The Tale of Three Summits

(Camp David—Paris—Vienna)

Although the West had proposed major concessions at Geneva, the Soviet Union chose not to accept them. In the closing days of the conference, their reason for not doing so became clear. Nikita Khrushchev was going to America. During early July the Soviet Premier had been contacted by President Eisenhower and officially tendered an invitation. Khrushchev had quickly accepted and now, with a meeting of this kind in the offing, there was little incentive for the Soviet delegation in Geneva to accept the so-called “final” Western proposal of July 28. Indeed, there was good reason for the Russians to believe that in the personal confrontations between the two leaders, an even more advantageous arrangement on Berlin might be secured. The Soviet Union therefore spurned the last Western offer at the meeting of Foreign Ministers and embarked on the road to the Summit.

In retrospect, President Eisenhower’s invitation to Khrushchev must be regarded as a major diplomatic triumph. As noted in the previous chapter, the West was on the verge of making extremely serious concessions at Geneva. By suddenly granting the Russians the meeting at the Summit which they had so long desired, the rationale behind the Geneva negotiations disappeared. The crippling Western pro-
posals were thereby preempted and the Allied position in Berlin temporarily secured. Although admittedly this may not have been the reason for the initial invitation to Khrushchev, it is clear that this was the result.

The formal announcement of Premier Khrushchev's visit to the United States was made simultaneously in Washington and Moscow on August 3. In Washington, President Eisenhower himself broke the news. According to the President, Khrushchev would arrive on September 15, tour the country for ten days and then return to Washington for a two-day conference on world affairs.\(^1\)

Khrushchev's itinerary went exactly as planned. He arrived at Andrews Air Base outside Washington on September 15, and thereafter followed ten of the most exciting days in the memory of the American public as the ruler of the Soviet Union freely toured the length and breadth of the United States. On September 25, Nikita Khrushchev was back in Washington. And although his visit had averted a major diplomatic rout at Geneva, it was not without its drawbacks. His ten days of barnstorming across the country had created many illusions that his intentions were innocent. His repeated praise of "peaceful coexistence" had convinced many others that a thaw in the cold war was at hand. His perpetual friendliness and buoyancy further encouraged those who sought accommodation at any price.

The two days of conferences between Premier Khrushchev and President Eisenhower were conducted at the President's Camp David retreat situated in the Maryland mountains overlooking the peaceful Catoctin River. Khrushchev arrived there by helicopter in the late afternoon of September 25, and was met as he landed by President Eisenhower. The two immediately began a series of discussions and, according to Press Secretary James Hagerty, the talks revolved around a general consideration of world affairs. The discussions held on the following day, Saturday, September 26, 1959, were devoted primarily to Germany and Berlin. For almost the entire day and evening on Saturday the two world leaders were closeted on this issue.\(^2\)

When the talks concluded, an agreement of sorts had been reached. In return for Khrushchev's withdrawal of the earlier Soviet ultimatum, the President agreed to reopen negotiations on Berlin in a Big Four Summit Conference the following year. The communique ending the Camp David meeting announced the President's part of the bargain,
and on his return to Moscow, Nikita Khrushchev said that the future discussions would be subjected to no fixed time limit provided the West entered the negotiations in good faith.\(^3\)

The Camp David accord has been criticized in the West from both sides. Some have objected that the President, perhaps unintentionally, misled Khrushchev into believing that the West might agree to a solution somewhat along Soviet lines at the forthcoming Summit. Others have objected that in agreeing to discuss the Berlin problem at all at the Summit, President Eisenhower was going too far to accommodate the Russians. But the fact remains that the Camp David agreement succeeded in gaining a much needed breathing period for the West and at least temporarily put the lid on further Western concessions. As a result of the relaxation achieved, the West was able to restudy the possible consequences of the Geneva proposals and thus discard them by the time the negotiations resumed.

Yet, although the Camp David meeting did introduce a brief period of calm—at least insofar as direct Soviet assaults on the position of the West in Berlin was concerned—it marked no relaxation in Soviet efforts to undermine the freedom of West Berlin by other means. The most effective of these means was by referring to the situation in Berlin as the abnormal result of the Second World War. By trumpeting this idea, the Soviets were implanting the thought that the situation in Berlin needed changing. If this belief could be nourished, a substantial erosion of the Western position would have been made.

According to the Russians, the best way to end the "abnormality" of West Berlin would be to conclude a peace treaty. Naturally, since there were two German states, two separate treaties would have to be signed. Khrushchev, in fact, lost no opportunity to hammer this point home. During a question and answer period at the National Press Club in Washington on the day following the Camp David discussions, the Soviet Chairman stated: "As day follows night, so peace follows war, and therefore peace should be signed, and since there is no united Germany we think that peace should be signed with the two German states. I see no other way toward that end. . . ." \(^4\)

Later that afternoon Khrushchev expressed much the same sentiment in a nationwide television broadcast to the American people. His remarks left no doubt that instead of the reunification of Germany, Russia actually sought the recognition of a divided Germany
and the complete assimilation of its eastern portion into the Soviet bloc. "It is well known," Khrushchev said, "that there are today in reality two German states and each of them is living its own way. Neither one German state or the other is willing to give up its social system." Accordingly, he suggested, "would it not be best to conclude a peace treaty with both German states without any further procrastination and thereby stamp out the sparks among the embers before they have a chance to kindle a new conflagration?"

As for Berlin, Khrushchev said that "the conclusion of a peace treaty would also extinguish the sparks smoldering in West Berlin and would thereby create a normal situation there." Already Russia's insistence on changing the status of Berlin had convinced many in the West that Khrushchev was right when he referred to the situation in Berlin as abnormal. But the real abnormality, as the late Secretary Dulles had pointed out frequently, was not the situation in Berlin but the division of Germany. With Dulles gone, however, Western spokesmen seldom mentioned this, and the field was left to the Russians almost by default; Khrushchev's charges went unrebutted, and more and more the West came to look on its position in Berlin as something that needed to be changed.

Even in the highest places it was obvious that Khrushchev's tactics had struck home. Indeed, President Eisenhower himself was soon referring to the situation in West Berlin as abnormal. The President's remark occurred at a highly publicized press conference immediately following Khrushchev's visit.

The President's off-hand comment necessitated the issuance of a formal statement immediately afterwards by Press Secretary Hagerty clarifying what the President had meant. The original question, and Mr. Eisenhower's reply, are as follows:

Q.—Mr. President, when we move into these new negotiations on Berlin, could you tell us whether we will be guided by the same standards and principles that we had before, namely, that any solution must guarantee Allied rights there, and protect the freedom of the West Berliners?

A.—I can't guarantee anything of this kind for the simple reason, I don't know what kind of solution may finally prove acceptable, as I say, but you must start off with this. The situation is abnormal. It was brought about by a truce, a military truce, after
the end of the war, an armistice, and it put strangely a few—or a number of free people in a very awkward position.\textsuperscript{3}

Needless to say, President Eisenhower's answer caused intense concern throughout the Western camp. Was the United States preparing to make a deal with Russia at free Berlin's expense? From the President's answer one certainly could think so. Hagerty's statement following the press conference attempted to set the record straight, but considerable damage already had been done. "The President," Hagerty announced, "of course did not mean that the freedom of the people of West Berlin is going to be abandoned or that Allied rights are going to be surrendered by any unilateral action. What he was referring to was that he could not now give in detail the ultimate solution to the Berlin question."

"Any agreement," Hagerty continued, "must be acceptable to the people of the area, including those most concerned—the people of West Berlin and the Federal Republic of Germany."\textsuperscript{7}

But the President's statement still left a good deal of doubt, and so the following week Secretary of State Christian Herter reaffirmed American determination to stand fast in Berlin. United States policy, he said, was based on the idea that American forces would remain in Berlin until Germany was reunified. "That is the position we have taken, and we see no reason to move away from it."\textsuperscript{8}

The effect of Mr. Eisenhower's statement was felt in Moscow as well as in Western Europe and when combined with the impressions which Khrushchev had formed at Camp David, caused the Communists also to have their doubts about Western firmness. As a result, the East resumed its probing operations in Berlin, seeking to test Allied response. For the most part, this testing was now done by the puppet East German regime of Walter Ulbricht. Indeed, while the Russians outwardly attempted to fulfill the conditions of Camp David, their East German henchmen began a series of harassing actions against the Allied garrison in Berlin designed not only to increase the pressure on the Western powers but to shake the confidence of the Berliners as well.

The first of the East German probing actions came on October 6, 1959, during the celebration commemorating the founding of the so-called "German Democratic Republic." To recognize the occasion, the
East German regime placed flags of the GDR over each of the S-Bahn (elevated) stations in West Berlin. When West Berlin police attempted to remove the flags they were assaulted by mobs of Communist toughs especially brought over from East Berlin for just such an eventuality. Six policemen were critically injured, and although the flags were removed, they were all replaced that evening.

The following day, Mayor Brandt met with the three Western Commandants and requested permission to remove the flags with whatever force was necessary. The people, he said, were aroused and a failure to act would be interpreted as a sign of weakness. Specifically, Brandt requested the Commandants to order out Berlin's special riot police (Force B) which, like the riot police in most continental capitals, is equipped with heavy infantry weapons and would have been ideally suited for removing the flags.

But the Commandants were not convinced. General Hamlett, the American Commandant, was out of Berlin at the time, and in his absence, his British colleague, General Sir Rohan Delacombe, carried the day. Mayor Brandt left the meeting disheartened but determined to comply with Allied policy. The riot police were not ordered out and the East German flags remaining flying for the duration of the celebration.

The following month, the East Germans threatened to raise the flags once more but this time the West was better prepared. General Hamlett was now back in Berlin and was determined that October’s fiasco would not be repeated. The occasion for the new flag raising was the coming celebration of the 1917 Bolshevik Revolution—a celebration due to begin on November 6. The East Germans had widely trumpeted their intentions to raise the flags once more and in response the three Allied Commandants met in special session on October 29. This time Hamlett and General Jean LaComme, the French Commandant, convinced Delacombe that the only way to meet the Communist threat was to advise the Russians that any attempt to hoist the East German flags in West Berlin would be met by force. Reluctantly, Delacombe agreed and a joint Allied note to this effect was then transmitted to Soviet military headquarters in East Berlin.

* The original occupation agreements in Berlin had given the Soviets control of all railroad facilities within the city. The S-Bahn system was a part of these facilities and was turned over by the Soviets to the East German regime in 1949.
Washington, which was also aroused over the implications of the East German flag raising, notified the Soviet Union the following day that American troops were prepared to take whatever "security requirements" might be necessary in West Berlin to prevent the East German flags from being flown. Immediately after the American statement, the French Foreign Ministry in Paris announced that France "formally associated itself" with the United States position.

On November 3, three days before the celebration was to begin, General Hamlett paid a personal call on Major General Zaharov, his counterpart in East Berlin, to inform him once more that the United States was prepared to act. Later that afternoon Hamlett called a meeting of the senior American officers in Berlin in which he reviewed the situation and his conversation with Zaharov as well. "I told him," Hamlett stated, "that if the flags were put up, the West Berlin police would take them down. If the police couldn't do it, then we would." Hamlett said he was alerting the entire command and that all units were to be prepared to take whatever action was necessary.

The following afternoon, Neues Deutschland, the official East Berlin newspaper, reported with seeming disdain that "we do not assume that the flags will be hoisted." The East German flags which already had been distributed to each of the S-Bahn stations in West Berlin were placed under lock and key by the Communist functionaries in each station and were returned surreptitiously to East Berlin that evening—a precaution lest any be raised the following day by an overzealous disciple. The tough stand of Brandt and Hamlett thus was vindicated; when confronted by a show of Western determination, the Communists had backed down.

Shortly after the second flag incident had been resolved, the Western Big Four met in Paris. By this time the West had had an opportunity to study the Geneva proposals in greater detail and to realize their full effect. Under the gentle prodding of Chancellor Adenauer, the Allied heads of government therefore agreed that they would no longer consider themselves bound by the so-called "final" Western proposal of July 28—the proposal calling for turning control of access to Berlin over to the East Germans and for the elimination of the so-called "irritants." Instead, it was decided that any future negotiations over Berlin would have to start from the beginning.

Three weeks later, speaking before the West Berlin city assembly,
Chancellor Adenauer reassured the Berliners that the West would make no "deal" with Russia at the city's expense. According to the Chancellor, "any change in Berlin would be a change for the worse . . . and nothing could be worse or more mistaken than to begin again where one left off in Geneva. All the Western proposals on Berlin," Adenauer said, "are no longer existent since the Soviet Union rejected them."

And while the West reviewed its position, the East likewise was taking stock of the situation. Although the Camp David agreement was not specifically repudiated, ominous voices were now raised in the Communist camp threatening a separate peace treaty with East Germany. At the meeting of the Warsaw Pact signatories in Moscow on February 4, the West was pointedly warned against attempting to delay a settlement in Berlin. Any procrastination, the Communists said, would lead to a separate treaty with East Germany, and the solution of "the question of West Berlin" on this basis. Specifically, the Warsaw members stated:

If the efforts toward the conclusion of a peace treaty with both German states do not meet with support and if the solution of this question comes up against attempts at procrastination, the states represented at the present conference will have no alternative but to conclude a peace treaty with the German Democratic Republic . . . and to solve on this basis the question of West Berlin as well.12

Five days after the Warsaw Pact meeting adjourned, Nikita Khrushchev himself threatened a separate treaty with East Germany. Speaking at a reception at the Italian Embassy in Moscow, Khrushchev repeated the Communist liturgy that a settlement of the West Berlin question "brooked no delay." Still anxious for the promised Summit, however, the Soviet leader carefully avoided mention of a specific deadline.

By now reviving the question of Berlin, the Soviets were preparing their position for these very Summit negotiations. Indeed, Khrushchev's remarks at the Italian Embassy marked the beginning of a long distance snipping campaign which kept up until the Summit began. Realizing perhaps what was happening, Secretary Herter issued an immediate reply to Khrushchev. Any unilateral action to alter the status of Berlin, Herter announced from Washington, "would be a very seri-
ous thing.” Such an action, he said, would be in clear violation of the Camp David agreement.\textsuperscript{13}

Just as the Communists were oiling their weapons for the Summit, the West likewise began to buttress its position. The following week, Secretary Herter repeated the earlier Western proposal for reunification of Germany based on a popular plebiscite. Nikita Khrushchev replied on February 29; speaking from Jakarta, Indonesia, the Soviet Premier said that such a proposal would be a clear “interference in German internal affairs.” If a suitable agreement on Germany were not reached, Khrushchev declared, the Soviet Union would “be forced to sign a treaty with the German Democratic Republic.” Should this be the case, “all consequences of World War II in the German Democratic Republic will cease to exist, including the question of Berlin, which is situated on the territory of the German Democratic Republic.”

Simultaneously with the long-distance sparring which was now going on between Khrushchev and the West, East German authorities stepped up their harassment of the Allied forces in Berlin. On February 3, the Ulbricht regime announced that henceforth the Allied military missions in Potsdam would be accredited to the GDR rather than the Soviet Union.

The Allied military missions in Potsdam had been established shortly after the end of the war ostensibly to facilitate communications between the Soviet and Western commands. Each of the three Western powers employed about twenty officers and men in their missions and the Soviet Union had three similar missions in West Germany.\textsuperscript{*} The size and composition of each of the three Soviet missions corresponded exactly to the opposite Western mission at Potsdam.

Although the stated purpose of these missions was to facilitate communications, in reality each operated as an officially sanctioned intelligence service, watching “the other side.” Since this was a two-way street, the Western powers and the Soviets carefully duplicated one another as to restrictions and prohibitions. Each mission was generally free to travel throughout the area of the other command, and this was a major means of collecting information.

Accordingly, the East German action on February 3 announcing that the missions would now be accredited to the “German Demo-

\textsuperscript{*} One in each of the former Allied zones, i.e., a mission in Baden-Baden to the French, one in Buende with the British, and one in Frankfurt with the Americans.
cratic Republic” was very significant. To have acquiesced to the East German announcement would have constituted a virtual recognition of the Ulbricht regime. Indeed, the East Germans had supported their announcement by issuing new passes to each of the Western missions which clearly stated that the issuing authority was the German Democratic Republic. The old passes which had been issued by the Russians, the East Germans said, were no longer valid.

The United States and France immediately objected. The passes furnished by the East Germans, they said, were unacceptable and if the Soviet Union was not prepared to continue issuing the passes in the normal manner, then the West would have no alternative but to withdraw their missions from the Soviet zone. This, they added, would mean that the Soviet missions in West Germany would also have to be closed.

For several weeks the Russians stood firm. Either the Allies would accept the East German passes or none at all. But on February 25, the situation suddenly changed. The French, under De Gaulle, now among Berlin’s strongest defenders, took affairs into their own hands and restricted the Soviet mission in Baden-Baden to its headquarters pending the issuance of new passes for the French mission in Potsdam. Two weeks later the United States and Great Britain followed suit. Immediately following the American action, the State Department in Washington announced that the Russians were “not improving the atmosphere in advance of the forthcoming Summit.”

With the onus now placed directly upon them, the Soviets relented. On March 14, they announced that the passes issued by the East German regime would be withdrawn. “Ruled by the wish not to worsen the attitude in the relations between the great powers especially prior to the Summit conference,” the Kremlin said, “the Soviet Union has ordered its commander not to change the former valid passes of the American, British, and French military missions in Potsdam for the time being.” The following day, the restrictions which had been imposed on the Soviet missions by the Western powers were also withdrawn.14

There were other reasons as well why the Communists decided to withdraw the East German passes. On February 29, the United States had announced that the high altitude flights of C-130 aircraft into Berlin would soon be resumed. For the Russians this was a very
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serious matter. As was to be demonstrated shortly, high flying aircraft are of major strategic importance in gathering otherwise unobtainable intelligence data; although this was never mentioned by the Russians in their protests over the C-130 flights into Berlin, they were clearly disturbed by the prospect. Indeed, the East German pass demands seemed of little importance in contrast.

The American announcement about the resumption of the C-130 flights was heartily approved in both Bonn and Paris. In London, however, the British Government hung back. Such a course, they contended, would upset the delicate balance of East-West relations. The British protests over the resumption of the C-130 flights were vehement and even erupted into the House of Commons, where the Government bench did little to conceal its distaste for the American move. Accordingly, on March 9, and before the flights could take place, Washington yielded to the British pressure rather than face an open break in Allied ranks. Speaking at a press conference that day, Secretary Herter said that President Eisenhower, while still reserving the right to make such flights, found “no operational necessity” for doing so at the present time.15

The fact that the United States had been willing to make the high altitude flights made its point with the Russians, however, and five days later Communist pressure on the Potsdam missions was withdrawn. Clearly, a *quid pro quo* had been achieved.

Shortly after Secretary Herter’s announcement canceling the C-130 flights, Konrad Adenauer was in Washington. In spite of the *quid pro quo* the Chancellor made no secret of the fact that he felt that the West had backed down.16 Indeed, *der Alte* was profoundly worried at this time about the total course of Allied policy toward Berlin, and especially, about preparations for the forthcoming Summit. Accordingly, in his private discussions with the President, Adenauer stressed that the Berlin question should not be negotiated at the coming Paris meeting except within the context of the overall problem of German reunification. A separate deal on West Berlin, he indicated, would give rise to a feeling among the Berliners that they were being forsaken—being treated differently from the other members of the NATO community. The result, Adenauer said, would be tragedy for the Western alliance.

The Chancellor’s arguments met with only limited success. The joint communique issued at the close of the conversations reaffirmed merely
that no deal would be made with the Soviets about Berlin which did not reflect the sentiment of the Berliners. No connection was made, however, between the Berlin problem and the larger problem of German reunification—the tie advocated for so long not only by Adenauer, but by Dulles and, indeed, by Acheson as well.\(^{17}\)

A study of this period prepared by Dr. Hans Speier cites a report appearing in a responsible West German newspaper, the *Süddeutsche Zeitung*, that Chancellor Adenauer had serious doubts during these discussions about American firmness.\(^{18}\) In fact, the day after the discussions ended, *der Alte* proposed that a plebiscite be held in West Berlin prior to the Summit to inform the Western statesmen how the Berliners felt. Since the feeling of the Berliners was already well known, no action was ever taken on the Chancellor's proposal. But the fact that it was made, and made by a statesman of Adenauer's rank, effectively reminded the Western powers of German concern.

Perhaps sensing the uncertainty in the West, on March 25, Nikita Khrushchev, then on a state visit to France, returned to the offensive and announced that a separate Soviet treaty with East Germany would end the occupation status of Berlin. As soon as Khrushchev spoke, Washington issued an immediate rebuttal. "There is no substance whatever to the contention voiced by Mr. Khrushchev," the State Department said, that a separate peace treaty would "alter Western rights and responsibilities."\(^{19}\)

Khrushchev appeared undaunted by the State Department's answer and three weeks later again threatened a separate peace treaty with the GDR. Speaking at Baku, in the Caucasus, he repeated once more that if the forthcoming Summit talks were not fruitful, the Soviet Union would end the occupation in West Berlin on its own terms. According to Khrushchev, and here again he was attempting to plant a seed of doubt in the West, West Berlin was on the territory of the GDR and therefore once a peace treaty was concluded, the presence of Allied forces there would then be illegal.

It was evident, however, that Adenauer's visit to Washington had served its purpose. Five days before Khrushchev spoke, American Under Secretary of State C. Douglas Dillon officially put the Kremlin on notice that the United States was not prepared to surrender any of its substantive rights in Berlin. In the strongest statement made by any Administration official since the death of Secretary Dulles, Dillon
told the closing session of an AFL-CIO conference in New York that come what may, Berlin would not be sacrificed. "No nation," the Secretary said, "could preserve its faith in collective security if we permitted the courageous people of West Berlin to be sold into slavery." Acknowledging that the problem in Berlin could be solved only by the reunification of Germany—the point Adenauer had stressed—Dillon carefully qualified the type of interim solution which the United States would accept. "We are determined to maintain our presence in Berlin and to preserve its ties with the Federal Republic," he said. "We will not accept any arrangement which might become the first step toward the abandonment of West Berlin or the extinguishing of freedom in that part of Germany which is a free, peaceful, and democratic member of the world community."

Several days later, President Eisenhower explicitly endorsed Mr. Dillon's remarks. Appearing at a press conference on April 27, the President stated that the Administration position at the forthcoming Summit had been completely covered in Dillon's speech. "The point is," Mr. Eisenhower said, "we are not going to give up the juridical rights that we have."  

As the American position on Berlin stiffened, an incident occurred on May 1, which rendered further negotiations virtually impossible. At exactly 5:36 A.M. that day, an American intelligence pilot, Francis Gary Powers of Pound, Virginia, was forced down over Soviet territory. As is now well known, Powers was flying a highly classified reconnaissance aircraft (U-2) engaged in aerial surveillance activities. His equipment was captured virtually intact by the Russians, and although Nikita Khrushchev and other top Soviet officials had known of the U-2 activities for some years, the forcing down of Powers' aircraft was transformed by the Soviet Union into a major diplomatic incident. Two weeks later, when Khrushchev arrived in Paris for the opening of the Summit Conference, he announced that the meeting could not be held except under humiliating conditions. President Eisenhower, he said, would have to apologize publicly for the U-2 flight, and all those in the American Government who had had a hand in it would have to be dismissed.

Khrushchev knew these demands could not be fulfilled. Indeed, it seems clear that the U-2 incident was simply seized upon by the Russians as a pretext for breaking off the conference. The public statements
of the American government in the previous two months, and particu-
larly that of Under Secretary Dillon, had convinced the Soviets that
their demands on Berlin would not be fulfilled. With an American
presidential campaign then in the offing, why not wait six or eight
months until the new Administration had taken office?

Not surprisingly, this is exactly what Khrushchev proposed. The
Summit, he said, was not being canceled but only postponed until a
more suitable occasion. Following Khrushchev's remarks, a Soviet
spokesman at the Russian Embassy in Paris took great care to announce
that the Soviet Union would make no unilateral move regarding a peace
treaty with East Germany. Three days later, Khrushchev himself said
much the same thing in East Berlin. In short, the Soviet Union was
willing to seize on the U-2 incident to interrupt negotiations at the
Summit when it seemed likely that their demands would not be met.
But they were not prepared to use the flight as a pretext for terminat-
ing negotiations entirely. Without doubt, the Russians expected to gain
their prize in Berlin and were willing to wait once more for it to ripen.
In the meantime, the East German puppet regime could continue its
war of nerves.

By not using the U-2 episode as an excuse for consummating a sepa-
rate peace treaty with East Germany, it is conceivable that the Soviet
Union was attempting to lull Western suspicions and restore an out-
ward international calm. The efficiency of the U-2 flights—judged from
the material captured by the Soviets—undoubtedly caused many in
the Kremlin to have second thoughts regarding Russia's military posi-
tion vis-a-vis the West. As a result, Khrushchev did not press his diplo-
matic advantage and for the next six months Moscow scrupulously
refrained from issuing any announcement about Berlin threatening
the Western position.

Also, it is not improbable that Khrushchev's earlier threat to sign a
separate treaty with the Ulbricht regime was merely a tactical ma-
neuver designed to intimidate the West into further concessions. Such
a treaty, if concluded, would have put the East Germans in a direct
position of responsibility toward the West and would have made them
legally liable—at least in Communist eyes—for relations with the
Western powers. If this were done, then the "German Democratic Re-
public's" effectiveness as a ploy (or stalking horse) would be destroyed
immediately and Ulbricht himself would thenceforth be entrusted
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with *de jure* Communist control over Western access to Berlin. There is no reason to believe that the Kremlin desired either of these possibilities.

First, it was far better from Moscow's point of view to use the East Germans as puppets to harass the West. If they went too far, they could always be disowned without involving the Soviet Union in any significant risk. Second, with official Communist responsibility for Western access in Ulbricht's hands, the East Germans might precipitate a crisis with the West leading directly to war. Certainly the Russians would prefer to keep this responsibility to themselves.\(^{28}\)

Khrushchev's speech in East Berlin immediately following the Paris Summit left little doubt that this was what the Soviet Union had in mind. "We are realists and shall never follow an adventurous policy," he said. "In this situation, time is required." According to Khrushchev:

We would like to believe that a summit conference will be held in six or eight months. Under these circumstances, it makes sense to wait still a little longer and try through the joint efforts of all four victorious powers to find a solution to the long since ripe question of the signing of a peace treaty with the two German states. . . . What is fallen from the wagon is lost.

Clearly, the Kremlin had decided to wait. Russia would take no unilateral action herself. The Western powers would not be pushed directly in Berlin, and the threat of a separate treaty with the so-called GDR would be shelved. But while the Russians waited, the East Germans, with tacit Soviet approval, stepped up their campaign to incorporate West Berlin, and at first, these efforts were directed against the ties binding the Western sectors to the Federal Republic.

The first incident in this new East German offensive arose over a proposed meeting of the West German Bundestag in Berlin, scheduled for July. Following the election of President Heuss in Berlin in 1954, the Bundestag had regularly opened its annual session with a one week symbolic meeting in the isolated city. Since the beginning of the Berlin crisis in 1958, however, the Russians had attacked these sessions as provocative. Now, in the summer of 1960, the East Germans vigorously took up the cry. Such a move this year, said Ulbricht, would be an assault against the sovereignty of the GDR and would jeopardize the temporary occupation status which he claimed West Berlin enjoyed.

But unlike previous Bundestag sessions, the West this time met the
East German attack in utter disarray. Within the Federal Republic opinion was bitterly divided between the CDU, which counseled caution, and the SPD of Mayor Brandt, which advocated holding the meeting in Berlin regardless of the Communist threat. The United States, which under Dulles had supported the meetings vigorously, now washed its hands of the matter, saying it was a problem for the Germans themselves to decide. France and Great Britain made it no secret that they opposed the meeting and, as a result, the Bundestag session was canceled.

The next East German move against Berlin occurred at the end of August. During the first four days of September each year the various West German refugee organizations (representing mainly those persons displaced from their homes by the advancing Red Army in 1945) have held an annual convention honoring "Homeland Day." In 1960, this ceremony was to be held in West Berlin. But on August 30, two days before the convention was to begin, the East German regime announced that passage to Berlin through the Soviet zone would be barred to all West Germans who intended to take part in these activities. The ban, they said, would remain in effect until midnight on Sunday, September 4.

The East German announcement was in clear violation of the 1949 accord that had lifted the blockade and guaranteed free access between West Berlin and the Federal Republic. A *New York Times* dispatch from Berlin on the day following the East German announcement described the restrictions as "the most stringent Communist interference with Western rights of free access to West Berlin . . . since the Berlin blockade of 1948–49." 24

The East German move, it should be noted, did not affect Allied traffic and was aimed at only one particular group—a group whose purposes clearly ran counter to those of the GDR. Before the East German announcement had been made, certain elements of the Western press, especially in Britain and France, had been critical of holding the refugee meeting in Berlin.25 Thus, by now moving against the meeting, the East Germans once more had chosen an issue on which the West was divided. By establishing their right to deny passage to Berlin to one group, however, the Communists were establishing their right to deny passage to all groups. If the East could make the ban
stick, another slice of Western “salami” in Berlin would have disappeared, and as Mayor Brandt warned the West, the whole sausage would soon be gone, slice by slice.

The East German attack, as it turned out, was two-pronged. Simultaneously with the ban on travel to West Berlin, the Ulbricht regime also prohibited entry into East Berlin to all West Germans without a special pass issued by East Berlin authorities. On August 31, following a meeting with Mayor Brandt, the three Western Commandants dispatched a formal protest over both actions to Major General Zharov, the Soviet Commandant in East Berlin. The East German travel ban was countered the following day by the organization of a “baby airlift” from Hanover which flew into Berlin anyone who had been denied passage by road. The West did nothing about the partial closing of the East Berlin border, however, and the East German regime scored another uncontested tactical victory.

Immediately after the East German measures went into effect, Allied spokesmen in Berlin attributed the East German moves to previous Western indecision. “Encouraged by Western hesitation to sanction the symbolic annual session of the West German Parliament in Berlin,” the New York Times stated, “the East German puppet regime is now trying to put Western mettle to a further test. . . . The real purpose is, of course, to isolate West Berlin, to discourage West Berlin’s political and economic development by constant threats against its life-line and thereby make it wither on the vine.”

As the Ulbricht regime had announced, the restrictions remained in effect until midnight, September 4, then they were lifted without incident. Thus, without direct involvement, the Soviet Union witnessed the East Germans effecting one more curtailment of the Western position. The right of unimpeded Western access to Berlin had been effectively challenged and, perhaps even more significant, the “German Democratic Republic” had usurped the authority to curtail freedom of movement within the city itself.

As a result of their success, the East Germans continued their efforts. The day after the travel bans were lifted, GDR authorities halted twenty-three barges bound from Hamburg to West Berlin. According to East zone authorities, the barges carried too much weight for the water level of the canals. After three days of fruitless negotiations the
West yielded and reloaded the barges. There were few in Berlin who did not remember, however, that the 1948–49 Communist blockade had begun with a similar interruption of barge traffic.\textsuperscript{27}

On September 8, less than one week after the earlier travel bans had been lifted, the East German regime announced that the restrictions on the entry of West Germans into East Berlin would be reimposed on a permanent basis. As has been noted, the West had not countered this restriction when it had first been imposed. The East Germans undoubtedly were encouraged by this and were willing to gamble that the West once more would not interfere. At an emergency session of the city council, Mayor Brandt prophetically warned that “we haven’t yet reached the climax of the new crisis.” Although the Western powers protested the East German action to the Soviet Union (the Soviets still had not answered the original protest filed on August 31), the East German restrictions were not eased. Where free circulation within all of Berlin formerly had been guaranteed to everyone, the West Germans now were singled out for special treatment. Entry into East Berlin was denied them except at the four crossing points where special passes were given out. A dangerous precedent was being set—again without significant Western reaction. The formal Western protest was rejected by the Soviet Union one week later with the curt statement that the GDR “has full responsibility for the territory under its control.”\textsuperscript{28}

On September 13, the same day that the Soviets rejected the Western protest, the East German regime resumed the attack. Passports issued by the Federal Republic to the citizens of West Berlin, they announced, would no longer be valid for travel through the Soviet zone. Shortly afterwards, Czechoslovakia and Poland announced that they too would not recognize West German passports for the Berliners. Once more the Soviet Union stood by and watched with satisfaction. To informed observers in Berlin at the time, the evidence seemed clear that Khrushchev had given the Ulbricht regime a free hand to go as far as it could in eroding Western rights in Berlin short of an actual showdown.

Five days after the passport announcement, the East Germans denied entry into East Berlin to the Apostolic Nuncio in Germany, Archbishop Corrado Bafile. In spite of the fact that the Archbishop was the official diplomatic representative of the Vatican—indeed, probably because of it—he was barred by East German border guards from attend-
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ing services in the Soviet sector. The Communist action marked the first time that a foreigner equipped with proper identification had been denied free movement within the city. A Western protest was rejected by the Russians and three days later, on September 21, the GDR formally announced that all diplomats accredited in Bonn would have to receive “legal permission” before entering East Berlin. Thus, once again Ulbricht had moved from the particular to the general—from the Papal Nuncio to all diplomats. Thus, once again, another slice of Western sausage had disappeared in Berlin.

But now the West was ready to act—or at least, almost ready to act. The day after the East German announcement, American Ambassador to West Germany Walter Dowling drove through the Brandenburg Gate into East Berlin. Dowling’s car was marked with American license plates and flew a large American flag on the fender. As it crossed the boundary it was stopped by East German People’s Police. The Ambassador was told that he would have to turn around; that he could not proceed into East Berlin. Dowling replied that he was in Berlin as head of the American mission and was entitled to free access to all parts of the city. The East German officer demanded to see the Ambassador’s identification and the Ambassador unwittingly produced it. As soon as he had done so the car was waved on. By showing his identification papers to the East German border guards, Dowling inadvertently had recognized the right of the East zone authorities to control the movement of Allied personnel into East Berlin. Thus, in spite of the fact that his visit to East Berlin refuted the East German claim to be able to deny entrance to the Soviet sector to Allied diplomats, another precedent had been set. The following day, the official East German News Agency (ADN) announced that the diplomatic representatives of the United States, Great Britain, and France would not be denied access to East Berlin providing they showed their identity papers to the East German police on duty. In other words, they could enter East Berlin as long as the East Germans were granted the right to inspect these papers.

Encouraged by their success, the East quickly pressed its advantage. On September 26, in supposed reaction to a rally being held near the sector boundary by the evangelist Billy Graham, the GDR announced the temporary closing of the East Berlin border. Although the closure lasted less than a day, the Communists clearly were testing Allied re-
response. Mayor Brandt lost no time in warning the West accordingly.\textsuperscript{31}

By now, Berlin public sentiment was indignant at Western inaction. In Bonn, where the situation was better understood—and where the voice of the Berliners carried more weight—the Adenauer Government began to speculate publicly on the rupture of all economic ties with the Soviet zone. The trade pact between the two areas was due to expire on December 31, and Chancellor Adenauer’s spokesmen now lost no opportunity to remind the East that it would not be extended in the face of further Communist encroachments. The West German reaction served its purpose. Almost overnight the situation in Berlin eased and for the next three months the GDR attempted no further moves against Western rights. Indeed, many of the measures previously invoked were now relaxed. The GDR made no further attempts to restrict movement into East Berlin and Western diplomats were allowed to pass uninspected.

But during the year 1960, the Communists had made significant gains in Berlin. First, the Ulbricht regime had demonstrated the right to interrupt the flow of travel to Berlin from West Germany by road, rail, and water. Second, it had succeeded in curtailing free circulation within the city, establishing in the process the right to control entry into East Berlin, including entry even for accredited diplomatic officials. Third, it had successfully made a point of differentiating between West Berliners and West Germans both in the passport issue and over entrance into East Berlin, thereby encouraging the idea that Berlin was separate and distinct from the Federal Republic. In addition, the GDR had intimidated the Western powers by forcing the cancellation of the meeting of the Bundestag in West Berlin and, perhaps most important, had successfully sealed the border between East and West Berlin for almost twenty-four hours. To each of these actions Allied response had been negligible. A serious erosion of the Western position in Berlin thus had resulted and the Communists had been given numerous precedents on which to base their future action.

And as the year 1960 drew to a close, so did the Eisenhower Administration. The new President for whom Khrushchev professed to be waiting soon would assume office. Whether Khrushchev expected a change of policy on Berlin from the new administration is a moot point. Little, of course, was known of Senator Kennedy’s views on the former German capital. During the second of the great TV debates with Vice
President Nixon, both candidates had been asked whether they would take military action to defend Berlin. Mr. Kennedy’s answer, which is quoted below in full, could hardly have been reassuring to the Kremlin.

**Senator Kennedy:** Mr. McGee [Dale McGee, N.B.C. News], we have a contractual right to be in Berlin coming out of the conversations at Potsdam and of World War II that has been reinforced by direct commitments of the President of the United States.

It’s been reinforced by a number of other nations under NATO. I’ve stated on a number of occasions that the United States must meet its commitments in Berlin. It is a commitment that we have to meet if we are going to protect the security of Western Europe, and therefore on this question I don’t think that there is any doubt in the mind of any American. I hope there is not any doubt in the mind of any member of the community of West Berlin.

I’m sure there isn’t any doubt in the mind of the Russians.

We will meet our commitments to maintain the freedom and independence of West Berlin.⁴²

Three months later, on January 20, 1961, John F. Kennedy was inaugurated thirty-fifth President of the United States. Although in his inaugural address he mentioned no area specifically, his tone again was of resolution and determination. Europe and the free world were heartened. Chancellor Adenauer and Mayor Brandt were warm in their praise of the new American President.

There was also reason to feel that the Berlin problem might have eased; that a standoff there had been achieved. Since the end of the Paris Conference the Soviet Union had made no move against the Western position. The Ulbricht regime—when faced with the threat of a trade embargo—had retreated from their sausage-slicing tactics of the previous autumn and now scrupulously avoided interfering with Western rights. Indeed, the show of Western firmness symbolized by the U-2 flight in May and the threatened trade embargo of October seemed to have removed Berlin from among the major world trouble spots. The first news conferences held by President Kennedy and Secretary of State Dean Rusk confirmed this. Neither spoke of Berlin when mentioning the major problem areas; Secretary Rusk specifically stated that the pressure on Berlin had eased.⁴³

With this background of easing tensions, President Kennedy dispatched a personal note to Premier Khrushchev on February 22. Al-
though both the President and Secretary Rusk had earlier expressed a distaste for "Summit diplomacy," Washington freely acknowledged that the note to Khrushchev contained a proposal for just such a meeting. The decision to dispatch the letter to Khrushchev came after two weeks of intensive discussions at the White House among the President's key foreign policy advisers. Taking part in these discussions were three previous Ambassadors to the Soviet Union; Charles Bohlen, George Kennan and Averell Harriman; the current American Ambassador, Llewellyn Thompson; Secretary Rusk, and other members of the President's personal directorate. When the discussions were over, it had been decided that a meeting between Mr. Kennedy and Premier Khrushchev might serve to reduce the chances of Russian miscalculation of American intent. Nothing was to be negotiated at such a meeting but a face to face confrontation, it was felt, would "clear the air" and pave the way for the resumption of "normal" U.S.-Soviet relations. Accordingly, on his return to Moscow in late February, Ambassador Thompson carried with him the President's message which he subsequently delivered to Premier Khrushchev in the Siberian industrial city of Novosibirsk on March 9.\(^\text{34}\)

Simultaneous with the President's message to Khrushchev, Administration spokesmen began a series of public statements designed to answer Russian questions about Berlin. During a stop-off in the isolated city on March 8, Averell Harriman, the President's roving Ambassador, announced that the new Administration did not consider itself committed to any discussions on Berlin which had been conducted under President Eisenhower. "All discussions on Berlin," Harriman said, "must begin from the start." Specifically, Harriman's comment was an attempt to inform the Soviets that the final concessionary proposals offered at Geneva in July, 1959, were no longer valid. Two days later, State Department spokesman Lincoln White clarified this explicitly. The United States, he said, was "no longer bound" by the Geneva proposals and all negotiations with the Soviet Union will have to start from scratch, "not from August 5, 1959." Significantly, White added that the size of the American garrison in Berlin would not be cut. "I would like to state unequivocally," he said, "that the United States has no intention of reducing its garrison in West Berlin."\(^\text{35}\)

Thus, although the Russians had witnessed a new Administration come to power in America, they were unable to discern any change in
American policy toward Berlin. If anything, the new Democratic Administration, if judged by its public statements, was taking an even firmer stand on Berlin than had the previous one. Khrushchev had been tendered an invitation to meet at the Summit but at the same time was put on notice as to what the West would not yield. Its rights in Berlin were among these.

For almost two months after the receipt of Kennedy's invitation, Khrushchev remained silent. Clearly, the Kremlin wanted no part of a Summit meeting with an Administration so positively committed, so determined to maintain its position and so outwardly successful—or at least, so outwardly untarnished by the events of the day. The Warsaw Pact nations, meeting in Moscow on March 28 and 29, 1961, made no reference to the President's message. Germany was mentioned but only in connection with purported rearmament activities. The threat of a separate treaty with the Ulbricht regime was not repeated.

During the month of April, however, the fortune of world politics turned against the United States and, of course, against the Kennedy Administration. The ill-fated landing in the Bay of Pigs combined with the deteriorating Western position in Laos quickly diminished the luster of the new American government. American foreign policy had suffered decisive setbacks; in both Cuba and Laos, the Administration had been guilty of talking firmly and acting timidly. Confronted with these American failures, the Soviet Union now took the initiative.

On May 4, the Kremlin advised the American Embassy in Moscow that Mr. Khrushchev "still was willing" to meet with President Kennedy "if Mr. Kennedy was interested." The United States advised the Kremlin that an official U.S. reply would be made before May 20. Two weeks later, on May 16, Soviet Ambassador Menshikov called at the White House to deliver Khrushchev's formal answer to the President's letter. Over two months had elapsed since Khrushchev had received it and the world situation had changed considerably.

Three days after Menshikov's call at the White House, it was officially announced that a Kennedy-Khrushchev meeting would take place. The site would be Vienna and the dates June 3 and 4—immediately following the President's already scheduled visit to France. The announcement of the meeting, issued simultaneously by Washington and Moscow, stressed that the two leaders did not plan to negotiate but only to meet and discuss their positions.
Coming as it did with virtually no diplomatic preparation and on top of Administration failures in Laos and Cuba, the mere fact that the Vienna Conference was being held represented a tactical victory for the Soviet Union. Instead of talking from a position of strength, President Kennedy was reduced to speaking from a background of failure. While his four day stop-over in Paris served admirably to renew Western ties with De Gaulle, the two days spent in Vienna turned into a diplomatic rout.

Before his arrival in Vienna, President Kennedy joined General De Gaulle in espousing their joint determination to defend Berlin by whatever means were necessary. The public statements made in Paris were replete with professions of firmness. It is therefore all the more remarkable that the Vienna encounter was used by Khrushchev for once more regaining the initiative in Berlin. The tough talk of Paris, seen in the context of Laos and Cuba, evidently failed to impress the Soviet leader.

The first meeting of President Kennedy and Premier Khrushchev in Vienna was devoted to Laos and disarmament. The following day, June 4, 1961, Berlin and Germany were discussed. At the onset of the second day's discussions Premier Khrushchev presented Mr. Kennedy with an aide-mémoire defining the Soviet position. But the Soviet note was more than merely a statement of policy. Khrushchev had used it—and the Vienna Conference—to begin a new Soviet assault on the free status of West Berlin.

Basically, the Russian aide-mémoire of June 4 repeated the original Soviet note of November 27, 1958, and brought it up to date. It threatened a separate treaty with the regime of the Soviet zone, demanded a demilitarized status for West Berlin, and prescribed a new time limit. Indeed, the Soviet aide-mémoire was far more specific than the original note of November 27 had been. Detailed treaty arrangements with Germany were suggested and, if the United States was "not prepared" to sign an agreement with the GDR, the Soviets suggested two treaties—"with both or with one German state at its discretion." According to the Russians, "these treaties do not have to have identical texts but must contain the same provisions on the major questions of a peace settlement."

As for Berlin, the conclusion of a peace treaty, the Soviets said, would "normalize" the situation there by converting it into a demilitarized free city.
... as the Soviet Government sees it, West Berlin must be strictly neutral. It must not be tolerated, of course, that West Berlin be used further as a base for provocative hostile activity against the USSR, the German Democratic Republic or any other state or that it continue to remain a dangerous seat of tension and international conflict.

To guarantee the "neutrality" of West Berlin, Khrushchev proposed that "token contingents" of the four Allies, including the Soviet Union, be stationed there.

In perhaps the most significant part of the note, the Soviets demanded that both German states meet together and "explore the possibilities of agreement" within six months. This, of course, would mean the end of German reunification based on free elections and represented a further effort by the Soviets to legitimize their puppet regime in East Germany. The six-month time limit suggested by the Russians also marked a repudiation of the Camp David agreement and the imposition of a new ultimatum.

The international climate had changed substantially since Paris, and Khrushchev was once more on the offensive. The aide-mémoire concluded with an undisguised threat:

If the United States does not show an understanding of the necessity for concluding a peace treaty, we shall have to sign a peace treaty . . . not with all states but only with those that want to sign it.

The peace treaty will specifically record the status of West Berlin as a free city and the Soviet Union . . . will strictly observe it. In addition, measures will be taken to see that this status is also respected by the other countries. At the same time this will also mean the liquidation of the occupation regime in West Berlin with all the resulting consequences. Specifically, the questions of using land, water, and air communications across the territory of the German Democratic Republic will have to be settled in no other way than through appropriate agreements with the German Democratic Republic.

Confronted with the new Soviet assault, President Kennedy sought to hold his ground. The final communique issued at the close of the second day's conference stressed only that the meeting had provided a useful exchange of views. The fact that the President and Khrushchev had met was held up as a sign of encouragement. The Soviet aide-
mémoire was not mentioned and the world was not yet apprised that the third Soviet attack on Berlin had begun.

Immediately upon his return to the United States, President Kennedy reported to the American people on the results of the Vienna meeting. In the President’s words, “it was a very sober two days.” The advantages of the conferences were admittedly vague and related to the supposedly reduced possibilities of misjudgment. “No spectacular progress was either achieved or pretended. . . . [but] at least the chances of a dangerous misjudgment on either side should now be less, and at least the men on whose decisions the peace, in part, depends have agreed to remain in contact.”

According to President Kennedy: “Our most somber talks were on the subject of Berlin. I made it clear to Mr. Khrushchev that the security of Western Europe and therefore our own security are deeply involved in our presence and our access rights to West Berlin, that those rights are based on law not on sufferance; and that we are determined to maintain those rights at any risk and thus our obligation to the people of West Berlin and their right to choose their own future. . . . We and our Allies cannot abandon our obligations to the people of West Berlin.”

Thus, if Khrushchev had used the Vienna meeting to launch another attack on West Berlin, President Kennedy had used it to emphasize to the Soviet leader the risks which such a policy involved. But the supposed advantages arising from the resumption of diplomatic contact at the highest level can be quickly dismissed. Khrushchev simply had assessed the tide of world events to be running in his favor and had used the Vienna Conference to pursue his advantage. Like Hitler at Munich, he had used it to impress on the West the risks of opposing his policy and the dangers of total war. Indeed, he had imparted a caution to Western policy where previously none had existed—a caution unfortunately reminiscent of Neville Chamberlain in 1938. The only results of the so-called “resumption of contact at the highest level,” in fact, were a decided worsening of U.S.–Soviet relations, a concomitant increase in defense expenditures, and an accelerated deterioration of the situation in Berlin. Once more the Kremlin had played the game of Summit diplomacy to its own advantage.