Negotiations under Pressure
(November 1958—August 1959)

The Soviet note caused the usual gastronomical reaction among the Western powers, who cautiously withheld comment while trying hard to digest its contents. It had been ten years since the last major Soviet drive on Berlin and therefore it took some time for the significance of the Russian ultimatum to register. The Allies viewed Berlin as merely a part of the overall German question and accordingly, were not prepared at first for the specific nature of the Kremlin’s demands. But in Berlin and West Germany, the Soviet announcement caused intense alarm and people anxiously waited to see what course the Allies would take.

The Berliners were not reassured by the first soundings emanating from Washington and London on the evening of November 27. Given the belligerent and insulting tone of the Soviet note, it would not have been out of place for the Western powers to have summarily dismissed it. Indeed, the fact that this wasn’t done was viewed in many quarters as a partial Western concession.

Instead of dismissing it, the State Department in Washington issued a brief announcement that they had received and were studying the
Russian message. Fortunately, the tone of the State Department announcement was firm:

The United States, [it said,] along with Britain and France, is solemnly committed to the security of the Western sectors of Berlin. Two and a quarter million West Berliners in reliance thereon, have convincingly and courageously demonstrated the good fruits of freedom.

Another consideration is that the United States will not acquiesce in a unilateral repudiation by the Soviet Union of its obligations and responsibilities . . . in relation to Berlin. Neither will it enter into any agreement with the Soviet Union which . . . would have the end result of abandoning the people of West Berlin to hostile domination.¹

The State Department reply was personally drafted by Secretary Dulles. President Eisenhower, who was then vacationing in Augusta, withheld comment “pending receipt of an official translation of the Kremlin message.” ²

Dismay in West Germany at the lack of a more positive American response was accentuated by Secretary Dulles’ comment in a press conference the day before, that if the Russians insisted on turning control of the routes to Berlin over to the Ulbricht regime, the United States might agree to deal with the East Germans as “agents” of the Soviet Union.

Q.—Mr. Secretary, what if, despite this responsibility, the Soviets go ahead and turn over to the East German authorities the check points on the autobahn . . . would we deal with the East German officials who would man these check points . . . ?

A.—Well, we would certainly not deal with them in any way which involved our acceptance of the East German regime as a substitute for the Soviet Union.

Q.—Does that mean that we might deal with them as agents of the Soviet Union?

A.—We might, yes. . . . It all depends upon the details of just how they act and how they function. . . .³

When seen in their full context, however, Dulles’ remarks are not as compromising as they at first appeared. The Western press unfortunately had played up the Secretary’s answer to this particular question and virtually ignored other and, indeed, much firmer statements which
he had made during the course of the interview. Specifically, Dulles had been asked whether the U.S. had ruled out the use of force should the East Germans attempt to block our access to Berlin and he had replied: "We have not ruled out any of our rights at all including the use of force if necessary."

But since Dulles' latter remarks had not been emphasized in the news, the American response to the Soviet note on November 27 seemed dishearteningly cautious. As in June of 1948, once the average Berliner heard about the Russian demand, he doubted whether the West would remain. Persons from all over the city began calling up their American acquaintances to find out if the United States was planning to leave. Reflecting the city's anxiety, Governing Mayor Willy Brandt issued a nervous statement reminding the world that Berlin was only a part of the larger conflict between East and West—that Berlin was the result, not the cause, of the friction between communism and democracy. Indeed, Brandt's statement betrayed the fear common to most Berliners at the time that a deal might be made with the Russians at their expense. "There is no isolated solution of the Berlin question," the Mayor said. "If there is to be a contribution made toward relaxation of tension . . . then it is not a matter of the Berlin question but of overcoming the division of Germany."

"Now particularly the people of Berlin," he continued, "has trust in its friends throughout the world. In the coming weeks it is a matter not only of the fate of our city but of the German people."¹

Ernst Lemmer, party leader of the CDU in Berlin, sounded a note of defiance. "We will never permit ourselves to be converted," he said, "into a No Man's Land in the heart of Germany and Europe." From Bonn, Chancellor Konrad Adenauer added his voice to those calling for a firm stand and stated that "everything would be done to preserve the status of Berlin."²

In London, on the other hand, reaction to the Soviet note was noticeably weak. A New York Times dispatch by Walter H. Waggoner reported that "a sense of relief seemed evident in Foreign Office quarters, where the note was regarded as more moderate than might have been expected." The six-month respite in Khrushchev's proposal, he said, was regarded by responsible opinion as "a promising aspect."³

Unofficial opinion in Great Britain was a great deal more critical
of the Soviet note, however. The London *Times* in a lead editorial condemned the Russian ultimatum as "the opening move in a very long and tough tussle of wills." "Clearly enough," it continued, "the prospect is in many ways as serious . . . as it was over ten years ago when Stalin was planning to blockade Berlin." In Paris, French Information Minister Jacques Soustelle attacked the Soviet note but declined further comment until its full text had been received by the French government.7

By November 28, the seriousness of the Soviet note was apparent in the West. Following continued reports of the tension which had been aroused in Berlin, Secretary of State Dulles journeyed from his offices in Foggy Bottom across the Potomac to the Pentagon where he conferred with Secretary of Defense Neil McElroy for more than an hour.8 Vice President Nixon, then in London, denounced the Soviet proposal in vigorous terms. The *New York Times*, reflecting perhaps the Administration's position, was beside itself with indignation. "The history of diplomacy," it stated editorially, "knows many tendentious and self-serving documents, but there is surely none among them so arrogant and insolent, so cynical and so full of distortions and barefaced lies as the latest Soviet note on Berlin."9

The Communists by this time were keeping up a steady pressure on the West, stressing simultaneously the reasonableness of the Soviet proposals and the consequences which might result from their rejection. At his press conference on November 27 announcing the Russian plan for Berlin, Premier Khrushchev had worn a gold dove of peace on his lapel to emphasize, as he put it, "the peaceful nature of Soviet intentions." The conference itself had lasted ninety minutes and Khrushchev's manner had been friendly to the point of comradery. He wisecracked to newsmen that the Soviet Union at last had embarked on the road to peace, and bantered good-naturedly during the question and answer period when asked about specific passages. Significantly, throughout the entire ninety-minute session Khrushchev not once referred to any of the advisers who accompanied him nor did he use any notes. His answers frequently paraphrased or quoted the ultimatum exactly, and indeed, convinced many of those who were present that he had written it himself.10

On November 29, Walter Ulbricht added the basso to Khrushchev's tenor. For two days now the East German press had trumpeted the
news that Moscow's ultimatum was a Communist victory. When asked by a Western correspondent in East Berlin what would happen if the Allies chose to answer the Soviet proposals with an airlift, Ulbricht replied that such a move "would be considered a military threat" to East Germany and would be answered accordingly.\textsuperscript{11}

But Ulbricht's tin horn was the exception. Having struck up the music once more in Berlin, most Russian spokesmen responded with harmonious tones. A Soviet Embassy official in East Berlin stated that the six-month time limit for proposed negotiations was not "rigid." According to a report quoted by the West German News Agency, the Russian official implied "that the Soviet Union might delay the transfer of its Berlin responsibilities to the East German Government if the negotiations showed any hope of success."\textsuperscript{12}

Likewise, at an Albanian Embassy reception in Moscow on November 29, Khrushchev himself made much the same comment. No text of Khrushchev's impromptu remarks was kept, but the agreed gist was that Russia would not act unilaterally to alter Berlin's status in six months, providing East-West talks had begun within that time.\textsuperscript{13}

Khrushchev's pleas for parley however fooled no one in the U.S., and the official American position continued to harden. On November 30, Secretary Dulles visited President Eisenhower in Augusta, and upon leaving, read a short statement to the press emphasizing American determination. The statement was deliberately terse—its terseness, in fact, had an extremely reassuring quality. "The President reiterated," Dulles said, "our government's firm purpose that the United States will not enter into any arrangement or embark on any course of conduct which will have the effect of abandoning the responsibilities which the United States, with Great Britain and France, has formally assumed for the freedom and security of the people of West Berlin."\textsuperscript{14} Dulles' announcement was a way of advising the world that the United States intended to stand firm.

In Berlin itself the United States also took decisive steps to underline its determination to remain. On the same date as Dulles' visit to Augusta, General Henry I. Hodes, Commander-in-Chief of the United States Army in Europe, arrived in Berlin on a special inspection. Hodes' visit was a none too subtle reminder to the Communists that the Allied position in the isolated city was supported by more than the 11,000 men of the Western garrison. It also reemphasized
to the Berliners that the United States was militarily prepared to defend its position in Berlin with whatever force was necessary. Hodes' visit was widely publicized in the West Berlin press and his arrival just three days after the Soviet ultimatum did much to buttress the morale of the Western sectors. He stated emphatically that the United States was going to stay in Berlin and insisted, as General Clay had earlier, that "no dependents of servicemen have been evacuated and none are going to be." Following General Hodes' assurances, everyone in Berlin, Allied as well as German, breathed an audible sigh of relief. Mayor Brandt said that the people of the city now knew they would not be forsaken, and in the American colony, mothers and housewives once more went about their business with a smile on their lips, firmly aware of their role in the city's defense.

There were also indications that by this time official British thinking had also hardened. In an interview on the American television program, "Meet the Press," Iain MacLeod, Minister of Labor in the Macmillan Cabinet, stated positively that Great Britain intended to stay in Berlin. "Just because someone twitches the strings," he said, "doesn't necessarily mean that we should dance. It should be made quite clear that we have our rights in Berlin—that we intend to stay there."

And while the West was fortifying its position, the East German regime kept up its steady propaganda barrage designed to shake Berlin's morale. Elections were due to take place in the Western sectors on Sunday, December 7, and the Communists clearly hoped to capitalize on the fear which the Soviet ultimatum had produced. Already there had been a noted economic reaction in West Berlin following the Russian announcement. Between six and seven million dollars in personal savings had been withdrawn from the banks and nervous housewives had begun to stock up on non-perishable items like coffee and sugar from their neighborhood grocer.

On December 1, Lothar Bolz, Foreign Minister of the puppet East German state, attempted to add further to the Berliners' feeling of insecurity by announcing that the Allied occupation agreements no longer were valid. Speaking before a widely publicized political rally in East Berlin, Bolz stated that as a result of the Soviet note "no agreements exist between the Soviet Union and the Western powers." Berlin, he said, "was a part of the Soviet occupation zone of
Germany and today is a part of the German Democratic Republic."\(^17\)

Bolz’s statement was an ill-concealed effort to influence the coming election. An increased vote for the Communists (Socialist Unity Party, or SED), who were still recognized in West Berlin, would be interpreted throughout the world as an endorsement of the Russian proposals. Accordingly, the day after Bolz’s attack, Chancellor Adenauer, recognizing the gravity of the situation, paid one of his rare visits to Berlin to add his weight to the Western cause. In one of his equally rare displays of non-partisanship, the Chancellor advised the Berliners that more important than a vote for the CDU \(^*\) was a vote against the Communists. Together with the SPD’s Willy Brandt, Adenauer toured the city to remind the voters of the peril they faced. Even the working class boroughs of Neukölln and Wedding, where \emph{der Alte} had never been popular, this time gave the pair a tumultuous welcome. Speaking later at his departure, again in the company of Mayor Brandt, Adenauer stated that although “the clouds have darkened over this city . . . we shall not be frightened.”\(^18\)

As a result of the combined efforts of Adenauer and Brandt, the election that took place in Berlin the following Sunday decisively answered Ulbricht and Bolz. Over 93.1 percent of the registered electorate of almost two million went to the polls in the largest turnout for a free election in German history. The city’s eighteen hundred and sixty polling places were jammed throughout the day. As soon as the first returns began coming in that evening it was apparent that the Communists had been overwhelmingly defeated. The SPD of Mayor Brandt received over 52 percent of the total votes cast. Adenauer’s Christian Democrats followed with 37 percent, the Free Democrats with 6 percent, and the German Party with 3 percent. The SED, which in 1954 had polled almost 4 percent, now received less than 2 percent—a total of 31,520 votes out of the more than 1,700,000 ballots that were cast.

While the counting was still under way, Ernst Lemmer, the Berlin leader of the CDU, pledged his support to Mayor Brandt for another four years. Two days later Brandt was reelected Mayor by the city assembly in a record vote of 127–1. The Communist assault had caused the city to close ranks and a unanimity prevailed which had not been seen in Berlin since the days of Ernst Reuter. When Willy Brandt now

\(^*\) Christian Democratic Union.
spoke, the world could be sure that he was speaking for all the Berliners.\textsuperscript{19}

In Washington the results of the Berlin election were greeted with jubilation. According to State Department Press Officer Lincoln White:

The West Berlin elections give a clear evidence of the sentiments of the free people of West Berlin with reference to Soviet proposals to transform the area into a so-called free city. The decisive defeat of the Socialist Unity Party should give some idea as to the amount of trust the people of West Berlin are willing to place in Soviet proposals regarding their future.\textsuperscript{20}

On December 10, three days after the West Berlin elections, President Eisenhower held his first press conference since the Russian note had arrived. He devoted his opening remarks to Berlin and emphasized that the Western powers would stand firm. The occupation agreements, the President said, had “given the West not only the right but the duty of preserving the peaceful and free existence” of their sectors and he intended to see that that duty was carried out. He spoke admiringly of the results of the Berlin election, and said that the United States would not let the Berliners down.\textsuperscript{21} His words, understandably, were received with rejoicing in Berlin.

Three days later Secretary of State Dulles left Washington for a session of the NATO Council scheduled to meet in Paris on December 15. Dulles left for Paris from a hospital bed at the Walter Reed Medical Center in Washington where he had been under treatment since December 5, with what was then diagnosed as “a nonmalignant inflammatory condition in the lower colon.” In spite of his illness, the Secretary was determined to add his prestige to the Western meeting.

On December 14, Dulles met with the Foreign Ministers of Great Britain, France, and West Germany\textsuperscript{*} and heard Mayor Brandt present a summary of the existing situation in Berlin. Following the meeting, the Foreign Ministers issued a statement which for the first time since November 27 unequivocally placed all four governments on record against the Soviet proposal. For Dulles, the announcement marked a deliberate effort to dissociate himself from his earlier remark about East Germans acting as “agents” for the Soviet Union on the access routes to Berlin.

\textsuperscript{*} Selwyn Lloyd, Couve de Murville, and Heinrich von Brentano.
According to the communique, the Foreign Ministers “reaffirmed the determination of their governments to maintain their position and their rights with respect to Berlin including the right of free access.” Unilateral repudiation by the Soviet Government of its obligations in respect to these rights, or the substitution of East German officials for the Soviet Union “insofar as those rights are concerned,” the Foreign Ministers said, was unacceptable.22

Two days later, the NATO Council issued a formal declaration on Berlin specifically upholding the Foreign Ministers’ pronouncement. “The Council,” it stated, “fully associates itself with the views expressed [by the Foreign Ministers] in their statement of 14th December. . . . The demands expressed by the Soviet Government have created a serious situation which must be faced with determination.”23

Indeed, the NATO Council devoted most of its time to the question of Berlin. The firm line advocated by Dulles and Brandt was explicitly endorsed and the member states agreed that a solution in Berlin could only be achieved “in the framework of an agreement on Germany as a whole.” The door to negotiations with Russia was left open, but it was stressed that these negotiations should center on German reunification based on free elections.

The final NATO communique issued two days later stated that after “a comprehensive survey of the international situation and particularly of the events in Berlin,” the Council “make clear their resolution not to yield to threats. Their unanimous view was expressed in the Council’s Declaration of 16 December.”24

Two days after the adjournment of the NATO Council, the State Department in Washington issued a press release on the legal aspects of the Berlin situation. This release presents in detail the factual legal basis for the Western position in Berlin. Its provisions are still applicable to Allied rights in the isolated city and represent the most complete restatement of the legal points involved which has been issued since 1945. In it, the Department specifically objected to the claim of the Soviet Union to end unilaterally the right of occupation belonging individually to each of the four wartime Allies. “The United States,” it said, “considers that the agreements denounced by the Soviet Union are in full force and effect, that the Soviet Union remains fully responsible for discharging the obligations which it assumed under
the agreements, and that the attempts by the Soviet Union to undermine the rights of the United States to be in Berlin and to have access thereto are in violation of international law."

As to the specific legal questions involved, the release stated:

The legal dispute of the United States Government with the Soviet Government involves fundamental questions of international law. Among them are the respective rights acquired by the occupying authorities in Germany at the conclusion of World War II and the status of those rights pending a final peace settlement with Germany; the question of whether a nation may unilaterally abrogate without cause international agreements to which it is a party in order to divest itself of responsibilities which it has voluntarily assumed; and what is the effect of a unilateral renunciation of jointly shared rights of military occupation by one of the occupants.

After treating the historical development of the situation in Berlin, the Department stated that Allied rights "do not depend in any respect upon the sufferance or acquiescence of the Soviet Union. Those rights derive from the total defeat of the Third Reich and the subsequent assumption of supreme authority. . . . This defeat and assumption of authority, were carried out as joint undertakings in which the participants were deemed to have equal standing." Accordingly, "the rights of each occupying power exist independently. . . . The right of each power to be in occupation of Berlin is of the same standing as the right of each power to be in occupation of its zone."

Also, "the rights of the three Western powers to free access to Berlin . . . is of the same stature as the right of occupation itself. The Soviet Union did not bestow upon the Western powers rights of access to Berlin. It accepted its zone subject to those rights of access. If this were not true . . . then, for example, the United States would now be free to require the Soviet Union to withdraw from the portion of the Soviet Zone originally occupied by American forces. . . ."

Thus, "inasmuch as the rights of occupation and of access do not stem from the Soviet Union, the Soviets are without any authority to repeal those rights by denunciation of agreements or by purported transfer of control over them to third parties. The Soviet Union can-

*I.e., How does a renunciation by one of the occupiers affect the rights of the others.*
not affect the rights by declaring agreements null and void because the rights exist independently of the Soviet Union. . . ."

As for the specific legal point at issue, i.e., whether the Soviet Union could unilaterally void the occupation agreement, the State Department said that since the agreement was a "multi-lateral agreement" and rested on the consent of other parties, the Soviet Union was powerless to terminate it singlehandedly:

In the absence of agreement by the other parties to terminate the agreement, or in the absence of a specified duration in the agreement itself, the question of termination must be justified in terms of international law. International law does not recognize any right of unilateral denunciation under such circumstances.

The analysis concluded by stating that "there can be no legal or moral doubt of the right of the United States to maintain its right of occupation in Berlin and its corollary right of access thereto and that efforts of the Soviet Union to assail and interfere with those rights are in violation of international law." 26

By acting to clarify the legal status of the Western powers in Berlin, the State Department was paving the way for the formal Western reply to the Soviet note which was soon to come. Meanwhile, in Berlin, the Western garrisons stepped up their preparations to guard against a Communist attempt to seize power through a "popular" coup. During the third week in December, Major General Barksdale Hamlett, the Commandant of the American sector, met with the officers of the Berlin Command to review the situation. Hamlett emphasized that the United States was going to stay in Berlin and ordered detailed plans prepared to contain any possible East German demonstration. The Allied command knew that any contemplated East German move would probably be launched on a weekend or holiday. With the Christmas season approaching, Hamlett wanted to take no chances. He imposed a rigorous curfew and placed the garrison on a standby alert.

Two weeks later, on December 31, 1958, the formal Western reply to the Soviet message of November 27, was announced. The three Western Ambassadors in Moscow presented the answer of their governments simultaneously to the Kremlin and, except for the formal greetings, the messages were identical. The Allied messages began
by pointing out the historical fallacies of the Soviet note and particularly, the attempts to portray the Western powers as supporters of Hitler. These attempts, the Allies said, were “in sharp contrast to the actual facts.”

Referring to the withdrawal of the Allied forces in 1945 from what was to be the territory of the Soviet zone, the U.S. note stated that:

... the Soviet Union has directly and through its puppet regime—the so-called German Democratic Republic—consolidated its hold over the large areas which the Western Allies relinquished to it. It now demands that the Western Allies should relinquish the positions in Berlin which in effect were the *quid pro quo*.

The three Western Powers are in Berlin as occupying powers and they are not prepared to relinquish the rights which they acquired through victory just as they assume the Soviet Union is not willing now to restore to the occupancy of the Western Powers the positions which they had won in Mecklenburg, Saxony, Thuringia and Anhalt and which, under the agreements of 1944 and 1945, they turned over for occupation by the Soviet Union.

The agreements made by the Four Powers cannot be considered obsolete because the Soviet Union has already obtained the full advantage therefrom and now wishes to deprive the other parties of their compensating advantages. These agreements are binding upon all of the signatories so long as they have not been replaced by others following free negotiations.

... The Government of the United States will continue to hold the Soviet Government directly responsible for the discharge of its obligations undertaken with respect to Berlin under existing agreements. As the Soviet Government knows, the French, British, and United States Governments have the right to maintain garrisons in their sectors of Berlin and to have free access thereto. ... The Government of the United States will not accept a unilateral repudiation on the part of the Soviet Government of its obligations in respect of that freedom of access. Nor will it accept the substitution of the regime which the Soviet Government refers to as the German Democratic Republic for the Soviet Government in this respect.

The Western replies also exposed the Soviet charge that the Allied garrisons in Berlin constituted a threat to the “Socialist camp.”

The forces of the three Western Powers in Berlin number about ten thousand men. The Soviet Government, on the other hand, is said to maintain some three hundred and fifty thousand troops in
Eastern Germany, while the regime which the Soviet Government refers to as the German Democratic Republic is understood also to maintain over two hundred thousand men under arms. In these circumstances, the fear that the Western troops in Berlin may “inflict harm” appears to be wholly unfounded. If Berlin has become a focus of international tension, it is because the Soviet Government has deliberately threatened to disturb the existing arrangements at present in force there, arrangements to which the Soviet Government is itself a party.

The Western note ended on an air of resolution. The Soviet proposals for “a so-called ‘free city’ of West Berlin” were termed unacceptable as were any proposals “which would have the effect of jeopardizing the freedom and security of the two million people of West Berlin.” The Kremlin was advised that the West was prepared to begin negotiations on the overall question of Germany—of which Berlin was a part—but that such negotiations could not take place under threat of an ultimatum.26

On January 10, the Soviet Union replied to the Western note. Along with its reply the Russian government included a draft peace treaty for Germany. The Soviet treaty was an obvious propaganda gimmick designed to impress the “neutrals” and contained the usual pro-Communist provisions: recognition of “the two existing” German states, withdrawal of foreign troops from German soil, and the permanent recognition of the Oder-Neisse frontier. The Soviet note itself contained little new and for the most part was a rehash of the November 27th polemic. Russia threatened once more to “divest itself of the functions being carried out in relation to Berlin” and to sign a separate agreement with the East German regime. “Summing up what has been said,” the note concluded, “the Soviet Government, besides the proposal about the calling of a peace conference, proposes also to discuss with interested states the question of Berlin. If, however, the Western powers consider it expedient before the calling of a peace conference preliminarily to exchange opinions with the Soviet Union about the content of a peace treaty, then the Soviet Government will be agreeable to that.” In such a case, the Soviets said, it would be necessary to insure appropriate East and West German participation.27

Thus, very subtly, the Soviets were taking the West up on the offer to parley. Communist demands, however, remained undiminished and by now insisting upon East German participation, the Russians were
adroitly moving to extract what amounted to a *de facto* recognition for their zonal puppets from the Western powers. The offensive launched by Khrushchev on November 27, was already bearing fruit. If the West would now agree to inviting the Ulbricht regime to a forthcoming conference, a considerable gain would have been made. Western refusal to recognize East Germany, it should be remembered, was not based simply on dislike for its Government but on the fact that Germany, as a previously occupied nation, was a responsibility of all four victorious powers. Under the terms of the occupation agreement (Potsdam), self-government was to be encouraged in all of Germany until such time as a peace treaty could be concluded. Since the regime of the Soviet zone is an affront to the very concept of self-government, and, indeed, since to recognize it would be tantamount to recognizing the division of Germany, the Western powers consistently refused to do so.

At a press conference three days later, Secretary of State Dulles reviewed the American position toward German reunification. Dulles' statement represents a summary of the prevailing Western sentiment at the time and is highly significant. The exchange was as follows:

Q.—Mr. Secretary, what's your reaction . . . to the Soviet proposal of last weekend for a peace conference to draft a new peace treaty for Germany?

A.—That proposal highlights what I just referred to as the two different philosophies about dealing with Germany. The Soviet Union has consistently believed that Germany should be isolated, segregated, to a large extent demilitarized and neutralized and separated from close association with the neighboring countries.

We don't believe that is a sound approach to the problem. On the contrary we take the view that Germany and the German people are too great, vigorous and vital a people to be dealt with in that way . . . We believe the future is best served by encouraging the closest possible relations between Germany and other Western European countries which are peace-loving [so] that independent, aggressive, nationalist action by Germany becomes as a practical matter impossible. . . .

Q.—Mr. Secretary, when you said the Soviet plan for Germany is "stupid" because it wouldn’t work, in what sense did you mean it wouldn’t work? . . .
A.—I believe that if you try to isolate and segregate a great people like the Germans in the center of Europe that they will become a restive and dangerous force . . . I don't think that you can put the Germans within the kind of a smothering blanket that the Soviet Union has in mind and expect it to hold. That, in a way, was the approach of the Treaty of Versailles, and it just didn't work. And I don't think it will work again. I think that a so-called “neutralized” and largely demilitarized Germany, attempted to be demilitarized in the center of Europe, is just something that won't work, and that, instead of trying to isolate Germany the best way is to tie Germany in.

Now that is the basic thesis of Adenauer. I believe that Adenauer's claim to greatness rests upon his effort to assure that Germany will not again follow the path which Germany followed in 1914 and again in 1939. He is the one who has invented, you might say, this solution, and I believe it is the most practical and sound solution for those who really want to end for all time the kind of danger that has come from Germany in the past.28

Simultaneously with the Soviet note, Russian spokesmen began to drop more hints that their earlier six-month ultimatum might be postponed. During a whirlwind unofficial visit to the United States in the first half of January, Deputy Soviet Premier Anastas Mikoyan repeatedly implied that the previous six-month ultimatum related only to the beginning of talks—not to the settlement of the dispute. Upon his return to Moscow, Mikoyan stated the same thing from the Kremlin in a formal press interview on January 24. “There is nothing unusual or abnormal about a deadline for the talks,” he said. “The main thing in our proposal is not the six-month deadline but the proposal to have talks. If the talks are concluded in the spirit of finding a settlement . . . then of course negotiations could be prolonged for a few days or even a few months.”29

Indeed, the rising crescendo of Russian requests for negotiations tended to obscure the fact that the original difficulty over Germany had been created by Soviet intransigence in carrying out the Geneva Agreement calling for free elections. Accordingly, the week after Mikoyan's statement, Secretary Dulles attempted to set the record straight:

Never yet has the Soviet Union, [Dulles told the House Foreign Affairs Committee,) made any proposal designed to promote ending the “cold war.” There is, I know, always the temptation to
grasp at a formula of words which might seem to end the continu­
ing strains, the burdens, the risks, to which we are now subjected. But the Soviet proposals constitute not remedies but drugs which would numb us to the real danger which will then become greater than ever. . . . It would be reckless to be intimidated, or lured, into measures which far from ending the present danger would merely increase it.50

Five days after Dulles addressed the House committee, an incident occurred at the Marienborn checkpoint on the Berlin autobahn which seemed to underline the Secretary’s remarks. At 1:05 P.M. on February 2, Soviet military authorities at Marienborn refused to allow an American military convoy to pass through the Soviet control point into West Germany. The four two-and-one-half ton trucks which were on a regular supply run between Berlin and West Germany had cleared the Russian checkpoint at the Berlin end of the autobahn without difficulty four hours before. But when they arrived at the other end, Soviet authorities, in clear violation of existing agreements, insisted on boarding the trucks and making a personal inspection of their cargo. Pursuant to his orders, the American convoy commander, Corporal Richard C. Masiero, refused to allow the Russians to do so. For over two days the American vehicles were kept impounded while Corporal Masiero and the four drivers under his command held their ground. Even when a full colonel of the Soviet Army had demanded to inspect the cargo, he had been politely refused by the steadfast Masiero.

When it was learned in Berlin that the vehicles were being detained at Marienborn (Checkpoint Alfa), the American command lodged an immediate protest with Russian military authorities in East Berlin. This produced no results. The following day, the headquarters of the United States Army in Europe, at Heidelberg, filed a similar protest with Russian headquarters in Potsdam. Again the request was refused and the Soviets declined to allow the trucks to proceed. By this time, of course, the incident at Checkpoint Alfa had become a matter of major importance. The Soviets were at their usual game attempting to curtail Western rights bit by bit and although their demand to board the American trucks may have seemed of little consequence, it was a dangerous precedent which could be extended to every vehicle on the Berlin access routes.
In Washington, the seriousness of the action at Checkpoint Alfa was appreciated immediately. After the two protests from the military authorities had gone unanswered, the Department of State wired an official protest to the American Embassy in Moscow. This was presented to the Kremlin on February 4, at 3:30 P.M. At approximately the same time, President Eisenhower announced the protest to a specially called press conference at the White House. The Soviet action, he said, was a clear violation of existing agreements and the United States demanded that the vehicles be allowed to proceed immediately.\footnote{Five months before when the Russians had detained two U.S. Army trucks at the Berlin end of the autobahn (Checkpoint Bravo), Major General Hamlett had ordered a full alert of the American garrison and gave the Soviets a one-hour ultimatum to release the vehicles. While waiting for the Soviets to respond, Hamlett moved a detachment of tanks into position next to the Soviet checkpoint with orders to go in and get the trucks if the Soviets refused. As soon as the tanks appeared the Russians backed down and the vehicles were allowed to return to the American sector unmolested. Since there were no American units stationed near the West German end of the autobahn (Checkpoint Alfa), the same maneuver could not be repeated when Masiero’s party was held up.}

Three and one-half hours after the American note was delivered in Moscow the convoy was released. The vehicles were not inspected and Western firmness had made its point. The ease with which President Kennedy was able to reinforce the Berlin garrison in August, 1961, was in no small measure due to the determination displayed on this occasion by the five American enlisted men who had refused to allow their vehicles to be searched.

Simultaneously with the incident at Checkpoint Alfa, Secretary of State Dulles departed from Washington on a tour of the major West European capitals. His purpose was to consult at first hand with America’s Allies on the larger Berlin crisis and, if possible, to formulate a common Western policy. It has been suggested that one of the reasons for the incident at Checkpoint Alfa was a Soviet desire to impress Paris and London with the precariousness of the Berlin lifeline on the eve of Dulles’ departure.\footnote{If anything, it had the opposite effect. When Dulles returned to Washington on February 9, he made the strongest pronouncement on Berlin by an American official since Khrushchev’s ultimatum had been received. The United States and its Allies, Dulles said, would hold their position in Berlin by force if necessary. “We do not accept the substitution of East Ger-}
mans for the Soviet Union in its responsibilities toward Berlin and its obligations to us. We are resolved that our position in, and access to, West Berlin shall be preserved. We are in general agreement as to the procedure we shall follow if physical means are employed to interfere with our rights in this respect. . . .”

Immediately following his statement, and a short conversation at the White House with President Eisenhower, Mr. Dulles went to the Walter Reed Hospital in Washington. Although the Secretary remained in close touch with the State Department, his health was failing rapidly. Under Secretary Christian Herter, who took over most of Dulles' duties, was unable to duplicate the firm guidance which Dulles had given to the Western cause and, as a result, Allied steadfastness over Berlin began to diminish noticeably.

But for a time, Dulles remained in control. One week after he entered the hospital the United States formally advised the Soviet Union that it was prepared to discuss the issue of Germany “in all its aspects and implications” at the level of Foreign Ministers. The tone of the American note was firm and represented no compromise from the position which the Administration had announced even before Khrushchev's ultimatum. The Russians were told that the Western powers intended to uphold their rights in Berlin “by all appropriate means” and that the Soviet demands constituted a major danger to world peace. In short, the Communists were being given an invitation to talk but were being told beforehand of those issues on which the West would not yield.

On March 2, the Soviet Union replied to the American note. Moscow said it still preferred a meeting of statesmen “at the highest level.” The road to negotiations at the level of Foreign Ministers was a long one. “If the governments of the Western powers are not yet ready to take part in a summit conference, however, then the Soviet Union considers that . . . there could be convoked a conference of the Ministers of Foreign Affairs.” Both German states, according to the Soviet Union, should be represented. The meeting should take place in a neutral location, preferably Vienna or Geneva, and April would be an appropriate time. In effect, Russia was pushing as hard as ever for negotiations to begin. By suggesting the date of April, the Kremlin was insuring that their six-month ultimatum—at least insofar as it related to the beginning of negotiations—would be complied with.
Five days after the Soviet note arrived in Washington, Premier Khrushchev journeyed to East Germany to address what was euphemistically described by the Communists at the "Ninth All-German Workers Conference" in Leipzig. As this would be Khrushchev's first venture into the so-called German Democratic Republic since the new crisis had begun, his speech was eagerly awaited for the hints it might give about the future course of Soviet policy. Characteristically, Khrushchev attempted to satisfy East and West alike. To the East Germans he held out the branch of communal work with the Soviet Union toward the inevitable victory of Leninism. But to Ulbricht's undoubted discomfiture, Khrushchev counseled patience. "Do not hurry," he said. "The wind does not blow in your face. . . . The conditions are not ripe as yet for a new scheme of things. . . . As the saying goes, each fruit has its season." 36

Two days later, on March 9, Khrushchev spoke in East Berlin. Once more he cautioned that delay was necessary, although this time his tone was more menacing. "The signing of a peace treaty," he said, "would mean the solution of the West Berlin question, which as part of Greater Berlin forms part of the territory of the German Democratic Republic." By referring to West Berlin as a part of the GDR, Khrushchev was reminding his listeners that the situation there—at least as Russia saw it—was a temporary one.37

But Khrushchev's words also reminded the West of the dangers still lurking in Berlin. These dangers, of course, were traceable directly to the historic policy of the Soviet Government—a policy described by President Eisenhower one week later as being "no less than world domination." The President made these remarks in a nationwide television address to the American people. According to the President (and here he was quoting Secretary Dulles), the Soviets sought to achieve this purpose by gaining power "in each of the many areas which had been afflicted by war, so that in the end the United States . . . would be isolated and closely encircled."

"The current Berlin effort of the Soviets falls within the pattern of this basic purpose," the President continued:

The first instance of unusual pressure, clearly evidencing these purposes, came in 1948 when the Communists imposed a blockade to force the protecting Western troops out of Berlin and to starve the people of that city into submission.
That plan failed. A free people and a dramatic airlift broke the back of the scheme.

In the end the Communists abandoned the blockade and concluded an agreement in 1949 with the Western Powers, reconfirming our right of unrestricted access.

Then, last November, the Soviets announced that they intended to repudiate these solemn obligations. They once more appear to be living by the Communist formula that “Promises are like pie crusts, made to be broken.” . . .

The Soviet threat has since been repeated several times, accompanied by various and changing suggestions for dealing with the status of the city. Their proposals have included a vague offer to make the Western part of Berlin—though not the Eastern part, which the Soviets control—a so-called free city.

We have no intention of forgetting our own rights or of deserting a free people, [the President said.] Soviet rulers should remember that free men have, before this, died for so-called “scraps of paper” which represented duty and honor and freedom.

The shirking of our responsibilities would solve no problems for us. . . . One result would be to undermine the mutual confidence upon which our entire system of collective security is founded. . . . The second choice which the Soviets have compelled us to face, is the possibility of war.

Certainly, the American and Western peoples do not want war. . . . But all history has taught us the grim lesson that no nation has ever been successful in avoiding the terrors of war by refusing to defend its rights—by attempting to placate aggression.

The risk of war is minimized if we stand firm. War would become more likely if we gave way and encouraged a rule of terrorism rather than a rule of law and order. . . . We cannot try to purchase peace by forsaking two million free people of Berlin. . . . We must not, by weakness or irresolution, increase the risk of war. Finally, we cannot merely for the sake of demonstrating so-called “flexibility” accept any agreement or arrangement which would undermine the security of the United States and its Allies.58

Ten days after the President spoke, the Department of State delivered a note in Moscow acknowledging Russian willingness to negotiate at the level of Foreign Ministers and specifically suggesting that such a conference be held in Geneva beginning on May 11. The Soviet Union, which had now realized its immediate objective, quickly announced its acceptance.59
The day following, as if to demonstrate to the world that the impending negotiations did not mean that the West intended to yield its position in Berlin, the United States dispatched a high flying C–130 Lockheed Hercules along the air corridor into Berlin. As soon as the flight plan of the C–130, which called for an altitude of 25,000 feet, was given to the Air Safety Center in Berlin the Soviet representative lodged a vigorous protest. According to the Soviets, the maximum altitude permissible in the air corridors was 10,000 feet although clearly there was no such agreement. The Russian protest was ignored by the U.S., and the flight to and from Berlin was made at 25,000 feet as scheduled.

According to State Department Press Officer Lincoln White, the United States intended to “continue to fly planes into Berlin at above 10,000 feet when that was the normal operating altitude.” A formal Soviet protest which was delivered in Washington on April 4, was denied by the State Department the following week. “The United States government,” the American reply stated, “rejects the Soviet contention that flights above 10,000 feet are precluded by regulations covering flights in the corridors. . . . The Government of the Soviet Union, having itself put into service aircraft (such as the TU–104) technical characteristics of which require flight at higher altitudes than those formerly in use, will appreciate the influence of such factors on operating altitudes of United States aircraft.”

On April 4, 1959, the same date the Russian protest over the first flight of the C–130 into Berlin was received in Washington, President Eisenhower again reasserted our determination to hold fast in Berlin. Speaking at the Gettysburg College convocation in Gettysburg, Pennsylvania, the President once more pointed to the pitfalls of irresolution and compromise. Against the background of the continuing Communist conspiracy to gain world domination, he said, the sacrifice of the two million free people of West Berlin would be unthinkable. “The course of appeasement,” he continued, “is not only dishonorable, it is the most dangerous one we could pursue. The world paid a high price for the lesson of Munich, but it has learned the lesson well. We have learned, too, that the costs of defending freedom—of defending America—must be paid in many forms and in many places. They are assessed in all parts of the world—in Berlin, Viet-
Nam, in the Middle East, here at home. But wherever they occur, in whatever form they appear, they are first and last a proper charge against the national security of the United States. . . .”

On April 15, less than two weeks after the President’s speech at Gettysburg, John Foster Dulles resigned as American Secretary of State. In the negotiations that were soon to commence in Geneva his presence would be sorely missed. Secretary Herter, who succeeded him, had neither the confidence of the President, nor the same moralistic fervor of Dulles in combating the tide of Communist expansion. As a result, the Western powers now began to waver perceptibly in the defense of Berlin and the Soviet Union came near to realizing its goal of a neutralized “free city.” Indicative of the slackening Western determination, a scheduled flight of another C-130 aircraft into Berlin was canceled just one week after Dulles’ resignation due to what was officially described in Washington as “British timidity.”

The Geneva Conference convened as scheduled on May 11, 1959. To some extent, the decision to hold the conference represented a concession to the Soviet Union. Without explicitly removing their ultimatum of November 27, the Russians had forced the West into negotiations intended to alter the status of Berlin. The opening of the Geneva Conference boded ill for the West for other reasons as well. In addition to the confusion resulting from the resignation of Secretary Dulles, the Western camp was now in serious disarray as to how the Soviet threat should be met. As in 1948, London in particular advocated a position of compromise and tended to view every Soviet pronouncement as an indication of Russian good faith. Large bodies of opinion both in the United States and Great Britain ignored the original Soviet ultimatum and blamed West German rearmament and the militant anti-communism of Chancellor Konrad Adenauer as principal causes of the crisis in Berlin.

In the United States Senate, Senators William Fulbright and Mike Mansfield kept up a steady fusillade against the Administration position of standing firm against the Communist threat. On March 16, Mr. Fulbright lashed out violently at the policy of Secretary Dulles and indorsed immediate negotiations with the Soviet Union announcing that he saw “no virtue in maintaining the status quo.” The day prior to that, Senator Mansfield, appearing on the CBS television program “Face the Nation,” recommended that because of the present
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crisis the United States should evacuate all military dependents from Berlin. The effect of such a move, as General Clay had pointed out eleven years before, would have been a total collapse of Western morale. Yet Mansfield continued carping and on April 8, just one week before Dulles' resignation, advised a banquet of the New York University Alumni Association in New York that the West should seriously consider a compromise in Berlin, and that “firmness is not an end in itself.” While Dulles was in the hospital, in fact, both Fulbright and Mansfield had kept up a steady flow of invective against the ailing Secretary and demanded that his resignation be tendered immediately.

Besides the disarray in the Western camp, the Geneva Conference of Foreign Ministers also marked the introduction into world councils of the puppet regime of the “German Democratic Republic.” This in itself was a substantial gain for the Soviet Union—a gain which Dulles most certainly would have resisted—and for the first several days of the Conference the attention of the entire world was directed to the ensuing discussions as to how these Soviet satraps would be seated. Although they were subsequently placed at an adjoining table to that of the Big Four Foreign Ministers, the fact remained that the East Germans were present at the conference and were being consulted just as though they were a properly recognized national government.

On May 14, three days after the conference began, the Western Foreign Ministers (Herter, Selwyn Lloyd and Couve de Murville) introduced a package plan for solving the Berlin crisis by tying it to eventual German reunification. Considering the seeming confusion which then prevailed in the Western camp, the plan was not a bad one. It was a four-phase measure calling first for the reunification of Berlin and then proceeding gradually to a reunification of all of Germany. Whether it represented a legitimate Western proposal or whether it was intended as a starting point from which to begin concessions is open to conjecture.

In the first phase of the Allied proposal, East and West Berlin would be unified under free elections held under quadripartite or United Nations supervision. As a result of these elections a city council would be formed for all of Berlin which would then govern it as the first step toward German unification.
Phase two called for a mixed committee consisting of twenty-five members from West Germany and ten from East Germany to draft an election law for all-German elections. Under stage three, all-German elections for a General Assembly would then be held and, following their election, the General Assembly would draft a constitution for Germany. Stage four of the Western plan called for the formation of an all-German government under the constitution drafted by the General Assembly and the conclusion of a peace treaty with that government.

As soon as it was introduced, the Western proposal was summarily rejected by Soviet Foreign Minister Andrei Gromyko. One month later, following a harrowing period of fruitless negotiations, the Soviet Union presented their own set of proposals for Berlin. These extended the occupation period of the Western powers for one year but demanded onerous concessions in return. Among these, the Western powers would reduce the size of their forces in West Berlin to “symbolic contingents”; “hostile propaganda against the GDR and other Socialist countries” from West Berlin would be stopped; all organizations engaged in “espionage and subversive activities against the GDR, the USSR, and other Socialist countries” in West Berlin would be “liquidated”; and the Western powers would agree not to erect atomic or missile installations in West Berlin. During the one-year time limit which the Soviets proposed, an all-German committee would be set up on an equal basis between East and West Germany to formulate an agreement on German reunification and a final peace treaty. If agreement was not reached within one year, the Soviet Union would conclude a separate peace treaty with the GDR and negotiations regarding Berlin would go forward from that point.

The Russian proposals were immediately dismissed by Secretary Herter. But unfortunately, the urge to compromise now seemed to take hold of the Western delegations and for the next two months an aura of concession enshrouded Geneva. With the death of John Foster Dulles on May 26, the determination of the Allied negotiators sagged noticeably. Prodded by British Foreign Secretary Selwyn Lloyd, Herter and Couve de Murville joined in offering a second set of Western proposals on June 16, which, if accepted, would have made the Allied position in Berlin untenable.

Under the new proposals the Allies agreed to consider a reduction
of the size of the Western garrisons and to establish a four-power commission designed to eliminate "subversion and espionage" in both parts of Berlin. This last item was extremely defensive in nature and would have curtailed the operation of such Western agencies as the RIAS broadcasting station in West Berlin, and probably all the free newspapers as well. It would have also amounted to the introduction of Soviet personnel in an official capacity into the Western sectors and would have been a serious setback for the Allied cause. The Western proposal also made no mention of Allied rights of occupation—a fact which could have been used by the Communists to deny the existence of these rights later on.

Announcement of the Western proposals caused a near panic in West Berlin. Mayor Brandt and Chancellor Adenauer barely managed to conceal their open hostility, and Allied unity was now dangerously close to foundering on the rocks of compromise. In spite of the German protests, however, the Western proposals were presented in much the same form three days later when both East and West agreed to present a summary of their positions. Following the introduction of these summaries, the conferees had agreed to recess for a period of three weeks.

But instead of being a summary of its position, the Western proposals presented on June 19, represented even greater concessions. Under these proposals the West agreed to:

a. The limitation of the Western garrison to 11,000 men.

b. The understanding that they would be armed only with conventional (non-atomic) weapons.

c. Consideration of a reduction in the size of the garrison "if developments in the situation permit."

d. East German control of the access routes to Berlin but with recognition of the right of "continued free access."

e. A curb on propaganda and intelligence activities "in both parts of Berlin."

* On May 9, 1962, Mayor Brandt advised the author that he considered the Western proposals made at Geneva the weakest ever put forward by the Allies—weak even than the American plan on access presented by Secretary Rusk in his conversations with Soviet Ambassador Dobrynin in April, 1962. (See Chapter XIV.)
The final Soviet proposals submitted before the recess were not significantly different from the Western set. Gromyko, in presenting the Russian proposals, in fact, was extremely conciliatory in manner and indicated that the Soviet Union was most pleased with the progress it had made. "On the basis of the exchange of views held so far," he stated, "the Soviet government believes that it is quite possible to find an acceptable basis for agreement on the Berlin question and on the question of an all-German committee."

Gromyko began his presentation by announcing that the Russian government no longer considered the time element "of major importance nor principle." He would suggest an eighteen-month interim period in Berlin, he said, but this should not be considered a stumbling block. As for Berlin itself during the interim period, Gromyko suggested:

a. The reduction of the occupation forces to symbolic contingents;

b. the termination of subversive activities in West Berlin;

c. non-location in West Berlin of atomic and rocket weapons.

During the time limit, whatever it happened to be, an all-German committee would consider the problems of reunification and the writing of a German peace treaty. If no agreement was reached by the all-German Committee, then the Big Four would resume consideration of the Berlin problem based on the situation as it existed at that time.48

The only difference between the Russian and Western proposals, it should be noted, dealt with the time limit as to the new status of Berlin, and Gromyko himself had declared that this was a matter of little importance. Both sets of proposals called for the reduction of the Allied garrisons and the curtailment of "subversive activities," and the West had abandoned its proposals for German reunification based on free elections. Thus, less than eight months after the original Soviet ultimatum, Russia was on the verge of seeing its demands realized. The East German regime already had been partially recognized by its attendance at the conference and now a substantive gain in Berlin itself was about to be made.

The day after the Communist and Western proposals were presented the conference recessed. When it convened again on July 13,
the West had had a chance to subject its position to closer scrutiny. As a result, a harder line began to emerge. On July 25, Secretary Herter visited West Berlin to participate in renaming one of the city’s streets in honor of the late John Foster Dulles. While there, he conferred with Mayor Brandt and Major General Barksdale Hamlett, the Commandant of the American Sector. The principal argument that day was made by Hamlett. He advised the Secretary that from a military standpoint it would be impossible to guarantee the territorial integrity of West Berlin should the garrison be reduced from its present level. Eleven thousand men, Hamlett said, was the bare minimum with which the safety of the city could be assured from Communist inspired rioters who might try to seize control in West Berlin through public disorder.

General Hamlett’s argument impressed the Secretary. When the final Western proposals were presented at Geneva three days later, all mention of a reduction in the size of the Allied garrison had been deleted. Secretary Herter, in fact, had been visibly impressed by his reception in Berlin. In addition to the brilliant presentation made by Hamlett, the Secretary had been subjected to one of Berlin’s moving public demonstrations. Everywhere the Secretary had gone during his brief stay he had been cheered by great masses of Berliners. He was able to see at first hand the importance of a free Berlin to the Western cause and to realize the tragic results which would follow from its surrender. He also learned of Berlin’s role in the fight for freedom—of the hope it meant to those behind the Iron Curtain—and, like many another statesman who had flown into Berlin during the blockade, he departed deeply moved by what he had seen. As he boarded his plane, he assured the Berliners “that the United States will not forget its responsibilities toward Berlin.”

But in spite of the favorable impression made on Secretary Herter by his visit to Berlin, the final Allied proposals presented to the Geneva Conference still came dangerously close to effectively ending the free existence of West Berlin. Although no mention was made in these proposals of a reduction in the size of the Western garrison, the earlier proposals made on June 19 remained the same. These included the use of East Germans as “agents” for the Soviet Union on the routes of access into Berlin, and the curtailment of all propaganda and intelligence activities. In addition, the final Western proposals also in-
cluded a provision limiting the agreement on Berlin to a five-year duration. This would clearly have redounded to the advantage of the Soviet Union by giving the Western occupation a decidedly temporary appearance.

The final Soviet proposals were a repeat of their earlier recommendations. The Western powers, over muffled British protest, announced that the Russian proposals remained unacceptable as a basis for negotiations, and the conference adjourned on August 5, without having reached an agreement. The final days between the submission of the Western and Soviet plans on July 28, and the adjournment, however, was an extremely critical period for the West. Had Gromyko accepted the final Western proposals, West Berlin's hope of survival would have been destroyed. Mayor Brandt, in fact, hurried to Geneva as soon as the Western proposals were announced to caution against them. Fortunately for the West, by this time the strategists of the Kremlin were interested in other matters.