. . . . As it was, hundreds of officers and men milled around, looking for places to stay in the ruins, and most of them, in Class A uniforms, wound up sleeping in the rain.31

Howley and his military government detachment fared only slightly better. They had brought their field gear with them and in the absence of any accommodations, spent the night camped in the Grunewald, Berlin’s forest-like city park. As Howley recalls, “I pulled up my vehicles in a protective circle, as in the old covered-wagon days on the prairie, and posted guards.”

The following day Howley and General Parks visited the Russian commandant in Berlin, Colonel General Gorbatov, to arrange for the take-over of the American sector. * Both parties agreed that July 4, then two days away, was a suitable date. Early on the morning of the fourth, the leading elements of the American 2nd Armored Division arrived in Berlin. The 2nd Armored Division, which was part of

* At this point it is well to distinguish between the sector commandants in Berlin and the Commanders-in-Chief of each of the Allied forces. The sector commandants were relatively junior “General Officers” and were usually several echelons below the Commanders-in-Chief in the chain of command. Their responsibilities extended only to the City of Berlin whereas the Commanders-in-Chief were responsible for all of Germany, including Berlin. Thus, General Gorbatov, a Colonel General, was the Russian sector Commandant in Berlin and was responsible to Marshal Zhukov who was the Russian Commander-in-Chief. Similarly, Major General Parks was the commander of the American sector in Berlin and likewise, was responsible for his actions to General Eisenhower, the American Commander-in-Chief.
Simpson's Ninth Army, had been sitting on the banks of the Elbe since April 11, a period of almost three months, waiting for the opportunity to push on to Berlin. When they arrived, a brief change-over ceremony was held, and General Bradley, who had flown to Berlin especially for the occasion, spoke briefly to the assembled troops. Flags were exchanged between the Russians and Americans, and elements of the Red Army passed in review.

Later that day as the Americans were preparing to take over their sector, Major General Parks received a note signed by Marshal Zhukov. In it, Zhukov stated that under the agreements Berlin was to be governed by an Allied Kommandatura composed of each of the four sector commandants. Since the Kommandatura had not been established, Zhukov said, the American sector could not be turned over to the U.S. forces. This was another Soviet strategem but General Parks and his deputy, Colonel Howley, refused to be put off. In the absence of orders from American headquarters in Frankfurt, Parks took the initiative and instructed Howley to “go ahead as planned, but don’t get into too much trouble. After all, the occupation is just beginning.”

At dawn the following morning Colonel Howley moved his military government personnel and borough commanders into each of the six boroughs of the American sector. In each of the six borough halls Howley’s officers “requisitioned” space and raised the American flag. The German officials who were there were told that henceforth they would receive their instructions from the Americans. When the Russians awoke later in the day they were confronted with a fait accompli. After a brief protest, they acquiesced and withdrew, and according to General Clay, “we had learned our first lesson in how to obtain Russian consent.”

On July 7, General Clay and General Weeks again met with Marshal Zhukov to discuss occupation policy. The purpose of the meeting was to arrange for the permanent supply of food and fuel needed in Berlin

* Under the provisions of the Allied agreement on control machinery in Germany which had been signed by each of the four Commanders-in-Chief on June 5, the city of Berlin was to be governed jointly by “an Inter-Allied Governing Authority or Kommandatura.” The Kommandatura was to operate under the direction of the Allied Control Council, and would have a technical staff to control the various organs of city government. Like the Control Council, its chairmanship would rotate on a monthly basis.
and to establish the quadripartite machinery for the city government. With little discussion, Generals Clay and Weeks accepted the Russian draft for the organization of the Kommandatura. At General Clay's suggestion, it was decided that the Kommandatura would hold its first meeting on the eleventh of July.

The second subject discussed, that of supplying food and fuel for Berlin, was not so easily resolved. Marshal Zhukov insisted that the Western powers would have to bring into Berlin the necessary food to support their individual sectors. Previously, all of Berlin had received its food from the surrounding countryside which was now under Soviet occupation. When Clay and Weeks protested and pointed this out, Zhukov stressed the severe food shortage which he said was then impending in the Soviet zone and in the Soviet Union itself. Moved by this argument, Generals Clay and Weeks accepted the responsibility for bringing in the necessary food to support the population of the Western sectors. "Weeks and I knew," Clay has written:

\[\ldots\] that there was a definite food shortage in both eastern Germany and the Soviet Union. Fighting between the ground forces in eastern Germany had gone on for a much longer period than in western Germany and was certain to have cut down its resources. We could not expect the ill-nourished Russians to eat less in order to feed Berlin. Therefore, subject to the establishment of a common ration in all sectors of Berlin and with the understanding that the Control Council when it was established would arrange for the exchange of food between all zones of occupation \ldots I accepted the responsibility for bringing in the food necessary to support the population of the American sector.\[^{34}\]

As a result of General Clay's decision, the Western Allies assumed the burden for supporting their sectors in Berlin, as well as for governing them. It is interesting to speculate how the situation in Berlin would have developed had the Russians been compelled to continue to provide the food and fuel for all of the sectors of Berlin. Presumably, the dependence of the Western sectors on the Western Allies (and the Western zones in Germany) would not have existed. Conversely, a blockade three years later which cut off the supplies from the Soviet zone might have been all the more serious. Likewise, had the responsibility for the feeding of the Western sectors of Berlin not been placed on the Western Allies, it is questionable whether the feeling of mutual
dependence, which subsequently developed between Berlin and the West, would have flourished. In the absence of General Clay's decision, Berlin very definitely might have gone behind the Iron Curtain in 1945.

The four-power occupation in Berlin officially began when the Berlin Kommandatura held its first meeting on July 11. All four sector commandants were present. The United States was represented by Major General Floyd Parks and his deputy, Colonel Howley. Great Britain was represented by Major General Lewis Lyne and the Soviet Union by Colonel General Alexander V. Gorbatov. France, whose sector in Berlin had not yet been established, was represented by Brigadier General Geoffroi de Beauchesne.

In its first item of business, the Kommandatura, at Soviet insistence, agreed that all orders previously issued by the Russians would remain in effect until further notice. This was a serious mistake. All decisions of the Kommandatura had to be unanimous. Accordingly, it later became impossible to change many aspects of the Berlin city government which the Russians had imposed. Most important of these were the replacement of Soviet appointed officials in the Western sectors and the control of the city's police force. Political parties and labor unions also found it difficult to organize on an independent basis as a result of the Kommandatura's decision. As Colonel Howley later stated, "when we signed that document we acquiesced to Russian control of Berlin."