

Dissertation

Cold War in Germany: The United States and East Germany, 1945-1953

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I

Introduction

With the outbreak of widespread strikes and demonstrations in East Berlin and throughout East Germany on June 16-17, 1953, the country's communist leaders — as well as the Soviet leadership — believed that “Day X,” the day of the long-expected Western-instigated coup d’etat against the socialist order in the German Democratic Republic (GDR) had arrived. Internal GDR estimates and outward propaganda had long warned of the culmination of Western efforts to undermine the peasant-and worker state. The ruling Socialist Unity Party (best known by its German acronym SED) quickly charged that the uprising had been a “fascist provocation” hatched by American and West German “imperialist agents.” Captives of their ideological prism and predictions, Moscow quickly sought to suppress the unrest militarily and stabilize the faltering regime of East German communist party leader Walter Ulbricht.

Before long, the events of 1953 would become the subject of propaganda, legends, and identity on both sides of the Cold War in Germany.¹ The spontaneous strikes and demonstrations of workers, farmers, and youth against the SED regime was the first major uprising within the Soviet empire since the Kronstadt unrest in 1921. To many in the West, in particular the new administration of President Dwight D. Eisenhower, it seemed to demonstrate to the world that the “captive peoples” within the Soviet empire could and would oppose Stalinist rule when the opportunity arose—and that the Moscow-backed Central European communist regimes could be upheld only by military force. It seemed that the “proletariat” had risen against the “dictatorship of the proletariat;” workers and

¹ See Ilse Spittmann, “Der 17. Juni im Wandel der Legenden,” Ilse Spittmann/Karl-Wilhelm Fricke, eds., *Der 17 Juni 1953* (Cologne: Verlag Wissenschaft und Politik, 1988), pp. 121-132; Dietmar Schiller, “Politische Gedenktage in Deutschland: Zum Verhältnis von öffentlicher Erinnerung und politischer Kultur,” *Aus Politik und Zeitgeschichte* B25/93 (June 1993), pp. 32-39. *17. Juni 1953: Streit um sein Wesen*, ed. by Kurt Frotscher and Wolfgang Krug (Schkeuditz: GNN, 2004).

peasants were throwing stones at the organs of a state that had been proclaimed in their name. Politically, ideologically and diplomatically, East Germans had dealt their communist rulers and their Soviet “masters” a heavy, near mortal blow. Eisenhower would note that “I am quite certain that future historians, in their analysis of the causes which will have brought about the disintegration of the Communist Empire, will single out those brave East Germans who dared to rise against the cannons of tyranny with nothing but their bare hands and their stout hearts, as a root cause.”² For Eisenhower, as for many of his contemporaries in East and West, the widespread rebellion against the oppressive communist government in East Germany in the summer of 1953, suppressed only by a Soviet military crackdown, was a pivotal moment in the Cold War—anticipating perhaps the beginning of the end of the Soviet empire and the dawn of the post-Cold War world.

In West Germany, the unanimous condemnation of the Soviet military action resulted in the adoption of an annual “Day of German Unity.” In the German *Bundestag*, June 17 was hailed as “the most important event in the recent history of German democracy.”³ But even as early as the summer of 1953, the events in the East were manipulated for the political purposes of the day: for Chancellor Konrad Adenauer, the uprising bolstered support for his policy of integrating the Federal Republic (FRG) with the West in the hopes of negotiating with the East some day from a position of strength.⁴ By contrast, for many within the Social Democratic opposition in the FRG, the revolt prompted calls for further immediate steps towards German reunification. Though its

² Draft letter from the President to Chancellor Adenauer, 20 July 1953, Dwight D. Eisenhower Library (Abilene, KS), C.D. Jackson Records, Box 3; *The New York Times*, 26 July 1953.

³ Deutscher Bundestag delegate Stefan Meier on 3 July 1953 in the parliamentary debate on the law; Deutscher Bundestag, ed., *Verhandlungen des Deutschen Bundestages, Stenographische Berichte, First Legislative Period, 280th Session*, p. 14070, quoted in Edgar Wolfrum, “Kein Sedantag glorreicher Erinnerung: Der Tag der Deutschen Einheit in der alten Bundesrepublik,” *Deutschland Archiv* (1998), p. 434. See also Matthias Fritton, *Die Rhetorik der Deutschlandpolitik: Eine Untersuchung deutschlandpolitischer Rhetorik der Regierungen der Bundesrepublik Deutschland unter besonderer Berücksichtigung von Reden anlässlich des gedenkens an den 17. Juni 1953* (Stuttgart: M&P, 1998).

⁴ “The Eisenhower Administration, the Adenauer Government, and the Political Uses of East German Uprising in 1953,” *Diplomatic History* (1996), pp. 381-409.

emotional appeal would deflate over time, the interpretation of the June 17 events as a popular uprising became part of the legitimizing *raison d'être* of the young Federal Republic.⁵

Though the events of June 1953 had nearly swept away his regime, SED leader and GDR deputy premier Walter Ulbricht, too, soon managed to turn the crisis into an advantage: Blaming the unrest on Western machinations served as an extraordinarily useful pretext for eliminating the challenge that had arisen to his own rule within the communist party leadership and any oppositional elements within East German society. In the wake of his regime's gravest crisis, Ulbricht instrumentalized his version of the events to expand dramatically the very means of repression that had helped, in part, to generate the crisis and to stage what has been called "the second founding" of the GDR.⁶ Public discussion and historical research into the deeper causes of the unrest remained a taboo in East Germany for years to come.⁷ After Ulbricht's death in 1973, and increasingly in the 1980s, some East German historians tried to give a more differentiated, less grossly distorted picture of what had happened. Nonetheless, the idea that "Day X" had been a U.S.-instigated plot remained the predominant interpretation. Former Soviet and SED

⁵ Over the years, official statements and public commemorations in West Germany on the "Day of German Unity" became a rather precise barometer of the dominant strain of *Deutschlandpolitik* of the day. Progressively, the memory of June 17 faded and lost its emotional appeal. Against the backdrop of *détente*, *Ostpolitik*, and the seeming permanence of Germany's division in late 1960s and 1970s, many West Germans increasingly wondered whether to commemorate June 17 at all. At the same time, curiously, the student movement and German Left began to discover 1953 and interpret it according to their own conceptions--as a failed attempt at class struggle by East German workers against the all-German state-capitalist (East) and bourgeois (West) elites. Rudi Dutschke, "Der Kommunismus, die despotische Verfremdung desselben und der Weg der DDR zum Arbeiteraufstand vom 17. Juni 1953," *Die Sowjetunion, Solschenizyn und die westliche Linke*, ed. Rudi Dutschke and Manfred Wilke, (Reinbeck: Rowohlt, 1975); see also Alexander Gallus, "Der 17. Juni im Deutschen Bundestag von 1954 bis 1990," *Aus Politik und Zeitgeschichte* B25/93 (June 1993), pp. 12-21.

⁶ This is the main thesis maintained in Ilko-Sascha Kowalczyk, Armin Mitter and Stefan Wolle, eds., *Der Tag X -17: Juni 1953. Die „Innere Staatsgründung“ der DDR als Ergebnis der Krise 1952/54*. (Berlin: Links, 2019).

⁷ Ilko-Sascha Kowalczyk, "Die Historiker der DDR und der 17. Juni 1953," *Geschichte in Wissenschaft und Unterricht* 44 (1993), pp. 704-724; Ilko-Sascha Kowalczyk, *Legitimation eines neuen Staates. Parteiarbeiter an der historischen Front: Geschichtswissenschaft in der SBZ/DDR 1945 bis 1961* (Berlin: Links, 1997); Alexander Fischer and Günther Heydemann, eds., *Geschichtswissenschaft in der DDR*, 2 vols. (Berlin: Duncker & Humblot, 1988-1990).

officials stubbornly adhere to this view even years after the implosion of the GDR and the end of the Cold War. The idea of a secretly engineered Western provocation, popularized in such books as Stefan Heym's *Der Tag X* (later published in the West as *Fünf Tage im Juni*) and taught for years in high schools and universities throughout the GDR, may still have its hold on many.⁸

The following study seeks to put the events of 1953—and particular the role of American policy – into its larger international and historical context. It projects backwards from the fateful days of June 1953 to retrace the origins of American policy towards East Germany in the early postwar years. The following chapters demonstrate that the June 1953 uprising took the West, in particular the U.S. government, with as much surprise as the Kremlin and the East German leadership, but it also shows that American policy in Germany since 1945 was far more assertive and aggressive vis-à-vis the Soviet Union and the emerging East German regime than previously acknowledged.

In fact, officials in the administration of Harry S. Truman were themselves worried about a reverse, Soviet-inspired “Day X”—the outbreak of general warfare in Europe triggered by a massive Soviet attack. American strategic planners did not generally believe that Moscow had any intentions of launching World War III in the immediate aftermath of a war that had nearly devastated the Soviet Union in human and material terms, but such a possibility could nonetheless not be entirely discounted. But as it watched events unfold in Eastern Europe in the early postwar years, the Truman administration grew anxious that a hostile bloc under Soviet domination was emerging that would lead to economic chaos and global war. Despite financial and military support for the beleaguered Greek and Turkish governments, Marshall Plan aid to the UK, France,

⁸ See for example the memoirs of the SED chief ideologue, Kurt Hager *Erinnerungen* (Leipzig: Faber & Faber, 1996), pp.193-195; Wladimir S. Semjonov, *Von Stalin bis Gorbatschow. Ein halbes Jahrhundert in diplomatischer Mission, 1939-1991* (Berlin: Nikolai, 1995), pp. 291-299. See also: Herbert Krämer, *Ein Dreissigjähriger Krieg gegen ein Buh: Zur Publikations- und Rezeptionsgeschichte von Stefan Heyms Roman über den 17. Juni 1953* (Tübingen: Stauffenburg, 1999).

the western zones of Germany and other West European countries, and massive efforts to assure the defeat of the communists in Italy's April 1948 elections, the communist forces seemed on the offensive throughout Europe in the late 1940s. Communists seized power in Czechoslovakia in February 1948, and that very spring Moscow notched up its pressure on the Western powers in Berlin. Continued occupation of Germany and labor unrest in France highlighted the fragility of Western Europe's halting rehabilitation. Despite what in retrospect appear as early Western "victories," such as the Berlin airlift and the stabilization of Western Germany—the successful testing of a Soviet atom bomb in August 1949 and the Communist victory in the Chinese Civil War that fall reinforced the pervasive feeling in Washington that time and initiative was on Moscow's side.

In the political discourse in Washington, reactive, defensive notions of "containing" this new Soviet threat mixed with more activist and offensively conceived notions of "liberation" and of "rollback" of Soviet power. The latter concepts were popularized by the Eisenhower and his secretary of state, John Foster Dulles, in the 1952 campaign as they criticized the "passive" and "stagnant" foreign policy of the Truman administration. They struck a chord because they related to traditional American political paradigms of liberty and "manifest destiny," linked to the religiously infused ideology of American exceptionalism and America's moral superiority that had motivated U.S. interventionism from the 19th century to the world wars of the 20th.⁹ Faced with the yet another "totalitarian challenge" to its very concept of modernity in the wake of the German Reich's defeat, the United States saw itself assisting the "natural" or "divine" trends of world history and defending its own security at the same time as it sought to expand the domains of freedom abroad.¹⁰ The United States, therefore, could not limit

⁹ Bernd Stöver, *Die Befreiung vom Kommunismus: Amerikanische Liberation Policy im Kalten Krieg 1947-1991* (Köln: Böhlau, 2002), pp. 35-60.

¹⁰ On the Cold War as a struggle of for competing visions of modernity, see Odd Are Westad, *The Global Cold War: Third World Interventions and the Making of Our Times* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2005).

itself to the “long-term, patient but firm and vigilant containment of Russian expansive tendencies” alone, as U.S. diplomat George F. Kennan had—now famously—demanded in his “X-Article” (1947) in *Foreign Affairs*.¹¹ Led by Kennan himself, American officials set out in 1947-1948 to destabilize the Soviet regime and its East European “satellites” through a concerted “psychological warfare” effort—termed “counteroffensive”—that sought to further and exploit “vulnerabilities” of the Soviet system, particularly its pervasive distrust and suspicion, and “rollback” Soviet domination from Central Europe. The following study seeks to demonstrate that *East Germany* played an important role in this “counteroffensive” strategy.

A case study in American policy towards the Soviet orbit, the following chapters show that even General Lucius B. Clay, the American military occupation chief in the early postwar period, known largely for his efforts to continue the U.S.-Soviet alliance in running postwar Germany in the face of growing estrangement, pursued what might be called a first attempt at “rollback”—one by integrating the Soviets into a joint occupation system that would ensure—that is, compel—the expansion of American influence right into the Soviet occupation zone. Evidence from the Russian and former East German archives shows both the impact of this strategy on Moscow’s and the East German communists’ threat perceptions – and their reactions.

Frustrated by the lack of Soviet cooperation and outraged by Stalin’s effort to capitalize on the Germans’ yearning for preserving their national unity as the occupation zones increasingly drifted apart, Clay turned from rollback by integration to rollback by destabilization. Efforts to destabilize communist rule in eastern Germany expanded after the establishment of the GDR in October 1949, now seen by Clay’s successor, U.S. High Commissioner John J. McCloy, as Moscow’s main “bridgehead” into Western Europe. To

¹¹ “The Sources of Soviet Conduct,” *Foreign Affairs* 25 (1946/47), pp. 566-582.

be sure, this Western counteroffensive in Germany would have to eschew the risk of triggering general war; instead American policymakers imagined turning East Germany into so great a liability that the Kremlin would consider negotiating its detachment from its sphere of control. That day would see the end of the West's own security liability in Europe: its tenuous position in Berlin, and it promised the unification of Germany on Western terms, the solid integration of a united Germany with the West and, more than likely, a significant weakening, if not collapse of Moscow's European empire.

The American counteroffensive entailed a massive program overt and covert measures that went well beyond inoculating the Federal Republic politically against similar measures from the East. Only the outlines of this "psychological warfare" program are known even today as much of the U.S. operational documentation remains declassified. Nonetheless, hundreds of pages of materials declassified via the U.S. "Freedom of Information Act" for this project make clear that the program was not confined to planning papers in Washington and Berlin. Soviet and East German archival materials also help to demonstrate the extent to which this program affected the "hearts and minds" of the SED leadership and the East German population. This is particularly true for the events of June 17, 1953 that nearly turned the regime crisis in the GDR in the wake of Stalin's death into an international conflict. Only in the aftermath of the June 1953 uprising did the newly elected Eisenhower administration begin to rethink its pursuit of rollback, which, in Europe, saw its denouement in the tragedy of the 1956 Hungarian Revolution.

The extent to which rollback in Germany could be pursued was severely circumscribed by the overall American strategy in Europe. That strategy centered on the integration of the Federal Republic of Germany into Western European economic, political and military structures, believed to be critical to prevent the resurgence of

German nationalism and militarism *and* assure the rehabilitation of war-torn Western Europe. The limits on an aggressive rollback approach to East Germany were defined largely by the American priorities in West Germany and requirements of building an increasingly sovereign and assertive Federal Republic. West German officials were reticent to push as far as some ‘cold warriors’ in Washington envisioned, in particular in the trade area. Similarly, maintaining Western allied unity in Germany in face of the threat from the East, particularly with regard to the exposed Allied position in Berlin, often, but not always, constrained American efforts towards East Germany.

By adopting an “international history” approach, this study seeks to go beyond the examination of one side’s perceptions¹² to a more complex narrative of interactions between actors on all, or at least a number, of sides in the Cold War in Germany.¹³ Having said that, his study does focus on the U.S. and (given the access to sources) to some degree less, on the Soviet and East German perspective. Despite some new research, in-depth British and French perspectives on this issue remain a task for future research.¹⁴

2. Historiographical Context and Sources

¹² The classic study for the perceptions approach is Robert Jervis, *Perception and Misperception in International Politics* (Princeton: UP, 1976); for the US-German relationship, see Ragnhild Fiebig-von Hase and Ursula Lehmkuhl, eds., *Enemy Images in American History* (Providence, RI, and Oxford: Berghahn, 1997); Willi Paul Adams and Knud Krakau, *Deutschland und Amerika - Perzeption und Historische Realität* (Berlin: Colloquium, 1985); Angermann, Erich and M.-L. Frings, eds., *Oceans Apart? Comparing Germany and the United States* (Stuttgart: Klett-Cotta, 1981).

¹³ See in particular, Odd Arne Westad, “Reviewing the Cold War,” in., *Reviewing the Cold War: Approaches, Interpretations, and Theory* ed. by Odd Arne Westad (London; Portland, OR: F. Cass, 2000), pp. 1-23; and Melvyn P. Leffler, “Bringing it Together: the Parts and the Whole,” *ibid.*, pp. 43-63. See also *Geschichte der internationalen Beziehungen : Erneuerung und Erweiterung einer historischen Disziplin* / ed. by Eckart Conze, Ulrich Lappenküper and Guido Müller (Köln: Böhlau, 2004); and *Internationale Geschichte : Themen, Ergebnisse, Aussichten*, ed. by Wilfried Loth and Jürgen Osterhammel (München : Oldenbourg, 2000).

¹⁴ Heinrich Maetzke, , *Der Union Jack in Berlin. Das britische Foreign Office, die SBZ und die Formulierung britischer Deutschlandpolitik 1945/47* (Konstanz: UVK, 1996); Adolf M. Birke and Günther Heydemann, *Grossbritannien und Ostdeutschland seit 1918* (München: KG Saur, 1992); Bert Becker, *Die DDR und Großbritannien 1945/49 bis 1973: Politische, wirtschaftliche und kulturelle Kontakte im Zeichen der Nichtanerkennungspolitik* (Bochum: Brockmeyer, 1991).

This study interfaces the history of postwar U.S. policy towards Germany and Eastern Europe with the history of East Germany within the emerging communist bloc. Its place therefore is at the intersection of two larger historiographic projects: the internationalization of the history of U.S. foreign relations, and the historicization of the GDR. Only recently have historians come to appreciate that U.S. foreign policy in the early phase of the Cold War was far more assertive in nature than the defensive posture implied by the notion of “containment.” This view of American policy differed sharply from the initial assessments of the U.S. approach to the rising Cold War: In the 1950s, scholars and former administration officials emphasized the defensive nature of American policy and laid blame for the post-World War II confrontation at Stalin’s door step.¹⁵ New Left revisionism in the 1960s—reflecting the contemporaneous political debate more so than new facts—argued that the United States was motivated in its approach to the Soviet Union primarily by its desire for global economic dominance.¹⁶ While revisionist writings overplayed the importance of economic and more narrow business motivation behind American foreign policy relative to other factors, they did break with the 1950s historiographic consensus and create a real debate—and sharpen the sense for the more offensive nature of American policy.

Spearheaded by John Lewis Gaddis, the “post-revisionism” of the 1970s further legitimized the idea that Americans bore some responsibility for the rise of the Cold War confrontation.¹⁷ Benefiting from increased declassification of formerly secret documents in the 1980s, Melvyn Leffler’s *Preponderance of Power* (1991) finally documented persuasively that U.S. objectives had been far more aggressive than previously

¹⁵ The classic study of this “school,” often labeled the “orthodox” or “traditional” interpretation, is Louis J. Halle, *The Cold War as History* (New York: Harper & Row, 1967).

¹⁶ See, e.g., Joyce Kolko und Gabriel Kolko, *The Limits of Power. The World and U.S. Foreign Policy, 1945-1954* (New York: Harper & Row, 1972).

¹⁷ John Lewis Gaddis, *The United States and the Origins of the Cold War, 1941-1947* (New York, Columbia University Press, 1972).

acknowledged.¹⁸ American planners, Leffler argued, wanted to redraw Russia's borders to its pre-1939 status, destroy the Cominform, retract influence of the Soviet Union and eventually cause the Soviet system to weaken and decay. Given time and strength, containment could evolve into a "rollback" of Soviet power. Based on newly declassified top-level US planning papers, Gregory Mitrovich recently pushed this notion even further: rollback did not await successful containment: the Truman administration embarked on a strategy to "compel" the Soviet Union to abandon its international ambitions in sync with its containment policy.¹⁹

With the end of the Cold War, the implosion of the communist regimes in East-Central Europe, the disintegration of the Soviet Union, and the ensuing opening of the former communist-world archives, historians have also sought to internationalize the history of the Cold War beyond what was possible until then. Against the backdrop of an era of unprecedented openness and declassification of U.S. government records (during the 1990s), access to the innermost chambers of secrets of the formerly ruling communist parties from Moscow to Berlin has allowed historians to recast the Cold War in ways unthinkable beforehand: the narrative could now be reconstructed from an international perspective, on a multi-archival basis, overcoming the one-sided perspectives that had predominated scholarship in East and West.²⁰ The sudden end of the Cold War confrontation posed the challenge to historians to write its history knowing the outcome, yet it also allowed them to escape the ideological and political parameters that the Cold War seemed to have set while it was ongoing. After all, in the Soviet bloc much of the

¹⁸ Melvyn P. Leffler, *A Preponderance of Power: National Security, the Truman Administration and the Cold War* (Stanford: Stanford UP, 1992); see also his *The Specter of Communism: The United States and the Origins of the Cold War, 1917-1953* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1994).

¹⁹ Gregory Mitrovich, *Undermining the Kremlin: America's Strategy to Subvert the Soviet Bloc, 1947-1956* (Ithaca, NJ: Cornell UP, 2000). See also Peter Grose, *Operation Rollback: America's Secret War Behind the Iron Curtain* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 2000); and Stöver, *Die Befreiung vom Kommunismus*.

²⁰ John Lewis Gaddis, "On Starting All Over Again: A Naïve Approach to the Study of the Cold War," Odd Arne Westad, ed., *Reviewing the Cold War: Approaches, Interpretations, and Theory* (London; Portland, OR: F. Cass, 2000), pp. 27-42; and Melvyn P. Leffler, "New Approaches, Old Interpretations, and Prospective Reconfigurations," *Diplomatic History* 19:2 (Spring 1995), pp.172-197.

political history was in the lip service of the party state, and the scholarly debate in the United States was all too often a mere continuation of the political and politicized debate over American foreign policy by historiographic means. The “New Cold War History” (Gaddis) shifted the old debate centered on the question of who was to blame for the rise of the Cold War to rethinking some of the fundamental dynamics of the international history of the second half of the twentieth century: Aside from recasting the Cold War with greater complexity, the “New Cold War History” emphasized, for example, the role of ideas and ideology and the importance of “junior allies” (a phenomenon commonly referred to as the “tail wagging the dog.”)²¹

The German battleground of the Cold War has always formed an important sub-narrative. Reflecting the larger debate on the origins of the Cold War, during the Cold War (and beyond) historians fought and re-fought the battle over who was to blame for the division of Germany. During the height of the Cold War, most Western accounts laid the blame squarely at Stalin’s doorstep. Much of the late Cold War era scholarship had firmly grounded American policy towards postwar Germany in the containment paradigm. To be sure, the notion of a “double” or “dual” containment developed by Wolfgang Hanrieder and Thomas Schwartz added subtlety to the notion that Washington was solely

²¹ The most recent statement is: John Lewis Gaddis, *The Cold War: A New History* (New York: Penguin, 2005); a first synthesis was attempted in John Lewis Gaddis, *We Now Know: Rethinking Cold War History* (New York: Oxford UP, 1997), in particular his final chapter; Melvyn P. Leffler, “The Cold War: Inside Enemy Archives,” *Foreign Affairs* 75:4 (July/August 1996), pp. 120-135; Leffler, “What do `We now know”? *American Historical Review*, 104: 2 (April 1999), pp. 501-525, and Leffler, “Bringing it Together,” *Reviewing the Cold War*, pp. 47-58. For a critical view, see Geir Lundestad, “How (Not) to Study the Origins for the Cold War,” *Reviewing the Cold War*, pp. 64-80. Among the most prominent publications are Vladislav Zubok and Constantine Pleshakov, *Inside the Kremlin’s Cold War: From Stalin to Khrushchev* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1996), Hope M. Harrison, *Driving the Soviets Up the Wall* (Princeton: Princeton UP, 2003). See also the work of Kathryn Weathersby on the Soviet role in the Korean War, “The Soviet Role in the Korean War, The State of Historical Knowledge,” in William Stueck, ed., *The Korean War in World History* (Lexington: The University of Kentucky Press: 2004), pp. 61-92; “Should We Fear This?” *Stalin and the Danger of War with America*. Working Paper No. 39 (Washington, D.C.: Cold War International History Project-Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars, July 2002); “Stalin, Mao and the End of the Korean War,” in Odd Arne Westad, ed., *Brothers in Arms: The Rise and Fall of the Sino-Soviet Alliance* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1998); “To Attack or Not to Attack? Stalin, Kim Il Sung and the Prelude to War,” *Cold War International History Project Bulletin* 5 (1995), pp. 1-9. See also other publications by the Woodrow Wilson Int’l Center for Scholars’ Cold War International History Project.

preoccupied with countering Soviet expansionism into Europe.²² The effects of World War II – and President Roosevelt’s singular focus on defeating, punishing and emasculating German military might -- lingered on in the almost irretrievable political atmosphere of the postwar period. Fear of a reemerging Germany coexisted with the emerging fears of the Russian “Grand Alliance” partner. General Lucius Clay personified this layered, incongruous and yet very real and actionable sense in dealing with the German and Russian problems – one that has at times led biographers and historians astray.²³ With the U.S. and British sources well exploited by the last 1980s, the study of American policy in Germany during the first postwar decade took a cultural turn. Reflecting similar trends in other fields, major works emphasize the significance of ideological or cultural agendas and discourse as well as the importance of non-state, non-governmental actors in the international arena of the postwar period.²⁴

Though over time historians came to question this consensus, only Carolyn Eisenberg’s *Drawing the Line: The American Decision to Divide Germany, 1944-1949*, published in 1996, finally turned the historiographic tables: The United States along with Britain, not the Soviet Union, Eisenberg argued in what over the last decade has become the standard account of the subject, was the architect of Germany’s partition. Lacking access to archival sources in Germany and Russia, Eisenberg’s account, however,

²² Wolfram Hanrieder, *Deutschland, Europa, Amerika. Die Außenpolitik der Bundesrepublik Deutschland 1949-1994* (Paderborn: Schöningh, sec. ed., 1995); Thomas A. Schwartz, *America's Germany. John J. McCloy and the Federal Republic of Germany* (Cambridge, Mass.; London: Harvard UP, 1991); see also *Die doppelte Eindämmung: Europäische Sicherheit und deutsche Frage in den Fünfzigern*, ed. by Rolf Steininger (München: v. Hase & Koehler, 1993).

²³ See John. H. Backer, *Die deutschen Jahre des Generals Clay. Der Weg zur Bundesrepublik 1945-1949* (München: C.H. Beck, 1983); Wolfgang Krieger, *General Lucius D. Clay und die amerikanische Deutschlandpolitik 1945-1949* (Stuttgart: Klett-Cotta, 1987); Jean Edward Smith, *Lucius D. Clay: An American Biography* (New York: Henry Holt, 1990).

²⁴ For a good overview see Jessica C.E. Gienow-Hecht and Frank Schumacher, eds., *Culture and International History*, (New York: Berghahn Books, 2003); Jessica C. E. Gienow-Hecht, “Academics, Cultural Transfer, and the Cold War - A Critical Review,” *Diplomatic History* 24:3 (Summer 2000), pp. 465-395; Frank Schumacher, *Kalter Krieg und Propaganda: Die USA, der Kampf um die Weltmeinung und die ideelle Westbindung der Bundesrepublik Deutschland, 1945-1955* (Trier: WVT, 2000); and Jessica C.E. Gienow-Hecht, *Transmission Impossible: American Journalism as Cultural Diplomacy in Postwar Germany, 1945-1955* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, c1999).

remained as one-sided as those she had revised. In dispensing historical judgment, *Drawing the Line* reduced a complex dynamic to a powerfully suggestive but far from complete historical construct. As the following study shows, in some sense Eisenberg overdrew her analysis of U.S. responsibility; in other ways she did not go far enough.²⁵

What these new important contributions, including Hermann Josef Rupieper's, *Der besetzte Verbündete: Die amerikanische Deutschlandpolitik 1949-1955* (1991) and his *Die Wurzeln der westdeutschen Nachkriegsdemokratie Der amerikanische Beitrag 1945-1952*(1993) as well as Frank Schumacher's *Kalter Krieg und Propaganda* (2000), had in common – and indeed united them with landmark earlier studies such John Lewis Gaddis' *The Long Peace: Inquiries into the History of the Cold War* (1987) and Melvyn Leffler's *Preponderance of Power: National Security, the Truman Administration, and the Cold War* (1992) -- was the fact that they paid little attention to East Germany, both as an object and actor in the story that unfolded. Scholarship seemingly still mirrored the American political vantage point that had focused on Western Germany and, in line with the longtime denial of diplomatic recognition, ignored the eastern part of the country and treated it as a negligible appendage. Alternatively, many studies subsumed the GDR as a Soviet "satellite," as part of the political Eastern Europe, famously written off to Soviet domination by American "non-policy."²⁶ Even in works on German-American relations, including classics such as John H. Backer's *The Decision to Divide Germany: American Foreign Policy in Transition* (1978), *Die USA und Deutschland, 1918-1975: Deutsch-amerikanische Beziehungen zwischen Rivalität und Partnerschaft* (1978), Frank Ninkovich's *Germany and the United States: The Transformation of the German Question since 1945* (1987), Wolfgang Krieger's *General Lucius D. Clay und die amerikanische*

²⁵ Carolyn Eisenberg, *Drawing the Line. The American Decision to Divide Germany, 1944-1949* (Cambridge: UP, 1996).

²⁶ Geir Lundestad, *The American Non-Policy Towards Eastern Europe 1943-1947* (Tromsø: Universitetsforlaget, 1978).

Deutschlandpolitik 1945-1949 (1987) and Schwartz' *America's Germany*, developments in eastern Germany found scant mention, if at all.²⁷ Only recently have a number of new publications, such as Anjana Buckow's *Zwischen Propaganda und Realpolitik* (2003); Schanett Riller's *Funken für die Freiheit* (2004) and Burton C. Gaida's *USA - DDR. Politische, kulturelle und wirtschaftliche Beziehungen seit 1974* (1989) focused greater attention on certain aspects of the American approach to the "other" Germany.²⁸

The historiographic deficit on the GDR changed when the doors of the archives of the SED and the government it ran flung far open in the wake of the fall of the wall.²⁹ To be sure, the GDR had been a subject of serious study in West Germany prior to reunification, particularly by the Mannheimer Arbeitskreis "Geschichte und Politik der DDR" around Hermann Weber and Dietrich Staritz, as well as other experts, such as Karl Wilhelm Fricke, Gisela Helwig, Peter Christian Ludz, Ilse Spittmann and Carola Stern.³⁰

²⁷ John Lewis Gaddis, *The Long Peace: Inquiries into the History of the Cold War* (New York: OUP, 21989); Leffler, *A Preponderance of Power*, passim; John H. Backer's *The Decision to Divide Germany: American Foreign Policy in Transition* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1978), Manfred Knapp, ed., *Die USA und Deutschland, 1918-1975. Deutsch-amerikanische Beziehungen zwischen Rivalität und Partnerschaft*. (München: C. H. Beck, 1978); Frank Ninkovich, *Germany and the United States: The Transformation of the German Question since 1945*. (Boston: Twayne, 1988).

²⁸ Anjana Buckow, *Zwischen Propaganda und Realpolitik* (Stuttgart: Franz Steiner, 2003); very insightful: Schanett Riller, Riller, *Funken für die Freiheit: Die U.S.-amerikanische Informationspolitik gegenüber der DDR* (Trier: WVT, 2004); Burton C. Gaida, *USA – DDR: Politische, kulturelle und wirtschaftliche Beziehungen seit 1974* (Bochum: Brockmeyer, 1989).

²⁹ On the records of the former SED and GDR see: Hermann Weber, "Die aktuelle Situation in den Archiven für die Erforschung der DDR Geschichte," *Deutschland Archiv* 27:7 (1994), pp. 690-99; Lothar Dralle, "Das DSF-Archiv als Quelle zur Geschichte der DDR - Der Volksaufstand vom 17. Juni 1953," *Deutschland Archiv* 25:8 (1992), 837-45; Hermann Weber, "Die Wissenschaft benötigt die Unterlagen der Archive. Einige Überlegungen zur Archivsituation in Berlin," *Deutschland Archiv* 24:5 (1991), pp. 452-57. Christian Ostermann, "New Research on the GDR," *Cold War International History Project Bulletin* 4 (Fall 1994), pp. 34, 39-44; Ulrich Mähler, ed., *Vademekum DDR-Forschung. Ein Leitfaden zu Archiven, Forschungseinrichtungen, Bibliotheken, Einrichtungen der politischen Bildung, Vereinen, Museen und Gedenkstätten* (Opladen: Leske & Buderich, 1999).

³⁰ Hermann Weber, *DDR. Grundriß der Geschichte 1945-1990* (Hannover: Fackelträger, 1991); Ders., *Die DDR 1945-1986* (München: Oldenbourg, 1988); Ders., ed. *Parteiensystem zwischen Demokratie und Volksdemokratie. Dokumente und Materialien zum Funktionswandel der Parteien und Massenorganisationen in der SBZ/DDR 1945-1950*. (Cologne: Wissenschaft und Politik, 1982); ders., "Weißer Flecken" in der DDR-Geschichtsschreibung, "Aus Politik und Zeitgeschichte" 11 (1990), pp. 3-15; Dietrich Staritz, ed., *Einheitsfront, Einheitspartei: Kommunisten und Sozialdemokraten in Ost- und Westeuropa 1944-1948* (Köln: Wissenschaft und Politik, 1989); Staritz, *Geschichte der DDR 1945-1985* (Frankfurt/M.: Suhrkamp, 1985); Staritz, *Die Gründung der DDR. Von der sowjetischen Besatzungsherrschaft I zum sozialistischen Staat*. (München: dtv, 2nd ed., 1987); Karl Wilhelm Fricke, *Die DDR-Staatssicherheit*. (Köln: Wissenschaft und Politik, 3rd ed., 1989); Fricke, *MfS intern. Macht, Strukturen, Auflösung der DDR-Staatssicherheit. Analyse und Dokumentation* (Köln: Wissenschaft und Politik, 1991);

But it remained handicapped by the dearth of sources and – much like the broader debate about the Cold War in the United States – the study of the GDR reflected the political debate and exigencies in the Federal Republic about *Deutschlandpolitik*, from the early totalitarian critique of the 1950s to the “systemic” understanding of the GDR as a modernizing society in the *Détente* years. Only access to the archives in Eastern Germany (and Russia) after 1989/90 allowed historians in East and West to begin a critical reconstruction of the political and social history, the “historicization” of the “second German state.”³¹

Since the early 1990s, the history of East Germany (and the relations between both German states) has witnessed an explosion of new research. In this process, former East German historians – in particular members of a new generation, including Armin Mitter, Stefan Wolle and Andreas Malycha, liberated from the prerequisites of Marxist-Leninist ideological framework, have played a leading role in reassessing GDR history.³² International historians have joined this proliferation of research on postwar eastern Germany, with such landmark studies as Norman Naimark’s *The Russian in Germany: A History of the Soviet Zone of Occupation* and Catherine Epstein’s *The Last Revolutionaries: German Communists and their Century* (2003).³³ The following study

Fricke, *Opposition und Widerstand in der DDR*. (Köln: Wissenschaft und Politik, 1984); Gisela Helwig, „Die DDR in vergleichender Perspektive. Erste internationale Konferenz zur Innen- und Außenpolitik der DDR in den USA,“ *DeutschlandArchiv* (1983), pp. 750-52; Helwig, *Rückblicke auf die DDR* (Köln: Wissenschaft und Politik, 1994); Peter Christian Ludz, *Die DDR zwischen Ost und West* (München: C. H. Beck, 1980); Ilse Spittmann, ed., *Die SED in Geschichte und Gegenwart* (Köln: Wissenschaft und Politik, 1987); Spittmann, ed. *DDR-Lesebuch: Stalinisierung 1945-1955* (Köln: Wissenschaft und Politik, 1991); Carola Stern, *Ulbricht: eine politische Biographie* (Köln, Kiepenheuer & Witsch, 1963).

³¹ Particular noteworthy are the publications emanating from the Zentrum für zeithistorische Forschung in Postdam.

³² In addition to the works by Armin Mitter and Stefan Wolle mentioned in footnote 1 above, see: Armin Mitter „Die Ereignisse im Juni und Juli 1953 in der DDR,“ *Aus Politik und Zeitgeschichte* 5 (1991) , pp. 31-41; ders. And Stefan Wolle, eds., *Der Tag X. Quellen und Forschungen zum 17. Juni 1953* (Berlin: Links, 1995) Andreas Malycha, *Partei von Stalins Gnaden? Die Entwicklung der SED zur Partei neuen Typs in den Jahren 1946 bis 1950*. (Berlin: Dietz, 1996); ders., *Die SED 1946-1953* (Paderborn: Schöningh, 2000).

³³ Norman M. Naimark, ‘*To Know Everything and to Report Everything Worth Knowing: Building the East German Police State, 1945-1949*. Cold War International History Project Working Paper 10. (Washington, D.C., August 1994); ders. *The Russians in Germany., A History of the Soviet Zone of Occupation, 1945-*

builds on this rich archival corpus of documents and analytical literature to show how American policy impacted events in East Germany; and it has allowed this study to give historical agency to the East German leaders and “masses” as they faced the West.

While the events of June 1953 and the Soviet occupation period drew much public and scholarly attention, research on international history based on the former East German records preoccupied itself with German-German relations, with an emphasis on the period after 1960.³⁴ Studies of GDR foreign policy generally suffered from two circumstances:

1949 (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard UP, 1995); Catherine Epstein, *The Last Revolutionaries: German Communists and Their Century* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2003).

³⁴ An exception is the work of historian Michael Lemke. See Michael Lemke, *Einheit oder Sozialismus? Die Deutschlandpolitik der SED 1949-1961* (Köln: Böhlau, 2001) and his edited volume *Sowjetisierung und Eigenständigkeit in der SBZ/DDR (1945-1953)* (Köln: Böhlau, 1999); for a good survey see Joachim Scholtyseck, *Die Aussenpolitik der DDR* (München: Oldenbourg, 2003). On the events of June 17, 1953 see: *Volkserhebung gegen den SED-Staat: Eine Bestandsaufnahme zum 17. Juni 1953*, ed. by Roger Engelmann and Ilko-Sascha Kowalczyk (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2005); Hegedus, Andras B. and Manfred Wilke, eds., *Satelliten nach Stalins Tod* (Berlin: Akademie, 2000); Heidi Roth, *Der 17. Juni 1953 in Sachsen* (Cologne: Böhlau, 1999); Ilko-Sascha Kowalczyk, Armin Mitter and Stefan Wolle, eds., *Der Tag X: 17. Juni 1953. Die “Innere Staatsgründung” der DDR als Ergebnis der Krise 1952/54* (Berlin: Ch.Links, 1995); Torsten Diedrich, “Zwischen Arbeitererhebung und gescheiterter Revolution in der DDR,” in: *Jahrbuch für Historische Kommunismusforschung* (Berlin: Akademie Verlag, 1994), 288 ff.; Der 17. Juni—vierzig Jahre danach, in: *Die DDR als Geschichte: Fragen-Hypothesen-Perspektiven*, ed. by Jürgen Kocka (Berlin: Akademie Verlag, 1993), pp. 40-66, Gerhard Beier, *Wir wollen freie Menschen sein. Der 17. Juni 1953. Bauleute gingen voran* (Köln: Bund, 1993); Angelika Klein, *Die Arbeiterrevolte im Bezirk Halle*, 3 vols. (Potsdam: Brandenburger Verein für politische Bildung ‘Rosa Luxemburg,’ 1993); Armin Mitter and Stefan Wolle, *Untergang auf Raten. Unbekannte Kapitel der DDR-Geschichte* (München: Bertelsmann, 1993); Willy Müller, *Die Situation der Bauarbeiter in der Stalinallee und der Verlauf der Berliner Demonstrationen vom 16. und 17. Juni 1953 in den Berichten gewerkschaftlicher Beobachter* (Berlin: Helle Panke, 1993); Klaus Schwabe, *Der 17. Juni 1953 in Mecklenburg-Vorpommern* (Schwerin: Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung, 1993); Dagmar Semmelmann, “Schauplatz StalinStadt/EKO:” *Erinnerungen an den 17. Juni 1953* (Potsdam: Brandenburger Verein für politische Bildung ‘Rosa Luxemburg,’ 1993); Ilse Spittmann, “Zum 40. Jahrestag des 17. Juni,” *Deutschland Archiv* 26:6 (1993), pp. 635-39; Udo Wengst, “Der Aufstand am 17. Juni 1953 in der DDR. Aus den Stimmungsberichten der Kreis- und Bezirksverbände der Ost-CDU im Juni und Juli 1953,” *Vierteljahrshefte für Zeitgeschichte* 41:2 (1993) pp. 277-322; Rainer Gries, “Westliche Markenprodukte waren die schlimmsten Provokateure. Versorgung und Propaganda in der DDR am Vorabend des 17. Juni 1953,” *Das Parlament* 42:25/26 (1992), 9; Armin Friedrich and Thomas Friedrich, eds., “*Es hat alles keinen Zweck, der Spitzbart muß weg.*” *Der 17. Juni 1953* (Berlin: Paetec, 1992); Manfred Hagen, *DDR. Juni ‘53. Die erste Volkserhebung im Stalinismus* (Stuttgart: Steiner, 1992); Leo Haupts, “Die Blockparteien in der DDR und der 17. Juni 1953,” *Vierteljahrshefte für Zeitgeschichte* 40:2 (1992), pp. 383-412; Torsten Diedrich, *Der 17. Juni 1953 in der DDR. Bewaffnete Gewalt gegen das Volk* (Berlin: Dietz, 1991); Anke Huschner, “Der 17. Juni an Universitäten und Hochschulen der DDR,” *Beiträge zur Geschichte der Arbeiterbewegung* 33:5 (1991), pp. 681-92; Armin Mitter, “Die Ereignisse im Juni und Juli 1953 in der DDR. Aus den Akten des MfS,” *Das Parlament* 41:5 (1991), pp.31-41; Heidi Roth, “Der 17. Juni im damaligen Bezirk Leipzig. Aus den Akten des PDS-Archivs Leipzig,” *Deutschland Archiv* 24:6 (1991), pp.573-84; Christoph Buchheim, “Wirtschaftliche Hintergründe des Arbeiteraufstandes vom 17. Juni 1953 in der DDR,” *Vierteljahrshefte für Zeitgeschichte* 38:3 (1990), pp.415-433; Gottfried Zieger, “Der 17. Juni 1953,” in Dieter Blumenwitz, ed., *Die Deutschlandfrage vom 17. Juni 1953 bis zu den Genfer Viermächtekonferenzen von 1955* (Berlin: Duncker & Humblot, 1990), 7-26; Ilse Spittmann and Karl Wilhelm Fricke, eds., *17. Juni 1953. Arbeiteraufstand in der DDR* (Köln: Verlag Wissenschaft und Politik, 1988); Karl Wilhelm Fricke, *Opposition und Widerstand in der DDR* (Köln: Verlag Wissenschaft und

First, despite the setting up of a foreign ministry in the GDR in 1949, international affairs remained a tightly guarded prerogative of the Soviet occupation power, particularly in the immediate postwar period but to a great degree into the 1950s as well. Thus the German record, exemplified by the important but fragmentary and often cryptic Pieck diary notes has been fragmentary at best.³⁵ Secondly, until very recently, Russian records for the early postwar period in Germany remained inaccessible in the Presidential Archive and the Russian Foreign Ministry Archive in Moscow.³⁶ Thanks to patient effort by Jochen Laufer, Jan Foitzik and others at the Zentrum für zeithistorische Forschung in Potsdam, Russian records on occupied Germany have begun to be published in cooperation with the MID. Though far from complete, these records, supplemented with Russian records relating to Germany from other collections and archives, have informed this study to the extent that they allow for the first time in a fairly systematic fashion for insights into Soviet (and German) intentions and actions vis-à-vis the United States and its allies.³⁷

Politik, 1984); Klaus Ewers, "Zu einigen langfristigen Auswirkungen des Arbeiteraufstandes am 17. Juni 1953 für die DDR," in Ilse Spittmann and Gisela Helwig, eds., *Die DDR vor den Herausforderungen der achtziger Jahre* (Cologne: Verlag Wissenschaft und Politik, 1983); Axel Bust-Bartels, "Der Arbeiteraufstand am 17. Juni 1953. Ursachen, Verlauf und gesellschaftspolitische Ziele," *Aus Politik und Zeitgeschichte*, 25 June (1980), pp. 24-54; Arnulf Baring, *Uprising in East Germany: June 17, 1953* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1966); Rainer Hildebrandt, *The Explosion: The Uprising behind the Iron Curtain* (New York: Little, Brown, and Co., 1955); Stefan Brant and Klaus Bölling, *Der Aufstand. Vorgeschichte, Geschichte und Deutung des 17. Juni 1953* (Stuttgart: Steingrüben, 1954); Arno Scholz, Werner Nicke, Gottfried Vetter, *Panzer am Potsdamer Platz* (Berlin: Arani, 1954); H. Brand, "East Germany: The Uprising of June 17," *Dissent* 1:1 (1954), pp. 32-49.

³⁵ *Wilhelm Pieck - Aufzeichnungen zur Deutschlandpolitik 1945- 1953*, ed. by Rolf Badstübner und Wilfried Loth (Berlin: Akademie, 1994).

³⁶ Recent assessments are Stefan Kreuzberger and Rainer Lindner, eds., *Russische Archive und Geschichtswissenschaft: Rechtsgrundlagen, Arbeitsbedingungen, Forschungsperspektiven* (Frankfurt/M.: Lang, 2003), Andrea Graziosi, "The New Soviet Archival Sources," *Cahiers du Monde russe* 40:1-2 (January-June 1999), pp. 13-64; Silvio Pons, "The Papers on Foreign and International Policy in the Russian Archives: The Stalin Years," *Cahiers du monde russe*, 40:1-2 (January-June 1999), pp. 235-250; Norman Naimark, "Cold War Studies and New Materials on Stalin," *The Russian Review* 61 (January 2002), pp. 1-15; and *Archives of Russia: A Directory and Bibliographic Guide to Holdings in Moscow and St. Petersburg*, ed. by Patricia Grimsted, 2 vols. (Armonk, NY: M.E. Sharpe, 2000), and Grimsted, *Archives of Russia Seven Years After: 'Purveyors of Sensations' or Shadows Cast to the Past'*: CWIHP Working Paper No 20, 2. vols. (Washington, D.C.: Woodrow Wilson Int'l Center for Scholars, 1999). See also Norman Naimark, "Post-Soviet Russian Historiography on the Emergence of the Soviet Bloc," *Kritika* 5:3 (Summer 2004), pp. 561-580

³⁷ Jochen P. Laufer und Georgij P. , eds., *Die UdSSR und die deutsche Frage, 1941-1948: Dokumente aus dem Archiv für Aussenpolitik der Russischen Föderation* 3 vols. (Berlin : Duncker & Humblot, 2004); Jan Foitzik, comp., *Inventar der Befehle des Obersten Chefs der Sowjetischen Militäradministration in Deutschland (SMAD), 1945-1949* (München/New Providence: K.G. Saur, 1995).

II

“An Iron Curtain of Our Own”?³⁸

The United States, the Soviet Zone, and the Division of Germany, 1945-1948

1. “Toward a Line Down the Center of Germany:”³⁹ Dividing Germany

Berlin and the Soviet Occupation Zone (SBZ) was a desolate place when President Truman’s entourage arrived there in late July 1945 to discuss the future of Germany with the leaders of Russia and Great Britain. The capital of the defeated German Reich lay largely in ruins. “For mile after mile through Berlin and its suburbs,” one member of Truman’s party remembered, “every building was shattered beyond habitation. Some were still smoldering (...) The stench of death was everywhere.”⁴⁰ A desolate atmosphere pervaded the place to which the victors had come to decide on the spoils of the war. The city’s skyline of ruins was powerfully suggestive of the awesome challenge of ruling the country over which the Allies had just assumed “supreme authority.” And it reinforced the frustrations that emerged in the discussion between the wartime allies—and the depressing reality of a new confrontation. “This is an unhealthy place—Berlin,” U.S. Assistant Secretary of War John J. McCloy, who was accompanying Truman, noted in his diary upon arrival, “The misery of the place and the conflict between the East and the West hangs over you all the time.”⁴¹

By mid-1945, these two realities in the heart of Europe, the problem of Germany and emerging tensions with Soviet Union, were weighing heavily on the new Truman

³⁸ Memo by Perry Laukhuff, “Appraisal of Quadripartite Control and Soviet Policy,” 25 April 1946, The Hoover Institution Archives, RMP, Box 58.

³⁹ McCloy Diaries, 29 July 1945, Amherst College Archives, McCloy Papers Series 2, DY1:18,

⁴⁰ Walter J. Brown, *James F. Byrnes of South Carolina: A Remembrance* (Macon, Ga.: Mercer University Press, 1992), p 268.

⁴¹ McCloy Diaries, 29 July 1945, McCloy Papers Series 2, DY1:18, Amherst College Archives.

administration. Truman's predecessor, President Franklin D. Roosevelt, had focused his energies on winning the war and avoided being drawn into postwar planning.⁴² On key issues of a German settlement, such as dismemberment, the president felt that "our attitude should be one of study and postponement of the final decision." FDR was privately disposed toward a draconian peace with Germany, convinced that it needed to be "driven home to the German people" that "their nation had engaged in a lawless conspiracy against the decencies of modern civilization."⁴³ In late 1944, he gave his ad hoc endorsement to a pastoralization plan for Germany championed by his Treasury Secretary Henry Morgenthau, who suggested to "take every mine, every mill and factory and wreck it."⁴⁴ Yet the president's commitment to Morgenthau's idea of a drastic economic disarmament of Germany was short-lived. In absence of more specific presidential determination, the discussion and development of how to treat the defeated adversary was left to officials at the State and War Department. By war's end, only minimal allied agreements on Germany's surrender and occupation were in place.

State and War Department officials charged with postwar planning understood the elementary problem of security from Germany largely in economic terms, in this respect not without affinity to Roosevelt's mode of thinking. Imbued with the belief that restoring a multilateral world trade system was a key element in sustaining peace after the war's end, U.S. postwar planners considered integrating German economic potential with the economies of its neighboring countries the best way to undercut German nationalistic

⁴² Robert Dallek, *Franklin D. Roosevelt and American Foreign Policy, 1932-1945* (New York : Oxford University Press, 2nd ed., 1995); Warren F. Kimball, *The Juggler: Franklin Roosevelt as Wartime Statesman* (Princeton, N.J. : Princeton University Press, 1991.)

⁴³ Quoted in Thomas Alan Schwartz, *America's Germany: John J. McCloy and the Federal Republic of Germany* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1991), p. 19.

⁴⁴ John Morton Blum, ed., *From the Morgenthau Diaries: Years of War, 1941-1945* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1967), p. 351. On the Morgenthau Plan see Warren Kimball., ed., *Swords or Ploughshares? The Morgenthau Plan for Defeated Germany, 1943-1946* (Philadelphia: Lippincott, 1976).

propensities for autarchy and hegemony.⁴⁵ Preventing future German aggression, in their view, was less a matter of emasculating German industrial might than creating inextricable interdependencies with other economies. Reparations were widely considered “one of the most fundamental sources of disturbance in international relations after 1919;” many believed that the United States ended up financing them through interwar loans to Germany. Now postwar planners at Foggy Bottom wanted reparations to become a tool for economic integration: “Reparations have their economic justification to the degree that they are forward—not backward – looking, that is, to the degree that they contribute to reconstruction.” Rather than drastic intervention into the German economy, officials were even willing to provide Germany with trade incentives to reinforce its re-incorporation into the world economy.⁴⁶

This approach toward the German problem reflected not only the corporate background of these State and War Department officials but also their conservative political outlook quite distinct from FDR’s New Dealers.⁴⁷ Concerns about the resurgence of German nationalism mixed with a basic anti-communism and suspicions about the ultimate designs of America’s Soviet ally. In fact, to many, Soviet moves in Eastern Europe, northern Scandinavia, the Mediterranean, the Middle East and the Far East looked increasingly as if Moscow was pursuing an expansionist policy, extending, as Molotov would later recall, “the frontier of our Fatherland to the maximum.” Social upheaval, moral debilitation and economic desolation throughout much of war-torn Europe also held the potential exploitation by local communist forces and the Soviet Union, now the most

⁴⁵ Ilse Dorothee Pautsch, *Die territoriale Deutschlandplanung des amerikanischen Aussenministeriums, 1941-1943* (Frankfurt am Main; New York: P.Lang, 1990); Wilfried Mausbach, *Zwischen Morgenthau und Mnarshall. Das wirtschaftspolitische Deutschlandkonzept der USA, 1944-1947* (Düsseldorf: Droste, 1996).

⁴⁶ Working Paper of the Division of Economic Studies, 23 September 1943, DDP I/4, p. 562, quoted in Mausbach, *Zwischen Morgenthau und Marshall*, p. 27.

⁴⁷ Rebecca L. Boehling, *A Question of Priorities: Democratic Reforms and Economic Recovery in Postwar Germany: Frankfurt, Munich, and Stuttgart under U.S. Occupation, 1945-1949* (Providence, R.I. : Berghahn Books, 1996).

powerful power on the continent. U.S. planners therefore favored resuscitating Germany's coal and steel industry in the Rhein-Ruhr area as a critical catalyst to the rehabilitation of Western Europe's war-torn economies -- and ultimately the survival of free enterprise and market economy. Though most planners looked at the former Reich as a whole, intrinsically, this economic-structural approach focused largely on the more industrialized western part of Germany. By early 1945, the idea of the centrality of western Germany's coal and steel industrial complex to the revival of the European economy thoroughly pervaded American postwar planning.⁴⁸

Political and military realities in the waning months of the war reinforced concerns about Germany's western industrial complex. By the time of the Potsdam Conference, U.S. authorities were confronted with shortages in food and coal in the American zone and quickly preoccupied with allocating foodstuffs. The Red Army occupation of Germany's agricultural hinterland that, as the country's "bread basket," had traditionally supplied the Western industrial base, created increasing doubts that prewar trade patterns could be

⁴⁸ Eisenberg, *Drawing the Line*; Mausbach, *Zwischen Morgenthau and Marshall*; Washington planners saw nearly eye to eye with their British counterparts on this issue: "It is really amazing," two administration officials aptly captured the situation," to find US and British officials holding "two basic assumptions in regard to Germany: A. it is desirable that the Allied Military should cause minimum disturbance to German economy and B. The rehabilitation and reconstruction of German industry is vital in order that Germany might become the industrial supplier to the devastated areas of Europe. Taylor and Aarons to White, 15 July 1944, *Morgenthau Diary I*, p. 399. Not everybody within the administration agreed with these basic principles, though. A fierce controversy erupted in August 1944 when Roosevelt's Treasury Secretary Henry Morgenthau Jr. discovered an Army handbook which provided guidance for the establishment of an occupation regime, much in line with the prevalent State Department thinking. Outraged as he read the handbook's call for "the gradual rehabilitation of peacetime industry and a regulated economy," Morgenthau condemned it as a "soft policy" and warned that it would allow the Germans to "wage a third war in ten years. With FDR's support Morgenthau and his associates at the Treasury Department drew up their own plan (the so-called "Morgenthau Plan"), which called for a dismemberment and decentralization of Germany and the summary execution of leading Nazi war criminals. Most significantly, the Morgenthau Plan demanded that the Ruhr, "the cauldron of all wars," be stripped of all industries and "so weakened that it can never become an industrial area." Treasury officials called for an "economic disarmament" of Germany by sharply curbing its heavy industry through reparations and weapons and industrial controls. Despite the vocal opposition of Secretary of War Henry Stimson, Morgenthau managed to get FDR's and Winston Churchill's approval of the plan at the Quebec conference in September 1944. But Morgenthau's success was short-lived: the president quickly revoked his approval after the plan was leaked to the press. Cited in Schwartz, *America's Germany*, p. 19; John M. Blum, ed., *From the Morgenthau Diaries*, Vol.3: Years of War, 1941-1945 (Boston, Houghton Mifflin, 1959-67); Bernd Greiner, *Die Morgenthau-Legende: Zur Geschichte eines umstrittenen Plans* (Hamburg: Hamburger Edition, 1995); Mausbach, *Zwischen Morgenthau and Marshall*.

resumed speedily. In the short run, Allied financed imports were the only recourse, and the only way to justify imports to their tax-payers, Truman administration officials felt, was as interim financing which the Germans would pay back as “first charge” on exports proceeds. This decision reinforced the need for reviving coal and other industrial production, based largely in the Rhein-Ruhr valley, as the top occupation priority. It rendered the idea of reparations as tools of economic disarmament largely obsolete.

The thrust of American policy thus ran counter to Moscow’s approach to the German problem. Soviet concerns focused on the potential for a future German aggression against the Soviet Union, and expectations that Germany would quickly recover from its wartime losses and defeat only heightened these fears. In August 1944, Stalin told the Polish Premier Stanisław Mikolajczyk that after World War I, it had taken Germany only 20 to 25 years to recover. Obviously trying to win the confidence of the Polish leader whose country had equally suffered at German hands, he predicted that “Germany will rise again ... Who knows now if they won’t be ready to fight again after 20 or 25 years. Yes, Germany is a powerful country, even though Hitler is weakening it. We are convinced that the danger from Germany will repeat itself.”⁴⁹ By April 1945, he had revised his estimate downward: Receiving a Yugoslav leadership delegation, he stated that the Germans “will recover, and indeed very quickly. They are a highly-industrialized nation with an extraordinarily educated and large working class and technical intelligenza. Give them 12 or 15 years, and they will be on their feet again.”⁵⁰ Stalin’s statements reflected a widespread fear of the “vitality” of the Germany economy and its capacity to recover within a few years from the war. The *opinio communis* among the upper echelon of the Soviet foreign policy bureaucracy was that Germany had to be rendered harmless through

⁴⁹Only a few months earlier, Maisky had estimated that it would take the USSR “minimum 30, maximum 50 years” to make up for the war-induced economic losses and set-backs. See Zubok, “Cooperation or ‘Go Alone?’” unpubl. MS.

⁵⁰Milovan Djilas, *Conversations with Stalin* (Orlando: Harcourt Brace, 1962), p. 114.

a combination of dismemberment, “military, industrial and ideological disarmament,” reparations and re-education.⁵¹

To prevent another German aggression, Ivan Maisky, Soviet ambassador in London and a top foreign policy adviser to Stalin and Soviet Foreign minister Vyacheslav Molotov, noted in his diary which has recently become accessible, the Soviet Union could seek “internal or external guarantees”—the establishment of a Soviet regime or industrial disarmament.⁵² The establishment of Communist rule in Germany certainly seemed the ideal solution to the Soviet security dilemma. But while Soviet officials never abandoned the idea completely, they discounted its likelihood: The Soviet planning effort was based on the assumption that the war would not lead to a truly proletarian revolution in Germany.⁵³ A Communist take-over would, of course, as Maisky informed Molotov in the fall of 1943, call for a change of postwar planning. “We would be forced to reassess the situation and draw conclusions accordingly.”⁵⁴ With the development of a socialist Germany affined to the Soviet Union “a pie in the sky,” continued allied cooperation was critical to preventing the resurgence of German power.⁵⁵

American calls for disarming and democratizing Germany and rooting out Nazism made some Soviet officials like Maisky optimistic that the Western powers could be

⁵¹ Maisky’s Diary, 5 January 1943, AVPRF, from Lichny Fond Maiskogo [Maisky’s Personal Collection], op. 1, papka 2, delo 10, pp. 8-9, *SSSR i Germanskii Vopros*, ed. by G. P. Kynin and J. Laufer., *SSSR i Germanskiy 1941-1949* (Moscow, Mezhdunarodnyye Otnosheniya, 2000) vol. 2, p. 701.

⁵² Maisky’s diary, 5 January 1943, AVP RF, from Lichny Fond Maiskogo [Maisky’s Personal Collection], op. 1, papka 2, delo 10, pp. 8-9, *SSSR i Germanskii Vopros*, ed. by G. P. Kynin and J. Laufer, vol. 2, p. 701.

⁵³ Jochen Laufer, “Die Reparationsplanungen im sowjetischen Außenministerium während des Zweiten Weltkrieges,” in *Wirtschaftliche Folgelasten des Krieges in der SBZ/DDR*, ed. Christoph Buchheim (Baden-Baden: Nomos, 1995), p. 36. In fact, the high-level Soviet official Vladimir Rudolph reported after his defection to the West that by late 1944, the Soviet leadership had “no confidence in the possibility to Sovietize even those parts of Germany which had been occupied by Soviet troops.”

⁵⁴ Maisky to Molotov, 10 November 1943, *SSSR i Germanskii Vopros*, ed. by G. P. Kynin and J. Laufer, vol. 2, p. 810.

⁵⁵ Laufer, *Reparationsplanungen*, *passim*; Vladimir O. Pechatnov, *The Big Three After World War II: New Documents on Soviet Thinking about Post-War Relations with the United States and Great Britain* (Washington: Woodrow Wilson Center, 1995), p. 318.

counted on in “creat[ing] real democracies”⁵⁶ that would pose no threat to the USSR. But long-standing mistrust vis-à-vis the Western powers and uncertainty about their ultimate intentions remained a powerful sentiment within the Soviet foreign policy apparatus, casting doubts about the sincerity and efficacy of Western disarmament and reparation efforts. Many Soviet officials expected that “contradictions” between the USSR and the Western powers would arise again after the end of the war. Internal Soviet foreign ministry discussions in early 1944 as Soviet postwar planning entered its formative stage assumed that Germany, or its western parts if dismembered, would align itself with France, England and the U.S. Given the possibility of disagreements between the allies, Soviet ambassador to Washington Maxim Litvinov, another leading foreign policy expert soon to take a leading role in Soviet postwar planning efforts in Moscow, reflected the general feeling, that “the danger arises of a conscious weakening of controls by certain powers, yes, even the active promotion of arming and reindustrializing Germany.”⁵⁷

Moscow remained fundamentally skeptical about the ability and interest of its wartime allies to implement a reparations regime. To be sure, Stalin and his advisers looked at reparations from Germany in restitution of the enormous damage suffered at the hands of the Germans a natural right of the victorious powers and crucial to the reconstruction of the devastated homeland. Soviet officials considered reparations as a tool for the economic disarmament of Germany, for an elimination of the German industry and the pastoralization of Germany. But Marxist-Leninist ideology and the post- World War I experience let Soviet leadership doubt that the Western powers would execute a harsh reparation regime. Reparations “among capitalist countries — as the example of the First World War shows — cannot be implemented,” argued the influential Soviet economist and Stalin adviser Eugene Varga, given “the insuperable contradiction between the efforts

⁵⁶Maisky to Molotov, 11 January 1944, quoted in Vladimir O. Pechatnov, *The Big Three After World War II: New Documents on Soviet Thinking about Post-War Relations with the United States and Great Britain*, p.4.

⁵⁷ Laufer, “Die UdSSR und die Zoneneinteilung Deutschlands (1943/44),” p. 319.

to take reparations from the vanquished while destroying their economic power and moreover protecting the capitalist social order.”⁵⁸ Such ideologically and historically derived doubts about the Western allies willingness to see through harsh reparations scheme that would effectively disarm Germany’s military industrial complex had to reinforce a focus on gaining and maintaining direct control over occupied territory.

Stalin himself seems to have had less interest in reparations than many of the Soviet officials involved in postwar planning – and many in the West -- had assumed. “40,000 machine tools—this is all we want in reparations from Germany,” Stalin is reported to have exclaimed early in the war, according to veteran Soviet diplomat Maisky’s recently declassified diary.⁵⁹ Not until after the November 1943 Tehran Conference did a USSR government commission, led by Maisky, take on the task of developing a reparations program. When that commission produced a report eight months later, recommending total reparations from Germany at \$75 billion, the predicted maximum of German capabilities, Stalin failed to react to it at all, despite repeated requests by Maisky. The issue came to the fore when Soviet foreign minister Vyacheslav Molotov, on behalf of Stalin, surprised Maisky in December 1944 with the question of whether \$5 billion, stretched out over 10 years, would suffice. Against the advice of his experts, who pleaded for demanding at minimum a \$10-15 billion share of a projected reparations total of \$23 billion, Stalin clung to the \$5 billion total. Not until the second session of the heads of state at the Yalta Conference on 5 February 1945 did Stalin, seemingly impromptu, put forth the \$10 billion figure as the official Soviet request. But it was Maisky who was tasked to present its rationale: “economic disarmament” of Germany. Stalin’s apparent equivocation on the issue contributed to the failure of the

⁵⁸ Laufer, “Stalin und die deutschen Reparationen, pp. 6-7.

⁵⁹ Maisky Diary, 5 January 1943, AVP RF 017a/1/2/10, l. 8; *SSSR i Germanskii Vopros*, ed. by G. P. Kynin and J. Laufer, vol. 2, p. 701.

allies to reach agreement on the overall amount. The Yalta conferees shelved further discussion to the Allied Reparations Commission slated to meet in Moscow.⁶⁰

In Soviet calculations, interest in reparations was outweighed by other factors: Expecting disagreements with the allies over Germany as a whole, Soviet officials favored establishing near exclusive control over the territory the Red Army came to occupy at the end of the war. Wartime precedents suggested that Washington would go along with Soviet predilections for predominant influence in East-Central Europe. As early as the Tehran Conference in October 1943, Roosevelt had signaled his willingness to accept Soviet demands for control over the Baltic republics and the eastern part of prewar Poland. A year later, Roosevelt acquiesced to the “percentage agreement” between Churchill and Stalin that had secured the Soviet Union predominant influence in Bulgaria and Romania (while given Britain predominance in Greece). Poland (west of the Curzon line) had a tougher case: Germany’s invasion of the country had been the *casus belli* for Britain, and the weight of the Polish-American community in the United States was an important consideration for the Roosevelt administration. Recognizing Soviet security concerns, the president and many within the administration envisioned Central Europe as a zone of democratic governments autonomous in their domestic politics but “friendly” in their foreign policy towards the USSR – a concept encapsulated in the February 1945 Yalta Declaration on Liberated Europe.⁶¹ Yet despite growing concerns on Roosevelt’s part about Stalin’s reticence to follow through on the Declaration, efforts in the aftermath of the Yalta Conference to create a more broadly based Polish government were half-hearted at best. In May, Truman sent FDR confidante Harry Hopkins to Moscow to make it clear to “Uncle Joe Stalin” that “Poland, Rumania, Bulgaria, Czeckoslovakia [*sic*] Austria, Yugo-Slavia, Latvia, Lithuania, Estonia et al made no difference to U.S. interests only so

⁶⁰ Laufer, “Stalin und die deutschen Reparationen,” unpubl. MS, pp. 9-11.

⁶¹ Messer, Robert L. *The End of an Alliance: James F. Byrnes, Roosevelt, Truman and the Origins of the Cold War* (Chapell Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1982), p. 131.

far as World Peace is concerned.”⁶² As a result of Hopkins’ meeting with Stalin, the administration recognized a Polish government dominated by the communists (a slightly reconstructed version of the “Lublin Committee” installed at Soviet behest the previous year).⁶³ Despite lip service to democratic governance in Eastern Europe, much of the region was slowly accepted as a sphere in which the Russians would run the show.⁶⁴

In remarkable symmetry to American thinking, such sphere of influence thinking spilled over into occupation planning. As they pondered the occupation of Germany, Soviet planning documents had insisted as early as 1943 on exclusive responsibility of the supreme commanders for their zones. Three days before the British government tabled a draft for a zonal division of Germany in the EAC on 15 January 1944, which anticipated much of the allied protocol later that year, the Moscow officials had arrived separately at a very similar plan for a zone-by-zone occupation of Germany. In its demarcation of the zonal borderline along the Elbe, one version in the Soviet plan came phenomenally close to the British draft, leaving parts of Mecklenburg, Saxony-Anhalt and all of Thuringia outside the Soviet zone. An alternative version sought to assure Soviet zone access to the North Sea by claiming all of the territory north of the North-East Sea Canal and east of the Elbe.⁶⁵ Two-thirds of the later Schleswig-Holstein and Hamburg, Kiel and Lübeck would in this case have become part of the Soviet zone. Strikingly, the draft did not concern itself with the delineation of all three zones, simply a demarcation line between the Soviet and Western zones. Over the next few weeks, the Soviet foreign ministry officials adjusted their draft, initially extending the demarcation line through much of Central Europe, eventually limiting their demands to call for a joint occupation of Hamburg, Berlin and

⁶² Quoted in Messer, *The End of an Alliance*, p. 82.

⁶³ The acceptance of the Polish regime presaged Byrnes’ decision at the Moscow foreign ministers’ conference later that year to recognize the communist regimes in Bulgaria and Romania. See Messer, *The End of an Alliance*, pp. 50-51, 73-74.

⁶⁴ Marc Trachtenberg, *A Constructed Peace: The Making of the European Settlement* (Princeton: Princeton UP, 1999), p. 14.

⁶⁵ Even this was smaller than the later Soviet Zone in size.

Schleswig-Holstein. Stalin signed off on the draft on February 8, after eliminating claims to mixed occupation of Hamburg and its surrounding area, perhaps eager not to set precedents for mixed occupation areas other than the capital of the defeated Reich.⁶⁶

Moscow's emphasis on exclusive occupation by one allied power meshed well with American predilections for retaining a "free hand" in their zone. In the course the European Advisory Commission negotiations in London, Washington reverted from the initial idea of a centralized and omnipotent Allied Control Council to advocating a military government which operated at the zonal level and acted through a three-power organ in Berlin at the orders of the three governments. The tendency towards zonal control and decentralization was reinforced by the 26 August 1944 Soviet draft which explicitly denied even the most rudimentary executive and administrative functions to the Control Council. The final Zonal Protocol of 12 September 1944 clearly reflected the American and Russian preference for zonal autonomy. Allied control in postwar Germany would be divided between joint central authority vested in the Allied Control Council and the authority of the individual zonal commanders for administration in their zone, with the weight of power gravitating towards the latter.⁶⁷ In May 1945, moreover, American negotiators in the EAC proposed to their Allied colleagues that, whereas the Allied Control Council's authority would be supreme in all of Germany, in cases where agreement on policies was lacking, each military commandant would be free to proceed unilaterally in his zone.⁶⁸

The division of Germany in potentially autonomously run zones took the place of dismemberment of country which Roosevelt had entertained notionally until late in the war. At Yalta he had agreed with Churchill and Stalin to dismemberment in principle, but

⁶⁶Jochen Laufer, "Die UdSSR und die Zoneneinteilung Deutschlands (1943/44)," *Zeitschrift für Geschichte* 43:4 (1995), p. 326.

⁶⁷Gunther Mai, *Der Alliierte Kontrollrat in Deutschland, 1945-1948: Alliierte Einheit-- deutsche Teilung?* (München: Oldenbourg, 1995), pp. 24-28.

⁶⁸*Ibid.*

the idea was soon abandoned. Formal partition at the mercy of the victorious allies ran counter to the widespread conviction and experience that penalizing and crippling Germany permanently that way would fail; division would lead to a resurgence of German irredentism and nationalism. Equally important, neither side wanted to forsake a remaining measure of influence throughout all of Germany; no one wanted to shoulder the blame for partition. But it was quite clear to officials at all levels that, unless joint policies could be found, zonal division could de facto result in partition as each occupation power put its stamp on the political and economic landscape of its zone.

Admitting that “we have no idea yet what they had in mind,” Roosevelt certainly expected in the final months of the war that the Russians would “in their occupied territory (...) do more or less as they wish” in their zone,⁶⁹ and by spring 1945 it was becoming evident that Stalin was intent on just that. Moscow interpreted its “free hand” in the Soviet occupation zone to allow extensive looting and dismantling, which became first priority for the Soviet occupation forces. In the wake of the combat units that entered Germany, so-called “trophy brigades” plundered German cities and villages. Soviet soldiers engaged in a veritable hunt for military machinery, scientific laboratories, communication equipment, gold, watches and furniture, cattle, cars and bicycles, even cultural objects. Without any consideration of discussing joint reparations policy at the forthcoming “Big Three” meeting in Potsdam, Stalin authorized a “Special Committee” headed by Georgy Malenkov to coordinate trophy removals in order to carry away industrial plants and equipment in large quantities, as fast and as secretly as possible.⁷⁰ Requisitions by the occupation troops and reparations in some areas aggravated food shortages and

⁶⁹ Roosevelt to Hull, 29 September 1944, cited in Messer, *The End of an Alliance*, p. 42.

⁷⁰ To be sure, by the time SMA assumed control over all of the Soviet zones, Western intelligence services and “special units,” moreover, had scouted key industrial plants in Saxony and Thuringia, such as the Zeiss plant in Jena, Agfa Wolfen and IG Farben, for valuable materials and technical know-how, taking with them, among other things, a number of leading scientists as well as most of the radium reserves of the Reich.

epidemics.⁷¹ Long before the allies settled on a zonal reparations solution the Soviet Union was in fact following such a policy.⁷²

Unilateral reparation removals began in May 1945 when about 70,000 Soviet reparation agents from the various ministries, scientific and academic institutions in Moscow “swept” the zone, often competing with each other and the Soviet occupation authorities. The first wave focused on the Greater Berlin area. Following the motto “ship off everything,” (“alles auf die Räder”), Soviet agents dismantled or destroyed large quantities of industrial equipment, particularly in Berlin’s western sectors, in preemption of the anticipated Western control. Not only did western Berlin lose half of its industrial capacity in these first few months of occupation, but nearly 50 percent of the total number of plants to be dismantled by the USSR in the aftermath of the war had been approved for removal by the time the Potsdam Conference convened in July.⁷³

In stark contrast to the looting frenzy, Stalin seemed in little rush to come to an agreement on the central issue before the allied powers: reparations. There is, in fact, no evidence to suggest that the Soviet leaders ever showed an interest in an allied reparations plan that the Yalta Conference had called for. Not until March 14 did he appoint Maisky as Soviet representative to the reparations commission established in Yalta. Western efforts to have the French included in the negotiations served as a pretext to delay its work for several months, allowing Soviet unrestricted removals in the meantime. When the commission finally convened on June 21, discussions quickly stalled over the “first charge” principle demanded by the Americans and British. In addition, the head of the U.S. delegation to the Reparations Commission, Edwin Pauley, suggested that the group

⁷¹ OMGUS Information Control Intelligence Summary No. 32, enclosed in Murphy to Department of State, 2 March 1946, NARA, RG 59, 740.00119 Control (Germany)/3-246.

⁷² Laufer/Kynin, ed., *Die UdSSR und die deutsche Frage*, Dokumente aus dem Archiv für Aussenpolitik der Russischen Föderation (Berlin: Duncker & Humblot, 2004), vol. 2, p.XLIII.

⁷³ Laufer, *Stalin und die deutschen Reparationen*, p 14. The practice of arbitrary dismantling of war trophies continued until mid-October 1945, when, at Zhukov’s initiative and with Molotov’s support, it was finally abandoned. Laufer/Kynin, ed., *Die UdSSR und die deutsche Frage*, vol. 2, p. XLIII.

jointly inspect industrial sites throughout Germany. Though Maisky himself seems to have favored that a reparations mechanism “be extended to our zone,” he rejected the proposal at Molotov’s behest.⁷⁴ Pauley now backed away from discussing any number total for reparations, conceding at most a percentage key that would leave the USSR with half of the total, and suspended discussions on forced labor after Truman instructed him to avoid any impression of sanctioning “slave labor.”⁷⁵

In turn, the Soviet delegation dragged its feet on agreeing on defining such crucial terms as trophies, reparations and restitution. Without instructions from Moscow, Soviet officials were hedging on specifics on a reparations plan, increasingly putting them in a position “awkward to the highest degree.”⁷⁶ As the Potsdam summit approached, Maisky pleaded with Molotov to throw Pauley a bone: to agree to a percentage key and joint mechanism for early removal of certain plants and goods prior to finalizing an overall reparations agreement. “Why not take everything of possible importance out of our zone during, let’s say, the next month and a half and simultaneously maneuver so that the mechanism which Pauley is proposing actually begins functioning no earlier than the middle of August?”⁷⁷ Moscow had little interest in restricting the massive removals from their zone as long as possible, and by mid-July refused to discuss the issue at all.⁷⁸

⁷⁴ Maisky to Molotov, 2 July 1945, *AVP RF. f. 06, op. 7, p. 18, d. 182, l. 49-54.*; *SSSR i Germanskii Vopros*, ed. by G. P. Kynin and J. Laufer, vol. 2, pp. 164-67.

⁷⁵ Mausbach, pp.130-134. *AVP RF. f. 06, op. 7, p. 18, d. 182, l. 49-54. Original*; *SSSR i Germanskii Vopros*, ed. by G. P. Kynin and J. Laufer, vol. 2, 701. 164-67

⁷⁶ Maisky to Molotov, 2 July 1945, *AVP RF. f. 06, op. 7, p. 18, d. 182, l. 49-54.*; G. P. Kynin and J. Laufer, *SSSR i Germans Maisky to Molotov*, 2 July 1945, *AVP RF. f. 06, op. 7, p. 18, d. 182, l. 49-54.*; G. P. Kynin and J. Laufer, *SSSR i Germanskii Vopros*, vol. 2, 701. pp. 164-67.

kii Vopros, vol. 2, 701. pp. 164-67.

⁷⁷ *Ibid.*

⁷⁸ The reparations commission met twice more at the end of August, but without result. Stalin had weakened the Soviet participation by suspending Maisky as Soviet delegate. In September the commission’s mandate was effectively transferred to the Control Council in Berlin. Kynin/Laufer., eds., *Die UdSSR und die deutsche Frage 1941-1948*, *SSSR i Germanskii Vopros*, vol. 2, p. LXXXIV.

Truman administration officials had figured that the USSR was “determined to get rapidly all it can out of Germany;”⁷⁹ intelligence reports confirmed the massive removals in Soviet occupied territory. The inability to agree to a reparations plan and the growing depletion of the Soviet zone reinforced Anglo-American anxieties about the economic viability of their zones and the feasibility of an overall reparations framework. But it was hence not until Truman’s entourage descended upon Potsdam for the meeting of the “Big Three” that the extent of the removals became shockingly evident to the president and his advisers. “When I saw how completely the Russians had stripped every factory they could get their hands on,” Averell Harriman, who had arrived for the Potsdam Conference from Moscow recalled, “I realized that their conception of surplus tools and machinery which could be taken from Germany was far tougher than we could ever agree. The Reparations Commission had been meeting in Moscow before Potsdam, talking endlessly about percentages, and all this time the Russians had been helping themselves to everything of any value in the Eastern Zone and in Berlin. I decided after seeing the situation for myself that while there was nothing we could do to stop the Russians from taking whatever they wanted out of their own zone, we ought to give them nothing from the Western Zones.”⁸⁰ President Truman noted in his diary that “the Russians are natural looters,” though in light of Germany’s wartime atrocities, one could “hardly blame them for their attitude.”⁸¹

In Potsdam, Moscow confronted its wartime allies with the demand to consider all its removals thus far as war booty rather than reparations. Ignoring far more limited proposals for reparations developed internally by Varga by mid-July, official Soviet conference documents presumed an expansive definition of trophy removals to include all

⁷⁹ Harriman to Secretary of State, 16 October 1944, Library of Congress, Harriman Papers, Box 174.

⁸⁰ Averell Harriman and Elie Abel, *Special Envoy to Churchill and Stalin, 1941-1945*, 1st ed. (New York : Random House, 1975), p. 484.

⁸¹ Truman Diary Entry for 30 July 1945, *Diplomatic History* 4 (1980), pp. 325-326.

of Germany's armaments industry, already removed or still standing.⁸² Exasperated by the Soviet *fait accompli*, Pauley warned of the dire consequences of Soviet (and French) policies: "After they have looted their own zone, they will come around and ask for 'their share' of our zones. Is the horse being stolen?" American officials were determined not to finance imports into the Soviet zone necessitated by the rapid depletion of the zone. If Germany were treated as an economic unit, American and British taxpayers essentially paid for Soviet removals in the east; the Soviets would "simply milk the cow which the US and British are feeding," as a British official later put it.⁸³ Soviet behavior in eastern Germany, moreover, reinforced a growing feeling among Truman's advisers that Stalin's hands ought to be kept out of the Ruhr, whose strategic economic importance grew with every removal from the SBZ to the East. Frustrated by Soviet unilateralism — and meanwhile just as eager to keep a free hand on the Ruhr — Pauley conceived of the idea to let the Soviet Union satisfy its need for reparations exclusively from its own zone. Prewar statistics dug up by the Reparations Commission could be interpreted to suggest that the economic value of the Soviet Zone roughly equaled the percentage of the reparations total (however controversial that number was). Rather than endlessly quarreling over the removals, whether "war booty" should be counted as reparations, about how much Germany should pay and what forms these payments would take, each side would take whatever it wanted from the areas it controlled.⁸⁴ As Pauley told his Soviet counterpart, the reparations program could "best be conducted on a zonal basis" and "not by treating Germany as a single economic unit." Unwilling to foot the bill for Germany's reparations as it had done after the World War I, the United States would "deal

⁸² Memorandum by Varga, "Guiding Principles of Allied Economic Policy," sent to Molotov on 12 July 1945, AVP RF, f.06, op.7, p.30, d.406, pp. 37-55, cited in Kynin/Laufer., eds., *Die UdSSR und die deutsche Frage 1941-1948*, II, p. LXXXI.

⁸³ Heath to Byrnes, 11 December 1946, FRUS 1946, 5:650-651, quoted in Trachtenberg, *A Constructed Peace*, p 24.

⁸⁴ Trachtenberg, *A Constructed Peace*, p. 23.

with [its] reparations along the same line.” The zonal approach was the “regrettable but inescapable” result of the Soviet unilateralism in its zone.⁸⁵ On July 23, Byrnes proposed the zonal solution as the core principle of a deal on reparations.

In the conception of Byrnes and Pauley, this zonal approach was not limited to reparations alone; it would also govern Germany’s foreign trade, would allow each zonal authority to control ex- and imports – and not just with other countries, but even with other zones. The Soviet Union, Byrnes assured Molotov in Potsdam, would not have to worry about financing imports into western zones and be hamstrung by the first-charge principle. Moscow would have no interest in imports or exports from the Western “zone.” The entire scheme implied giving up on treating the German economy as one unit: it was instead based on the premise that each of the three western zones would constitute “a virtually self-contained economic area.”⁸⁶

Soviet officials were aware that the zonal solution bore considerable risks for the Soviet side, particularly shutting the door to the industrial riches of the Ruhr. Experts from the renown Institute of the World Economy in Moscow had estimated that as much as one-third of the total German military-industrial potential was located in the Ruhr area alone. Internal Soviet reports suggested that the Ruhr district suffered comparatively little from Allied military operations. Soviet analysts figured that about 35% of the buildings and structures of the enterprises were damaged or destroyed but only about 5-15% of the equipment was put out of operation. They presumed that the Ruhr’s production capacity had been reduced only by about 20%. From American members of the reparations commission who recently visited western Germany Soviet officials learned that they expected the Rhein-Ruhr industry to be completely restored within a year. Though unsure about the Western allies’ intentions with regard to the Ruhr, Litvinov warned that it was

⁸⁵ Pauley to Maisky, 27 July 1945, *FRUS Potsdam II*, pp. 894-6.

⁸⁶ Eisenberg, *Drawing the Line*, p. 177n.

absolutely clear that “there is a tendency in the West not to destroy the industry of the Ruhr district but to put it under international administration or control, intending to concentrate this control in the hands of the Western countries.”⁸⁷ The strongest objections to the zonal solution came from Varga. Based on Varga’s estimates, Georgy P. Arkadeev, deputy head of the Soviet Foreign Ministry’s economic department, told Molotov that only 30% of all removable goods were located in the zone and that the USSR was entitled to some \$3 billion worth of deliveries from the Western “zone.”⁸⁸

Despite these misgivings, Molotov signaled his readiness to negotiate based on the zonal principle that very same day. In fact, the foreign minister instructed his staff to suggest a Soviet counteroffer that applied the separate regime not just to one time removals, but even reparations from current production. Over the objections of his economic advisers, Molotov agreed to the zonal principle when Byrnes, on July 29, offered a package deal that tied the reparations scheme to American recognition of the western borders of Poland.⁸⁹ The Potsdam reparations formula played to Molotov’s and Stalin’s strong predilections for a free hand in their zone. Despite the “relative poverty of our zone,” Molotov agreed to the “Pauley Principles.” Once further negotiations assured the Soviet Union 25 percent of all reparations extracted from the Western zones (15 percent in exchange for foods, coal, potash, timber and other products from Eastern

⁸⁷ Note by Litvinov, 5 July 1945; *AVP RF, f. 06. Op. 7, p. 56, d. 937, l. 1-6*; G. P. Kynin and J. Laufer, *SSSR i Germanskii Vopros*, vol. 2, pp. 171-174.

⁸⁸ Note by Arkadeev, 27 July 1945, Kynin/Laufer., eds., *Die UdSSR und die deutsche Frage 1941-1948*, vol. 2, pp. 58-61; Maisky suggested so in the Potsdam Conference economic committee, see Kynin/Laufer., eds., *Die UdSSR und die deutsche Frage 1941-1948*, vol. 2, pp. LXXXXI-LXXXXII.

⁸⁹ The Allies had agreed at the 1943 Tehran conference to move the Polish borders westward; at the Yalta Conference final determination was left to a peace treaty. As part of the Potsdam Conference accords, the German territories east of the Oder-Neiße Line were provisionally put under Polish administration until a final settlement was reached. On the history of the Oder-Neiße borderline, see: Michael A. Hartenstein, *Die Oder-Neiße-Linie: Geschichte der Aufrichtung ; send Anerkennung einer problematischen Grenze* (Egelsbach: Hänzel-Hohenhausen, 1997); Carsten Lilje, *Die Entstehung der Oder-Neiße-Linie als Nebenprodukt alliierter Großmachtspolitik während des 2. Weltkrieges* (Frankfurt/M.: Lang, 1995); Alfred M. de. Zayas, *Anmerkungen zur Vertreibung der Deutschen aus dem Osten* (Stuttgart: Kohlhammer, 1987); Wolfgang Benz, *Die Vertreibung der Deutschen aus dem Osten. Ursachen, Ereignisse, Folgen* (Frankfurt: Fischer, 1985). On the Potsdam negotiations, see FRUS 1945, Potsdam, pp. 208-221, 250-251, 518-519, 861-862, 1152; Wolfgang Krieger, *General Lucius D. Clay und die amerikanische Deutschlandpolitik 1945-1949* (Stuttgart: Klett-Cotta, 1987), pp. 83, 96, 132.

Germany), Stalin dropped his insistence on shares in stocks of those enterprises to remain in the Western zones and German gold and foreign assets, removing the last obstacle to the deal.⁹⁰

Publicly the Potsdam agreements emphasized the unified economic treatment of Germany, but the reparations formula adopted on August 1, conceptualized by Byrnes and his advisers in response to the developments in the Soviet Zone, split Germany into two economic zones. Playing to the predilections on both sides for a “free hand” in occupation policy, it set eastern and western Germany on very different economic and trajectories that would make quadripartite governance difficult at best. It reflected and reinforced the binary thinking increasingly pervading the discourse in allied capitals. “Eastern and Western Germany are two separate economic units, run by Russia and the three Western powers respectively,” noted a British official later that year; Soviet officials more frequently spoke of the “western zone” (rather than “zones”).⁹¹ Such thinking was not limited to the economic sphere alone; diverging political futures for both parts of Germany seems in the offing. “There will be two Germanies,” Stalin told German communist leaders as early as June 1945.⁹² One American Potsdam witness, Assistant Secretary of Defense John J. McCloy, confessed to his diary that “[w]e are drifting towards a line down the center of Germany.”⁹³

⁹⁰ The agreement allowed the Western powers to determine the amount of reparations in view of occupation exigencies and Western Europe’s need for German coal. Since no overall sum for reparations had been fixed, it was essentially left to the Western occupation authorities to decide what constituted Moscow’s 25 percent share in industrial excess capacities.

⁹¹ Quoted in Trachtenberg, *A Constructed Peace*, p. 29.

⁹² Badstübner, Rolf und Wilfried Loth, eds., *Wilhelm Pieck - Aufzeichnungen zur Deutschlandpolitik 1945-1953* (Berlin: Akademie, 1994), p. 50.

⁹³ G. P. Arkad’yev to V.M. Molotov, “Regarding the Issue of Our Arguments Against the Current Proposed American Plan Imposing Reparations on Germany by Zones,” 27 July 1945, *AVP RF, f. 0428, op. 1, p. 1, d. 7, l. 32-35*; G. P. Kynin and J. Laufer, *SSSR i Germanskii Vopros*, vol. 2, pp 183-187; McCloy Diary, Amherst College, Amherst.

2. “Western Democracy on the Elbe:” Conceptualizing ‘Roll-back’ in Germany

Byrnes’ efforts at Potsdam to work out a *modus vivendi* with the Russians had been based on his belief that real cooperation was not possible. There is too much difference in the ideologies of the U.S. and Russia,” Byrnes noted in the midst of the Big Three summit, “to work out a long-term program of cooperation.”⁹⁴ Mistrusting Stalin’s intentions, he sought to keep Soviet influence in Germany at bay, containing its devastating economic impact to the territories the Red Army had occupied. For all intents and purposes Byrnes was writing off eastern Germany as a Soviet sphere of influence in Germany. By mid-1945, Byrnes’s views of the relationship with the Russians – and his conclusions for quadripartite control of Germany – were, however, not widely shared within the administration and the American public. Truman himself seemed to condone the feelings of his secretary of state at times, while at others seemed convinced that he could work out a deal with the Soviet leader. One of Truman’s aides aptly captured this ambivalent feeling, noting that Stalin was considered by most on the delegation as “the most likable horse thief I have ever seen.”⁹⁵ Neither Molotov nor the new British foreign minister Ernest Bevin seemed to want to publicly acknowledge the division of Germany along zonal lines. Most importantly for a politician so attuned to Congressional and published opinion as Byrnes, much of the American public was not yet ready to abandon hopes for Soviet-American amity in running Germany. After all, the Potsdam Conference declaration buried the essential Byrnes-Molotov deal on reparations in a thicket of calls for a unitary treatment of Germany. The “Big Three” had called for the unified treatment of Germany by the Allies in matters of de-nazification, democratization, de-cartellization, de-militarization and economic policy and envisaged the establishment of central German administrations in the fields of finance, transport, communications, foreign trade and

⁹⁴ Walter Brown Diary Entry, 24 July 1945, quoted in Daniel Yergin, *Shattered Peace*, p. 118.

⁹⁵ Gen Harry Vaughan, as quoted in Walter J. Brown, *James F. Byrnes of South Carolina*, p. 280.

industry, headed by German state secretaries under the control of the Allied Control Council.

Few seemed to have inculcated the “spirit of Potsdam” as much as General Dwight D. Eisenhower’s deputy military governor and soon-to-be U.S. occupation chief, General Lucius B. Clay.⁹⁶ The Potsdam accords became “Clay’s bible.” Not only were they jointly arrived allied policy pronouncements; he essentially took them as a directive by his commander-in-chief. With regard to suspicions about Soviet intentions to fulfill the Potsdam program, voiced by State Department experts who briefed him on the negotiations after the conference, Clay apparently responded that not abiding by the Potsdam declaration “would mean that I should deviate from what the President determined at the conference.”⁹⁷ Still imbued with the spirit of the wartime alliance with Moscow, Clay was “optimistic” that the Russians would join allied control mechanisms and “we will be able to forge a national administration over those things which should be administered nationally.” Cognizant of the enormous losses at which the Soviet Union had defeated the German Reich, Clay possessed an enormous patience and understanding for Russian behavior, such as their actions in their occupation zone. He was confident in his ability to deal personally with his Russian counterparts in Berlin, many of them recent brothers-in-arms. As his numerous biographers have suggested, Clay was determined to make the experiment of cooperation with the Russians work.⁹⁸ Conscious of domestic pressure on Byrnes and administration for a quick fix on the dire economic situation in the U.S. occupation zone, Clay felt “just as apprehensive over possible impatience and lack of

⁹⁶ Wolfgang Krieger, *General Lucius D. Clay und die amerikanische Deutschlandpolitik, 1945-1949* (Stuttgart: Klett-Cotta, 1987).

⁹⁷ Michale Lacey, ed., *The Truman presidency* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1989), pp. 29-30.

⁹⁸ See also Donald R. Heath (USPOLAD) to James Riddleberger (Chief of the Central European Division, Department of State), 7 March 1946, NARA, RG 59, Lot 55D371, Box 2.

understanding at home of our failure to obtain rapid progress” as he did about “our ability in the long run to work out many mutual problems in the Allied Control Council.”⁹⁹

What has been less well understood is that Clay did not seek cooperation with the Russians as an end in and of itself as he energetically pressed for the establishment of central administrations in Germany. In fact, he probably agreed to a large extent with Byrnes’s skepticism (and that of many of his State Department colleagues) about the chances for longer-term cooperation with the Russians. Yet unlike many Washington officials, Clay combined brother-in-arms empathy for Russian hardships and security interests with a self-confident belief in the superiority of the American soldier and the American occupation system.¹⁰⁰ Where Byrnes and State Department analysts emphasized ideological differences with the Russians as impediments to longer-term cooperation, Clay was inclined to believe that the ideological competition would work out to the advantage of the West – if such competition could take place throughout Germany. Where Washington officials fretted over the USSR’s expansionist agenda, Clay and his advisers saw Russian policy as largely defensive, contradictory and ultimately self-defeating, certainly in Germany. As administration and Congress anxiously watched the Soviet Union rise to unprecedented power on the European continent, Clay effused a sense of American preponderance in his dealings with the Russians. Clay did not naively believe that quadripartite solutions would come easily: He expected that they would be reached “gradually through long drawn out negotiations.” Hence zonal military government would operate “on almost an independent basis for many months.” There was a chance that the

⁹⁹ *The Papers of General Lucius D. Clay: Germany, 1945-1949*, edited by Jean Edward Smith (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1974). On Clay, besides Krieger, *General Lucius D. Clay*, see John H. Backer, *Winds of History: The German Years of Lucius DuBignon Clay* (New York : Van Nostrand Reinhold, 1983); Jean Edward Smith, *Lucius D. Clay: An American Life* (New York: H. Holt, 1990); Curtis F. Morgan, Jr., *James F. Byrnes, Lucius Clay, and American Policy in Germany, 1945-1947* (Lewiston, N.Y.: E. Mellen Press, 2002).

¹⁰⁰ Vis-à-vis Byrnes intimate Walter J. Brown, he confided his “opinion that the Russian soldiers could not compare to the Americans or British in dress, physique or discipline. He said that, if need be, the Second Armored “Hell on Wheels” Division quartered in Berlin could move straight to Moscow with little effective resistance. Brown, *James F. Byrnes of South Carolina*, p. 278.

Allied Control Council, set up for allied government of Germany, would “become only a negotiating agency,” not an overall government for Germany. And if the allies could not run Germany as a unit, the Western allies had to consider running western Germany by themselves.”¹⁰¹ But *if* solutions could be reached across the four occupation zones; *if* quadripartite agencies could be established throughout Germany; if therefore the Soviet-controlled zone it retained a degree of openness and ties with the western parts, then, Clay believed, the zone would eventually gravitate “west” – and so might other parts of Soviet-controlled Central Europe. Cooperation with the Soviets was for Clay the key to a roll-back of Soviet power.

Clay felt encouraged by the personal relationships he struck up with his Russian counterparts as the Allied Control Council assumed its work. This is evident even from the Russian transcripts of his conversations with Sokolovsky and other Soviet officials. But with Moscow in need for reparations from the Western zones, Clay also felt certain he could coerce a deal with the Soviets. Levers of pressure on Moscow had been built into the Potsdam system, such as the linkage between Russia’s 25% percent of western German reparations and the to-be-determined level of industry throughout Germany. Clay and Murphy were convinced that the Soviet Union was desperately in need of reparation deliveries, that in fact reparations were a “principal weakness in the application of [the USSR’s] political policies in Germany.”¹⁰² Time and again Clay displayed his readiness to power-play Moscow into working out agreements on such critical issues as level of industry, all-German central administrations and handling Germany’s foreign trade. Equally important was his view from the Berlin vantage point that the situation in the Eastern zone was far more complex and fluid than perceived in Washington. No one

¹⁰¹ *The Papers of General Lucius D. Clay*, vol. 1, pp. 18-20.

¹⁰² Clay and Murphy remained continually mystified by the belief among some Soviet officials in Washington that reparations were all but a “weapon of political and economic domination for Moscow.” See Murphy to Hickerson, 13 December 1947, NARA, RG 59, 740.00119 Control (Germany)/ 12-1347.

reflected this view more succinctly than the State Department's top man in Berlin, Clay's Political Adviser Robert Murphy. Like Clay, he had little patience and respect for communism and its protagonists, but he brought to his job equanimity and poise and quickly developed a sense for the complexity of occupation politics in Germany. Fundamental to Murphy's outlook was that communism held little attraction for Germans and that Soviet policies quickly had dissipated any remaining goodwill among the German population. Along with the Allied Control Council in Berlin, the Soviet occupation zone was for Murphy a laboratory for probing Soviet intentions and capabilities.¹⁰³

Clay and Murphy were keenly aware that reliable information on the Russian zone was hard to come by. Soon after their arrival in Germany, American occupation authorities had begun to receive a swelling stream of reports on the conditions in the Russian-occupied territories of Germany from U.S. sources, German civilians, German soldiers and displaced other nationals. The Army's and the U.S. Military Government's intelligence branches started collecting intercepted letters commenting on the Soviet Zone in an effort to gain further insights into the conditions in the SBZ and the attitudes of the Germans living there.¹⁰⁴ It quickly became clear to the OMGUS leadership that definite generalizations about Soviet behavior and German reactions were difficult to make. It difficult to establish the validity of the reports. If anything, the reports were striking for their cacophony of opinion and for apparent contradictions: some of them described conditions in the rosiest, some in the bleakest colors; others painted a more neutral picture. Murphy suspected that much of what U.S. officials were hearing was aimed at "playing

¹⁰³ The point is made most explicitly in Murphy to "Doc" Matthews, 3 May 1946, NARA, RG 59, 740.00119 Control (Germany)/ 5-346. Son Murphy's background see Robert D. Murphy, *Diplomat among Warriors*, (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday, 1964).

¹⁰⁴ OMGUS Information Control Intelligence Summary No. 32, enclosed in Murphy to Department of State, 2 March 1946, NARA, RG 59, 740.00119 Control (Germany)/3-246. First-hand observations remained hard to come by Not until March 1947 were two officers from EUCOM's Intelligence Branch in Frankfurt allowed to attend the Leipzig Industrial Fair. See "Intelligence Summary No 4," Dispatch 293, OMGUS to Department of State, 2 April 1947, NARA, RG 59, 740.00119 Control (Germany)/4-247.

the Russians off against the Americans and the British.”¹⁰⁵ Much seemed to depend on what segments of the Russian military the informants had encountered, whether, as one U.S. intelligence report stated, had come into contact with the frontline ““Asiatic troops or with the more ‘civilized’ troops who usually relieve the shock troops.”¹⁰⁶ One impression stood out: that Russian military government officers did not “appear to act under uniform instructions” and that conditions and policies differed widely.¹⁰⁷ From the beginning, Clay and Murphy could therefore see little evidence of a Soviet “master plan” for Germany.

Nor did Clay and Murphy echo the dire assessments of diplomats and analysts, like Harriman, who starkly warned Truman of the impending barbaric invasion of Europe. Deep mistrust of the just defeated enemy initially made many American observers in the zones disinclined to put much stock into disconcerting reports about the situation in East Prussia, Silesia, Pomerania, or the SBZ, summarized by one US Military Intelligence Service Center report as painting a picture of “utter hopelessness and near-extermination.”¹⁰⁸ Reports about atrocities and the barbarian behavior of the second wave of Red Army troops often came across as exaggerations by Germans eager to exonerate themselves from the terrible pains and horrors inflicted by the Nazi onslaught and the ensuing war on the Russian population. Subjected to scrutiny, U.S. officials noted, evidence of Russian misbehavior “usually becomes less breathtaking.”¹⁰⁹ Americans understood that many Russian soldiers had deep feelings of hate and revenge against the Germans, and as long as the war went on, such feelings had been officially encouraged.

¹⁰⁵ “Military Government Report on the Success of Russian propaganda in the Heidelberg Area,” enclosed in Murphy to Secretary of State, 12 June 1945, NARA RG 59, 740.00119 Control (Germany)/6-1245 (FOIA release to author).

¹⁰⁶ Information Control Center Intelligence Report, 5 July 1945, enclosed in Murphy to Secretary of State, 23 July 1945, NARA, RG 59, 740.00119.

¹⁰⁷ Information Control Center Intelligence Report, 5 July 1945, enclosed in Murphy to Secretary of State, 23 July 1945, NARA, RG 59, 740.00119.

¹⁰⁸ Headquarters, USFET Military Intelligence Service Center, “The German View: A report for Counter-Intelligence,” 19 November 1953, NARA, RG 59, 740.00119 (Control (Germany)/11-1945).

¹⁰⁹ Murphy to Secretary of State, 19 November 1945, NARA, RG 59, 740.00119 Control (Germany)/11-1945.

Fanaticized by anti-German propaganda such as Ilya Ehrenburg's tirades of hatred, Red Army soldiers occupied Germany's eastern provinces, looting, threatening and killing the local German population which, despite the Nazi propaganda, was caught unaware of the intense terror it faced. Such acts, OMGUS noted, "should be considered as accidents of war – similar in many ways to the shelling and bombing of residential areas."¹¹⁰

Reflecting the widespread view of the situation, one OMGUS official commented that "[a]ll war is rough. People who dislike being treated rough should not commence wars of aggression."¹¹¹

Perhaps no single dimension of the Red Army terror would engrave itself into the memory of the German population as much as the rape of women and children undertaken on a massive scale in the wake of the Red Army's East Prussian campaign. In East Prussia where the initial encounter between the Red Army and the German population took place, rape was indiscriminate and almost systematic: "It was not untypical for Soviet troops," writes historian Norman Naimark, "to rape every female over the age of twelve or thirteen in a village, killing many in the process."¹¹² Red Army continued its practices as it moved into Silesia and Pomerania, what was to become Western Poland. Since these territories were assigned to Polish administration, Germans, in addition, faced retribution by the Poles. Berlin suffered the brunt of rape and abuse. The taking of the city, in prolonged and fierce battle, was accompanied by "an unrestrained explosion of sexual violence by Soviet soldiers."¹¹³ Innumerable cases of indiscriminate rape (sometimes gang-rape) occurred on a daily basis, first in the bunkers, then in apartments and houses. For much of the last year of the war, Stalin and the Soviet military leadership remained insensitive to the issue and

¹¹⁰ Murphy to Secretary of State, 19 November 1945, NARA, RG 59, 740.00119 Control (Germany)/11-1945.

¹¹¹ Murphy to Secretary of State, 19 November 1945, NARA, RG 59, 740.00119 Control (Germany)/11-1945.

¹¹² Norman Naimark, *The Russians in Germany. A History of the Soviet Zone of Occupation, 1945-1949* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard UP, 1995), p. 72.

¹¹³ Naimark, *The Russians in Germany*, p. 80.

indifferent to complaints about the behavior of Red Army soldiers by Communist leaders throughout Soviet-occupied Europe. But by mid-1945, Moscow was becoming aware of the political damage done to its cause in Germany. Reports from the field emphasized the propaganda advantage opponents derived from the behavior of Soviet soldiers in Germany, and increasingly called on Soviet authorities to eliminate “this evil which carries such a huge cost for our political prestige in Germany.”¹¹⁴ American occupation officials initially tended to take reports on rape with a grain of salt. True, rape and its less violent sister acts were “common,” one OMGUS intelligence official noted, but German reports were prone to emphasize the rape issue “because of its erotic appeal to some Americans and British.”¹¹⁵ But how deeply the issue had ingrained itself into German memory and would complicate Soviet-German relations was not lost on American observers: “most Germans,” one report in late 1945 noted, “still associate all Russians with rape and looting.”¹¹⁶

The rape issue reinforced the darker German stereotypes towards the Russians. While Germans, American observed, at times referred to Russians as individually generous, good-natured and childishly amazed at the most ordinary gadgets of household fixtures, “somewhere in the German estimate, it is almost always mentioned that the Russians are ‘barbaric’ and ‘enslaved by a system worse than ours was.’”¹¹⁷ Many Germans considered the establishment of communist rule in the Soviet occupied areas as “the end of everything” and were “inclined to write off the Russian zone as lost to

¹¹⁴Quoted in Naimark, *The Russians in Germany*, p. 90.

¹¹⁵ Murphy to Secretary of State, 19 November 1945, NARA, RG 59, 740.00119 Control (Germany)/11-1945.

¹¹⁶ Headquarters, USFET Military Intelligence Service Center, “The German View: A Report for Counter-Intelligence,” 19 November 1953, NARA, RG 59, 740.00119 (Control (Germany)/11-1945).

¹¹⁷ Ibid.

Germany:” Russia, according to this widespread perception, “begins at the border of the Russian zone.”¹¹⁸

The stream of reports of atrocities, food shortages and desolation in the SBZ were powerful antidotes to Soviet radio broadcasts announcing increased food rations and active assistance to the reconstruction efforts that set in as early as May 1945.¹¹⁹ Yet in time Soviet information policy in Berlin and the Soviet Zone – in particular Radio Berlin’s broadcasts -- seemed to American observers to prove increasingly effective in “tending to modify the original attitude of fear and hostility toward everything Russian.”¹²⁰ “Less glowing reports” of conditions in the “Russian area” were only gaining circulation slowly and did “not have the same widespread effect as the Russian radio propaganda from Berlin.”¹²¹ Samples of Soviet success in spinning a more positive atmosphere were at hand. “I thought that the people would wish that the Americans or English were here (in Thuringia) instead of the Russians,” one US zoner, whose correspondence was intercepted by US agencies, wrote to a friend about his recent trip to the Russian zone: “But what I heard was very much the opposite. They seem very content with the Russians.”¹²² By the end of 1945, American officials in fact noted a “decided decrease in emphasis on hardships and unpleasantness of life in the Soviet Zone,” as one report put it. To be sure, requisitioning and dismantling apparently remained a sore issue with many Germans, but noticeably many sources now pointed to the rapidity of reconstruction and reorganization of life in the Soviet Zone. Complaints by SBZ businessmen about shortages in materials

¹¹⁸ Ibid.

¹¹⁹ “Military Government Report on the Success of Russian propaganda in the Heidelberg Area,” enclosed in Murphy to Secretary of State, 12 June 1945, NARA RG 59, 740.00119 Control (Germany)/6-1245 (FOIA release to author).

¹²⁰ G-5 Political Intelligence Letter No 10, 19 June 1945, enclosed in Murphy to Secretary of State, 23 June 1945, NARA, RG 59, 740.00119 Control (Germany)/6-2345.

¹²¹ “Military Government Report on the Success of Russian propaganda in the Heidelberg Area,” enclosed in Murphy to Secretary of State, 12 June 1945, NARA RG 59, 740.00119 Control (Germany)/6-1245 (FOIA release to author).

¹²² OMGUS Information Control Intelligence Summary No. 32, enclosed in Murphy to Department of State, 2 March 1946, NARA, RG 59, 740.00119 Control (Germany)/3-246.

and tense relationships with the occupation authorities mixed with frequent praise for the help extended by the Russians to German industry and commerce; one writer from Leuna described that the workers at the Leuna Works were “enthusiastic about the Russian occupation and dread[ed] the day when the Russians might withdraw.”¹²³ Contrasting favorably conditions under Soviet occupation with those in the West, numerous letters intercepted by U.S. occupation authorities spoke to the “rapid return to normalcy in the Russian zone.”¹²⁴

Not only did American observers notice signs of revitalizing cultural and civic life under Soviet auspices. The resurgence of political activities in the SBZ in particular outpaced those in western Germany, though not in ways American (and Soviet) officials had anticipated. In late April and early May 1945 Moscow-trained communist cadres had been sent to Germany.¹²⁵ The mission of the German Communists, spearheaded by three “initiative groups” under Walter Ulbricht, Anton Ackermann and Gustav Sobottka, had been to cooperate with the occupation power, re-establish local administrations and take over key administrative positions in Berlin and elsewhere in the Soviet-controlled areas. Murphy and his staff were certainly aware that Communist Party members controlled the municipal administrations in the American sector by being placed in strategic offices.¹²⁶ In doing so, they created few problems in the eyes of the American occupation officials. The U.S. district commandant in Berlin-Steglitz for one noted that those communists officials did not obstruct his administration and loyally executed allied orders.¹²⁷ Murphy was confident that the communist take-over of the “command posts” in the emerging political

¹²³ OMGUS Information Control Intelligence Summary No. 32, enclosed in Murphy to Department of State, 2 March 1946, NARA, RG 59, 740.00119 Control (Germany)/3-246.

¹²⁴ *Ibid.*

¹²⁵ On the Muscovites within the German communists, see Epstein, *The Last Revolutionaries*, pp. 83-85.

¹²⁶ “Certain Aspects of the Work of the Military Government in Berlin District,” Murphy to Secretary of State, 10 September 1945, NARA, RG 59, 740.00119 Control Germany/9-1045.

¹²⁷ Memorandum of Conversation with Lt. Col. Stahl, 28 August 1945, cited in Stivers, “Amerikanische Sichten,” p. 277.

structures would be “slowly rectified with the passage of time,” particularly if local elections would “reveal that the Communist Party lack[ed] majority support.”¹²⁸ Certainly Soviet and KKD actions were a far cry from the expectations of many communists and other antifascists, many of who hoped for the creation of a “Socialist Germany” or “Soviet republic.” Neither the Soviets nor the Ulbricht group, however, could control the political upsurge on the Left. All over the zone, antifascist committees and communist bureaus sprang up and called for the establishment of a People’s Republic, nationalization of industries and collectivization.¹²⁹

Confronted with this “ideological chaos,” Stalin decided to press ahead with the re-establishment of the Communist Party. In May, Ulbricht and Sobottka were recalled to Moscow for this purpose, and on June 4, the party leadership was informed that political parties and unions would be allowed according to a decision of May 26. “Central Committee is to appear openly now,” Pieck noted in his diary.¹³⁰ Anton Ackermann was to draft a manifesto. The “course” was set “in the direction of creating a workers’ party” to include workers, farmers and intelligenzia,” but what stuck out to most observers was the demand for a parliamentary democracy. At the same time Stalin thought “the creation of antifascist committees not to be expedient,” as they could become a challenge to the re-established municipal administrations. Within days, Ulbricht disbanded over 200 such committees.

Besides the KPD, which formally reconstituted itself on June 11, Moscow also permitted the reestablishment of the SPD, the Liberal Democratic Party (LDPD) as well as

¹²⁸ “Certain Aspects of the Work of the Military Government in Berlin District,” Murphy to Secretary of State, 10 September 1945, NARA, RG 59, 740.00119 Control Germany/9-1045.

¹²⁹ *“Gruppe Ulbricht” in Berlin, April bis Juni 1945: von den Vorbereitungen im Sommer 1944 bis zur Wiedegründung der KPD im Juni 1945 : eine Dokumentation*, herausgegeben und eingeleitet von Gerhard Keiderling mit einem Geleitwort von Wolfgang Leonhard (Berlin : Berlin Verlag A. Spitz, c1993); Wolfgang Leonhard, *Die Revolution entlässt ihre Kinder* (Leipzig : Reclam-Verlag, 1990).

¹³⁰ *Wilhelm Pieck--Aufzeichnungen zur Deutschland Politik 1945-1953*, ed. by Rolf Badstübner and Wilfried Loth (Berlin: Akademie Verlag, 1994), p. 50

the former Catholic *Zentrum* Party, now reconstituted as the Christian Democratic Party; the parties would join forces with the KPD in an antifascist “unity front.”¹³¹ Ulbricht and the Moscow-trained KPD leadership, moreover, decried the “sectarian” and “ultraradical” views of those on the Left who believed that the defeat of fascism would bring about socialism in Germany. As a leading German communist, Hermann Matern, admonished a group of antifascists in Dresden: “To talk of dictatorship of the proletariat today is utterly absurd and anyone who comes to us with such nonsense has either not understood the situation or is an enemy.”¹³²

Clay and Murphy were fully aware of the “democratic line” espoused by the KPD, and like many other U.S. officials did not think the party’s line was entirely a farce. More often than not local communist functionaries continued to display diligence and fairness in their official dealings and, in the eyes of American officials, seemed to be sensitive to the reservations and skepticism among broad segments of the population. Brewster Morris, an anti-communist adviser to Murphy who took it on himself to track Soviet and Communist activities in the eastern zone, reassured the U.S. occupation leaders that social revolution was probably not immediately on the agenda of the Soviets and the German communists. Moscow ultimate goals remained uncertain, and for now, emphasizing moderation proved exceptionally advantageous for the KPD’s broader popular appeal.¹³³

To be true, a moderate KPD set to lead an antifascist bloc could be a key tool to retaining a unified Germany under communist influence. The Soviet military government

¹³¹ Political parties were permitted by virtue of Order No. 2 of the Soviet Military Administration. Initially published in *Tägliche Rundschau* on June 10, 1945, the order is reprinted in ADD, pp. 54-55. American observers noted that the early admission of parties in the Soviet Zone could give the Russians a lead once party political activities could be resumed on a nationwide scale. See Buckow, *Zwischen Politik und Propaganda*, p. 107.

¹³² Quoted in Naimark, *The Russians in Germany*, pp. 274-275.

¹³³ Memorandum by Brewster Morris, “Present tactics and Position of German Communists,” 22 January 1945, enclosed in Robert Murphy to H. Freeman Matthews (Department of State, Office of European Affairs), 25 January 1945; and Memorandum by Morris, “The Free Germany Movement and American Military Government,” 23 May 1945, POLAD/33/105, cited in Stivers, “Amerikanische Sichten,” pp. 276-277.

had quickly sought to bring its influence to bear on the new non-communist parties. U.S. Political Adviser Murphy could report that in July that the CDU “gave in to the Russian invitation to move party headquarters into the Russian sector of Berlin,” and it quickly became apparent that CDU and LDP were dependent on the Russian sector for the printing of their daily newspapers, “bringing them under the unpleasant control of the Russian censor.”¹³⁴ But while such worries were on the back of OMGUS officials’ minds, they soon realized that Soviet hopes quickly faltered. Not only did Stalin’s decreed moderation sow further disunity and disappointment within the Communist Party, but the enthusiasm with which many party members had greeted the arrival of Soviet troops evaporated within days as a result of pervasive violence and fear.¹³⁵ “It is the same people for whom the Russian army couldn’t appear soon enough who now wish to see them far away,” Murphy reported based on a “highly-reliable” source. Murphy and his staff noted not only the weakness and confusion among many German communists, and the growing resentment vis-à-vis the KPD among the other political parties. Differences within the antifascist bloc over an ill-conceived land reform implemented in the summer of 1945 undermined the KPD’s relationship with the other parties in the Soviet Zone. Thanks to their direct contacts with the CDU leadership in the SBZ, in particular Ernst Lemmer, OMGUS was fully aware that the CDU and LDP opposed Soviet sequestering policies and criticized the expropriation of personal property and the forcible shipping of former landowners out of their districts.¹³⁶

Similar to the havoc and confusion created by competing Soviet agencies in the dismantling of German industrial sites in the early days of occupation, American officials

¹³⁴ 464, Murphy to Secretary of State, 7 September 1945, NARA, RG 59, 862.00/9-745. The LDP initially resisted but eventually moved its headquarters to the Soviet sector of Berlin. 1344, Murphy to Secretary of State, 29 December 1945, *ibid.*, 862.00/12-2945.

¹³⁵ Cable from Murphy to Secretary of State, 27 November 1945, enclosed in Memo from M.J. Dolbey/EE to Durbrow/EE, 4 January 1946, NARA, RG 59, 740.00119 Control (Germany)/11-2745.

¹³⁶ A-804, OMGUS Berlin to Secretary of State, *ibid.*, 862.00/9-2746.

noted diverging political lines that seemed to emerge among the Soviet policies in Germany. Officials such as Zhukov deputy Vassily Sokolovsky and Political Adviser Vladimir Semenov considered as favoring more moderate policies that left the door open to an understanding with the Western allies competed with ideologically hardline “Sovietizers” led by the head of the SMA’s propaganda and censorship department, Col. Sergey Tulpanov, who became more visibly involved in Soviet policies as the German communists’ appeal and strength waned in the fall of 1945. Similar to the actors on the American side, the “center’s” perspective on the German situation would come to diverge from the experiences and views of those on the ground in Germany.

3. German Central Administrations: The Double-edged Sword

With unilateral seizures from the zone sanctioned by the Western allies, Soviet dismantling in the eastern zone proceeded unabated in the aftermath of the Potsdam Conference. A second wave of removals had begun in May 1945, centering on the zone’s weapons production and metal processing industry which had been expanded and modernized considerably under wartime production patterns.¹³⁷ Continued inefficiency, the confusion and destructiveness of the dismantling process, increasingly antagonized those occupation officials charged with supplying the occupation army, restarting German production and feeding the German population. By fall 1945, the economic dislocations created by unrestrained dismantling took on crisis proportions, creating “almost universal consternation,” as US intelligence noted.¹³⁸ Internally, the Soviet Military Administration’s top economic official, Konstantin Koval, warned of the danger of an economic vacuum and sought to save plants from removal by transferring them into Soviet

¹³⁷Rainer Karlsch, *Allein bezahlt? Die Reparationsleistungen der SBZ/DDR 1945-53* (Berlin: Christian Links, 1993), pp 35-47.

¹³⁸ Headquarters, USFET Military Intelligence Service Center, “The German View: A report for Counter-Intelligence,” 19 November 1945, NARA, RG 59, 740.00119 (Control (Germany)/11-1945).

property. In early 1946, Koval began developing a reparations plan to gain control over the numerous agencies active in the zone. Some 200 of the largest and most modern enterprises were turned into Soviet stock companies. Under pressure from Berlin-Karlshorst, Malenkov's policy of maximum removals from the occupation zone was finally abandoned in early 1946. The change in reparation policy became evident in the course of the third wave of removals, beginning in the spring of 1946. Dismantling now targeted specific plants in the primary, coal mining, briquette, shoe, sugar and metal-producing industries. In early May 1946, SMA internally declared a partial halt to removals, and on May 21 SMA chief Marshall Sokolovsky announced that an end to dismantling was near (though, as it turned out, far from over). Instead of removing industrial equipment in large quantities, reparations shifted from removals to extractions from current production.¹³⁹

Spurred by the rapid decline of the SBZ economy and the ensuing reassessment in the Kremlin, the shift in Soviet reparations policy made possible the first and only major quadripartite compromise in the spring of 1946: an agreement on a level of industry, mandated by the Potsdam decisions and eagerly pursued by Clay. Agreement had proved evasive for much of 1945, as Moscow's drastic dismantling policy had led it to favor severe limits on German industrial output to free up as many industrial plants for reparations as possible, well beyond what Washington and London considered necessary to make their zones self-sufficient. As late as December 1945, Soviet representatives on the Allied Control Council insisted on turning Germany into an agrarian nation. Soviet draft plans called for a reduction of Germany's industrial output to 40% of the prewar level. Allied disagreement turned on the level of steel production, viewed by the Russians as an indicator of economic disarmament and the level of reparations. Compromise

¹³⁹ Nevertheless, the fourth (late 1946 to spring 1947) and fifth (autumn 1947 to spring 1948) waves of dismantling still exerted a heavy toll on the zone's coal industry, energy supplies and train track system and dealt the final blow to its armaments industry.

proposals developed internally by Soviet experts in Berlin failed to win approval by Stalin. Only after the change in Soviet reparation policy took effect in January 1946 did Molotov authorize Sokolovsky to accommodate to the higher levels acceptable to Clay and the British. Clay too insisted on a link between the level of industry and reparations. On March 23, Stalin signaled his agreement, freeing a way for the adoption of the “Plan for Reparations and the Level of the Postwar German Economy” three days later.¹⁴⁰

Though it is now clear that internal Soviet dynamics – both in Moscow and in the zone -- rather than American pressure led to the allied agreement, to Clay, the industry plan was proof that quadripartite government would work, especially if backed up by the lure of reparations. As a step closer to unified economic treatment of Germany, allied agreement on the nationwide industry level implied a measure of quadripartite restraint on Soviet exploitation of its zone. But Clay overestimated the significance of reparations as a leverage to force all-German solutions – and in turned failed to fully understand the consistent preoccupation of the Soviets with maintaining exclusive control of their zone and preserving the “gains” that had been made in occupying and transforming the eastern Germany. Far more effective in influencing the Soviet zone, both Clay and Moscow sensed, would be central German administrations envisioned at Potsdam – if they could be established nationwide.

Anticipating the establishment of all-German agencies, the Soviet government had established central administrations for the Soviet zone even before Potsdam and agreed in principle at the Big Three meeting to all-German agencies with limited economic tasks as precursors for a German government. On July 27, SMA order No. 17 provided for the establishment of some eleven central administrations responsible for traffic, communications, health and education in the Soviet occupation zone; German communists

¹⁴⁰ Laufer, “Stalin und die deutschen Reparationen;” Mausbach, *Zwischen Morgenthau und Marshall*.

filled the leadership posts. During the discussions in Potsdam, Molotov raised the issue of central administrations, which, among other tasks would implement an allied reparations agreement and thus administer the Ruhr area, only to be rebuffed by Byrnes with a view to the emerging zonal reparations scheme. Rather than an attempt to expand Soviet influence into the critical Ruhr area, Molotov's proposal seems to have been a tactical negotiation move rather than a genuine offer.¹⁴¹ It was commonly held in the Russian capital that industrial disarmament, denazification and the strengthening of the "democratic bloc" were prerequisites for the creation of all-German institution.

By the summer of 1945 it was the French government, in particular the Foreign Ministry under Henry Bidault, not Moscow, that appeared as the stumbling block towards setting up central administrations.¹⁴² Fearful of a resurgence of German nationalism, the French government objected on principle to effective central German agencies and instead argued for a western settlement centering around separation and internationalization of the Rhein-Ruhr area. On September 13, France had made its agreement to central administrations contingent on separating Nordrhein-Westphalia from the rest of Germany; a week later French Deputy Military Governor, Lt. General Louis Marie Koeltz privately repeated his governments refusal to sanction any central agencies to his American counterparts. Two days later Koeltz vetoed the establishment of a central transport administration in the Control Council, and on October 1 France withdrew its representatives from all deliberations of central administrations.¹⁴³

Clay reminded Washington that the "Russians and British are in full agreement with us as to the desirability of establishing this machinery." Fearing that the lack of

¹⁴¹ Kynin/Laufer., eds., *Die UdSSR und die deutsche Frage 1941-1948*, vol 2, p. LXVI.

¹⁴² Cable from Sobolev and Semenov to Foreign Ministry, 8 July 1945, Kynin/Laufer., eds., *Die UdSSR und die deutsche Frage 1941-1948*, vol 2, pp. 52-53; Caffery to Secretary of State, 1 March 1946, NARA, RG 59, 740.00119 Control (Germany)/3-146.

¹⁴³ Sololev to Vyshinsky, 24 September 1945, AVP RF, f. 082, op. 27, p 123, d. 30, p. 55, cited in Kynin/Laufer., eds., *Die UdSSR und die deutsche Frage 1941-1948*, vol . 2, p. LXVII.

central administrations would lead to “practical if not actual dismemberment” of Germany, he pleaded with Washington to put pressure on the French and to be allowed to proceed on a trilateral, U.S.-Russian-British basis, a suggestion to which the State and War Department, somewhat hesitantly, agreed to in late October.¹⁴⁴ At the London Council of Foreign Ministers meeting in mid-November 1945, Byrnes threatened French Foreign Minister Couve de Murville with the possibility of establishing tripartite central administrations at the exclusion of France, but to no avail. Frustrated by French opposition, Clay argued that “the USSR had gone further than the French in the introduction of democratic procedure in their zone,” and, in such matters as the land reform, was “acting unilaterally in the absence of quadripartite agreement.” The “entire record” of the Control Council showed that the USSR was “willing to cooperate with the other powers in operating Germany as a single political and economic unit.”¹⁴⁵

In February 1946, Clay and Murphy launched a major push for the establishment of quadripartite central administrations. Time, they argued, was overdue for “firmer and more aggressive stand” should be taken for what they considered one of the basic elements of the Potsdam decisions. A recent speech by communist party leader Walter Ulbricht represented the “opening gun” in a campaign to rally German public opinion behind the communist movement in favor of a united Germany. To Murphy and Clay, French intransigence had played into Soviet hands” Moscow had taken full advantage of French obstructionism “to consolidate the Soviet position in eastern Germany.” The operation of central agencies would have “militated against zonal boundaries and served to break down the exclusive Soviet control of one of the largest and most important German areas.” It was time to put pressure on the French, possibly withholding cooperation in other fields.

¹⁴⁴ Smith, *The Papers of General Lucius D. Clay*, vol. 1, p. 85

¹⁴⁵ *Ibid.*

¹⁴⁶ Likely at Clay's behest, Secretary of War Robert Patterson personally reiterated concerns to Byrnes that, thanks to the French refusal, Moscow and the German communists had be able to pose before the German people as "the hope of a restored Germany;" embryonic at this stage, the situation appeared to have "more future political significance than any other development up to this time."¹⁴⁷ At the heart of Clay's and Murphy's argument was their conviction, shared by others within the American foreign policy establishment, that any externally imposed partition of the country along the Elbe, "a river (...) not very wide or deep," would not prove a lasting solution: such an artificial division "will only lead to dangerous conspiracy."¹⁴⁸ Division might be the necessary result if a cold war could not be avoided. But, as Murphy put it, whether "the gentlemen in the Politburo in Moscow plan to cooperate with the US and UK or to fight them – not necessarily with weapons but by psychological, political and economic means" remained very much a question. It was "not proven that the specialists of the Politburo are planning such a hostile campaign." If they were not, Murphy maintained in the spring of 1946, "cooperation on the German problem is possible." In that case, "we should cooperate with them on one German problem, not two." But even if he and Clay were wrong in their basic assumption, Murphy argued, "it would be defeatists to yield to them [the Russians] suzerainty over all of eastern Germany without using the present agreements to organize a

¹⁴⁶ Murphy to Secretary of State, 24 February 1946, NARA, RG 59, 740.00119 Control (Germany)/2-2446. By March 1, Caffery could report from Paris that the French Socialists, around Prime Minister Blum, Auriol and Gouin were making "courageous efforts" to go along with the United States on central administrations, despite their realization that any abandonment of past French policy on this issue would be unpopular. But, according to Caffery, they could not risk that Foreign Minister Bidault would resign and the MRP would leave the fragile anti-communist coalition government. See Caffery to Secretary of State, 1 March 1946, NARA, RG 59, 740.00119 Control (Germany)/ 3-146. See also Memorandum, "Future Policy towards Germany," David Harris to Riddleberger and Matthews, 26 March 1946, NARA, RG 59, 740.00119 Control (Germany)/ 3-2646.

¹⁴⁷ Patterson to Byrnes, 25 February 1946, NARA, RG 59, 740.00119 Control (Germany)/2-2546; and Byrnes to Patterson, not dated, NARA, RG 59, 740.00119 Control (Germany)/2-2546.

¹⁴⁸ Murphy to DeWitt C. Poole (Princeton), 11 April 1946, Hoover Institution Archives, Robert Murphy Papers, Box 59; Murphy to "Doc" Matthews, 3 May 1946, NARA, RG 59, 740.00119 Control (Germany)/ 5-346; see also Memorandum, "Future Policy towards Germany," David Harris to Riddleberger and Matthews, 26 March 1946, NARA, RG 59, 740.00119 Control (Germany)/ 3-2646; Allen W. Dulles to Murphy, 9 May 1946, *ibid.*, Box 57; State Department Economist Paul R. Porter to Norman Thomas, 30 June 1947, Harry S. Truman Library, Paul R. Porter Papers.

German state embracing that territory.”¹⁴⁹ Delays in establishing these mechanisms had meant that the West had to watch “from across the line without opportunity to bring broader democratic influence to bear” as selected Germans – “the vast majority of them Communists” -- were installed in provincial and local governments, trade unions and cooperatives. “Central German agencies, I am convinced,” Murphy cabled Washington, would have effected the “gradual relaxation of zonal barriers” and facilitated greater American influence.¹⁵⁰

The push by OMGUS for central administrations in early 1946 intersected with a heated debate within the Truman administration about policy towards the Soviet union and Germany, crystallizing around the February 1946 Moscow Embassy charge d'affaires George F. Kennan's “Long Telegram” from Moscow. The telegram analyzing the sources of Soviet conduct had been circulated widely among top administration officials, even sent to top military commanders and many U.S. missions abroad, and “received in the highest quarters here as a basic outline of future Soviet policy.”¹⁵¹ Concerns about Soviet intentions, reinforced by growing concerns over Soviet troop movements in northern Iran, led Washington to take “an extremely serious view of the present situation.”¹⁵² The reception of the “long Telegram” in German was quite different. The Supreme Commander of U.S. Forces in Europe, General Joseph McNarney, reportedly commented on the cable “with a shrug of his shoulders that after all the telegram did not offer anything new.”¹⁵³ Clay's reaction was “pretty violent” as he took the State Department's sending the telegram to army commanders as “a sort of Pearl Harbor warning.” In addition, Clay believed that the cable represented the more anti-Soviet “British line” (“it is evident that

¹⁴⁹ Murphy to DeWitt C. Poole (Princeton), 11 April 1946, Hoover Institution Archives, Robert Murphy Papers, Box 59.

¹⁵⁰ Murphy to Secretary of State, 19 March 1946, NARA, RG 59, 740.00119 Control (Germany)/3-1946.

¹⁵¹ Matthews to Murphy, 12 March 1946, Murphy Papers, Hoover Institution Archives, Box 58.

¹⁵² Matthews to Murphy, 12 March 1946, Murphy Papers, Hoover Institution Archives, Box 58.

¹⁵³ Murphy to Matthews, 3 April 1946, R. Murphy Papers, Hoover Institution Archives, Box 58.

the British technique of needling our people over a period of months is bearing fruit”). By contrast to “some Americans ... prone and eager to blame the Soviet representatives for everything that is unhappy in the situation,” he and Murphy found the record of quadripartite accomplishments in Germany “not too discouraging.” On the contrary, the Soviets could not be accused of having violated the Potsdam Agreements: “Whatever secret cynicisms they may maintain, it has not been manifest in their negotiation or official action.” Instead, they had “gone out of their way repeatedly and throughout the months to be friendly with the Americans.” Though “disparaged” by Kennan, personal relationships between Soviets and Americans, beginning with Eisenhower and Zhukov, had left a very definite local imprint here which has influenced in a marked degree the Soviet-American relationship in Berlin.”¹⁵⁴

In the shadow of the “Long Telegram” Kennan provided a powerful counterargument to Clay’s approach on Germany.¹⁵⁵ In mid-January, he had warned from Moscow that Soviets demands for a harsh reparations regime for Germany pursued two objectives: maximum reduction of Germany’s economic military potential, *and* undermining the social classes not readily susceptible to penetration of Soviet-controlled political groups.¹⁵⁶ Central administrations were a similarly dangerous tool: the Soviets “were happy to have several months in which to exercise a completely free hand in their own zone,” nevertheless they saw in central administrations “a possibly indispensable device for entering at an appropriate moment into [the] other three zones and facilitating there [the] accomplishment of [the] Soviet political program.” Recognizing that central administrations were a “plainly two-edged sword” for the Soviets, “depending on realities

¹⁵⁴ Murphy to Matthews, 3 April 1946, R. Murphy Papers, Hoover Institution Archives, Box 58.

¹⁵⁵ On Kennan’s role, see David Mayers, *George Kennan and the dilemmas of US Foreign Policy* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1988); Walter L. Hixson, *George F. Kennan: Cold War Iconoclast* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1989); Wilson D. Miscamble, *George F. Kennan and the Making of American Foreign Policy, 1947-1950* (Princeton, N.J. : Princeton University Press, 1992).

¹⁵⁶ Kennan to Secretary of State, 18 January 1946, NARA, RG 59, 740.00119 Control (Germany)/1-1846.

of underlying political control,” Kennan maintained that the success of their authoritarian methods in the Soviet zone convinced them that “in the end they cannot lose.” He warned of “undue optimism about central agencies serving to break down exclusive Soviet control in their own zone.” Rather, the Russians would hold back until the time “that they are fairly sure that within this new framework they can contrive not only to preserve in effect their exclusive control in their own zone but also to advance materially their possibilities for influencing [the] course of events elsewhere in Germany.” With Germany territorially crippled, unbalanced economically and psychologically dependent on the food resources controlled by Russia, Kennan saw the United States left with only two alternatives: “(one) [to] leave the remainder of Germany nominally united but extensively vulnerable to Soviet political penetration and influence or (two) to carry to its logical conclusion the process of partition which was begun in the east and to endeavor to rescue [the] western zones of Germany by walling them off against eastern penetration and integrating them into [the] international pattern of western Europe rather than into a united Germany.”¹⁵⁷

Kennan’s cable reverberated widely within the Truman administration and OMGUS. Byrnes that U.S. Ambassador Jefferson Caffery relayed the French government’s view, nor surprising in light of its steadfast resistance to central administrations, that such agencies would only benefit “Soviet penetration in the French, British and American zones” with the goal of a “Communist-dominated central German government which would control the Ruhr and Rhineland.” Even if they were agreed to establish such institutions, the Soviets would refuse to cooperate loyally.”¹⁵⁸ Perry Laukhuff, political officer on Robert Murphy’s staff similarly questioned the priority which Clay had ascribed to the establishment of central German agencies. Echoing Kennan, Laukhuff argued that the deadlock on the Control Council was much to the liking

¹⁵⁷ Kennan to Secretary of State, March 6, 1946, NA, RG 59, 740.00119 Control (Germany) /3-646.

¹⁵⁸ Caffery to Secretary of State, 29 March 1946, NARA, RG 59, 740.00119 Control (Germany)/3-2946.

of the Soviets who were allowed to pose as proponents of quadripartite cooperation while at the same time carrying out in their zone “a sweeping social, economic and political revolution, now practically past recall ” and using the French as “a very convenient whipping boy.” To counter Soviet policy effectively, Laukhuff argued in favor of a frank admission that quadripartite control of Germany had failed and American withdrawal from the Control Council. While maintaining the American position in Berlin, Laukhuff proposed to remove U.S. occupation headquarters to the U.S. zone, to concentrate upon developing the unity of the three western zones and to reconstruct interzonal and international trade “so clearly necessary in Western Europe.” Such a decision, he admitted, “would mean writing off for the time being the Soviet Zone of Germany as a completely separate entity, entirely outside our control and influence,” but it only recognize “what is today a fact.” Acknowledging that “Eastern Germany is *wholly* in Russian hands,” Laukhuff predicted, would allow the United States not only to pursue more constructive policies in Germany, but also win influence in Eastern Europe by “penetrat[ing] to the utmost into Austria, Czechoslovakia and Poland” through trade and cultural relations.” It seemed “evident that we must seek by every means to outflank the ‘iron curtain’, meanwhile temporarily lowering an iron curtain of our own in the center of the stage.”¹⁵⁹ Equally skeptical of Soviet intentions, James Riddleberger, the chief of the State Department’s Central European Division, argued that that Russia would “only permit the functioning of such [central] agencies in the Soviet zone and cooperate in their operation throughout Germany to the extent that it believes these agencies can be used for Soviet purposes.” Hence central agencies were to be construed in ways that, in the case of a

¹⁵⁹Memo by Perry Laukhuff, “Appraisal of Quadripartite Control and Soviet Policy,” April 25, 1946, The Hoover Institution Archives, RMP, Box 58. Murphy passed Laukhuff’s analysis to Washington, not without calling it “unsound” in its argument. Murphy to “Doc” Matthews, 3 May 1946, NARA, RG 59, 740.00119 Control (Germany)/ 5-346.

complete break-down of quadripartite government, they could be “utilized in the western zones alone.”¹⁶⁰

By late 1945 Soviet officials were actually preparing themselves for the possibility that “in the near future the deadlock over the issue of the creation of national German departments might be broken.”¹⁶¹ But throughout much of 1945, Zhukov and Sokolovsky had dragged their feet in the Control Council on the issue of central administrations. Internally, Soviet officials admitted that, while the Americans and British were insisting on the fastest possible organization of the national German departments provided for by the decisions of the “Berlin Conference,” the Soviet military administration had “not in fact been interested in accelerating the organization of these departments.”¹⁶² The SMA Economic Administration had opposed the transport and postal administrations Sokolovsky offered up in the shadow of the French veto.¹⁶³ Leading Soviet occupation official complained that “all the specific proposals” with regard to central administrative structures “had come from the Allies.” Soviet representatives had spoken “without having a specifically formulated and coordinated point of view, which sometimes led to disputes with the Allies over trivia. Instances took place when our representatives in committees, for one reason or another, spoke from one point of view but in the directorate, from

¹⁶⁰Riddleberger to Matthews, March 26, 1946, Hoover Institution Archives, David Harris Papers, Box 2; and NARA, RG 59, FW 740.00119 Control (Germany)/3-2646. See also the assessment by the Joint Intelligence Staff, “Capabilities and Intentions of the U.S.S.R. in the Post-War Period,” 8 February 1946, NARA, RG 218, Geographical File 1946-1947, Box 53, compared to Joint Intelligence Staff, “Capabilities and Intentions of the U.S.S.R. in the Post-War Period,” 15 January 1946, NARA, RG 218, Geographical File 1946-1947, Box 52; see also Joint Intelligence Staff, “Capabilities and Intentions of the USSR. in the Postwar Period,” 9 July 1946, NARA, RG 218, Geographical File 1946-1947, Box 53.

¹⁶¹ Memorandum, “Regarding the Issue of the Need to Prepare for the Organization of National German Administrative Departments V. S. Semenov to G. K. Zhukov,” 18 December 1945, AVP RF, f. 082, op. 30, p. 134, d. 64, l. 2-4, , published in *SSSR i Germanskiy Vopros 1941-1949*, vol. 2 (Moscow, Mezhdunarodnyye Otnosheniya, 2000), pp. 310-312; see also “Daily Intelligence Digest #148,” enclosed in Murphy to Riddleberger, 24 April 1946, NARA, RG 59, Lot 55D371, Box 2.

¹⁶² V. S. Semenov to A. A. Sobolev, 16 October 1945, AVP RF, f. 07, op. 10, p. 17, d. 222, l. 32; Kynin/Laufer., eds., *Die UdSSR und die deutsche Frage 1941-1948*, vol. 2, pp. 264-265.

¹⁶³ Cable from Semnov to Sobolev, 16 October 1945, Kynin/Laufer., eds., *Die UdSSR und die deutsche Frage 1941-1948*, vol 2, p. 148.

another, directly contradictory [point of view].”¹⁶⁴ With the Control Council deadlocked on the issue thanks to the French veto, Zhukov in November declined Clay’s repeated overtures for bilateral or trilateral communication and transportation agencies.¹⁶⁵

Publicly, the Soviet occupation chief cited the need for unanimous Control Council agreement in his refusal to condone the trizonal fusion sought by Clay. Yet in their internal deliberations Soviet officials reasoned defensively as they considered the “considerable pressure” from the Americans and British. At a practical level, Soviet officials felt they were far behind Anglo-American preparations. Smirnov warned Molotov in early December that “at this time we do not yet have the necessary cadres capable of taking on the leadership of central administrations.” The democratic parties had not yet “consolidated,” in the “Allied zone” they were just being licensed.¹⁶⁶ Equally convinced that the Soviet military administration was entirely unprepared should central administrations come about in the near future, Zhukov’s Political Adviser Semenov urged Moscow two weeks later to counterbalance the Western Allied “centers for the selection of German officials” to have “a solid reserve of German organizers at our disposal who are known throughout Germany and who satisfy us with their political characteristics.” As far as he could tell, there was “presently no clarity in SMA departments on the issue of whom we will propose as candidates for major and minor posts from the Soviet zone.”¹⁶⁷

Semenov demanded that the SMA outline its views on the central agencies to the American and British in greater detail, “select our candidates for the positions of greatest

¹⁶⁴ Memorandum, “Regarding the Issue of the Need to Prepare for the Organization of National German Administrative Departments V. S. Semenov to G. K. Zhukov,” 18 December 1945, AVP RF, f. 082, op. 30, p. 134, d. 64, l. 2-4., published in *SSSR i Germanskiy Vopros 1941-1949*, vol. 2 (Moscow, Mezhdunarodnyye Otnosheniya, 2000), pp. 310-312.

¹⁶⁵ From the Journal of General of the Army V. D. Sokolovsky, “A Conversation with US Army Lieutenant General Clay,” 2 October 1945, AVP RF, f. 06, op. 7, p. 30, d. 407, l. 25-29, Kynin/Laufer., eds., *Die UdSSR und die deutsche Frage 1941-1948*, vol. 2, pp. 245-249.

¹⁶⁶ Smirnov to Molotov, 3 December 1945, Kynin/Laufer., eds., *Die UdSSR und die deutsche Frage 1941-1948*, vol. 2, pp. 187-188.

¹⁶⁷ Memorandum, “Regarding the Issue of the Need to Prepare for the Organization of National German Administrative Departments V. S. Semenov to G. K. Zhukov,” 18 December 1945, AVP RF, f. 082, op. 30, p. 134, d. 64, l. 2-4., published in *SSSR i Germanskiy Vopros 1941-1949*, vol. 2, pp. 310-312.

interest to us, develop them beforehand, and when possible, also conduct other work with them from the standpoint of special bodies [*spetsorgany*—intelligence agencies].” By no means “can we and should we hand over the national German administrative departments to the Americans and British (...).”¹⁶⁸

Central administrations were precursors for a central German government and to Moscow signified the end of the occupation period. With denazification and demilitarization at best incomplete, the specter of a reduced occupation control and an early end to occupation – just a few months after the end of the war with Germany -- evoked deep-seated anxieties among Soviet officials. Smirnov therefore insisted that the USSR make its approval contingent on the prior implementation of the Potsdam accords.¹⁶⁹ Soviet officials also were concerned about what appeared to them as a forming “Western bloc.” Clay tried to impress Sokolovsky in person “very categorically (...) that the U.S. government was very sharply disposed against any kind of blocs and such ideas as a ‘Western bloc’ would not find support in the U.S..”¹⁷⁰ Though Zhukov, on instructions from Moscow, was forced to reject Clay’s fusion proposal, he and Semenov proceed with preparations for central administrations. A few weeks later, without apparent coordination with Moscow, Zhukov put Semenov in charge of developing cadres and plans for the day central administrations should be established.¹⁷¹ By the end of February, 1946, Semenov could report that SMA’s postal, transport, finance and foreign trade

¹⁶⁸ Memorandum, “Regarding the Issue of the Need to Prepare for the Organization of National German Administrative Departments,” V. S. Semenov to G. K. Zhukov,” 18 December 1945, AVP RF, f. 082, op. 30, p. 134, d. 64, l. 2-4, published in *SSSR i Germanskiy Vopros 1941-1949*, vol. 2, pp. 310-312.

¹⁶⁹ Smirnov to Molotov, 3 December 1945, Kynin/Lauffer., eds., *Die UdSSR und die deutsche Frage 1941-1948*, vol.2, pp. 187-188.

¹⁷⁰ “From the Journal of General of the Army V. D. Sokolovsky: Record of Conversation Between V. D. Sokolovsky and L. D. Clay” 2 October 1945, AVP RF, f. 06, op. 7, p. 30, d. 407, l. 25-29, published in *SSSR i Germanskiy Vopros 1941-1949*, vol. 2 (Moscow, Mezhdunarodnyye Otnosheniya, 2000), pp. 148-155.

¹⁷¹ Smirnov to Dekanozov, 23 January 1946, Kynin/Lauffer., eds., *Die UdSSR und die deutsche Frage 1941-1948.*, vol. 2, pp. 199, 238-239.

administrations had developed regulations and organizational charts for respective national agencies.¹⁷² Moscow's approval, however, was not forthcoming.

Zhukov's decision also reflected Moscow's reluctance to lose control of their zone: not only was Moscow ever more sensitive to being in total command in its zone as it inaugurated a dramatic change in its economic policy in Germany. When the U.S. delegate on the Allied Control Council's Central German Administrative Committee in May 1946 proposed a quadripartite commission which would tour the four zones to study the functioning of zonal and provincial economic administrations in preparation for nationwide agencies. Professing at first not to be able to find time for such a tour, then arguing that the Americans were "trying to do too much and trying to secure too detailed information," the Soviet delegate finally argued that he had no problem with an effort to "approach the problem abstractly," that as a matter of fact economic organization between the zones differed "only in minor details." In the initial phase it should be left to the zone commanders to assure economic unity; any quadripartite commission would be limited to formulating a program for central agencies.¹⁷³ In the Control Council's Economic Directorate discussions over a central German administrative departments for industry and agriculture, Soviet officials were even more direct in rejecting any interference in the authority of the zonal commander: Confronted with the U.S. member's assertion that central administrations were "cardinal provisions" of the Potsdam Protocol, creation of which needed to be "begun immediately" to avoid the danger of setting up "separate economies for the different Zones," Russian officials emphatically rejoined that the final decision in implementing any directives from central agencies should be made by the zone commander, similar to the reparations regime. When the American incredulously asked whether this would mean that the zone commander could "for example, set aside coal

¹⁷² Semenov to Zhukov, 22 February 1946, Kynin/Laufer., eds., *Die UdSSR und die deutsche Frage 1941-1948*, vol. 2, pp. 261-262.

¹⁷³ Murphy to Secretary of State, 14 June 1946, NARA, RG 59, 740.00119 Control (Germany)/ 6-1446.

allocations or taxes ordered by the Allied Control Council, the Soviet Member replied in the affirmative.”¹⁷⁴ To a man, Soviet officials categorically rejected any infringements on the total control of their zone.

Moscow’s reticence against any inroads into its zonewide control undermined Clay’s efforts to develop a joint export-import plan for Germany, essential to Anglo-American plans to deal with the faltering economy in their zones. In contrast to Byrnes’s Potsdam efforts to control trade on a zonal basis, Clay aimed at applying the first charge on proceeds to all of Germany’s exports, including those from the Soviet zone, thus dramatically reducing short-term German deliveries to the USSR. Soviet stock companies (SAGs) would have produced initially to pay for imports into Germany! Not surprisingly, Moscow was unwilling to forego one of its most effective tools of economic extraction. Even more disconcerting to Soviet officials, the unified foreign trade program held out the specter of far greater voice of the Western powers in Soviet zone affairs, to which Soviet officials from top down remained adamantly opposed. At the decisive April 5 meeting of the Control Councils Economic Committee, the head of the SMA Economic Administration emotionally declared that “primary responsibility” for maintenance of life and order in the zones rested with zonal commanders. Quite in line with what Byrnes had suggested at Potsdam, Koval argued that the zonal principle applied to foreign trade just as much as reparations, each occupation power being responsible for the results of its occupation regime. Three weeks later, Sokolovsky countered the U.S. proposal in the Control Council by invoking a clause in the Potsdam agreement that provided for foreign trade for Germany to be conducted on a zonal basis “within the net balance of each zone.” In reaction, Clay announced the suspension of all dismantling in the U.S. zone.

¹⁷⁴ “Central German Administrative Departments,” Murphy to Secretary of State, 13 July 1946, NARA, RG 59, 740.00119 Control (Germany)/ 7-3146.

To a large degree Soviet concerns thus validate Clay's thinking that the establishment of central German administrations in the economic field might be a crucial step in reasserting Western political influence to the Soviet zone. Soviet interest in reparations, he remained convinced, would make them amenable to a negotiated settlement which allowed political unification. Well aware that by 1946 the Soviets enjoyed little support among the German population, Clay expected that a unified German state would be a "gain for Western democracy" enabling it "to contest for its philosophy throughout Germany" and "to extend its frontiers to the borders of Poland and Czechoslovakia, thus encouraging any will for democracy in the peoples of these countries." For Clay, the United States had "much at stake in gaining the opportunity to fight for democratic ideals in Eastern Germany and in Eastern Europe" — an opportunity which would "result from the true political unification of Germany under quadripartite control." A failure to explore these possibilities would allow the Soviets "to mine the industry of Eastern Germany" and create "ultimate political and economic competition between Western Germany under allied controls and Eastern Germany under Soviet controls. Obviously, this establishes the frontier of Western democracy along the Elbe."¹⁷⁵

Confronted with Soviet (and French) obstruction on central administrations and foreign trade, Clay decided to leverage the presumed Russian interest in reparations for progress in greater economic unity.¹⁷⁶ In early May 1946, a halt to all reparation deliveries from the U.S. zone went into effect. Clay now demanded that the issue be resolved at the Paris sessions of the Council of Foreign Ministers. At the July ministerial, Byrnes increased the pressure on Moscow (as well as Paris): On July 11, he offered the fusion of the American zone with any of the others zones in preparation for economic unity. Faced

¹⁷⁵*The Papers of General Lucius D. Clay*, vol. 1, pp. 282-283.

¹⁷⁶ "Highly-credible" intelligence sources seemed to confirm this assumption. See the report of a secret meeting with Soviet occupation chief Sokolovsky and SBZ Länder and province presidents and vice-presidents on 28 May 1946, enclosed in Donald Heath (Charge d'affaires ad interim, POLAD) to Secretary of State, 9 July 1946, NARA, RG 59, 740.00119 Control (Germany)/ 7-946.

with the specter of a bizonal arrangement between Americans and British that would have precluded Soviet influence in western Germany, Moscow took a more conciliatory attitude. During the Paris negotiations, Molotov advocated an increase in the level of industry that would allow increased German exports as well as greater reparations, even signaled readiness to establish central administrations as a transitional step, if the USSR would be assured a voice in the Ruhr. The price for such a role, a senior State Department official sympathetic to Clay's line of thinking argued, would have to be "real" quadripartite control over the whole of Germany" unless the Soviets "grab[bed] off the East entirely for themselves and then horn[ed] in on a western arrangement."¹⁷⁷

Two days after the Byrnes offer, Soviet occupation chief Sokolovsky echoed Molotov's statement, demanding in the Allied Control Council improve cooperation among the occupation zones "as a preparatory first step towards the establishment of a central administration."¹⁷⁸ In informal talks between U.S. and Soviet officials in the following days and weeks, the outlines of a compromise were sketched out: The level of industry would be increased; plants earmarked for dismantling would remain in Germany for ten years to produce reparations; and all export proceeds from plants not slated for reparations would be used to pay for imports. Within weeks, Soviet officials proposed the creation of central administrations, the elimination of economic zonal borders and a balanced export-import program. Protracted negotiations on a draft constitution for Berlin suddenly turned into "most conciliatory and cooperative discussions" and quickly resulted in an agreement, adding to the sense on the part of American officials of a "change ... in the attitude and tactics of the Soviets towards the US."¹⁷⁹ So eager did the Russians seem

¹⁷⁷ David Harris (Division of Central European Affairs, Department of State, to Ridleberger, 17 July 1946, NARA, RG 59, 740.00119 Control (Germany)/ 7-1746.

¹⁷⁸ Murphy to State Department, 30 July 1946, FRUS, 1946, V, p. 585. In internal discussions, reported to Washington, Sokolovsky also expounded these views. See Donald Heath (Charge d'affaires ad interim, POLAD) to Secretary of State, 9 July 1946, NARA, RG 59, 740.00119 Control (Germany)/ 7-946.

¹⁷⁹ Heath to Secretary of State, 13 July 1946, NARA, RG 59, 862.00/7-1346.

to desire reparations from current production that by mid-October Murphy ventured that “we would be well advised to use the opportunity regarding the introduction of democratic methods in the Soviet zone.”¹⁸⁰

4. “The most significant event in Germany since the overthrow of the Nazi regime”?¹⁸¹ The U.S. and the 1946 SPD-KPD merger

The differing assessments on how to judge and react to Soviet policies in Germany, in particular in the Soviet Zone, clashed over what some contemporary observers considered “the most significant event in Germany since the overthrow of the Nazi regime,”¹⁸² the forced fusion of the SPD and KPD in the Soviet zone. Intersecting with the American debate over all-German institutions and reparations, the merger signified to officials, particularly in Washington, the consolidation of Communist control in eastern Germany. At the end of September 1945, the KPD Central Committee’s secretariat had called for a “new offensive” of the party’s political-ideological work, focused on the unity of KPD and SPD. Despite a rapid rise in membership numbers, by the fall of 1945 the KPD had found itself outrun by the SPD as the leading and most popular party on the Left. Following the SPD’s October party conference in Hannover, SMA intelligence chief I. Tugarinov warned Vyshinsky that the British government was intent on gaining control over the SPD in the Soviet zones in its effort to counter Soviet influence in Germany.¹⁸³ Communist defeats at the polls in Hungary and Austria did not bode well for Soviet plans to turn the KPD into a party of mass appeal. The following month, Tiulpanov, suddenly far more visible in Soviet Zone affairs, advised the SMA Military Council (which in turn informed Stalin) that without a “political unification” of

¹⁸⁰ Murphy to State Department, 16 October 1946, FRUS, 1946, V, p. 622.

¹⁸¹ OMGUS Special Report, 15 May 1946, NARA, RG 59, 862.00/6-1546.

¹⁸² OMGUS Special Report, 15 May 1946, NARA, RG 59, 862.00/6-1546.

¹⁸³ I. Tugarinov an Vyshinsky, 17 October 1945, Kynin/Layufer, II, pp. 152-159.

the two parties the Communists would suffer a resounding defeat in the Soviet zone elections scheduled for 1946. By late fall, Soviet officials in Germany had become convinced that the only way to assure KPD control and to crush the SPD as an active force in zone politics would be a merger of both parties. U.S. G-2 intelligence officials too saw the KPD fighting for its existence. With a decision on the fusion yet to be made in Moscow, Tiulpanov and the SMA propaganda administration started to support KPD merger designs and began to pressure SPD members towards unification with the KPD with a mixture of courting and coercion.

Relations between the Communists and Social Democrats soon grew sour as KPD officials, often emboldened by Soviet support, violated the principles of the antifascist bloc. The prospect of immediate unification had lost its attraction to many Social Democrats who had been appalled by the behavior of KPD functionaries, in particular their occupying of key administrative positions, and by the favoritism of the KPD so blatantly displayed by SMA. Conflict had increased sharply at the local level where “intolerable conditions between the SPD and the KPD had developed, as the minutes of the November 5 meeting of the Thuringian SPD executive board noted.¹⁸⁴ Social Democrats in the western zones took a vehemently anti-communist stance under the leadership of Kurt Schumacher. On November 11, Soviet Zone SPD Party Chairman Otto Grotewohl distanced himself from the course of accelerated fusion and qualified his support of unity, arguing that a fusion could only be voluntary and nationwide. Reflecting increasing annoyance with Soviet and KPD pressure tactics, Grotewohl argued that “the fault lies with the deep bitterness that the Communist Party has fostered in our ranks over the last six months through the repeatedly uncomradely attitude toward lower officials, through the pressure exerted [on SPD members], and through the one-sided preferential

¹⁸⁴Quoted in *Andreas Malycha, Auf dem Weg zur SED. Die Sozialdemokraten und die Bildung der Einheitspartei in den Ländern der SBZ* (Bonn: J.H.W. Dietz Nachfolger, 1995), p. LXIV.

treatment of the Communist Party by the officials of the Soviet Military Administration.”¹⁸⁵

Grotewohl’s speech “caused trouble for the Soviet Government,” the chief of the Soviet military administration in Saxony-Anhalt, General Kotikov, warned his superiors. That was certainly an understatement: With the central instrument of its German policy at risk of becoming obliterate, SMA officials resorted to a mixture of persuasion and coercion in pushing the SPD towards unity, in turn only heightening the growing restiveness within the SPD towards the fusion project. In discussions with Max Fechner, Ulbricht and Franz Dahlem, Tiulpanov first raised the subject explicitly on December 5.¹⁸⁶ By mid-December, local SMA commandants interfered in local conflicts about fusion, pressuring, threatening and arresting local SPD officials. Stalin himself did not approve the unity campaign until his meeting with Ulbricht and other German leaders on February 2, setting May 1 as a target date for the establishment of a “Socialist Unity Party.” “Line correct,” Pieck noted after Ulbricht’s return from Moscow later that month. Regional SMA commanders now intensified their pressure on SPD organizations around the zone, suspending SPD meetings, intimidating party officials and setting *ultimata* for fusion.¹⁸⁷

The U.S. occupation administration was well aware of the “powerful Communist campaign” for merger which, by late 1945, was showing some effect.¹⁸⁸ At a leadership meeting in December (“Conference of the Sixty”) between SPD and KPD, Social Democrats signed a joint resolution on organizational fusion after they had aired their grievances and the communists had agreed to parity, separate lists of candidates in the forthcoming elections, and fusion at a national level. At the SPD’s request, the date for the fusion was left open. The massive KPD campaign for fusion in the Länder and SMA’s

¹⁸⁵ CHECK quote.

¹⁸⁶ Malycha, *Auf dem Weg*, LXXVI.

Badstübner/ Loth, eds., *Wilhelm Pieck - Aufzeichnungen zur Deutschlandpolitik* p. 68.

¹⁸⁸ Murphy to Secretary of State, 19 January 1946, NARA, RG 59 862.00/1-1946.

pressure tactics “from below” undermined the SPD Central Executive Committee’s dilatory strategy. At the Committee’s meeting February 10-11, 1946, the Länder representatives announced that, the lack of fusion at a national level notwithstanding, the merger would be effected at the provincial and state level in the near future. Isolated from the Western SPD, pressed by the SMA, the KPD and SPD state organizations, the Central Executive Committee resigned itself to the apparently inevitable: on February 11, a majority voted for holding a party convention at the zonal level, practically abandoning any hope to forestall fusion. At a SPD/KPD leadership meeting five days later, the date for the merger was set for April 20-21.¹⁸⁹

By late February, Grotewohl’s position was becoming increasingly tenuous. Throughout the U.S. documents available there is an undercurrent of empathy, almost admiration for the besieged party leader, with whom Americans had intimate contact.¹⁹⁰ OMGUS officials knew that Grotewohl and the other top SPD leaders had been repeatedly called to Karlshorst and urged by Bukov and Zhukov to join with the communists; that he was confronted with the genuine support by some SPD members for the fusion, especially in Saxony and Thuringia, and the persecution of others who strongly opposed it; that tensions between Grotewohl and the KPD and Russians were growing.¹⁹¹ Grotewohl remained forthcoming with the Americans, indicating after a recent trip in early 1946 to the Western zones that people there “feel no compulsion exercised over them” and that elections in the Russian zone were still a matter of the distant future as the Communists were still suffering from Red Army behavior. The Russians, Grotewohl informed his American interlocutors, were “aware of this and taking no chances.” They saw in a single

¹⁸⁹ The new party statutes for the SED had been published on February 27, leading US officials to consider the merger “virtually completed.” Murphy to Secretary of State, 5 March 1946, NARA, RG 59, 740.00119 Control (Germany)/3-546.

¹⁹⁰ See biographical appraisal of Grotewohl, OMGUS Berlin to Department of State, 22 April 1946, NARA, RG 59, 740.00119 Control (Germany)/4-2246.

¹⁹¹ “KPD anxious to avoid elections before merger with SPD,” OMGUS Office of Political Affairs, enclosed in Murphy to Secretary of State, 29 January 1946, NARA, RG 59, 862.00/1-2946.

labor party the “surest guarantee against the re-emergence of such forces in Germany as might again attack Russia.” Asked whether he believed that the communists had become sincere advocates of democracy, the SPD leader wryly stated that “they are doing their best, by their actions from day to day, to prove the contrary.”¹⁹² Not only did Grotewohl remain frank in his admission of the serious problems plaguing the Soviet Zone economy. He in fact argued that “the SPD should be able to absorb the KPD,” if the merger, as he apparently hoped, would eventually take place on a nationwide scale.¹⁹³ After talks with Kurt Schumacher and other SPD leaders in the British zone, in which Schumacher refused to consider a national convention and any cooperation with the Eastern Social Democrats (despite British efforts to avoid a complete split by reining in Schumacher’s criticism of his Berlin colleagues) Grotewohl opted for the merger in part due to his “feeling that he must stand by his comrades in the Russian Zone.”¹⁹⁴ “Finding also that [the] Western powers did not give him what he regarded as sufficient political support, Grotewohl decided to yield.” Though in particular the British had tried to persuade him to move west, Grotewohl would remain in Berlin.¹⁹⁵

At a March 1 SPD meeting in the State Opera House in the Soviet Sector, over 1,000 SPD functionaries from all over Berlin revolted against the Central Executive Committee. When Grotewohl observed that the KPD was independent because the Comintern had been dissolved, according to an American observer, “the whole audience roared with laughter.”¹⁹⁶ The meeting resolved to hold a referendum in Berlin and the SBZ on the merger, “a first serious setback to KPD and Soviet plans for rapid

¹⁹² Murphy to Secretary of State, 27 February 1946, NARA, RG 59, 862.00/2-2746.

¹⁹³ Murphy to Secretary of State, 19 April 1946, NARA, RG 59, 862.00/4-1946.

¹⁹⁴ Murphy to Secretary of State, 19 January 1946, NARA, RG 59 862.00/1-1946; Murphy to Secretary of State, 15 February 1946, NARA, RG 59 (FOIA release to author).

¹⁹⁵ Murphy to Secretary of State, 15 February 1946, NARA, RG 59 (FOIA release to author). By contrast, British intelligence successfully engineered the departure of Gustav Dahrendorf and his family to the British zone. Ibid.

¹⁹⁶ OMGUS to Secretary of State, 4 March 1946, NARA, RG 59.

amalgamation.”¹⁹⁷ Western support for the merger opponents now seemed to SMA officials only the latest political maneuver to undercut the KPD’s mass appeal and Soviet positions in Berlin: Allied favoritism of the “separatist” Social Democrats aimed at “destroying the Unity of Berlin.”¹⁹⁸ Increasingly feeling under siege, Soviet officials pressed for a conclusion of the fusion process. The SMA quelled all efforts throughout the zone to make fusion subject to a referendum, but it could not prevent a unity referendum on March 31 in Berlin’s western sectors, where 82% voted against an immediate merger.¹⁹⁹ In the face of broad opposition within the SPD, the fusion was ceremoniously staged three weeks later.

The merger seemed to reinforce the increasingly “grim” outlook among many Truman administration officials in Washington, who were “following attentively” the events in Berlin. The State Department noted the “undemocratic methods” employed by the Soviet government and emphasized to Murphy the issues involved were considered “very important.”²⁰⁰ To some, the fusion now appeared “in a broad pattern of events occurring in all eastern and central European countries,” and as “the most significant political event in Germany since the overthrow of the Nazi regime.”²⁰¹ Key officials within the State Department were increasingly convinced that the Soviet zone could be “written off,” reinforced in their views by West German political leaders, in particular within the western CDU.²⁰² Given the momentous significance of the events, some officials began to criticize Clay’s and Murphy’s hands-off attitude and argued for a more aggressive U.S. reaction: In late March, Louis Wiesner pleaded that the United States

¹⁹⁷ OMGUS to Secretary of State, 4 March 1946, NARA, RG 59.

¹⁹⁸ Semenov and Bokov to Zhukov, 2 March 1946, quoted in Kynin/Laufer., eds., *Die UdSSR und die deutsche Frage 1941-1948*, vol. 2, p. XXXV.

¹⁹⁹“Soviet Views Toward Referendum,” Lt. B.H. Brown to Mr. Wenner, 30 March 1946, NARA, RG 59, USPOLAD to Department of State, 862.00/4-1546. Several US observers, including POLAD staff member Louis Wiesner, were arrested in the Soviet sector during the day, but in each case released. Murphy to Secretary of State, 1 April 1946, NARA, RG 59, 862.00/4-146.

²⁰⁰ Department of State to Murphy, 9 April 1946, NARA, RG 59, 862.00/4-646.

²⁰¹ OMGUS Special Report, 15 May 1946, NARA, RG 59, 862.00/6-1546.

²⁰² Murphy to Secretary of State, 22 June 1946, NARA, RG 59, 862.00/6-2246.

“undertake more vigorous action to combat Soviet and Communist influence.”²⁰³ Barely a week later Brewster Morris of Murphy’s staff demanded internally that “we must put an end to the new KPD line of openly criticizing the Western occupation powers,” actively promote “our concept of democracy,” and bring the American public up to speed on the German situation, “otherwise there maybe a rude and unpleasant awakening.”²⁰⁴ Others within the Department, including Eastern European Affairs Division chief Eldrige Durbrow, agreed.²⁰⁵ Kennan saw the efforts of the German communists in “penetrating, paralyzing and bending to their will the German Social-Democrats” as an effort “to prepare that zone as a spring-board for a Communist political offensive elsewhere in the Reich.”²⁰⁶

Ostensibly Clay and Murphy pursued a “policy of political neutrality” throughout much of the merger crisis, despite the “entirely un-neutral attitude” of the Russians and much to the frustration of some Washington officials and Social Democrats.²⁰⁷ But in fact Clay did intercede with Sokolovsky in several instances during the merger process in which Ulbricht and Pieck openly criticized the Western occupation powers.²⁰⁸ Sokolovsky apparently promised that “he would see to it that such performances would not again be repeated and expressed the strongest kind of disapproval.” The SMA chief apparently intimated that “the German Communists trade in the name of the Soviet Military Government and do not hesitate to indicate that the Soviet Military Government supports

²⁰³ Memorandum by Louis Wiesner, 18 March 1946, as quoted in Murphy to H. Freeman Matthews, 28 March 1946, NARA, RG 59, FW 740.00119 Control (Germany)/3-2546 (sic!).

²⁰⁴ Brewster Morris, Memorandum No. 121, 26 March 1946, enclosed in Murphy to H. Freeman Matthews, 26 March 1946, Hoover Institution Archives, Murphy Papers, Box 58.

²⁰⁵ E.A. Gross to General Hilldring, 6 April 1946, NARA, RG 59, 55D371, Box 4.

²⁰⁶ Kennan to Offie, 10 May 1946, NARA, RG 59, 740.00119 Control (Germany)/5-1046.

²⁰⁷ “The Current Campaign to Merge the Communist and Social Democratic Parties in Berlin,” Murphy to Secretary of State, 8 April 1946, NARA, RG 59, 862.00/4-846; Murphy to Secretary of State, 8 March 1946, with enclosed OMGUS Intelligence Summary ICIS # 33, dated 2 March 1946, NARA, RG 59, 862.00/3-846. See also British “Directive for Germany and Austria,” which, with regard to the Soviet pressure tactics for the fusion, called on British officials to “content ourselves with drawing attention to our own methods of political administration and underlining the virtues of the party system.” Copy in NARA, RG 59, 740.00119 Control (Germany)/2-246.

²⁰⁸ For example, see “Weekly Political Trend Summary, March 7, 1946,” NARA, RG 59, 7400.00119 Control (Germany)/3-1346.

actions on which, at times, it has not been consulted.”²⁰⁹ U.S. authorities in Berlin also arrested a number of Communist employees of the Berlin city administration. Bolstering the public voice of the anti-merger forces, OMGUS, moreover, put some paper at the disposal of the SPD opposition and allocated additional news print to bring up the daily circulation of the US-licensed “Tagesspiegel”— the leading public outlet for those opposed to the fusion — from 325,000 to 500,000 copies.²¹⁰ On March 23, Clay stated in a press conference that the U.S. administration would only recognize the proposed merger if demanded by the members of the party as such and not just a small group of party leaders -- a statement strongly endorsed by Washington. Clay made clear that the United States favored a democratic referendum by the party members, but that it would only ensure democratic procedures in the U.S. sector, not throughout the entire city.²¹¹

When the pro-merger SPD Central Committee blasted the referendum in the Soviet controlled newspapers and urged Berliners not to participate, General Barker, the Commanding General of the American Military Government in Berlin, publicly repeated Clay’s demands that the merger would not be recognized unless demanded by a majority of party members and assured publicly that in the American sector, “measures have been taken so that everyone entitled to vote will be afforded the necessary protection so that he may cast his vote unhindered for or against the merger.”²¹² On the day after the referendum, anti-merger SPD leaders decided to break away for the SPD central leadership and form a new Berlin SPD Executive Committee; with permission from the

²⁰⁹ Murphy to H. Freeman Matthews, 26 March 1946, Hoover Institution Archives, Murphy Papers, Box 58.

²¹⁰ Murphy to Secretary of State, 20 March 1946, NARA, RG 58, 862.00/3-2046; Murphy to H. Freeman Matthews, 26 March 1946, Hoover Institution Archives, Murphy Papers, Box 58. See also “interview with Erik Reger, Co-Licensee of ‘Der Tagesspiegel,’” enclosed in POLAD Berlin, 19 March 1946, NARA, RG 59, 740.00119 Control (Germany)/3-1946. This did not go unnoticed in Moscow, where TASS reported on May 21 that “British and Americans are inspiring and rendering support to Social Democrats minority in Berlin in its efforts to undermine decision of the majority of SD Party concerning amalgamation with Communists.” Smith to Secretary of State, 25 May 1946, NARA, RG 59, 862.00/4-1946.

²¹¹ Murphy to Secretary of State, 25 March 1946, NARA, RG 59, 862.00/3-2546. The British government apparently held similar view, as reported by the British newspaper “Berliner.” See Murphy to Secretary of State, 8 April 1946, NARA, RG 59, 862.00/4-846.

²¹² Murphy to Secretary of State, 8 April 1946, NARA, RG 59, 862.00/4-846.

U.S., on April 7, delegates from all sections of Berlin arrived to elect a new leadership led by Neumann, Germer and Swolinsky.²¹³ In a press conference on April 24, shortly after the merger was concluded, Clay quickly made clear that the newly established SED could only be recognized in the Western zones by a referendum or by a petition as a new party, effectively barring the SED from legally carrying out activities in the West.²¹⁴ Unlike the British government, Clay, however, did not object to members of the American zone SPD becoming members of the newly formed SED Central Committee, as long as they ceased to be active within the SPD or KPD in the U.S. zone, emphasizing his desire to see the zonal boundaries eliminated soon.²¹⁵ Nonetheless, U.S. intelligence sources reported that an “air resembling desperation over the lack of open American support” was besetting the anti-merger group which felt cut off from the fellow opposition in the west.²¹⁶ In a similar vein, Grotewohl claimed that the independence of the SPD in the Soviet zone had “been lost through the unwillingness of the Western powers to give any but verbal assistance.”²¹⁷

While the merger seemed to be a textbook example of Soviet expansionism if viewed through the lens of the “Long Telegram” and hence became, in the eyes of Washington officials, a fatal crucial turning-point that called for an active stance against the Russians, Clay and Murphy were keen to preserve a modicum of cooperation with their Soviet counterparts in order that jointly arrived at all-German solutions would allow for Western influence to roll-back Soviet advances. They saw the merger in line with Soviet strong-arm methods since the take-over of Berlin a year earlier: it had been “obvious” that Moscow would place its chosen people in key public offices: “I cannot,”

²¹³ Murphy to Secretary of State, 6 April 1946, NARA, RG 59, 862.00/4-646; OMGUS Intelligence Summary No 33, NARA, RG 59, 740.00119 Control Council (Germany)/4-1746.

²¹⁴ Transcript of Clay press conference in Murphy to Department of State, 29 April 1946, NARA, RG 59, 740.00119 Control Council (Germany)/4-2946.

²¹⁵ Murphy to Secretary of State, 6 May 1946, NARA, RG 59, 740.00119 Control Council (Germany)/5-646.

²¹⁶ Weekly Political Trend Summary # 15 of April 18, 1946, NARA, RG 59, 740.00119 Control (Germany)/4-2546.

²¹⁷ Fusion opponents argued that Grotewohl’s argument was “mainly an attempt (...) to excuse the line he has taken in agreeing to the merger.” Murphy to Secretary of State, 19 April 1946, NARA, RG 59, 862.00/4-1946.

Murphy argued near the height of the unification drama, “work myself up into a lather about it.” It had been more important to him and Clay all along to avoid “falling into the pitfall of Allied discord if we ever wanted to achieve a definitive solution to the German problem.” Reassurances from Sokolovsky served to reinforce Murphy’s impression that Germans —Communist or non-Communist— were eager to play the occupation powers against each other.²¹⁸ Murphy suspected in particular that the German communists at times traded in the name of the Soviet MG: “In fact I feel that the thinking of some German Communists may well be in advance of that of their Soviet associates.”²¹⁹ Taking issue with those who argued in favor of abandoning official policy that still classified Communist parties as democratic parties and instead “go[ing] all out” for the SPD, Murphy wondered how “our policy would differ from any other totalitarian methods. In other words I feel that we cannot continue to talk about democracy as we understand it and practice some other form.”²²⁰

Underlying the different approaches between Washington and Berlin was the expectation of success and the irreversibility Soviet policies in their zone would meet—and the potential to project American interests beyond the zonal boundaries. In the Washington view (and that of some OMGUS analysts), the Eastern zone was slowly but irreversibly transformed along the Soviet model into a people’s republic, that “a revolution has been accomplished in the Eastern Zone which has been brought so far that the status quo ante can hardly be restored.”²²¹ Murphy, by contrast, remained skeptical that the merger would be successful: “The Soviet technique in all these things seems to me

²¹⁸ Murphy to F. Freeman Matthews, 26 March 1946, NARA, RG 59, FW 740.00119 Control (Germany)/3-2646; Murphy to Riddleberger, 24 April 1946, NARA, RG 59, Lot 55D371, Box 2.

²¹⁹ The reference is to an intelligence report of a Ulbricht speech before the April 1-2 FDGB conference in Berlin, in which Ulbricht called for rapid nationalization of enterprises prior to the establishment of central agencies. “And then,” Ulbricht reportedly declared, “we shall devote ourselves to the other zones.” Murphy to Riddleberger, 24 April 1946, NARA, RG 59, Lot 55D371, Box 2.

²²⁰ Murphy to F. Freeman Matthews, 26 March 1946, NARA, RG 59, FW 740.00119 Control (Germany)/3-2646; see also Memorandum by Brewster Morris, enclosed in Murphy to Secretary of State, 8 April 1946, NARA, RG 59, 862.00/4-846.

²²¹ E.A. Gross to General Hilldring, 6 April 1946, NARA, RG 59, 55D371, Box 4.

exceedingly primitive, and in their obvious determination to impose a single party structure I think they will meet with failure... [T]heir efforts delude but few.” The United States stood little to gain from “cheap imitation of their methods.”²²² Similarly, one State Department German hand, dispatched by the Department to Berlin, wrote home that “from the vantage point of Washington, we are all inclined, I think, to be a bit pessimistic, to think that Germany is inevitably lost to the great push from the East or that at any rate the Eastern Zone of Germany is already lost as a result of the social and economic reorganization put through under Soviet auspices (...). From Berlin the situation does not look so bad, and I must say that my short stay here has already made me feel much more optimistic about the general situation and its prospects in relation to fundamental American interests. No matter what decisions may be made with regard to a closer organization of the Western Zones, I am convinced that we should in no sense write off Eastern Germany or Berlin (...).”²²³ Washington officials remained unconvinced – Murphy was told that if one were to draw general conclusions from the Berlin experience one would get an “entirely distorted picture.”²²⁴ But he continued to warn Washington more directly of the consequences of the fascination of “the other side.” As late as summer 1947, the head of the State Department’s Russian Unit, Nicolas Nabokoff, at Murphy’s behest, tried to convince Bohlen and Kennan that “the constant preoccupation with ‘that one problem’ definitely condition[ed] one and [made] one see the world as if it were a large plain with only two volcanoes on it, Washington and Moscow.”²²⁵

²²² Murphy to F. Freeman Matthews, 26 March 1946, NARA, RG 59, FW 740.00119 Control (Germany)/3-2546; see also Memorandum by Brewster Morris, enclosed in Murphy to Secretary of State, 8 April 1946, NARA, RG 59, 862.00/4-846.

²²³ Howard Trivers to James Riddleberger, 27 June 1946, NARA, RG 59, Lot File 55D371, Box 2. See also Donald R. Heath (USPOLAD) to James Riddleberger (Chief of the Central European Division, Department of State), 7 March 1946, NARA, RG 59, Lot 55D371, Box 2.

²²⁴ Matthews to Murphy, 18 April 1946, R. Murphy Papers, Hoover Institution Archives, Box 58.

²²⁵ Nabokoff to Murphy, 18 August 1947, Hoover Institution Archives, Robert Murphy Papers, Box 59.

Clay and Murphy were, moreover, aware that despite the fact that the fusion had made the SED the largest political force in the zone, rifts within the socialist “unity” party persisted, in particular between former KPD and SPD members, but even within the ranks of the KPD. The KPD’s arrogant and forceful approach to the merger reinforced skepticism among former SPD members about the sudden conversion of the Communists to democratic principles. Instead of unity, the SED was plagued by ideological and personal rifts, inner-party repression and power struggle. Among the rank-and-file, especially the former SPD members, the reality of Communist dominance quickly led to defeatism and hopelessness. American officials in Germany were well aware that doubts lingered on at the top level of the new party: Grotewohl was “far from being pleased over the merger-path” and might even break away from the SED.²²⁶ In May, SED co-chairman Grotewohl reestablished contact with the Americans, appeared tense and “not entirely happy about the new situation, though determined to make the best of it.”²²⁷ During the conversation Grotewohl referred several times to the “experiment of the SED [SED],” implying that he still viewed the merger as such. The party leader “seemed particularly glad of this opportunity to renew contact with the Americans, suggesting very definitely that he does not want to become isolated from the western occupation powers and dependent on his Soviet contacts.”²²⁸

Following the merger, each of the three Western allies moved quickly to prevent pressures on the non-Communist left in the West by assuring that no SED formed in their

²²⁶ U.S. officials also noted that some of Grotewohl’s associates believed that the SPD leader gave in due to a combination of Russian pressure and flattery, and the fact that his character was not strong enough to stand up to this onslaught.” Some suspected that “he may either have a nervous breakdown within the next year or break away from the SED [SED].” Murphy to Secretary of State, 19 April 1946, 862.00/4-1946.

²²⁷ “Conversation with Otto Grotewohl,” enclosed in Murphy to Secretary of State 23 May 1946, NARA, RG 59, 862.00/5-2346.

²²⁸ “Conversation with Otto Grotewohl,” enclosed in Murphy to Secretary of State 23 May 1946, NARA, RG 59, 862.00/5-2346. There is some evidence that Grotewohl maintained his contact with the Americans through the fall of 1946. See Murphy to Secretary of State, 20 September 1946, NARA, RG 59, 862.00/9-2046. For continuous reports on dissension within the SED see also Riddleberger to Secretary of State 27 June 1949, NARA, RG 59, 862.00/6-2449. OMGUS also maintained occasional contacts with Pieck, see Murphy to Secretary of State, 13 June 1946, NARA, RG 59, 862.00/6-1346.

zone. The forced merger process had raised the specter of the SED spilling over to the Western zones: Allied officials worried that lower levels of the SPD outside Schumacher's control would follow the Soviet zones model and join with the lower KPD ranks to form a Socialist Unity Party in the Western zones. But no one was concerned that Western Zone SPD leader Kurt Schumacher would voluntarily fuse his party with the Western KPD headed by Max Reimann, hence OMGUS announced that it would permit parties to merge at the state level only. Until that had occurred, no meetings could be held in the American zone under the name of the SED. In flagrant violation of basic political freedoms OMGUS ruled that those Social Democrats eager to support the SED had to join the KPD.²²⁹ But Clay's reaction was actually more forceful than is often portrayed: Rather than worrying about expansion of the SED into the American zone, Clay made it clear that the SED would not be licensed in the western zones until the SPD and other parties in the SBZ had equal rights. In June, Clay pressed for simultaneous quadripartite recognition of the reorganized SPD (composed of the anti-merger forces) and the SED throughout all of Berlin. Not only would such action counter the growing division between the Eastern and Western sectors in Berlin, but the attraction of the SPD was certain to aggravate the problems within the SED, whose popular appeal continued to evaporate as Soviet tutelage and micro-management of the party tainted the SED's public image as the "Russian party."

To the surprise of Western officials, Soviet and East German officials agreed to recognize an independent SPD in Berlin in early May 1946, denying that the Soviet Union "stood for a single party system in Germany." Reminding Murphy that German Communist Party members were "not without personal ambitions," Semenov complained

²²⁹ The British government adopted a slightly different procedure that required Social Democrats and Communists to dissolve their parties and apply for a new license, practically precluding a new license for forming an SED organization in its zone. Daniel E. Rogers, *Politics after Hitler: The Western Allies and the German Party System* (New York: New York University Press, 1995), pp. 82-83.

that the Soviet attitude had been “incorrectly publicized and probably intentionally so on the part of some German leaders who may trade in the name of the Soviet Military Government.” In another surprise move, SMA announced that local government elections would be held in the SBZ that fall, perhaps, as US officials expected, to influence Berlin elections scheduled for later that same fall and to avoid the effects of a sizable vote for the CDU and reconstituted SPD in Berlin.²³⁰

In the run-up to the elections in the Soviet Zone, the non-communist CDU and LPD suffered from massive discriminatory interference by the Soviet authorities.²³¹ While actual voting in the communal elections would be technically free, as almost all observers agreed, heavy pressure was exerted on the population during the months prior to the elections in order to influence the outcome of the election.²³² While the SED received considerable assistance from the Soviet military authorities, its opponents were greatly disadvantaged, “drowned in the overwhelming propaganda facilities” available to the SED, as CDU leader Ernst Lemmer confided to U.S. officials. A particular handicap was the CDU’s and LDPD’s inability to register local party groups to set up a list of candidates. Altogether, OMGUS estimated that in some 9,000 communities in eastern Germany the SED and its associated organizations were the only parties on the ballot; American observers got the impression that general directives from Karlshorst prescribed when and where the LDP and CDU had to be curbed. In one case, a Russian officer apparently displayed anxiety because he had registered more groups than his orders permitted.²³³ Soviet officials directly accused CDU and LDP speakers of having furnished

²³⁰ Murphy to Secretary of State, 23 May 1946, NARA, RG 59, 740.00119 Control (Germany)/5-2346.

²³¹ Memorandum on evidence of Soviet discrimination in favor of the SED, enclosed ion Donald Heath to Clay, 24 August 1946, NARA, RG 59, 740.00119 Control (Germany)/8-546; “OMGUS Intelligence “Special Report: Pressure used to Influence Soviet Zone elections,” 15 October 1946, NARA, RG 59, 862.00/10-2146.

²³² POLAD to Department of State, 16 April 1946, NARA, RG 59, 740.00119 Control (Germany)/4-1646; “Daily Information Summary No 214, 23 April 1946, NARA, RG 59, 740.00119 Control (Germany)/4-2446.

²³³ The OMGUS Intelligence “Special Report: Pressure used to Influence Soviet Zone elections,” 15 October 1946, NARA, RG 59, 862.00/102146

information on the SBZ to the Americans,²³⁴ and CDU leader Jakob Kaiser as well as LDP leader Lieutenant were reproached by the SMA for having quoted the September Stuttgart speech by U.S. Secretary of State Byrnes “but not mentioning that of Molotov.”

²³⁵ Taken together with other measures to intimidate CDU and LDP sympathizers and sabotage the parties’ campaigns (as well as to tap into the reservoir of former Nazis), the election presented itself to many within OMGUS as “a contest between the totalitarian occupying power and two unsponsored political groups.”²³⁶

As early as March 1946, CDU leaders asked for U.S. support of a party convention in Berlin; OMGU reports from Berlin reflected longstanding calls for greater backing of the non-communist parties.²³⁷ Against the backdrop of the elections, the question of if and how to lend assistance to the non-communist forces sparked an intense debate between OMGUS and Washington. At the State Department, an increasing number of officials felt that “we cannot afford the luxury of political neutrality towards German political parties.”²³⁸ State Department Counselor Charles Bohlen spoke for many others when he advised Murphy that he would soon see “indications of a more active and dynamic encouragement” to non-Communist forces than had previously been the case.²³⁹ State Department officials urged OMGUS to assure “in every feasible way” that the non-

²³⁴ See the OMGUS Intelligence “Special Report: Pressure used to Influence Soviet Zone elections,” 15 October 1946, NARA, RG 59, 862.00/102146. For other instances of Soviet discrimination against the non-Communist parties, see Heath to Secretary of State, 22 August 1946, NARA, RG 59, 862.00/8-2246; Murphy to James Riddleberger, 28 September 1946, NARA, RG 59, 740.00119 Control (Germany)/8-2846; Murphy to Secretary of State, 27 September 1946, NARA, RG 59, 862.00/9-2746.

²³⁵ Murphy to James Riddleberger, 28 September 1946, NARA, RG 59, 740.00119 Control (Germany)/8-2846. On Kaiser’s role, Alexander Gallus., *Die Neutralisten. Verfechter eines vereinten Deutschland zwischen Ost und West, 1945-1990* (Düsseldorf: Droste, 2001), pp. 57-61.

²³⁶ OMGUS to Department of State, 21 October 1946, NARA, RG 59, 862.00/10-2146; see also “Murphy to Secretary of State, “Transmitting German Report on Pre-election Political Discrimination in Soviet Zone of Occupation,” 25 September 1946. NARA, RG 59, 862.00/9-2546.

²³⁷ OMGUS to Department of State, 23 March 1946, NARA, RG 59, 740.00119 Control (Germany)/3-2346; Weekly Political Trend Summary, 28 February 1946, NARA, RG, 740.00119 Control (Germany)/3-1336.

²³⁸ Heath to Howard Trivers, 30 September 1946, NARA, RG 59, 740.00119 Control (Germany)/9-3046.

²³⁹ Bohlen to Murphy, 23 August 1946, Hoover Institution Archives, Robert Murphy Papers, Box 57.

communist parties could maintain their organizations.²⁴⁰ Some within the Department favored providing “a certain amount of quiet discreet unofficial assistance” for the SED’s opponents,²⁴¹ some were even ready to go as far as “hinting at the possibility of forbidding the SED in the U.S. sector,” should there be no “marked relaxation in repressive practices.” Some within the State Department were already wondering whether the political situation in the zone had developed so far that CDU participation in the elections would make sense at all.²⁴² Even within OMGUS proponents of a tougher policy vis-à-vis the Soviets, including reportedly Col. Glasser and Gen. Keating -- had grown impatient as “time is so rapidly slipping by.” Desperate to draw Clay’s attention to the situation, Perry Laukhuff bemoaned “our present passivity” and came close to accusing OMGUS of acting against State Department policy “to actively assist the non-Communist, democratic forces in Germany.” While the CDU continued “to wage as gallant as fight as it can in the Soviet Zone under present circumstances, it is hindered and discriminated at every turn and it seems impossible that it will be able to stand against the SED with any success.” Laukhuff argued that there were a number of actions that might alleviate the situation: OMGUS could protest in the Allied Control Council against the violation by the Russians of the Potsdam Agreement to allow and encourage political parties; emphasize through press conferences the suppression of democratic parties occurring in the Soviet Zone; “tell the truth” about the situation in the Monthly Report of the military Governor; officially inform Kaiser and the CDU to openly withdraw from political activity in the SBZ; and request permission from the Russians to send election observers. In Berlin, the United States could give the SPD greater support throughout the city with more cars, gasoline, food, furniture, meeting halls and paper. The CDU could be supported in a similar fashion

²⁴⁰ State Department to Murphy, 16 August 1946, NARA, RG 59, 740.00119 Control (Germany)/8-346 (sic!).

²⁴¹ Howard Trivers to James Riddleberger, 27 June 1946, NARA, RG 59, Lot File 55D371, Box 2.

²⁴² State Department to Murphy, 16 August 1946, NARA, RG 59, 740.00119 Control (Germany)/8-346 (sic!).

– “to whatever extent is necessary.” Though doubtful that such steps would “bring about free democratic political life in the Soviet Zone,” time had come, Laukhuff argued, “to put up an active fight in our own interest here.”²⁴³

Clay and Murphy however, fended off any suggestions that OMGUS overtly throw its full weight behind the CDU and LPD in the zone (and the SPD in Berlin). In fact, at the very time the non-communist parties were struggling in the SBZ, Clay gave official permission to Ulbricht, Pieck and Grotewohl to engage in a speaking tour throughout the U.S. zone, allowing the SED leaders to proselytize for Socialist unity provided that the meetings were publicly sponsored by the KPD. To the chagrin of not just Washington but local military government officials and eventually even Murphy, Ulbricht, Max Fechner and other SED politburo members used their appearances to expound SPD/KPD unity and draw invidious comparison between life in the US zone and the conditions in the SBZ. Murphy’s staff wanted the SED speakers sanctioned and reprimanded. At that point Clay personally intervened telling his subordinates that they had to uphold the right of Communists to make strong speeches “at all costs.”²⁴⁴

To be sure, after talking to Kaiser, Clay agreed to set up an afternoon paper in Berlin that, while not a CDU party paper, would be staffed by “people sympathetic to the CDU stand” and would bolster the CDU reach throughout Berlin. Other than the SPD’s request to start a paper -- one that OMGUS denied (“they hardly need another daily”) but the British approved --, however, OMGUS had apparently “no recent kicks from any of

²⁴³ Perry Laukhuff to Murphy and Mr. Heath, 12 August 1946, Hoover Institution Archives, Robert Murphy Papers, Box 57. Furthermore, Laukhuff argued, “We could give the same kind of publicity in the world press in this case as suggested above in the case of the Soviet Zone. 4. We should protest in the Kommandatura against the Russian order limiting the LDP in the Soviet Sector to speakers residing in that sector. 5. We should protest in the Kommandatura and refuse to recognize Soviet action in removing unilaterally the LDP City Executive Committee. This is a matter for the Kommandatura and not for any one of the Occupying Powers. 6. If necessary we could take certain retaliatory measures against the SED in our Sector if the Soviets persist in their suppression of the SPD.” Ibid.

²⁴⁴ Roger H. Wells, Chief, Election Affairs Branch, OMGUS to Director, OMGUS Civil Affairs Division, 17 August 1946, OMGUS CAD 3/156-3/14; Heath to Wilkinson, 27 August 1946, POLAD/747/33, cited in Daniel E. Rogers, *Politics after Hitler: The Western Allies and the German Party System* (New York: New York University Press, 1995), pp. 84-85.

the non-communist parties in Berlin that they lack any other types of facilities to reach the Berlin electorate” and was fairly confident that the parties had a fair chance in the Berlin elections. Semi-overt sponsorship of a political party by any of the occupation powers, top OMGUS officials remained convinced, would “put the ‘kiss of death’ on said party.”²⁴⁵

More importantly, Clay and Murphy remained convinced that far more was to be gained by extending Western influence to the east through quadripartite solutions than launching into an “active fight” which effectively promised to achieve very little. Rather than interference on behalf of individual political parties in the SBZ, Clay sought to mitigate discriminatory practices in the SBZ that kept the CDU and LDP from organizing and representing their own candidates by pushing through the quadripartite control machinery a policy guideline on political parties that provided all licensed parties with authority to present candidates in the voting district of that zone.²⁴⁶ In addition to pursuing quadripartite cooperation on the issue, OMGUS also used other ways of influencing the elections in the zone. One step was a series of OMGUS-inspired articles in the American press (among others by Alsop) that focused on the discriminatory pre-election practices. OMGUS officials credited the fact that the elections were not made a complete mockery with American and British media coverage “which turned the spotlight on Soviet and German communist methods and aims in the elections.”²⁴⁷ OMGUS intelligence sources confirmed that Russian concerns about foreign reactions led them to moderate their pressure methods. A direct result might have been the permission for a group of eight U.S. journalists to travel around the zone that summer.²⁴⁸ General Clay “may have done

²⁴⁵ Heath to Howard Trivers, 30 September 1946, NARA, RG 59, 740.00119 Control (Germany)/9-3046.

²⁴⁶ Murphy to Secretary of State, 5 September 1946, NARA, RG 59, 740.00119 Control (Germany)/9-546; Murphy to Secretary of State, 28 September 1946, NARA, RG 59, 740.00119 Control (Germany)/9-2846; Heath to Howard Trivers, 30 September 1946, NARA, RG 59, 740.00119 Control (Germany)/9-3046.

²⁴⁷ Murphy to Secretary of State, 17 September 1946, NARA, RG 59, 862.00/9-1746.

²⁴⁸ “U.S. Correspondents’ Observations About the Russian Zone,” 10 July 1946, enclosed in Murphy to Riddleberger, 16 July 1946, NARA, RG 59, 740.00119 Control (Germany)/7-1646. The journalists’ impressions were fairly positive: The “caliber of Soviet officials seemed to be superior;” “cooperation, not compulsion” was the thesis of Soviet officials. The journalists reported that feuding in Berlin and the

‘something’ to cause the Russians to permit more freedom,” one intelligence source wondered.²⁴⁹ More importantly, Clay sensed that the enormous effect Byrnes’ September 6 speech in Stuttgart had on the Soviet Zone: Internally, OMGUS officials later credited the Byrnes speech as having had a “great effect” on the communal elections on September 8 and 15. According to OMGUS estimates, the speech “increased the CDU and LDP vote in Mecklenburg and Vorpommern by about 25 percent.”²⁵⁰

How volatile the popular strength of the SED actually was became evident when, despite massive Soviet support, the party achieved only meager results at a string of local and state elections in the fall of 1946. To the embarrassment and shock of SMA and SED alike, the disadvantaged bourgeois parties nearly outflanked the SED at the polls. In the strongly Protestant Saxony, combined votes for CDU and LDP nearly matched those cast for the SED in local elections on September 1.²⁵¹ In communal elections in Thuringia and Sachsen-Anhalt [check] on September 8, the SED actually trailed the LDP in Apolda, Eisenach, Erfurt, Gotha, Jena and Weimar, with the CDU coming in third. Altogether, the SED was outvoted in 90 percent of Saxon cities!²⁵² Paradoxically, the SED seemed to score impressive victories in the remaining, far more rural areas of Mecklenburg-Vorpommern and Brandenburg on September 15, where the land reform had won over

western zones had “given us a somewhat distorted picture of the amount of cooperation being achieved between Germans and Soviets in the Russian Zone.” According to the group, “in progress toward economic and industrial recovery, the Soviet Zone ranks first, the American Zone second, the British Zone third, and the French Zone fourth.” The group’s overall impression: “Pretty good; people are working hard; there is enough, if not plentiful amount of food. Smoke stacks are puffing. Factories are turning out goods. There is a certain confidence that the “hump” can be crossed.” Ibid.

²⁴⁹ Murphy to Riddleberger, 14 October 1946, RG 59, Lot File 55D371, Box 2.

²⁵⁰ OMGUS to Department of State, 21 October 1946, NARA, RG 59, 862.00/10-2146. For US efforts to “keep alive” the Byrnes speech in other than US zone, see instructions to OMGUS Intelligence, 17 September 1946, NARA, RG 59, F.W. 862.00/9-2446; for East German reactions, see Ulbrich editorial in *Neues Deutschland*, 12 September 1946, pg. 1; Murphy to Secretary of State, 12 September 1946, NARA, RG 59, 862.00/9-1246; Murphy to Secretary of State, 17 September 1946, NARA, RG 59, 862.00/9-1746; and CIA intelligence report, “Further Remarks by Dr. Wilhelm Schroeder of the Central Administration of the Russian Zone, Germany”, 5 September 1946, enclosed in Lester O. Houck (Dissemination Branch, Central Intelligence Group) to Llewellyn Thompson (Department of State), 25 November 1946, NARA, RG 59, 740.00119 Control (Germany)/11-2546 (FOIA Release to author).

²⁵¹ Murphy to Secretary of State, 5 September 1946, NARA, RG 59, FW 862.00/9-546.

²⁵² OMGUS to Secretary of State, 20 September 1946, NARA, RG 59, 862.00/9-2046.

many traditionally conservative farmers but where, according to OMGUS estimates, CDU and LDP had also been prevented from reaching some 50-60 percent of the voters. While the CDU had been bolstered by recent election victories in the western zones, the SED's focus on the CDU had evidently allowed to LDP to gain strength.²⁵³ Most importantly, both parties apparently gained the votes of former SPD voters, many of whom used their votes to signal dissatisfaction with the forced merger. While the SED narrowly prevailed in the total vote due to its monopoly position on the ballots in the rural areas, Murphy could report to Washington that the Soviets and SED had "suffered a moral and strategic defeat of considerable magnitude." Where an alternative existed, "they have flocked to that alternative in large numbers."²⁵⁴ According to the U.S. Political Advisor, the elections showed that "Communism of Soviet State Party have not captured the minds of the voters in the Soviet zone."²⁵⁵ The electoral setback for the SED was compounded in the zonal and Berlin elections held on October 20, in which the communists, despite increased efforts to frighten voters, failed to obtain any majority at the zonal level, outmatched by the combined votes of the non-communist parties. In Berlin, the SED suffered a resounding defeat to the SPD.²⁵⁶

OMGUS officials speculated about the longer-term effects of the fall elections, which had made the Russians, as one intelligence report read by Clay indicated, "disappointed and quite angry."²⁵⁷ Some argued the results might lead the SED, backed by the Soviets, to increase pressures tactics vis-à-vis the non-communist parties. By contrast, the Central Intelligence Group suggested that the Kremlin was intent on working

²⁵³ Murphy to Secretary of State, 22 June 1946, NARA, RG 59, 862.00/6-2246.

²⁵⁴ Murphy to Secretary of State, 11 September 1946, NARA, RG 59, 862.00/9-1146.

²⁵⁵ Murphy to Secretary of State, 11 September 1946, NARA, RG 59, 862.00/9-1146.

²⁵⁶ Murphy to Secretary of State, 24 October 1946, NARA, RG 59, 862.00/10-2446. US intelligence indicated that the date of the zonal elections was moved from October 13 to October 20 in the wake of the local elections, as the SED "now fear[ed] zone elections will have [the] wrong effect on Berlin elections. (...) Additionally, they may wish to cover up anti-SED results in Berlin by flood of SED victories in [the] Soviet Zone." OMGUS Berlin to Secretary of State, 20 September 1946, NARA, RG 59, 862.00/9-2046.

²⁵⁷ Murphy to James Riddleberger, 28 September 1946, NARA, RG 59, 740.00119 Control (Germany)/8-2846 (sic!).

“through non-Communist parties.”²⁵⁸ Impressed by the blow to the SED, Murphy argued that the “moral bankruptcy” of the policy of creating and supporting the SED “might even lead to some complete change of attitude, such as the dissolution of the SED, rapprochement with the Social Democrats and greater cooperation with the bourgeois parties.”²⁵⁹ Sensing Soviet uncertainty about the SED, Murphy recommended to Washington to use concessions in the reparations question to effect a political opening in eastern Germany.²⁶⁰

OMGUS intelligence (based on conversations, among other, with the CDU’s Jacob Kaiser) reinforced the impression that the Soviets were preparing for a readmission of the SPD in the zone and that “a rather drastic change in Soviet policy in Germany”²⁶¹ towards was imminent. OMGUS reported to Washington “persistent reports of preparatory action by the SMA with regard to possible reauthorization of the SPD in the Soviet zone,” based on the expectation that “the Moscow Conference may result in the unification of Germany.” The reappearance of the SPD in the SBZ, “a bitter pill for the present leaders of the SED to swallow,” OMGUS officials speculated, might come as early as mid-February 1947, allowing the Soviets “to get credit for having done so at their own initiative.”²⁶² By February, no readmission of the SPD in the zone had occurred, but “fairly reliable sources” reported that at the eighth meeting of the SED Central Committee was informed that the Russians “are reconsidering readmitting the SPD in their zone.”²⁶³

At the same time, U.S. observers speculated about “a highly important change in the leadership of German communism.” For several weeks, rumors had it that Ulbricht,

²⁵⁸ CIG Report, “Beria’s Plans for Improvement of Russian-German Relations,” December 1946 (FOIA release to author).

²⁵⁹ Murphy to Secretary of State, 24 October 1946, NARA, RG 59, 862.00/10-2446.

²⁶⁰ Murphy to State Department, 16 October 1946, FRUS, 1946, V, p. 622.

²⁶¹ Chase to Secretary of State, 20 January 1947, NARA, RG 59, 740.00119 Control (Germany)/1-2047.

²⁶² Warren M. Chase to Secretary of State, 30 January 1947, , NARA, RG 59, 740.00110 Control (Germany) 1-3047; Maurice W. Altaffer (American Consul General Bremen) to secretary of Statem, 10 June 1947.

²⁶³ ESD (?-CHECK) report No MGB-2307, as reported in Mucchio to Secretary of State 24 February 1947, NARA, RG 862.00/2-447.

recognized since the beginning of occupation as “more Russian than the Russians” the real leader of the KPD/SED, had fallen into disfavor with SMA, presumably as a result of the failure of German communism to develop mass political support. The Russians had allegedly instructed Ulbricht to “remain more in the background,” presumably since they had realized that his methods and mentality had “in fact irritated many of the Germans he had to contact, and also served to identify the KPD and SED too closely in the popular mind with the SMA.”²⁶⁴ SED leader Pieck indicated that after the election debacle, the Soviets had instructed the SED to take a more independent line and to cooperate more with the other parties.²⁶⁵

To American observers, the “new Soviet line” of “greater conciliation and moderation”²⁶⁶ also related to apparent changes in Soviet personnel, in particular the replacement of Gen. Bukov, who had been “a man of mystery”²⁶⁷ to OMGUS, by Lt. Gen. Makarov, described as “responsible not only for all political questions, but for the coordination of all questions of Soviet policy, including economic matters.” Reputedly KGB chief Beria’s representative in Germany and apparently charged with sweeping authority, Makarov’s appointment seemed to be connected with Sokolovsky’s policy announcements and, together with a mysterious visit by Beria to Sokolovsky’s headquarters, reported by the War Department’s Strategic Services Unit (SSU)²⁶⁸ suggested to some that the Soviets were preparing for allied troop withdrawal and the establishment of central administrations, “perhaps even a government,” as a result of the

²⁶⁴ Warren M. Chase to Secretary of State, 30 January 1947, , NARA, RG 59, 740.00110 Control (Germany) 1-3047; Mucchio to Secretary of State, 29 January, 1947, NARA, RG 59, 740.00119 Control (Germany)/1-2947

²⁶⁵ Chase to Secretary of State, 20 January 1947, NARA, RG 59, 740.00119 Control (Germany)/1-2047.

²⁶⁶ Chase to Secretary of State, 20 January 1947, NARA, RG 59, 740.00119 Control (Germany)/1-2047.

²⁶⁷ Chase to Secretary of State, 20 January 1947, NARA, RG 59, 740.00119 Control (Germany)/1-2047.

²⁶⁸ SSU report, MGB-1611, 6 January 1947, cited in Chase to Secretary of State, 20 January 1947, NARA, RG 59, 740.00119 Control (Germany)/1-2047.

Moscow CFM.²⁶⁹ Based on intelligence sources within the SED, SSU had reported in late December that the SED Executive Committee had been informed by the Soviets that they had decided to agree to the unification of Germany, which “allegedly took the party completely by surprise, as its propaganda had been busy denouncing the bizonal agreement.”²⁷⁰ Several other intelligence reports about this same time suggested that Karlshorst was making similar statements to other Germans.²⁷¹

New Russian and German evidence shows that Stalin indeed entertained the idea of readmitting the SPD to the SBZ. The idea had not come entirely out of nowhere: In May 1946 Moscow had allowed for the readmission of the SPD in the Soviet sector of Berlin to obtain the licensing of the SED in the western part of the city, and in June Kurt Schumacher, the staunchly anti-communist leader of the SPD in the western zones, had demanded readmission of the SPD throughout the zone. Demands for a readmission of the SPD were popular throughout the Soviet Zone, as American intelligence officials reported; hopes among the population were directed at the United States and Britain.²⁷² After the elections, SMA considered such a step as “undesirable,”²⁷³ yet internally the SED party leadership remained convinced throughout November and December 1946 that the readmission of the SPD in the Soviet zone was imminent. Meeting with top SED leaders in January 1947, Stalin in fact raised the idea of “licensing the SPD in the Soviet Occupation Zone” and, during a nocturnal meeting in the Kremlin, asked the Germans

²⁶⁹ Warren M. Chase to Secretary of State, 30 January 1947, , NARA, RG 59, 740.00110 Control (Germany) 1-3047.

²⁷⁰ SSU report MGB-1351, 20 December 1946, cited in Chase to Secretary of State, 20 January 1947, NARA, RG 59, 740.00119 Control (Germany)/1-2047; and POLAD Berlin to Secretary of State, 26 December 1946, NARA, RG 59, 740.00119 Control (Germany)/12-2646.

²⁷¹ Chase to Secretary of State, 20 January 1947, NARA, RG 59, 740.00119 Control (Germany)/1-2047; see also Murphy to Secretary of State, “Reported Soviet Thinking on Central German Administrations,” 1 March 1947, NARA, RG 59, 862.00/3-147; and the SED’s declaration on March 2, reported in Murphy to Secretary of State, 5 March 1947, NARA, RG 59, 862.00/3-547.

²⁷² CIC Report, “Conditions in the Russian Zone,” by Counterintelligence Corps Region III, 28 January 1947, NARA, RG 319, Case Files: Conditions in the Soviet Zones, Vol. 1-2, XE 049458.

²⁷³ Doc 7

whether the “SED feared the SPD,” suggesting that “it had to be fought politically.”²⁷⁴ Chosen to present the SED’s case, Grotewohl evasively countered that the Western allies were demanding the readmission of the SPD despite the “fusion” of the party with the KPD. Stalin again stated with determination: “One had to license it [the SPD].” In a rare display of opposition, the shaken SED leaders tried to convince Stalin that the move was impracticable. Stalin himself seems to not have been certain of his “advice” to the German comrades: despite its repeated attempts to prepare for the day the SPD would be readmitted in the zone, as late as July 1947 neither the SED nor SMA could obtain a final word on the issue from Moscow.²⁷⁵

Despite his musings about the SPD, Stalin, as well as SMA, were far from abandoning the SED, as U.S. officials speculated. Detailed election analyses by the apparatus of the political adviser and Tulpanov’s department blamed the disappointing results on the lack of unity of communists and former social democrats within the SED, which had almost broken up over the even distribution of candidates on the ballot. Tulpanov emphasized the need to strengthen the SED organizationally and counter the “chauvinist” and “nationalistic” propaganda of the bourgeois parties. In particular, Tulpanov wanted to intensify the confrontation against the divisive activities of the Berlin SPD, recognizing the impact the city’s free politics — and the SPD in particular -- had on the surrounding zone.²⁷⁶ Fedor Bokov, responsible for SMA’s political work, demanded to create “conditions for the SED’s greater maneuverability in domestic and foreign affairs of Germany” that would undercut the non-communist parties’ claims that the SED was a “Russian party.” In the Kremlin talks weeks later, Stalin did indeed suggest that SED was right on course with its moderate program. “The position of the SED in favor of unity,”

²⁷⁴ Pieck notes, in Wilhelm Pieck - Aufzeichnungen zur Deutschlandpolitik 1945-1953 (Berlin: Akademie Verlag, 1994), p. 112.

²⁷⁵ Doc 92.

²⁷⁶ Doc 10.

the Germans were told, “is correct.” The Communist Party in the Western zones, Pieck jotted down, “was burdened by the old KPD program,” that people “feared dictatorship — revolution.” Hence the KPD was to adopt the “new SED program for the coming period.” The Soviet leader wondered “whether leftist elements within the SPD” would join the communists in “unity front committees” which would work “against the Reaction in the West.”²⁷⁷ Far from giving up on the SED, Stalin sought to strengthen its influence throughout Germany and stabilize the situation in the SBZ.²⁷⁸

Strengthening the SED went hand in hand with the build-up of political structures in the SBZ. In the spring of 1946, SMA had promised to transfer its authority in the economic field into German hands, and, insisting on increased German participation in economic decisions, Ulbricht suggested in late September the creation of a German administration for economic planning. Semenov endorsed Ulbricht’s proposal, arguing that it was “imperative” to “establish “some kind of zonal German government” in the Soviet zone. Semenov reasoned that the SED leadership had to learn how to run a country, and that it was necessary to create a state apparatus which could serve as “the core and basis of future German government agencies.”²⁷⁹ In a similar vein, that fall the SED pressed ahead with drafting an all-German as well as state constitutions that broke with German constitutional traditions, publishing their version in late November prior to accommodating fully concerns raised by Stalin himself. By the time of the Moscow ministerial in March 1947, Ulbricht had managed to secure the approval of constitutions throughout the provinces and states of the zone, reinforcing the SBZ’s trend towards autonomy—and further limiting Stalin’s options in Germany.

²⁷⁷ Badstübner/Loth, eds., *Wilhelm Pieck - Aufzeichnungen zur Deutschlandpolitik*, p. 112.

²⁷⁸ As late as November 1948, U.S. intelligence was receiving many indications that the SPD might be revived in the eastern zone. A resuscitated party would be formed in a way that would avoid the impression of SED sponsorship, create the impression of an opposition party, and pro-Soviet in outlook, undermine the Allied position in Berlin. Robert F. Corrigan to Secretary of State, 9 November 1948, NARA, RG 59, 862.00/11-948.

²⁷⁹ Doc 1

The prospect of opening up the Soviet zone and facilitating economic unity led Clay to argue passionately for a U.S.-Soviet deal at the ministerial level. In November 1946, Clay advised Byrnes that reparations were the clue to obtaining economic *and* political unity at the March 1947 Moscow Council of Foreign Ministers meeting. In preparation for the Moscow meeting, OMGUS again suggested a *quid pro quo* between reparations and economic and political objectives.²⁸⁰ Into early 1947 die OMGUS reports suggest that the Russians were interested in putting together a deal before the upcoming Moscow CFM on modest terms. As before, in their talks with Clay and Draper, they remained hesitant about establishing a provisional government, emphasized instead their own material requirements. In Moscow, Molotov again assured his Western counterparts, that, provided his government's requirements for reparations from current production were met, the Soviet government remained interested in economic unity -- "very similar to our terms," as U.S. delegation member Charles Kindleberger, head of the State Department's division for German and Austrian Economic Affairs, admitted.²⁸¹ A failure in Moscow, Walt W. Rostow warned, would mean the abandonment of the East, "crystallizing a real bloc there when in fact the Eastern Europeans are [...] anxious to avoid it."²⁸²

Yet by the time the allied delegations convened in the Soviet capital in the spring of 1947, key officials had come to view German unity more a risk than a gain for the U.S., increasingly feared that the Soviets would inevitably dominate a unified Germany. In September 1946, a State Department policy committee on Germany led by Riddleberger had recommended that in the case of "continued stalling" of the Soviets on unification, "we should pursue our unification of western Germany with the British and if possible the

²⁸⁰ Memorandum, Clay to Byrnes, November 1946, Clay Papers, I, pp. 279-284.

²⁸¹ Eisenberg, *Drawing the Line*, pp. 278-279; Jacobs and Kindleberger to De Wilde and Olivier, 29 March 1947, *Charles P. Kindleberger's Letters from the Field* (Westport, CT: Mecer, 1989), p. 157-158.

²⁸² Walt W. Rostow to Paul Porter, [March 1947], HSTL, Paul Porter Papers.

French and with the revival of the economy of that area” even if that meant “the splitting of Germany into an eastern and a western state.”²⁸³ In November, Kennan had warned the Secretary of State that “time is running short on us in the German question.” With prospects for progressing to a peaceful united Germany “slender indeed,” the foreign policy adviser warned Byrnes that the United States could only reach an understanding with the Russians from a position of strength, and that “the only way in which we can create that strength in our bargaining position vis-à-vis the Russians in Germany is to undertake immediately an energetic and incisive program of economic development and of restoration of public hope and confidence in our own zone.”²⁸⁴ From Moscow, U.S. Ambassador Walter Bedell Smith reinforced the skepticism about Soviet intentions gripping Washington: Intent on dominating a unified Germany, the USSR would inevitably tighten control of the eastern zone as it sought to exploit opportunities to destabilize the west: Having “once gotten their teeth into Germany,” the Kremlin would pursue “power-political and ideological considerations” at the upcoming Moscow meeting. To Smith it seemed inevitable “that we must be prepared if necessary to accept further separation of eastern and western zones of Germany.” The United States had to “promote and support in word and deed all true democratic and progressive forces in our zone and at the same time we must defend them from infiltration and subversion by totalitarian machinations from the east.”²⁸⁵

Many of the key policymakers in Washington were now tilting towards the Kennan-Smith line, including those charged with formulating the administration’s approach to the Moscow conference.²⁸⁶ Concerns over Soviet intentions mixed with

²⁸³ “Report of the Secretary’s Policy Committee on Germany,” 15 September 1946, NARA, RG 59, 740.00119 Control (Germany)/9-1546.

²⁸⁴ Kennan to Bohlen, 19 November 1946, NARA, RG 59, 740.00119 Control (Germany)/11-1946.

²⁸⁵ Smith to Secretary of State, 7 January 1947, FRUS 1947, vol. II, pp. 138-142.

²⁸⁶ Eisenberg, *Drawing the Line*, p. 280. Not everybody agreed: In November 1946 assistant Secretary of State J. H. Hilldring strongly disagreed with the central theses of an 21 October 1946 article by theologian

growing anxiety over the economic stagnation in the western zones. A Council of Relations task force headed by Allen Dulles and staffed with leading Germany experts from politics and business recommended scrapping the Potsdam apparatus and turning the Ruhr in the powerhouse for rehabilitating Western Europe. Similar recommendations resulted from a mission by former President Herbert Hoover, who declared that “the world was involved in the most dangerous economic crisis in all history.” Allen Dulles’ brother John Foster Dulles, quickly emerging as a top Republican foreign policy adviser, similarly argued for the necessity of Western European integration and giving up on the “Potsdam dictum that Germany shall be a single economic unit.” What was needed was a free hand in combating western Germany’s economic stagnation – and even more consciously and overtly than two years earlier were important voices inside and outside the administration willing to risk tensions with Russia and partition of Germany along the central zonal line. As the Moscow Council of Foreign Ministers convened Truman went before Congress to announce U.S. emergency aid for the Greek and Turkish government. His declaration that the United States had to be prepared to “support free peoples who are resisting subjugation by armed minorities or by outside pressures,” which would soon become known as the “Truman Doctrine,” pledged American assistance to countries around the world threatened by Soviet aggression or indigenous Communist insurgency backed by Moscow. Crystallizing certain basic assumptions that underlay the American approach to the problem of Germany, the Truman Doctrine led to preparations for a European recovery program, to be announced by Marshall in early June. The “Marshall Plan” placed priority on economic rehabilitation in Western Europe, including the western zones, over the

Reinhold Niebuhr to “deliberately [build] Germany into an anti-Russian force.” Hilldring to Benton, 7 November 1946, NARA, RG 59, 740.00119 Control (Germany)/11-746.

recovery of Germany as an economic unit, further stimulating the build-up of bizonal administrations.²⁸⁷

These assumptions clashed with Clay's and Murphy's arguments that concessions to the Soviets on reparations from current production could be leveraged for extending Western style democracy to eastern Germany and ultimately eastern Europe. If Truman Doctrine marked the support of governments threatened by Soviet aggression or Communist insurgencies in countries outside the Soviet sphere of influence in Eastern Europe, Clay believed that Soviet influence could eventually be rolled back from Eastern Europe itself by keeping the door open for American influence in eastern Germany and satisfying Russian economic and security needs. Truman's new Secretary of State, George C. Marshall was in fact equally wary of an open break with the Russians at the Moscow, and his initial argument called for the immediate implementation of central economic agencies. Not just that: Marshall also demanded the creation of a provisional German government composed of the heads of democratically elected state governments. The provisional government would act as a constituent assembly, writing a new constitution. Even greater was its authority in economic matters, drastically curtailing the autonomy of zonal commanders. But unlike General Clay, Marshall and his advisers were unwilling to test a *quid pro quo* in the form of reparations from current production would for the loss of zonal control: reparations would have to wait until the German economy was in balance. With Germany expected to be the engine of West European recovery, that "balance" implied a substantial raise in the level of industry well beyond what was necessary to guarantee the subsistence envisioned in the Potsdam accords.²⁸⁸ A revised version of the security treaty initially proposed by Byrnes was tabled, without expectation that Stalin would be any more ready now to accept the proposal than he was 15 months earlier. It

²⁸⁷ Quotes from Eisenberg, *Drawing the Line*, pp. 280, 290.

²⁸⁸ Eisenberg, *Drawing the Line*, pp. 292-293.

quickly became clear to Clay that the conditions for cooperation with the Russians were almost prohibitive, without any realistic chance for agreement by the Soviet leadership. Clay thus saw his more expansive vision of American influence throughout Germany and Eastern Europe undercut by the mounting anxieties over Western European economic disintegration and deepening distrust of Soviet intentions.²⁸⁹

Was Stalin open to a deal that could have entailed greater political pluralism in the Soviet zone and political unity throughout Germany, as Clay and Murphy had argued? Based on the evidence available thus far, no definite answer is possible. However, two findings stand out: by mid-1947, Soviet policy in Germany, and politics in the Soviet zone, were far more complex than the increasingly binary world view in Washington seemed to imply. At the same time, the Soviets never explored and followed through seriously those initiatives that might have offered the possibility of a political compromise with the West (just like those in the economic arena), even at the highest levels, leaving measures to consolidate control and autonomy of the zone to create realities on the ground. As the dynamics in the Soviet zone (as well as in the western zones, not considered here) created a reality of growing separation, Soviet officials were continually unwilling to go beyond “feelers” and (like their American counterparts) preferred not to run the risks that that cooperation implied. As both sides grew concerned over the sustainability of their zone, they also became increasingly averse to risking losing control in their zone.

Whether or not Clay’s and Murphy’s sense that in the fall of 1946 and spring of 1947 Moscow was open to a deal that would have extended Western influence beyond the Elbe had been realistic, in the aftermath of the Moscow meeting OMGUS noted that Soviet goodwill, moderation and flexibility seemed to dissipate. OMGUS intelligence reported that “regular visitors in Karlshorst” reported a sudden somberness on the part of

²⁸⁹ Walt W. Rostow to Paul Porter, [March 1947], HSTL, Paul Porter Papers.

Soviet officials.²⁹⁰ Pressure on the CDU increased once again, and rumors had it that Moscow looked to create a zonal CDU organization without Kaiser as chairman, though eschewing a final break with Kaiser prior to the next meeting of the Council of Foreign Ministers in London.²⁹¹ Tulpanov, seen by many as a hard-line ideologue, became more prominent in zonal affairs, and his speeches and instructions, ODI noted, were more “demonstratively communist and aggressive than ever.” During a zonal conference of the SED held in September in Berlin, Tulpanov spoke as a passionate Sovietizer, “as communist to communists.”²⁹²

Following the Moscow CFM and the establishment of the Unified Economic Council for the Bizone, the Soviets began to establish zonal administrative structures more openly. In June, Sokolovsky signed SMA Order No. 138, ratifying arrangements between the central administration and the state governments that had been negotiated earlier in the year and finalized in mid-April. Almost in passing did the order create a permanent economic commission which would become the core of a government for the Soviet occupation zone eight months later.²⁹³ The commission, soon referred to as “German Economic Commission” (DWK) within the following months, met nine times before the end of the year, yet initially failed to constitute any kind of central control mechanism for the SBZ economy due not only to the stubbornness of state governments, but, more importantly, competing interests among various Moscow-based agencies involved in the zone. To resolve the institutional dispute, Molotov ordered Sokolovsky and Semenov for consultations to Moscow at the end of the year. As a result of meetings with Stalin on 3

²⁹⁰ ODI, WIR No 56, 7 June 1947, pp. 2-3, OMGUS/3/429-3/5, BAK, cited in Stivers, p. 292.

²⁹¹ ODI, WIR, No 61, 12 July 1947, pp. 11-13, OMGUS/3/429-3/5, BAK; ODI, WIR No 73, 4 October 1947, pp. 6-8, OMGUS/3/429-3/8, BAK; ODI Special intelligence Summary, party 2 (Political Developments in the British, French and Russian Zones, 22 October 1947, p. 230, OMGUS/2/429-3/9, BAK, cited in Stivers, p. 292.

²⁹² ODI, WIR No 72, 27 September 1947, pp. 2-3, OMGUS/3/429-3/7, BAK, cited in Stivers, p. 293.

²⁹³ Laufer, Vol III, p. 35 (MS).

January 1948, the DWK was elevated to the status of a provisional government for the SBZ.²⁹⁴

5. “Trojan Horse” or “Dead Duck”? Countering the People’s Congress Movement

Clay had essentially argued that partition would create greater opportunities for increased Soviet influence, not unification. With the failure of the Moscow Council of Foreign Ministers’ meeting, the declaration of the Marshall Plan and the establishment of the Cominform, chances for settling Germany’s future through the quadripartite mechanisms set up at Yalta and Potsdam seemed to have vastly diminished. The Western powers on the one hand and the Soviets on the other were increasingly resolved to proceed unilaterally in their occupation sphere; as they pressed ahead, Germany became the stage for a global system confrontation. It was widely expected throughout Germany that the November/December Council of Foreign Ministers’ Meeting in London would fail to reach an accord on Germany, yet both sides eschewed the formal, open break-up of the final remnants of quadripartite rule: blaming the other side for its destruction in the pursuit of aggressive designs was central to the long-term legitimacy of each side’s German project.

In the aftermath of the Moscow Conference OMGUS noticed how Russian and East German officials began to notch up their appeals to German nationalism. This was not a new line: In June 1946, Kaiser and Lemmer reported to OMGUS officials that Tulpanov had conveyed to CDU leaders “with great earnestness the thesis that Russia’s prime policy” was to “build a strong Germany and a united Germany.” Though the presentation, Kaiser admitted, might have been a tactical ploy, it “made a deep impression

²⁹⁴ Laufer, III, p, 37 (MS)

on the assembled [CDU] delegates.”²⁹⁵ The effort was particularly evident on the sore question of the German eastern territories, de facto assigned to Poland as a result of the Potsdam Conference. In late March 1946, Grotewohl had reminded the Germans that Moscow might consider a revision of the unpopular Oder-Neiße borderline, that the decision on the issue rested with Moscow.²⁹⁶ Ulbricht seemed to suggest that not all of the eastern territories might be lost except for Silesia, “[C]ertainly,” a State Department analyst concluded, “he would not have so described his exception with Soviet approval.”²⁹⁷ Later that month, Kaiser and Lemmer were assured by the Russians that a definitive border settlement depended entirely on the Germans.²⁹⁸ Molotov himself had elevated the competition for championing German unity with his 10 July 1946 speech “On the Fate of Germany and on the Peace Treaty with Germany” during the Paris CFM.²⁹⁹ But while appealing to the Germans’ desire for unity, Moscow was not yet ready to give in to repeated SED calls for a nationwide plebiscite on the nature of a future German state and other all-German initiatives. During the Kremlin discussions with the German communist leaders in January 1947, Stalin still evaded an endorsement of the plebiscite idea, despite

²⁹⁵ “Conversations with Baron von Prittwitz-und-Gaffron, Jacob Kaiser and Ernst Lemmer, Three Leaders of the CDU, on German Political Problems,” Murphy to Secretary of State, 25 June 1946, NARA, RG 59, 862.00/6-2546.

²⁹⁶ A-265, Murphy to Secretary of State, 20 March 1946, NARA, RG 59, 862.00/3-2045.

²⁹⁷ Memorandum by David Harris, 26 March 1946, NARA, RG 59, Lot 55D374, cited in Buckow, *Zwischen Propaganda und Realpolitik*, p. 134. The new and presumably popular SED propaganda line for a border “correction” was, as Murphy aide Brewster Morris saw it, squelched by Molotov in the aftermath of the Byrnes speech in September 1946: The Soviet foreign minister confirmed the validity of the current borderline and instructed all parties that “there must be no further discussion of the of the eastern frontier at the present time!” Memorandum No 174 by Brewster Morris, 26 September 1946, and Memorandum by Brewster Morris, No 179, cited in Buckow, *Zwischen Propaganda und Realpolitik*, p. 137.

²⁹⁸ *Ibid.*.

²⁹⁹ The CPSU Politburo had internally noted the federative proposals entertained in the West four weeks earlier, but recognized that the decision was one to be made by the German people. Prompted by Semenov’s warnings that the federation idea was rooted in Western fears of a centralized German state turning communist, Molotov chose to sharply and publicly repudiate what he called Anglo-American plans for a “dismemberment” of the country.

assurances from the SED leadership that a vast majority of Germans would favor a centralized state.³⁰⁰

This changed by the summer of 1947, subtly at first. U.S. observers noted for example frequent references to former German Reich Chancellor Otto Bismarck by high-ranking Soviet officers, allusions to the possibilities for Russian-German cooperation in the era of the first German nation state.³⁰¹ In July, OMGUS reported that General Paulus, one of the leaders of the Free Germany Committee based in Moscow during the war, was slated in a prominent position in a new central government.³⁰² Of particular significance was the conference of *Länder* minister presidents to which the Bavarian minister president invited his colleagues in May 1947. This initiative for a national German meeting, the first of its kind, immediately found widespread support even within the SED, where many former social democrats and communists were willing to risk the pursuit of national unity. A few functionaries around Ulbricht opposed any national initiatives not controlled entirely by the SED. When the minister presidents agreed to send word of their joining their western counterparts, Molotov instructed SMA to let them know that “SMA would under no circumstances permit the participation of the Soviet zone in the meeting planned by the Americans,” only to reverse his position the same day, as it might “damage our interests” in Germany. With Moscow uncertain how to handle the situation, Ulbricht committed the minister presidents to demand revisions in the agenda for the meeting upon arrival in Munich, a demand that was certain to sabotage the conference even before it began.³⁰³

³⁰⁰ Record of Conversation between Stalin and the SED Leadership,” 31 January 1947, Kynin/Lauffer., eds., *Die UdSSR und die deutsche Frage 1941-1948*, vol. 3, pp. 136-156.

³⁰¹ ODI, WIR No 71, 20 September 1947, pp 11-13, OMGUS/3/429-3/7, BAK, cited in Stivers, p. 296.

³⁰² Carle Office to Secretary of State, 16 July 1947, NARA, RG 59, 740.00119/Control (Germany)/7-1647.

³⁰³ Rolf Steininger, *Deutsche Geschichte: Darstellung und Dokumente in vier Bänden*, vol. 1, Document No. 72.

The entire episode brought Moscow's hedging and uncertainty in handling the all-German initiative not controlled by the SED into sharp focus. Moscow reacted even more strongly to a far less significant initiative by Ferdinand Friedensburg, a CDU mayor in Berlin, who in November 1947, just before the London CFM, called for the creation of a "Forum of National Representation." In a November 17 telegram worded in stark and principled terms that probably reflected Stalin's imprimatur, Molotov reminded the SED that it had to be in decisive control of all-German initiatives.³⁰⁴ Molotov's November 17 cable indeed constituted a turning point in Soviet policy: abandoning its reservations, Stalin now made the SED seek front and center in all-German initiatives, even if that, as Kaiser anticipated, would undermine the support of the western zone parties. Having been held back repeatedly since the summer, the SED suddenly received the green light for its plebiscite initiative and rushed to call for a "People's Congress for Unity and Just Peace" to be held in Berlin on 6-7 December 1947. Rather than a genuine effort to expand Moscow's influence to all of Germany, Moscow viewed the people's congress movement as a means to assert and solidify the leading role of the SED in the eastern zone.

The SED's people's congress initiative led to the final break with the CDU under the leadership of Kaiser and Lemmer. For Kaiser, the national question was inextricably linked to the survival and independence of the party in the SBZ. Following Byrnes September 1946 Stuttgart speech, Kaiser had proposed in early 1947 to convene a "national representation." The proposal had met with widespread approval in the western and eastern Germany; the western SPD alone had withheld support, even the Russians had resisted from voicing opposition publicly. But after the Moscow CFM, Kaiser's open support of the Marshall Plan and overt criticism of SMA, relations between the Soviets and Kaiser quickly deteriorated. In early August, SMA disseminated a strong anti-Kaiser

³⁰⁴ See also Murphy to Secretary of State, 21 November 1946, NARA, RG 59, 862.00/11-2146.

article in Berlin and throughout the zone and increased pressure on the Land organizations of the CDU in the zone.³⁰⁵ In a heated exchange with Tulpanov at Karshorst on August 18, related by OMGUS to Washington, Kaiser candidly complained about Soviet actions and stated that measures such as the Marshall Plan were necessary for reconstruction. Sharp verbal exchanges on the issues of border, reparations and SAG's followed.³⁰⁶ In November, Kaiser warned that the SED's hastily arranged call for a SED-run people's congress in November 1947 would be dead on arrival in western Germany, and for that reason would not give his support to the congress movement. The decision sealed Kaiser's fate: Tulpanov realized the opportunity presented by the issue, stating on the eve of the first people's congress in early December that it could "serve us in the effort to juxtapose Kaiser and his policies with the [CDU] state organizations." When Kaiser remained dead-set against participating in the people's congress, SMA engineered his ouster from the party leadership.³⁰⁷ With Kaiser's departure, Moscow had rid itself of the person most passionately fighting against the separation of the Soviet occupation zone.

Though publicly still committed to German unification, the American delegation arrived in London "determined to have a split."³⁰⁸ Neither the Truman administration nor the Attlee governments were any longer sanguine about the chances of success in resolving the German issue.³⁰⁹ Without objections by the other allies, Washington had postponed the deputy foreign minister meeting just before its scheduled gathering in early October 1947. The postponement virtually eliminated any chances for agreements on such

³⁰⁵ Murphy to Riddleberger, 31 August 1947, NARA, RG 59, 740.00119 Control (Germany)/8-3147.

³⁰⁶ Murphy to Riddleberger, 31 August 1947, NARA, RG 59, 740.00119 Control (Germany)/8-3147.

³⁰⁷ FRUS 1947, II, pp. 905-906.

³⁰⁸ Eisenberg, *Drawing the Line*, p. 355.

³⁰⁹ For the British attitude, see "Memorandum for the File," by Robert Murphy (regarding his conversation with Sir William Strang), 21 July 1947, Hoover Institution, Robert Murphy Papers, Box 70.

issues as reparations and currency reform, then still under negotiation in Berlin.³¹⁰ There were certain indications that Moscow was considering major change: in November CIA reported that the Soviets had ordered the SBZ railway administration to deliver 315 passenger coaches to transport of Russian military families, leading top State Department officials to wonder whether Moscow was entertaining “radical plans to get out of Germany” or “expect[ing] trouble.”³¹¹ For Washington, the paramount goal was to make the Soviets appear responsible for the failure, thus clearing the road towards a separate West German government. “The difficulty under which we labor,” Ambassador Walter Bedell Smith wrote to Eisenhower during the London discussions, was “that in spite of our announced position, we really do not want nor intend to accept German unification in any terms that the Russians might agree to, even though they seemed to meet most of our requirements.” The negotiations in London would require “delicate maneuvering to avoid the appearance of inconsistency if not hypocrisy.”³¹²

In Moscow policymakers did not seem to have expected any progress from the CFM meeting either. As early as November 1, Soviet foreign ministry officials predicted failure. The Politburo did decide to put a German peace treaty and the formation of a German government at the center of its negotiation strategy. Yet the Soviet foreign ministry did not develop any new initiatives or ideas.³¹³ Directives for the preparatory meeting of the deputies precluded any initiatives to reach agreement on controversial questions; guidelines for dealing with issues that had remained unresolved in Moscow in fact hardened the Soviet position and lessened chances of a compromise with the Western powers. Preparations for the CFM were simply limited to updating the public declarations

³¹⁰ Smirnov to Semenov, 27 September 1947, in *Kynin/Laufer*, III, pp. 412-413.

³¹¹ Llewellyn E. Thompson to Beam/CE and Hickerson/EUR with copies to Kennan and Bohlen, 7 November 1947, and attached CIG intelligence report, “Russian Orders to the RR Administration in Connection with the London Conference,” 30 October 1947 (FOIA Release to author).

³¹² Smith to Eisenhower, 10 December 1947, quoted in Eisenberg, p. 359.

³¹³ *Kynin/Laufer*, eds., *Die UdSSR und die deutsche Frage*, vol. 3, pp. LVII.

from the Moscow meeting, and drafting press releases. Molotov himself was forced to clear every step along the way with Stalin. The draft for a new declaration by Molotov on Germany presented spectacular information of the positive economic developments in the zone but mainly polemicized against a Western German state. As expected, the discussions in London quickly stalemated in mutual recriminations. Instead of diplomatically exploiting continuing French reservations about Anglo-American plans, Molotov quickly became isolated at the conference and allowed Marshall to call into question the usefulness of further negotiations altogether. Without even agreement to hold another meeting, the negotiations were broken off.

The Anglo-Americans and Soviets had their sights set well beyond the London meeting. Resolved that there would be two Germanies, they sought to stabilize their own zone – and prevent the other side from consolidating its own. Alarmed that the Soviets were bent on communizing the western zones and frustrating European Recovery Plan, Marshall and his advisers wanted to bolt the door on further talks and preparations for a separate state. Molotov's deputy Fedor Gusev, in turn had surmised internally weeks before the London meeting that “the ruling reactionary circles of the USA have entered the path of active propaganda and the preparation of a new war against the Soviet Union and the countries of the new democracy in Europe.”³¹⁴ Moscow should not await the final outcome but prepare for measures after quadripartite melt-down. Cognizant of the implications for the political unity of the country, Western and Soviet occupation chiefs had pressed ahead with plans for separate currency reforms in the Soviet and the Bizone with renewed fervor since the Moscow conference debacle. While the foreign ministers were still deliberating in London in December 1947, the Politburo gave green light for the

³¹⁴ Gusev to Molotov, 17 October 1947, Kynin/Lauffer., eds., *Die UdSSR und die deutsche Frage 1941-1948*, vol. 3, pp. 420-425.

production of new money by the USSR state mint, to be introduced in the eastern zone should the currency reform in the bizonia be carried out.

American and British officials too set out to create a separate state out of the western zones, following the London failed meeting -- without acknowledging such publicly. To be sure, Clay remained convinced that an agreement could be worked out with the Russians. Meeting with Bevin and Marshall after the Council of Foreign Ministers, Clay warned that there was "still no final break with the Soviet Union," that "he hoped it could be avoided" and that they should make one more attempt to proceed on a quadripartite basis, "however many practical difficulties this might raise." Nor did he think it absolutely impossible to secure Soviet agreement to a currency reform when he would propose it at the Control Council. Clay counted on the effects of the break-down of the London CFM, the unwillingness of the Russians to appear responsible for the division of Germany, and the fact that the Soviets would be confronted with a *fait accompli* in that the West had the new currency in hand. Marshall agreed to give the quadripartite approach one more try: He was "most anxious in regard to the general international situation to avoid a "frozen front" which was tragic to contemplate." But even Clay favored "surely but not dramatically" expanding the political responsibilities of the Bizone Economic Council, "unless of course they had to react rapidly to some *fait accompli* by the Russians in the Eastern Zone."³¹⁵ In January, Clay and Robertson reorganized the bizonia, giving its structures greater resemblance of governmental organs. In the "Frankfurt Documents," handed to the assembled German minister-presidents and Bizone Economic Council leaders, the occupation chiefs recommended the expansion of the Council, the creation of a *Länder* council, the formation of an executive committee and a central bank. In

³¹⁵ "Anglo-American Conversations, (18 December 1947)," enclosed in Gallman to J.D. Hickerson (EUR, Department of State, 30 December 1947, NARA, RG 59, 74.00119 Control (Germany)/12-3047. In contrast with the British, even Marshall wanted it to be made clear that "we really wanted Russian agreement and were not merely making a gesture, expecting their refusal." Ibid.

February, the Americans pushed Britain, France and the Benelux states to agree on the future of the western zones, including the status of the Ruhr industry, the zones' role in the Marshall Plan and European reconstruction, and a constituent assembly ("Parlamentarischer Rat"). As Moscow finalized its own version of a currency reform for the Soviet Zone that spring, the State Department instructed Clay that it was no longer the policy of the U.S. government to reach an agreement on a quadripartite currency reform. Clay was to bring about an end to the negotiations by June 1.

The decision to include the western zones in the Marshall Plan aid and the London Program for a West German state freed the Truman administration from the immediate restraints involved in negotiating with the Soviets. No one now pressed harder for a West German state than Clay. But American officials were careful to avoid having the decision for a Western solution be seen as writing off German unity and the Soviet zone altogether, as much as some internally acknowledged that such was for now the case. Developments in the Soviet zone underscored the critical importance of this issue: While further shutting off its zone from western influence and quelling dissent in the SBZ, the SED seemed to count increasingly on mass mobilization throughout Germany, to force German unity through a "people's movement from below." As efforts to bring together representatives from state parliaments or parties from eastern and western Germany, such as the May 1947 Interzonal Conference of Unions or the June 1947 Munich conference, had failed, the SED leadership sought to appeal to wide strata of the German population for its national objectives. To what extent this actually was coordinated with Moscow remains a matter of controversy. Two weeks before the December 1947 London Council of Foreign Ministers meeting, the SED party leadership published its "Manifesto to the German

People on the Occasion of the London Conference,”³¹⁶ denouncing the Marshall Plan, and demanding a democratic and united Germany based on denazification and expropriation modeled after the SBZ. In a SED-run “people’s referendum” in mid-November 93.8% of those polled by the SED affirmed “the desire for national unity is a desire of the entire German people.”³¹⁷

In spite of the Western powers’ refusal to recognize the SED petition to the CFM, on November 24, 1947, the SED called on all parties, mass organizations and leading individuals to convene an all-German “People’s Congress for Unity and a Just Peace” on December 6-7. Assembling an impressive 2,215 delegates from eastern and western Germany, the first People’s Congress took place in Berlin, highlighting the symbolic importance of the former Reich capital. The Congress set up a national weekly, the “German voice,” designed for interzonal circulation on a large scale. Western observers fretted that the congress had “tremendous potential propaganda value” and quickly suspected that Moscow intended to try to turn it into a de fact parliament for all of Germany, “a coup, if successful, could have untold possibilities for influencing votes and direct action in the Western zones.”³¹⁸

In the shadow of the February 1948 Prague *Putsch*, the SED’s machinations and widening war scare could not be taken lightly. On the even of a second People’s Congress, convened on March 17-18, 1948, ranking German communists talked openly about armed sabotage, resistance and even a “war of independence” against the Western occupation powers, drawing parallels to the tactics employed by Gen. Markos Vafiades, the leader of the Greek communist insurgents. Timed for explicit appeal to the historical traditions of

³¹⁶ *Dokumente der Sozialistischen Einheitspartei Deutschlands*, vol. 1, pp. 241-243.

³¹⁷ Klaus Bender, *Deutschland, einig Vaterland? Die Volkskongressbewegung für deutsche Einheit und einen gerechten Frieden in der Deutschlandpolitik der Sozialistischen Einheitspartei Deutschlands* (Frankfurt am Main: P. Lang, 1992), pp. 99-106.

³¹⁸ Murphy to Secretary of State, 7 August 1948, NARA, RG 59, 862.00/8-748; “Pan-German Coup Called Soviet Aim,” *New York Times*, 1 January 1948, p. 18; Communist Front in Germany, *Wall Street Journal*, 19 January 191948, p. 4; Soviet coup hinted in Berlin March 18,” *New York Times*, 4 February 1948, p. 10.

1848, the Congress blamed the Western allies for Germany's growing division and motioned to dethrone the Allied Control Council. Aside from demanding all-German central administrations in Berlin and dissolution of the bizonal Economic Council, the Second People's Congress created a 400 delegates-strong "German People's Council" (and a smaller presidium), charged with drafting a constitution for Germany and conducting a massive drive for a people's initiative petitioning the allied commanders to hold "people's referendum" on a law that declared Germany an "indivisible republic." Throughout the country, some 11,000 "People's Committees for Unity and a Just Peace" were established in plants, residential areas, universities and local governments. Between May 23 and June 13, 1948, the People's Council collected some 13 million signatures in favor of the referendum, 1 million of which came from the British zone.³¹⁹ At its third session on July 2, the People's Council appealed to the Allied Control Council to order a referendum on the people's initiative resolution as basic law for all of Germany.³²⁰

OMGUS officials watched the people's initiative and people's congress movement with growing apprehension. U.S. intelligence sources reached deep into the People's Congress movement, including one former member of the Weimar-era Democratic People's Party, probably former Reichstag Deputy Dr. and Liberal Democratic Party leader Wilhelm Külz, who ostensibly was collaborating with the SED but actually serving as a CIC agent "instructed to play along," even being nominated to the People's Council presidium.³²¹ Intelligence reports confirmed the apparently great emphasis which Soviet and SED officials placed on the people's referendum. OMGUS learned that at a March 22 meeting with top SED officials shortly after the People's Congress, Pieck emphasized that

³¹⁹ Heike Amos, *Die Westpolitik der SED 1948/49-1961: Arbeit nach Westdeutschland durch die Nationale Front, das Ministerium für Auswärtige Angelegenheiten und das Ministerium für Staatssicherheit* (Berlin : Akademie Verlag, 1999), pp. 16-17.

³²⁰ Murphy to Secretary of State, 3 July 1948, NARA, RG 59, 862.00/7-348.

³²¹ A. Dana Hodgden (American Consul general in Stuttgart, to Secretary of State, 13 April 1948, NARA, RG 59, 862.00/4-1348.

the nationwide referendum was the “decisive task” for the party. The “non-Communist atmosphere” of the People’s Congress did not escape US observers (“no red flags were in evidence”),³²² and speakers included non-communist party leaders including Külz.³²³ Most disconcerting, one fourth of the 2,000 participants at the second congress had come from the western zones.³²⁴

People’s Congress leaders were apparently certain that the Western powers would not forbid the collection of signatures for people’s referendum (as they would otherwise create the impression of opposing German unity), and that if sufficient number of signatures had been obtained, the *Länder* governments could not ignore the issue.³²⁵ Meanwhile OMGUS received numerous reports of SED pressure methods to effect a large turn-out; the drive for signatures promised to be “the most farcical ‘vote’ thus far carried out under Soviet-Communist auspices in postwar Germany.”³²⁶ In Berlin, the Soviets apparently went so far as to use their exclusive control of the subway system to equip stations in all four sectors with voting booths, and overruled the non-Communist municipal government’s decision not to make public facilities available for the people’s initiative. Throughout the SBZ, voting was recorded by local residential and occupational people’s initiative committees. Those who failed to vote would be entered on a public list

³²² Murphy to Secretary of State, “Further Notes on the People’s Congress Movement,” 12 April 1948, NARA, RG 59, 862.00/4-1248.

³²³ *Wilhelm Külz: Ein Liberaler zwischen Ost und West: Aufzeichnungen 1947-1948*, ed. by Hergard Robel (München : R. Oldenbourg, 1989).

³²⁴ In the case of the delegation from Lower Saxony, the entire delegation had been selected by the local KPD, according to a CIC interview with one of the delegates. “They were assembled at KPD headquarters in Hanover and traveled together by train to a point close to the zonal border, where they were escorted across by local Communist agents using the password “Konsum”, to which the Soviet sentries replied “Verein”, completing the journey to Berlin by special bus.” Murphy to Secretary of State, “Further Notes on the People’s Congress Movement,” 12 April 1948, NARA, RG 59, 862.00/4-1248.

³²⁵ Murphy to Secretary of State, 16 April 1948, NARA, RG 59, 862.00/4-1648; Murphy to Secretary of State, “Further Notes on the People’s Congress Movement,” 12 April 1948, NARA, RG 59, 862.00/4-1248; Murphy to Secretary of State, The People’s Congress Movement’s Popular Initiative (Volksbegehren),” 29 May 1948, NARA, RG 59, 862.00/5-2948.

³²⁶ Murphy to Secretary of State, 29 May 1948, NARA, RG 59, 862.00/5-3048; see also Consulate Bremen to Secretary of State, “Terrorist methods used by SED agents in Western zones in collecting signatures for Volksbegehren,” 16 June 1948, NARA, RG 59, 862.00B/6-1648.

of “saboteurs of democracy.”³²⁷ With “totalitarian control already established in the Soviet zone” and the “war of nerves which the communists have been carrying on throughout Germany,” Brewster Morris, an analyst on Murphy’s staff, argued, “countless people” had signed the petition.³²⁸ U.S. intelligence expected 100 percent approval.³²⁹

Reports from the western zones indicated that the signature collection was well under way there too, and American officials emphasized “the natural appeal of such propaganda to the German public today.”³³⁰ While it quickly became evident that the people’s referendum initiative failed to attract real attention in the western zones, OMGUS officials expected “many ignorant and naïve Germans” to be taken in by the “nationalist appeal” of the referendum.³³¹ Just how effective the campaign might be was illustrated by an open-air meeting in Berlin-Wilmersdorf in the British sector: Though the crowd of 500-600 people, U.S. observers noted, must have come as a disappointment to the organizers, the SED speakers managed to turn “an initially rather unresponsive audience into an enthusiastic demonstration against the United States,” and the meeting occasioned “heated group discussions in the streets for a full hour after the meeting had ended.”³³² The initiative was, U.S. officials admitted, “one of [the] cleverest Soviet-Communist propaganda moves to date.”³³³

³²⁷ Weekly Intelligence Report No 108 by OMGUS Office of the Director of Intelligence, 5 June 1948, NARA, RG 59, 740.00119 Control (Germany).

³²⁸ Murphy to Secretary of State, The People’s Congress Movement’s Popular Initiative (Volksbegehren),” 29 May 1948, NARA, RG 59, 862.00/5-2948. Morris also reported various voting irregularities, including the fact that a British journalist had had no difficulty in signing himself in the Soviet sector in Berlin. Morris also reported that an active black market developed in signature certificates, and that anti-Communist “elements in the SBZ had been distributing counterfeit signature certificates providing Germans with ‘evidence’ that they had signed without having done so. Murphy to Secretary of State, The People’s Congress Movement’s Popular Initiative (Volksbegehren),” 29 May 1948, NARA, RG 59, 862.00/5-2948.

³²⁹ Weekly Intelligence Report No 108 by OMGUS Office of the Director of Intelligence, 5 June 1948, NARA, RG 59, 740.00119 Control (Germany).

³³⁰ Murphy to Secretary of State, “Further Notes on the People’s Congress Movement,” 12 April 1948, NARA, RG 59, 862.00/4-1248.

³³¹ Weekly Intelligence Report No 108 by OMGUS Office of the Director of Intelligence, 5 June 1948, NARA, RG 59, 740.00119 Control (Germany).

³³² Murphy to Secretary of State, 15 June 1948, NARA, RG 59, 862.00/6-1548.

³³³ Murphy to Secretary of State, 29 May 1948, NARA, RG 59, 862.00/5-3048.

Even before the people's congress movement got on the way, Clay had announced, much to the surprise by many on his staff, a public anti-communist campaign in the western zones, "Operation Talkback." Soon after the first People's Congress Clay decided (along with the British Military Governor) to prohibit any meetings of the movement at the state or zonal level. One meeting took place in Vegesack near Bremen, featuring speeches by SED leader Grotewohl and East-CDU leader Nuschke and deemed an instant success by the SED, but others planned for North Rhine-Westphalia, Schleswig-Holstein, Hamburg, Hesse, Bavaria and Rhineland-Palatine had to be cancelled in light of the US and British prohibition.³³⁴ The referendum in the spring of 1948 presented OMGUS with a somewhat more difficult decision--after all, the drive for signatures was a basically democratic practice. Ousted CDU leader Jacob Kaiser proposed a competitive referendum, but Washington was uneasy with linking the procedure with the one planned by the SED.³³⁵ Once the referendum went into full swing, Clay decided to allow the circulation of petitions while both ridiculing and banning the collection of signatures on behalf of the people's congress, forcing the SED to carry out the count largely on an "underground basis."³³⁶

Internal records from the SED archives now show that the East German communist leadership felt that OMGUS actions were a measure of their success. At their meeting with Stalin in Moscow at the end of March 1948, SED leaders hailed the success of the people's congress movement. Pieck told Stalin that the SED was winning the confidence of the masses in its fight against the reactionary forces and for German unity, citing the

³³⁴ SAPMO-BA, NY 4036/656, p 33; Amos, *Die Westpolitik der SED 1948/49-1961*, p. 15.

³³⁵ State Department to Murphy, 19 April 1948, NARA, RG 59, 862.00/4-1648; Chase to Secretary of State, 21 April 1948, NARA, RG 59, 862.00/4-2148.

³³⁶ Murphy to Secretary of State, "The People's Congress Movement's Popular Initiative (Volksbegehren)," 29 May 1948, NARA, RG 59, 862.00/5-2948. The French government also banned the Volksbegehren petition, while the British government allowed for the signature drive to take place. See Weekly Intelligence Report No 108 by OMGUS Office of the Director of Intelligence, 5 June 1948, NARA, RG 59, 740.00119 Control (Germany).

people's congress movement as proof. The SED managed, the Soviet leader learned, to include broad segments of the bourgeoisie in the movement, "to uncover the Schumacher's policies and to counter the reactionary efforts within the bourgeois parties." The Second People's Congress in particular, Pieck noted, had made a "strong impression on the masses, in the West too." The Congress needed to be more "impulsive" and better organized, but its "success was confirmed by the countermeasures and propaganda of the Western powers."³³⁷ Others within the SED drew a more sober assessment: The people's congress movement, one leading official conceded, was only making meager progress "thanks to the malicious propaganda of the western press," to some extent none at all.³³⁸ According to one source, Franz Dahlem, the SED's top official charged with the campaign in western Germany told a friend that the SED "had lost hope for the success of the referendum in western Germany," adding that the prohibition by the western powers was perhaps a "blessing in disguise," affording an excuse for the expected failure of the campaign and an opportunity for propaganda in the form of protests.³³⁹ Yet Stalin seemed to have been convinced of the success of the all-German project. In June 1948 he decided to broaden the appeal of the people's congress movement, signaling the Germans to create a new nationwide organization, the "National Front."

6. "Action Point Berlin"

Much like contemporary American observers later historians have generally portrayed Stalin's decision in early March to shut down the Control Council by Sokolovsky's dramatic departure on March 23 and to institute at first a small (April 1) and then a near full (June) blockade of the Western ground access to Berlin as a forceful

³³⁷ Badstübner/Loth, eds., *Wilhelm Pieck--Aufzeichnungen zur Deutschland Politik 1945-1953*, p. 192; Kynin/Lafer., eds., *Die UdSSR und die deutsche Frage 1941-1948*, vol. 3, pp. 541-542.

³³⁸ Ewald to Gniffke, 22 July 1948, SAPMO-BA, DY 6, vorl. 0494.

³³⁹ ESD Report MGB-6347, cited in Murphy to Secretary of State, "The People's Congress Movement's Popular Initiative (Volksbegehren)," 29 May 1948, NARA, RG 59, 862.00/5-2948.

reaction to the London program and Western currency reform plans; an aggressive showdown designed as a blow to the prestige of the Western powers in his efforts to prevent a West German state; and a last desperate measure to extricate himself from the dilemma over Germany. Some have argued that Stalin was cajoled into the crisis by the East German communist leaders who had had come to Moscow for discussions with the *vozhd*. While none of these explanations can be entirely dismissed, in the context of this study – and in the light of new sources – a different factor played a more significant and, perhaps, the central role. In the spring of 1948, barely three years after the end of World War II, serious worries about Germany’s role in Western “preparation of a new war” against the Soviet Union and its new allies combined with a growing sense that the Soviet Zone was on the brink of collapse -- and with it Stalin’s main stake in Germany.³⁴⁰

Contrary to Western perceptions of the eastern zone’s increasing isolation from the West, many Soviet officials felt that exactly the opposite was true: they blamed the zone’s alarming decline on destabilizing Western influence, in particular from Berlin, located in the heart of the zone. Alarming reports from East Germany were mounting in early 1948. In January, the head of the Soviet Foreign Ministry’s Third European Department Smirnov told Vyshinsky that, according to conversations with leading SED officials, “the current situation in the country was very tense.” In most major cities there were great difficulties in providing the population with potatoes, which had in turn strongly affected the prestige of the SED within the population. “Would elections be held today, the SED could lose up to one third of the votes it received in the last elections.”³⁴¹ The sense of “indetermination” of the economic situation, of a “lack of any economic perspective” for the zone combined with resentment over the new Polish borders and “unequivocally

³⁴⁰ Disconcerting information about more aggressive Red Army thinking in Germany was reaching Washington from intelligence sources; See Brewster Morris to Riddleberger, 30 March 1948 (FOIA Release to author).

³⁴¹ Smirnov to Vyshinsky, 12 January 1948, Kynin/Laufer., eds., *Die UdSSR und die deutsche Frage 1941-1948*, vol. 3, p. 485-486.

negative” attitudes towards the Soviet stock companies.³⁴² Depression and dissatisfaction was also gripping SED leadership.³⁴³ Many were unsure that the Eastern Zone could compete with the West and saw it getting further isolated. One could frequently hear the opinion, Moscow was told, that “the West would have everything, but what would happen to the Soviet Zone [?]”³⁴⁴

Matching contemporary Western perceptions that their zone remained vulnerable to Soviet machinations, Russian officials genuinely felt the very same in reverse: The “fascist underground,” Molotov learned in early March, was considerably expanding its activities against the backdrop of “contradictions” between the occupation powers. The center of the fascist underground was the American occupation zone, in particular Bavaria.³⁴⁵ Two weeks later “reactionary propaganda” was still “increasing.” Western press was increasingly reaching the zone, “while our print runs were low. Possibilities for an increased influence of the reactionary forces were growing.”³⁴⁶ Not surprisingly then, proposals with the top ranks of the Soviet foreign ministry for “countermeasures” against the formation of an anti-Soviet Western bloc in Germany included efforts to seal off the SBZ further: The USSR would see itself forced, Smirnov told Molotov, “to eliminate the disparity of our zone in Germany *which* [by contrast to the other zones] *is de facto open.*” Smirnov recommended that Moscow “close its zone” to put it in the same situation as existed in the West.³⁴⁷

³⁴² Orlov to Vyshinsky, 24 March 1948, Kynin/Lauffer, eds., *Die UdSSR und die deutsche Frage 1941-1948*, vol. 3, pp. 536-538.

³⁴³ Tulpanov to Semenov, 8 March 1948, Kynin/Lauffer, eds., *Die UdSSR und die deutsche Frage 1941-1948*, vol. 3, p.501-502.

³⁴⁴ Smirnov to Vyshinsky, 12 January 1948, Kynin/Lauffer, eds., *Die UdSSR und die deutsche Frage 1941-1948*, vol. 3, pp. 485-486.

³⁴⁵ Smirnov to Molotov, 10 March 1948, Kynin/Lauffer, eds., *Die UdSSR und die deutsche Frage 1941-1948*, vol. 3, pp. 520-521.

³⁴⁶ Orlov to Molotov, 24 March 1948, Smirnov to Vyshinsky, 12 January 1948, Kynin/Lauffer, eds., *Die UdSSR und die deutsche Frage 1941-1948*, vol. 3, pp. 536-538.

³⁴⁷ Smirnov to Molotov, 12 March 1948, Kynin/Lauffer, III, pp. 522-524.

By the time the German Communist leaders arrived in Moscow in late March 1948 for discussions with Stalin, Moscow had decided for an action plan aimed at shutting off Western influence from the zone. Pieck's and Grotewohl's suggestions merely reinforced what had been decided on already. They warned Stalin in a late night session at the Kremlin that "the exacerbation of the conflicts between the Allies on the issues of an imperialistic or democratic peace with Germany, the unity or dismemberment of Germany, and its democratic development or colonialization by means of the Marshall Plan are influencing the mood of the German people. These conflicts are not so clear to the broad masses but they are influencing the mood of the masses, especially in Berlin. The Western powers are trying to influence the population and direct it against the USSR, arousing hostility against communism which supposedly wants to crush the people, take the Germans' private property away from them ...". Some improvement of the economic situation had been achieved in the Soviet zone, Pieck told the Soviet leader, but all the same it remained difficult. SED counter-agitation against Western ERP propaganda had not been as active as on the issue of German unity as a consequence of the illusions spread among the population about the Marshall Plan. The Party has not yet managed to involve the broad masses in fighting the Marshall Plan." Sharp differences had arisen with the Western powers which had taken "terrorist measures" against the SED. Finally, there was "the powerful propaganda apparatus which the western occupation authorities have in Berlin which the SED cannot even match." In the western sectors the occupation authorities were interfering with the Party's work at enterprises, prohibiting the hanging of signs and the convening of meetings, and creating "Trotskyite groups." Elections scheduled for October would, in the estimates of the SED leaders, not be better for the SED than in 1946. Apparently sensing (or possibly already informed) that a set measures was in planning, Pieck ventured that "they would be happy if the Allies were forced out of

Berlin.” To this, Stalin commented, far less *ad hoc* than often portrayed, “let’s try with [our] common efforts; maybe we’ll force [them] out.”³⁴⁸

Truman and his advisers believed that a western withdrawal from Berlin under Soviet pressure would constitute a “political defeat of the first magnitude” with repercussions not just in Germany but throughout the world.³⁴⁹ American credibility was perceived to be at stake. Reports from Berlin suggested that in “Soviet-Communist circles” Berlin was referred to as a “political Stalingrad.” Top SED officials were reportedly convinced that the Western Powers would leave Berlin in the spring of 1948, with the Soviets moving into all of the city. The Western evacuation of the city, Washington was told, “was seen as “the first phase in the liberation of Germany.”³⁵⁰

The former Reich capital had, American officials were quite aware, an immense “drawing power” and could have a “magnetic effect” upon Western Germany.³⁵¹ The presence of Western forces in Berlin, in turn, provided perhaps the largest impediment to unqualified control by the Soviet occupiers over their zone. When OMGUS personnel appeared in the Soviet sector, news of their presence often “spread like wild-fire through the crowd,” “pleased and cheered them,” boosted morale, as U.S. officials saw themselves in an atmosphere increasingly charged by the East-West confrontation over access to the city.³⁵² Abandoning the Western island in the heart of the Soviet zone would have meant, administration officials figured, the “final concession of Eastern Germany to

³⁴⁸ “Record of a conversation between Cde. I. V. Stalin and the leaders of the Socialist Unity Party of Germany Wilhelm Pieck and Otto Grotewohl, 26 March 1948, at 1900 hours,” AP RF, F. 45, Op. 1, D. 303, pp. 53-79, Library of Congress, Volkogonov Papers.

³⁴⁹ CIA „Review of the World Situation,“ 8 April 1948, HSTL, President’s Secretary’s File, NSC File-Meetings, Box 203; W. Park Armstrong/R to Charles E. Saltzman/O, 30 June 1948, NARA, RG 59, 740.00119 Control (Germany), 1-3048 (sic).

³⁵⁰ A-269, Murphy to Secretary of State, 8 April 1948, NARA, RG 59, 740.00119 Control (Germany)/ 4-848.

³⁵¹ Charles E. Saltzman to Russel/PA, 12 July 1948, NARA, RG 59, Lot 55D371, Box 8.

³⁵² Rebecca Wellington to Frank Wisner, 23 July 1948, NARA, RG 59, 862.00/7-2348. Given the positive reaction by Soviet sector residents, the State Department soon considered whether visits to the Soviet sector should be continued on an “augmented basis.” See attached note, Wisner to Beam, August 1948, *ibid*. See also the British report, “Record of Conversation with Herr Reuier, Oberburgomaster of Berlin, on Monday, 7th February,” 7 February 1949, NARA, RG 59, 740.00119 Control (Germany)/ 92-1449.

Communism.”³⁵³ While the Berlin airlift, inaugurated in the summer of 1948, symbolized continued U.S. commitment to Western European and Berlin’s security, it was also an offensive gesture: Withdrawal from Berlin would have allowed the Soviets to consolidate control over their zone at the very moment U.S. intelligence agents were reporting “serious and growing food and raw materials shortages” in the SBZ.³⁵⁴ The city offered, America’s top diplomat in Germany, Robert Murphy observed, “an action point far inside Soviet-held territory from which to observe developments and to support and influence resistance to Communism in a vital area.” The degree to which Allied presence in Berlin kept the Soviets from consolidating their hold on 21,000,000 eastern Germans, Murphy surmised, “may be measured by [the] intensity of Soviet efforts to force us out of Berlin.”³⁵⁵

American officials used their continued presence in Berlin to counter Soviet efforts to stabilize their zone by subduing the non-communist forces and to use the capital vantage point for all-German appeals, especially with a view to winning over “recalcitrant bourgeois elements.”³⁵⁶ The Soviet Military Administration’s newly cooperative approach towards the CDU and LDP in early 1948, the U.S. mission in Berlin suspected, was driven by the desire to “lull” the non-communist forces within the population into a sense of security. It also rewarded compliant CDU and LDP leaders but also reflected the realization that “real support for the SED and the people’s congress was “less widespread than was hoped.”³⁵⁷ Since 1946 the Truman administration had wrestled with the question of how far the non-communist parties presented resistance potential within the SBZ and should be supported to that effect. The Western sectors of Berlin provided safe havens for

³⁵³ CIA, „Review of the World Situation,“ 8 April 1948, HSTL, President’s Secretary’s File, NSC File-Meetings, Box 203.

³⁵⁴ Murphy to Secretary of State, 15 April 1948, NARA, RG 59, 740.00119 Control (Germany)/4-1548.

³⁵⁵ Murphy to Marshall, 26 June 1948, NARA, RG 59, 740.00119 Control (Germany)/6-2648.

³⁵⁶ Murphy to Secretary of State, 4 June 1948, NARA, RG 59, 862.00/6-448.

³⁵⁷ Murphy to Secretary of State, 4 June 1948, NARA, RG 59, 862.00/6-448.

those non-communist party leaders increasingly under pressure by the people's congress and bloc movement. The CDU's success in the elections in the American zone in early 1946 seemed to have provided Kaiser with additional force against Pieck in the unity front discussions, and may have helped moderate the SED's attitude towards the nationalization measure carried out by referendum in Saxony in June 1946.³⁵⁸ In fact, throughout 1946, the CDU was growing in membership numbers, due to an influx of former Social Democrats, adding to its force.³⁵⁹ American observers in Berlin had sensed that the Soviet Military Administration was initially trying to avoid a complete breach with the CDU and particularly with Kaiser, cognizant of the fact that he and the party had resisted Soviet pressures to abandon its opposition to Soviet policies with considerable determination and reticence.³⁶⁰ But in December 1947 the Soviets ousted CDU leaders Kaiser and Lemmer over their refusal to join the people's congress movement, yet Kaiser and Lemmer remained powerful voices operating from Western Berlin. While many Germans in the Western zone felt that the East Zone CDU was henceforth "completely under Tulpanov's thumb" incapable of resisting the communization of the zone, Lemmer tried to counter the inclination to write off the Soviet zone CDU in repeated conversations with Murphy's staff. Lemmer tried to convince U.S. officials that the party's rank-and-file (as opposed to its leadership under Otto Nuschke) "still represented a considerable opposition and would do so as long as they believed that they were not totally cut-off from the West." That opposition, Murphy noted, did indeed "occasionally drop to the surface,"³⁶¹ as in the case of the tumultuous protest against the party's new "strong man" Georg Dertinger at a CDU

³⁵⁸ Murphy to Secretary of State, 13 June 1946, NARA, RG 59, 862.00/6-1346.

³⁵⁹ "Daily Information Summary No 214, 23 April 1946, NARA, RG 59, 740.00119 Control (Germany)/4-2446.

³⁶⁰ Murphy to Riddleberger, 31 August 1947, NARA, RG 59, 740.00119 Control (Germany)/8-3147.

³⁶¹ Murphy to Secretary of State, 1 October 1948, NARA, RG 59, 862.00/10-148.

meeting in Brandenburg.³⁶² But like Murphy many within the administration remained skeptical if this opposition could have “substantially any more effect on the progress of the “communization of the Zone than did the protests of the former opposition parties in Eastern European countries.”³⁶³ The CIA, in fact, concluded as early as the spring of 1948 that Moscow had virtually completed its “campaign to eliminate all overt opposition in the Soviet Zone.”³⁶⁴

Truman administration officials carefully followed Soviet efforts to set up what it termed “Quisling political parties” in Berlin to undermine the powerful Western-oriented Berlin Land organizations.³⁶⁵ Following the death of the Liberal Democratic Party leader Wilhelm Külz in early April 1948, the Soviets engineered the split of the LDP Land organization in Berlin, led by the anti-Soviet Schwennicke. They set up a LDP *Arbeitsgemeinschaft*, the “real aim” of which American observers estimated was “a new Sovietized Land organization” in Berlin that could align itself with the zonal LDP, and groomed Prof. Hermann Kastner as “potential head of an Eastern German government.”³⁶⁶ In July 1948, Alfons Gaertner, the president of the Landesbank of Thuringia and second chairman of the LDP Land organization slated by the Soviets to head the LDP in the zone, fled to the West. The defection was seen as a “heavy blow to the Soviet Zone LDP” precisely at a moment when the party “had gathered its courage to attack the SED in a surprisingly uninhibited manner.”³⁶⁷ Yet much of the party leadership throughout the zone remained intact at the local level, American officials learned, and under pressure had resolved many of their differences with the CDU leaders. People throughout the zone, one

³⁶² Riddleberger to Secretary of State, 12 February 1949, NARA, RG 59, 862.00/2-1249; POLAD Heidelberg to Department of State, 6 June 1949, NARA, RG 59, 862.00/6-649.

³⁶³ Murphy to Secretary of State, 1 October 1948, NARA, RG 59, 862.00/10-148, see also Murphy to Secretary of State, 12 January 1949, NARA, RG 59, 862.00/1-1249.

³⁶⁴ CIA, “Review of the World Situation As It Relates to the Security of the United States,” 10 March 1948, HSTL, PSF: NSC Files – Meetings, Box 203.

³⁶⁵ Riddleberger to Secretary of State, 19 October 1948, NARA, RG 59, 862.00/10-1949.

³⁶⁶ Chase to Secretary of State, 30 April 1948, NARA, RG 59, 862.00/4-3048.

³⁶⁷ Riddleberger to Secretary of State, 22 July 1948, NARA, RG 59, 862.00/7-2248.

defecting LDP leader reported, were “only waiting” in the hope that the Eastern zone would decline to such a “wretched state” that it was no longer of use to the Russians and expecting the Western allies not to make any compromises with Moscow.³⁶⁸

The Truman administration also sought to heighten dissension within the German administration in the Soviet zone and the SED, which, OMGUS was well aware, was suffering from poor morale as well as widespread lethargy and dissatisfaction.³⁶⁹ The SED’s performance had created increasing concern on the part of the Soviets as to the effectiveness of the party.³⁷⁰ By mid-1948, the party started to undergo a series of changes and purges designed to strengthen it as a Marxist-Leninist striking force.³⁷¹ In May, U.S. intelligence reported the creation of a SED “Parteiaktiv” at a secret meeting.³⁷² Former social democrats in particular came under increased pressure. Defections from the SED rank-and-file increased. Ulbricht’s call at the thirteenth meeting of the SED executive committee on 15-16 September 1948 to abandon any “peculiar German ways to socialism” had to be considered, according to Murphy, as “the funeral ovation over any nationalistic deviations in SED policy.”³⁷³ The SED’s internal assessments picked up by OMGUS offered a “remarkable confession of failure.”³⁷⁴ Aggressive posturing by SED leaders – such as Saxony’s Prime Minister’s Seydewitz’s statement that “All we need when the time comes are sufficient weapons and ammunition. We have the fanatics to fight when the

³⁶⁸ Memorandum, USPOLAD Frankfurt to USPOLAD Berlin, 25 January 1949, NARA, RG 59, 740.00119 Control (Germany)/1-2549, EUCOM Intelligence Report on LDP, enclosed in POLAD Heidelberg to Department of State, 12 August 1949, NARA, RG 59, 862.00/8-1249.

³⁶⁹ Murphy to Secretary of State, 8 June 1948, NARA, RG 59, 862.00/6-848.

³⁷⁰ Robert F. Corrigan (POLAD Heidelberg) to Secretary of State, 21 December 1948, NARA, RG 59, 862.00/12-2148.

³⁷¹ “Eastern Germany,” Douglas (American Embassy London) to Secretary of State, 13 July 1948, NARA, RG 59, 862.00B/7-1348; Robert F. Corrigan (POLAD Heidelberg) to Secretary of State, 29 October 1948, NARA, RG 59, 862.00/102948; A-946, POLAD Berlin to Secretary of State, 11 December 1948, NARA, RG 59, 862.00/12-1148; “SMA Order Directing Screening of German Socialist Unity Party (SED),” Robert F. Corrigan (POLAD Heidelberg) to Secretary of State, 21 December 1948, NARA, RG 59, 862.00/21-2148;

³⁷² EST Report No. MGB-6519, cited in Murphy to Secretary of State, 8 June 1948, NARA, RG 59, 862.00/6-848.

³⁷³ Murphy to Secretary of State, 21 September 1948, NARA, RG 59, 9-2048.

³⁷⁴ Riddleberger to Secretary of State, 19 October 1948, NARA, RG 59, 862.00/10-1948.

occasion arises.” -- only seemed to evidence the “desperation” which the SED had fallen into “in the face of the hostility of all except a small minority in the Soviet Zone.”³⁷⁵ U.S. observers, the SED’s “even more slavish acceptance of the Marxist-Leninist line” pitted it against the great majority of German public opinion, which were presumed to be “intensely anti-Soviet and anti-Communist.”³⁷⁶

The defection of former SPD functionary Erich Gniffke from the ranks of the SED leadership underlined the difficulties of the SED.³⁷⁷ Truman administration officials held hopes that they could induce other prominent SED leaders from the party’s Central Committee to bolt from their positions in the SBZ, such as Max Fechner, Friedrich Ebert, son of the former Reich president, and, most prized of all, Otto Grotewohl, the co-chairman of the party and former SPD leader. At the end of 1948, Friedrich Ebert Jr., son of the Weimar Reichspräsident, contacted Western intelligence officers expressing his desire “to quit and flee Berlin,” prompting OMGUS officials to advocate that he be given sanctuary in the U.S. zone.³⁷⁸ Western intelligence sources included Heinrich Graf von Einsiedel, a member of the Von Seidlitz Group of the National Committee for a Free Germany, who was taken into custody by the Army’s Counterintelligence Corps on 25 May 1948 while visiting Wiesbaden.³⁷⁹ The goal was made more difficult by the unremitting position of western SPD leader Kurt Schumacher who argued that potential high-ranking SED deserters had “burned their bridges” and would make “absolutely no commitment” to get them back into the SPD.³⁸⁰ To be sure Grotewohl’s more recent

³⁷⁵ Robert F. Corrigan (POLAD Heidelberg) to Secretary of State, 21 December 1948, NARA, RG 59, 862.00/12-2148.

³⁷⁶ Riddleberger to Secretary of State, 19 October 1948, NARA, RG 59, 862.00/10-1948.

³⁷⁷ For some results of Gniffke’s interrogation by U.S. Army Intelligence, see Corrigan to Secretary of State, 11 January 1949, NARA, RG 59, 862.00/1-1149.

³⁷⁸ 2907, Murphy to Secretary of State, 9 December 1948, NARA, RG 59, 862.00/12-948.

³⁷⁹ 2907, Murphy to Secretary of State, 9 December 1948, NARA, RG 59, 862.00/12-948; 233, Corrigan to Secretary of State, 18 May 1949, with enclosed Intelligence Report No. RP-116-49, NARA, RG 59, 862.00/5-1849; “Renunciation of Communism by Heinrich Graf von Einsiedel,” USPOLAD Frankfurt to Department of State, 26 April 1949, NARA, RG 58, 862.00B/4-2649.

³⁸⁰ Murphy to Secretary of State, 8 June 1948, NARA, RG 59, 862.00/6-848.

statements and actions left, in the view of one U.S. diplomat, “little reason to doubt that he has been completely won over to the Communist viewpoint.”³⁸¹

7. The Soviet Zone as a “Springboard for Penetration”?

As it shifted from trying to maintain the grand alliance to engaging the Soviet Union in a cold war, American policy took on a new, more aggressive nature. Financial and military aid for the beleaguered Greek and Turkish governments as a result of the Truman doctrine represented only the beginning of America’s efforts. The National Security Act of 1947 created a new bureaucracy to oversee U.S. security policies; in one of its first policy directives, the newly created National Security Council (NSC) authorized tighter coordination of U.S. information activities, by covert means if necessary, to counter Soviet efforts. Massive covert intervention in the April 1948 elections in Italy, the first test case for new psychological warfare tactics, sought to prevent a Communist take-over in the wake of the “Czech coup.” The United States provided scarce items to ease the constant food shortages in postwar Italy; Italian-Americans engaged in a massive letter-writing campaign in support of the non-communist parties. Meanwhile the CIA distributed anti-communist propaganda materials, supplied anti-communist forces with scarce newsprint and spearheaded a massive disinformation campaign.

The success of the non-communist Christian Democrats convinced many within the administration that psychological warfare would be an effective instrument in defeating the communist threat. American policy moved from a more defensively conceptualized “containment” to become a more aggressive, dynamic effort to subvert the emerging Soviet empire – an empire seen as being in a condition of “uneasy stability.”³⁸²

³⁸¹ A-851, Murphy to Secretary of State, NARA, RG 59, 862.00/11-848.

³⁸² Central Intelligence Agency, “Review of the World Situation, CIA 11-48, 17 November 1948, HSTL, PSF: NSC Files – Meetings, Box 204; “Memorandum for the President,” by Sidney W. Souers, 23 November 1948, *ibid.*

In November 1948, President Truman formally approved a new national security statement – NSC 20/4 – which aimed at reducing Soviet power, restoring the independence of the Eastern European states.³⁸³ CIA, in particular its deceptively named “Office of Policy Coordination” (OPC) established in September 1948 under the leadership of Frank Wisner, along with the State Department and the Defense Department, initiated a campaign to weaken Soviet control over Eastern Europe and undermine Communist control within the USSR. Most famously, the administration inspired the creation of the private Free Europe Committee and covertly help to develop, fund and programmatically guide two new radio stations, Radio Free Europe and Radio Liberty. The radios would carry psychological warfare beyond what official “Voice of America” was able to do, including intelligence gathering and paramilitary functions. Truman’s advisers, most prominently Kennan, were confident that the military balance favored the United States and that America’s “preponderant power” could be brought to bear without having to fear a Soviet military counterstroke.³⁸⁴

The apparent success of the Berlin airlift and counter-blockade, along with effective countering the all-German reach of the People’s Congress movement, certainly reinforced such emboldened thinking. To be sure, Berlin remained a strategic liability as much as it was an asset, and though the People’s Congress movement had been effectively undermined, the unity issue had not lost its powerful appeal to Germans across all zones. With the People’s Congress falling short, Stalin sought to tap into the support for unity through a new organization, the “National Front.”³⁸⁵ These efforts came at a time when Western allied-German relations had in fact reached a new low over Allied criticism of the

³⁸³ “Memorandum for the President,” by Sidney W. Souers, 23 November 1948, HSTL, PSF: NSC Files—Meetings, Box 204.

³⁸⁴ Gregory Mitrovich, *Undermining the Kremlin: America's Strategy to Subvert the Soviet Bloc, 1947-1956* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 2000), pp. 15-46.

³⁸⁵ On the “National Front,” see below.

draft constitution developed by the Parliamentary Council in Bonn.³⁸⁶ By early 1949 there was a widespread sense throughout Germany that the allies had reached a stalemate on the unity issue; in the eyes of the Truman administration the situation was vulnerable to exploitation by the Soviets and the German communist leaders.³⁸⁷ As a matter of fact, in early 1949 the Soviet Zone turned to renewed emphasis on German unity, and hard-line “Sovietizers,” such as Col. Tulpanov, seemed to recede into the background.³⁸⁸ At the SED Party Conference in January 1949 Pieck and Ulbricht renounced any suggestion that the SBZ was identical to the “people’s democracies” to its east.³⁸⁹ A new SED politburo directive also placed new emphasis on the People’s Congress Movement, which, Americans noted, “had been dormant until quite recently.”³⁹⁰ Ulbricht reversed earlier claims that Berlin was an integral part of the zone, instead declared it the capital of all Germany.³⁹¹ U.S. officials in Berlin warned that it would be “extremely unwise to dismiss the present Soviet line lightly on the ground that the Germans are basically anti-Soviet.”³⁹²

American officials worried about increased nationalism and general dissatisfaction in Western Germany fed by Western Allied measures, such as the Ruhr agreement, the installment of the Military Security Board and western boundary changes.³⁹³ East-CDU leader Nuschke, widely characterized by U.S. officials as a “handy tool of the Soviet Military Administration,”³⁹⁴ visited the West for talks with his western counterparts in

³⁸⁶ “Attitude of the German public Opinion Toward the Western Occupying Powers and the Reasons Therefor,” American Consulate General Hamburg to Department of State, 16 February 1949, NARA, RG 59, 740.00119 Control (Germany)/ 2-1649.

³⁸⁷ 479, Riddleberger to Secretary of State, 2 April 1949, NARA, RG 59, 740.00119 Control (Germany)/ 4-249.

³⁸⁸ 134, Murphy to Secretary of State, NARA, RG 59, 862.00/1-2649.

³⁸⁹ Kohler to Secretary of State, 18 January 1949, NARA, RG 862.00/1-1849.

³⁹⁰ USPOLAD to Department of State, 15 February 1949, NARA, RG 59, 862.00/2-1549.

³⁹¹ Kohler to Secretary of State, 10 February 1949, NARA, RG 59, 862.00/2-1049 (FOIA release to author); Memorandum from Jacob D. Beam/CE to Thompson/EE, 14 February 1949, NARA, RG 59, 2-1449.

³⁹² A-195, Riddleberger to Secretary of State, 27 March 1949, NARA, RG 59, 740.00119 Control (Germany)/ 3-2749.

³⁹³ 479, Riddleberger to Secretary of State, 2 April 1949, NARA, RG 59, 740.00119 Control (Germany)/ 4-249.

³⁹⁴ POLAD Heidelberg to Department of State, 6 June 1949, NARA, RG 59, 862.00/6-649.

early March 1949.³⁹⁵ Although he seemed to have only limited success at first, U.S. observers noted that “he may have sowed his seeds in miracle soil.”³⁹⁶ Nuschke met with Konrad Adenauer, the president of the constituent Parliamentary Council who was rapidly emerging as the leading political figure in the Western zones, to convince the West Germans that “the bourgeois parties have a real part to play in Germany’s future,” and that such was the case in the Soviet Zone where Nuschke expected the CDU to come off as the strongest party in elections in the “near future.”³⁹⁷ Former CDU leader Hermes, who had been among the first to be deposed by the Soviets in 1945 (over the land reform issue), and former German ambassador Rudolf Nadolny organized a meeting in Bad Godesberg which included leading German personalities such as Adenauer and Prittwitz-Gaffron who “did not wish to close [the] door completely.”³⁹⁸ Much to the dismay of American observers even a generally pro-Western Prittwitz-Gaffron reportedly attacked the emerging “Bonn State” as “leading to nationalism and totalitarianism.”³⁹⁹

Moreover, at its sixth session in March 1949, the *Volksrat* initiated what it called “the hand-stretched-out-to-the-west:” in a letter to the Parliamentary Council in Bonn and the Economic Council in Frankfurt inviting both bodies to select a delegation to meet in the British Zone city Braunschweig with members of the People’s Council for discussion

³⁹⁵ Other such efforts were reported earlier. E.g. “Activities in the Bremen District of “Oberkonsistorialrat” Johannes Schroeder,” enclosed in Maurice Altaffer, American Consul General in Bremen, to Secretary of State, 19 November 1947, RG 59, 862.00/11-1947.

³⁹⁶ Riddleberger to Acheson, 2 April 1949, NARA, RG 59, 740.00119 Control (Germany)/3-249. Adenauer informed OMGUS officials that Nuschke’s visit was designed to prevent or disturb the consolidating of a Western state, but “while ostensibly rejecting Nuschke as a tool of the Soviets, allowed himself to be frequently photographed with Nuschke.” Altaffer to Secretary of State, 7 March 1949, NARA, RG 59, 862.00/3-749.

³⁹⁷ Altaffer to Secretary of State, 3 March 1949, NARA, RG 59, 740.00119 Control (Germany)/3-349; Riddleberger to Secretary of State, 5 March 1949, NARA, RG 59, 862.00/3-549.

³⁹⁸ Riddleberger to Acheson, 2 April 1949, NARA, RG 59, 740.00119 Control (Germany)/3-249.

³⁹⁹ Murphy wondered whether “it might be useful if one of our people had a quiet and personal talk with Prittwitz. He used to be most cooperative ? I wonder what is eating him?” Murphy to John. J. McCloy, 6 September 1949, NARA, RG 59, 862.00/9-649. On Nadolny’s role, see his *Mein Beitrag: Erinnerungen eines Botschafters des Deutschen Reiches*, ed. by Günter Wollstein (Cologne: DME, 1985); and Alexander Gallus., *Die Neutralisten. Verfechter eines vereinten Deutschland zwischen Ost und West, 1945-1990* (Düsseldorf: Droste, 2001), pp. 146-148.

of German issues.⁴⁰⁰ The meeting between representatives of the People's Council and West Germans took place on May 20 in Hanover but was broken up soon after it opened by the British Military Government. While a meeting with a *Volksrat* delegation was unacceptable to many "responsible" West German leaders, the idea of a rapprochement between Eastern and Western Germany, American observers surmised, would be welcome by various elements in West Germany. West Germans seemed increasingly responsive to overtures from the East -- "more than could have been imagined a few months ago" -- and in growing number appeared eager to revive relations with the SED-controlled authorities in the SBZ.⁴⁰¹ A Soviet proposal for unification at the CFM meeting in Paris later that month could take advantage of this groundswell of national emotions -- and possibly derail the establishment of a West German state. Once again, it was the top U.S. diplomat in Germany who alerted Washington that the situation was "sufficiently serious to warrant a careful re-evaluation of our present course in Germany."⁴⁰²

How the United States would respond depended to a large degree on how one saw the "correlation of forces" in Germany. The Truman administration was of two minds. In August 1948, George Kennan, the driving force behind the new covert action program and then head of the Policy Planning Staff, began outlining a "Program A" for Germany which envisioned allied troop withdrawals to limited enclaves on the fringes of the country, opening up the possibility for free elections and a German administration in charge across the four occupation zones. In sharp contrast to his views in 1946-1947 -- but in striking similarity to Clay's views at the time, Kennan now argued that "time is on our side," and that the Berlin crisis had improved the U.S. position to the extent that "we could go much further in risking the immediate establishment of a German authority than would have

⁴⁰⁰ Riddleberger to Secretary of State, 11 May 1949, NARA, RG 59, 740.00119 Control (Germany)/5-1149.

⁴⁰¹ 479, Riddleberger to Secretary of State, 2 April 1949, NARA, RG 59, 740.00119 Control (Germany)/ 4-249; Riddleberger to Secretary of State, 22 May 1949, 740.00119 Control (Germany)/5-2249.

⁴⁰² 479, Riddleberger to Secretary of State, 2 April 1949, NARA, RG 59, 740.00119 Control (Germany)/ 4-249; Riddleberger to Secretary of State, 22 May 1949, 740.00119 Control (Germany)/5-2249.

been the case six months or a year ago.” Central to this view was that the airlift and counter-blockade had weakened the Soviet hold on eastern Germany, bringing it economically to near collapse.⁴⁰³ The Russian opposition to the organization of a western German state, Kennan argued, stemmed “from their realization that in the long run a communist regime in eastern Germany will not be able to compete successfully with the non-Communist regime in western Germany, particularly if the political development of the eastern zone along communist lines continues to be disrupted by the presence of western forces in Berlin.”⁴⁰⁴ Hence Kennan suggested a mutual troop withdrawal as a key to an all-German solution: “If our troops remain, Russia’s troops remain. If Russia’s troops remain, zonal boundaries remain. If zonal boundaries remain, there can be no serious talk of a solution of the German problem as a whole.”⁴⁰⁵ Kennan thus sensed that Moscow was acting less from strength than from insecurity, that the blockade was turning out to be a decisive failure, and that Western option for a unified Germany provided a unique, perhaps final chance to roll back Soviet influence throughout the entire country. CIA estimates seemed to support his view: the blockade had resulted in “growing anti-Soviet sentiments” among eastern Germans, and presented “the basis of a political problem” for Moscow, policymakers were told. Soviet-satellite relations were “not entirely healthy.” All might have brought about an “exaggerated sense of insecurity to Soviet calculations.”⁴⁰⁶ Other intelligence reports suggested that the SED was becoming uneasy with the prospect of the lifting of the blockade: Soviet zones leaders were

⁴⁰³ Kennan to Acheson, 14 February 1949, NARA, RG 59, 740.00119 Control (Germany)/ 2-1449; Henry A. Byroade to Murphy, 10 March 1949, NARA, RG 59, 740.00119 Control (Germany)/ 3-1049 TSF.

⁴⁰⁴ Draft Memorandum by Kennan, 4 October 1948, enclosed in George Butler to Bohlen, 5 October 1948, NARA, RG 59, 740.00119 Control (Germany).10-548.

⁴⁰⁵ George F. Kennan to Robert Murphy, 24 December 1948, NARA, Lot 64D563, Policy Planning Staff Records, Box 15; Memorandum by Kennan, 8 March 1949, NARA, RG 59, 740.00119 Control (Germany)/3-849.

⁴⁰⁶ CIA, Review of the World Situation,” 20 October 1948, HSTL, PSF: NSC Files—Meetings, Box 204.

concerned that the end of the blockade might lead to the elimination of the zonal borders.⁴⁰⁷

Kennan's proposals, in particular his call for partial military withdrawal, met strong criticism by many within the administration who felt that "it was too late for the U.S. to change its position regarding the establishment of a West German government."⁴⁰⁸ Officials in the War and State Departments feared that without a strong U.S. military presence in the country, Soviet interference in German internal affairs might bring a pro-Soviet government in Germany to power, which would make it "probably impossible to maintain governments in France and Italy and possibly throughout Europe, oriented toward the West."⁴⁰⁹ Others felt it was unrealistic to expect the USSR to tolerate a free and likely Western-oriented Germany to come into being, and, even if it did, the Soviets would likely try "by every device of sabotage and terror to over throw it."⁴¹⁰ Recent tightening of control in the SBZ suggested to some that free institutions could only be restored in the eastern part of the country "at cost of a civil war."⁴¹¹ Others yet pointed to the economic degradation of eastern Germany which would "make it difficult to achieve an integrated sound economy."⁴¹² These officials pressed for continued efforts towards a separate West German state did so in the belief that the Western powers first needed to build a position of strength by recognizing France's and Britain's security interests and securing the volatile position in Germany within a Western European framework, if necessary at the

⁴⁰⁷ Tensions within the SED reportedly erupted at a meeting of functionaries at the SED headquarters in Saxony on 4 May 1949. See Riddleberger to Secretary of State 27 June 1949, NARA, RG 59, 862.00/6-2449.

⁴⁰⁸ Memorandum of Conversation, Policy with respect to Germany," 9 March 1949, NARA, RG 59, 740.00119 Control (Germany)/3-949.

⁴⁰⁹ Kennan to Acheson, 14 February 1949, NARA, RG 59, 740.00119 Control (Germany)/ 2-1449; "Military Implications Deriving from the Establishment of a Free and Sovereign German Government," enclosed in Ware Adams to the Policy Planning Staff, 3 September 1948, NARA, RG 59, Lot 55D371, Box 8.

⁴¹⁰ "Plan for Germany," Jacob Beam, 27 September 1948, NARA, RG 59, 740.00119 Control (Germany)/9-2748; Hickerson to McWilliams, 23 November 1948, NARA, RG 59, 740.00119 Control (Germany)/ 11-2348.

⁴¹¹ "Plan for Germany," Jacob Beam, 27 September 1948, NARA, RG 59, 740.00119 Control (Germany)/9-2748.

⁴¹² Hickerson and Beam to McWilliams, 23 November 1948, NARA, RG 59, 740.00119 Control (Germany)/11-2348

expense of preserving German unity. Rather than pursuing an “ideal” program for German unity such as “Program A,” they argued that in any future discussions with the USSR, a *modus vivendi* on Germany could be limited to the resumption of normal trade allowing the Soviets “at least to stabilize the deteriorating economic conditions in their zone.”⁴¹³

Clay, who had so adamantly opposed Kennan’s views in 1946 but since 1948 had become the main proponent of the London decisions, now reacted sharply to Kennan’s proposals, warning that any all-German solution had to include continued U.S. economic assistance and the U.S. security screen had to remain in place, the withdrawal of which would “discourage the resistance movements” in the satellite countries.⁴¹⁴ Yet Clay shared with Kennan the sense that Western support for German unity offered an opportunity he had held out since first taking charge in Germany: “Obviously,” Clay argued, a unified Germany could be an advantage to the West, and be used as a “spring board for penetration into the Satellite countries.”⁴¹⁵ Other key foreign policy figures, such as Philip Jessup and Republican foreign policy expert John Foster Dulles, agreed with the longer-term potential of a unified Germany: Contrary to the “hypercautious” attitudes by the French and British (“somewhat unreal in the light of our present strength”), they agreed that U.S. policy should, “not rest on our laurels but exert unremitting pressure to reduce Soviet influence in Eastern Europe.” In this view, “the Soviets and their German stooges have far more to fear from the partial opening of Eastern Germany to Western influences than we have from a slightly increased exposure of free Germany to

⁴¹³ Hickerson and Beam to McWilliams, 23 November 1948, NARA, RG 59, 740.00119 Control (Germany)/11-2348; Jessup to Rusk, 21 February 1949, NARA, RG 59, 740.1100119 Control (Germany)/2-2149.

⁴¹⁴ Clay to Vorhees, 6 May 1949, HSTL, Papers of Harry S. Truman, President’s Secretary’s Files, Box 178.

⁴¹⁵ Clay to Vorhees, 6 May 1949, HSTL, Papers of Harry S. Truman, President’s Secretary’s Files, Box 178.

Communist associations.” Germany and Austria might “offer the most favorable fields in which to press forward now.”⁴¹⁶

The new Secretary of State Dean Acheson resolved the debate within the administration in March 1949 by setting American policy on a double-track that placed emphasis on consolidating the West German arrangements while leaving open the possibility for quadripartite agreement.⁴¹⁷ After a trip to Germany by Kennan that convinced him to throw U.S. support behind pro-Western German leaders, Acheson signed off on NSC recommendations for the creation of a West German state.⁴¹⁸ On March 31, he suggested to Truman that the United States push for simplified occupation statute, a stronger central government in western Germany and the transfer of authority from a military governor to a civilian high commissioner.⁴¹⁹ At the Washington talks in April, Acheson reassured the British and French foreign ministers of U.S. commitment to Western European security. At the same time, the Truman administration began to negotiate secretly for an end to the blockade. Discussions at the UN in early May resulted in agreement to lift the blockade and convene another Council of Foreign Ministers meeting on Germany.⁴²⁰

Some within the Truman administration expected that, faced with the imminent prospect of the complete exclusion from the heart of Germany and with the “Soviet zone milked dry,” the USSR would make a “drastic and dramatic shift” at the CFM.⁴²¹ Signs of such a shift could be seen in indications, by SED leaders that, in order to achieve an all-

⁴¹⁶ Charles W. Yost to Jessup, 21 May 1949, enclosed in Jessup to Kennan, 24 May 1949, NARA, Lot 64D563, Policy Planning Staff Records, Box 15.

⁴¹⁷ Memorandum of Conversation, “Policy with Respect to Germany,” 9 March 1949, NARA, RG 59, 740.00119 Control (Germany)/ 3-949.

⁴¹⁸ Memorandum, 17 March 1949, NARA, RG 59, 740.00119 Control (Germany)/3-1749.

⁴¹⁹ Dean Acheson, Memorandum for the President, „German Policy Papers,“ 31 March 1949, NARA, RG 59, 740.00119 Control (Germany)/3-3149; Schwartz, *America’s Germany*, p. 38.

⁴²⁰ “Discussion of Malik-Jessup Conversation Concerning German Question,” 17 March 1949, NARA, RG 59, 740.00119 Control (Germany)/3-1749; “Preparations for CFM on Germany – meeting in the Secretary’s office May 12, 2:00 p.m.,” NARA, RG 59, Lot File 64D563 (Policy Planning Staff), Box 15.

⁴²¹ Kohler to Acheson, 6 May 1949, NARA, RG 59, 740.00119 Control (Germany)/5-649.

German solution, they would be willing to give up the “anti-Fascist democratic order,” and reach an understanding with “big industrialists and former Nazis.” Suspecting that the impending Council of Foreign Ministers session in Paris and the rapid progress in Bonn caused the SED to accept “strange bedfellows,” James Riddleberger, Murphy’s successor as political adviser, argued, the statements might imply a “radical change in SED policy.”⁴²² But the foreign ministers’ meeting failed to produce a break-through. Vyshinsky advocated a return to the system of four-power control, an anathema to the Western ministers. Instead of an all-German government, he demanded only a council composed of representatives of the economic councils in the eastern and western zones. The Soviet leaders, Truman was told, “feel that their political position in Germany, and the position of their German friends and partisans, to be so weak that they do not dare take a chance at this time on the establishment of a real all-German government.” Could it be, Kennan wondered, that “the fortunes in the cold war have shifted so fundamentally in the past two years that it is now the Russians who are trying to follow with regard to us, a policy of firmness and patience and unprovocative containment?”⁴²³ But Washington shied away from exploiting the “fortunes in the cold war” by a bold offer on German unity as Kennan had advocated. All the foreign ministers could agree on in the end was the resumption of interzonal trade, to be negotiated by German authorities. Following their agreement to the Basic Law for a Federal Republic, the Western allies proceeded with elections to a “Deutscher Bundestag” throughout the western zones in August.⁴²⁴ In September, a West German federal government under Adenauer took office, restrained by

⁴²² Riddleberger to Secretary of State, 11 May 1949, NARA, RG 59, Control (Germany)/5-1149.

Administration officials in Washington, however, remained “skeptical [that the] Grotewohl speech indicates any independent initiative [by] himself or [the] SED,” doubting the authenticity of the source. Acheson to Riddleberger, NARA, RG 59, 740.00119 Control (Germany)/5-1149

⁴²³ Kennan, Draft Statement for Webb (for appointment with president”, 26 May 1949, NARA, RG 59, Lot 64D563, Policy Planning Staff Papers, Box 15.

⁴²⁴ The Basic Law held out the possibility of unification with the eastern zone if freely elected state parliaments chose to accede to the Federal Republic, extending the constitution to Eastern Germany.

the reserve powers held by the Three Powers as represented in their newly installed High Commissioners. Within weeks, Stalin followed suit.

8. Conclusions

Contrary to recent scholarship which emphasized early American (and British) determination to divide Germany along East-West zonal lines in an effort to assure the inclusion of the Western occupation zones (in particular the heavy-industrial Rhein-Ruhr complex) in the economic rehabilitation of Western Europe, important forces within the Truman administration – led by the U.S. occupation chief, General Lucius Clay, were far from “writing off” the Soviet zone. They remained intent on a rollback of Soviet powers and control from eastern Germany. To this end, Clay and his Political Adviser, Robert Murphy until late 1947 consistently sought quadripartite solutions, in particular on establishing central administrative agencies and export-import trade systems that would mitigate the trend towards zonal autonomy. Along with its dogged determination to turn western Germany into the motor of West European recovery, American policy also sought to put Moscow on the defensive by all-German solutions that would have diminished Soviet control and potentially expanded U.S. influence in the Soviet zone. As the Cold War confrontation set in, American strategy of political *fait accompli* towards a separate German state in the west meshed with efforts to exploit vulnerabilities in eastern Germany.

III

From Diplomatic Blockade to Psychological Warfare:

The United States and East Germany, 1948-1952

1. Moscow's "Major Satellite"? The U.S. and the Establishment of the GDR

The establishment of the German Democratic Republic (GDR) within weeks of the founding of the Federal Republic did not take the Truman administration by surprise.⁴²⁵ Since the KPD-SPD merger in April 1946 U.S. officials had expected – and to a certain degree even hoped for – Moscow's moving ahead with the creation of a separate government in the Soviet occupation zone. The question for American policymakers was no *whether* the USSR would launch its "own" government in Germany, but *when, how,* and most importantly *why* this would be done. The answers to these questions would no doubt have significant implications for the status and security of Berlin and the Western zones as they were being merged in a separate government in the West. The developments in the Soviet zone, the Truman administration continued to assume, would thus allow for a further "reading" of Soviet intentions on the German problem. Would Moscow forego its all-German aspirations and turn the Soviet zone into a people's democracy modeled after its eastern neighbors? Or would the eastern government simply offer new, possibly more dangerous opportunities for expanding Soviet influence throughout the country, peacefully or militarily?

Initially the impetus behind setting up a centralized German administration in the Soviet zones had, in the eyes of U.S. Military Government observers, been to offset the "particularist" tendencies in the *Länder* and provinces in the Soviet Zones and the administrative difficulties created by overlapping responsibilities of local and *Länder*

⁴²⁵ See also Hermann-Josef Rupieper, "Die Reaktionen der USA auf die Gründung der DDR," *Provisorium für längstens ein Jahr: Die Gründung der DDR*, ed. Elke Scherstjanoi (Berlin: Akademie Verlag, 1993), pp. 59-66.

governments.⁴²⁶ Zone-wide administrative bodies would not only resolve administrative confusion; it would also allow the SED to assert its authority more effectively over local opposition forces. Since the launch of the People's Congress movement just before the inconclusive London Council of Foreign Ministers meeting in December 1947, however, Americans suspected that Stalin would use the Congress "as the basis for a possible eventual Communist-dominated German government."⁴²⁷ Given the SED-dominated composition of the People's Council, the Congress movement's executive committee, Truman administration officials figured that such a Soviet creation would be easily "recognized as a patent fraud."⁴²⁸ U.S. intelligence reports noted that "certain top SED-KPD leaders expect the *Volksrat* and/or its successor with governmental pretensions may eventually be given complete authority in Northeastern Germany."⁴²⁹

To others within OMGUS, however, the German Economic Commission (DWK), set up in mid-1947, was a far more likely option.⁴³⁰ In March 1948, U.S. intelligence noted that the SBZ administration was stepping up controls at the zonal border, purportedly to clamp down on illegal border crossings, and building up para-military units, and in May DWK decisions were announced as quasi-governmental ordinances.⁴³¹ A few months later, following similar changes in the western zones, Sokolovsky expanded the DWK from 36 to 101 members, leading American officials to wonder whether the Soviet Military Government would promote "the oft-rumored East Zone government through the instrumentality of the DWK rather than through the *Volkskongress*."⁴³²

⁴²⁶ OMGUS Political Research and Analysis Branch, "Centralization of Soviet Zone German Administration," 27 March 1946, NARA, RG 59, 740.00119 Control (Germany)/ 4-946.

⁴²⁷ Murphy to Secretary of State, 12 April 1949, NARA, RG 59, 862.00/4-1248.

⁴²⁸ Marshall to Douglas and Murphy, 3 April 1948, NARA, RG 59, 862.00/4-348.

⁴²⁹ Marshall to Douglas and Murphy, 3 April 1948, NARA, RG 59, 862.00/4-348.

⁴³⁰ Murphy to Secretary of State, 12 April 1949, NARA, RG 59, 862.00/4-1248.

⁴³¹ Murphy to Secretary of State, 8 April 1948, NARA, RG 59, 740.00119 Control (Germany)/4-848.

⁴³² Murphy to Secretary of State, 4 January 1949, NARA, RG 59, 862.1-449.

But it was the People's Council's Constitutional Committee which was authorized in May 1948 by the SMA to draft a constitution for a German Democratic Republic. Whether and how soon the People's Congress movement would develop into a government remained even to OMGUS specialists "as much of a riddle as ever."⁴³³ In July 1948, the People's Council's Constitutional Committee published a draft of basic principles for a German constitution, then was instructed by the People's Council at its August 3 session to have a final formulation ready by mid-September, presumably to be adopted at the next meeting of the People's Congress. Despite public denials by leading People's Council members that the body "planned east German government as answer to west German regime," the fifth session of the People's Council in late October 1948 adopted a "German constitution."⁴³⁴ To many U.S. observers, the activities of the committees of the People's Council already gave that body "all aspects of [an] embryo parliament."⁴³⁵

What was the reason for these confusing assessments? There was no question for Stalin that there would have to be a government in the zone if the West proceeded with its plans. "If a separate West German government is created in the west then a government will have to be created in Berlin," the Soviet leader told the SED leaders ordered to Moscow in December 1948. If American analysts were getting conflicting signals, it was due to the fact that the Kremlin and the SED, in fact, had not resolved *how* and *when* to establish such a government in the zone. The Soviet government tended to favor the People's Congress with its all-German appeal; Walter Ulbricht argued for an expansion of the DWK where SED-dominated parties and mass organizations held a slim majority. The discussions culminated during the secret summit in Moscow in December 1948.

⁴³³ Memorandum by Brewster Morris, 29 May 1948, enclosed in Murphy to Secretary of State, 29 May 1948, NARA, RG 59, 862.00/5-2948.

⁴³⁴ Murphy to Secretary of State 7 August 1948, NARA, RG 59, 862.00/8-748.

⁴³⁵ Murphy to Secretary of State 7 August 1948, NARA, RG 59, 862.00/8-748.

Countering the Germans' arguments for a zonal parliament (people's chamber) based on an expanded DWK, Soviet Foreign Minister Molotov pointed to the German People's Council "which for some reason the SED leaders never talk about in their proposals." When Pieck replied that the People's Council was an all-German body, Molotov asked whether it was "possible to tie the government to the People's Council so that the zonal nature was not stressed" – something that Stalin himself confirmed was very important: "Why couldn't it be done so that the People's Council elects the government[?]"⁴³⁶

Uncertainty about the procedure notwithstanding, to American observers it was clear that any eastern government would be set up in Berlin "in view of its great psychological implications" as the former Reich capital. They suspected that such a government would "definitely have national pretensions," not be limited to the zone alone.⁴³⁷ Such an assumption reflected the near common belief among Western observers that Soviet and German communist objectives encompassed all of Germany. Vying for popular support throughout Germany, neither the Truman administration nor Moscow and the SED were eager to take the blame for openly dividing the country. As the Truman administration sought British and French agreement to a West German state in early 1948, U.S. officials would have considered an early Soviet announcement of the establishment of a German republic an "advantage," inasmuch as it would force the "Soviets [to] take [the] onus of [a] split and destruction [of the] ACC [Allied Control Council]." A Soviet move prior to a final Western decision was seen to "clearly shift responsibility to Soviets for splitting Germany."⁴³⁸ American officials were careful to avoid having the decision for a Western solution be seen as writing off German unity and the Soviet zone altogether,

⁴³⁶ "Record of a Conversation between Cde. I. V. Stalin and the leaders of the Socialist Unity Party of Germany, W. Pieck, O. Grotewohl, and W. Ulbricht.," 18 December 1948, APRF, F. 45, Op. 1, D. 303, pp. 53-79.

⁴³⁷ Memorandum by Brewster Morris, 29 May 1948, enclosed in Murphy to Secretary of State, 29 May 1948, NARA, RG 59, 862.00/5-2948.

⁴³⁸ Marshall to Douglas and Murphy, 3 April 1948, NARA, RG 59, 862.00/4-348.

even if some internally acknowledged that such was for now the case. After receiving instructions to form a West German government in June 1948, the western zone minister presidents had impressed Murphy with the fact that their principal concern was not provoking the Soviets but the fear that the German population in the Soviet zone of occupation might “misunderstand” their actions in that direction.⁴³⁹

Stalin was eager not to take the blame either: “You don’t want to be the initiators of the division of Germany,” Stalin told the SED leadership in late 1948.⁴⁴⁰ In fact, the Soviet leadership held out hopes for appealing to the concerns by Germans on either side of the demarcation line: as early as June 1948 Semjonov had urged the SED leaders to think about such a manifesto for a “National Front” that would appeal to all Germans, -- even, as SED leader Pieck noted, to “for[mer] Nazi” and “for[mer] military” in order to serve as a “combat formation” for the “strengthening of the nat[ional] liberation struggle.”⁴⁴¹ Shortly before the Third People’s Congress Semyonov pressed on the German comrades: Stalin wished more than the kind of rhetoric at display at unity and peace events: the SED leaders were asked to go “a step further than the People’s Congress.” The SED leaders were unsure where this would lead: “Creation of a Nat[ional] Front,” Pieck noted, but “what is this supposed to be?” It had not been “prepared,” the suggested propaganda slogans seemed “precarious – Nazi slogan to the outside -- poss[ibly] nat[ional] unity front – in inward direction.”⁴⁴² The Third People’s Congress convened in Berlin on May 29, 1949. The following day, the Congress ratified the draft

⁴³⁹ Murphy to Saltzman and Hickerson, 16 July 1948, NARA, RG 59, 740.00119 Control (Germany)/7-1648; 37, Murphy to Secretary of State, 8 July 1948, NARA, RG 59, 862.00/7-448.

⁴⁴⁰ “Record of a Conversation between Cde. I. V. Stalin and the leaders of the Socialist Unity Party of Germany, W. Pieck, O. Grotewohl, and W. Ulbricht.,” 18 December 1948, APRF, F. 45, Op. 1, D. 303, pp. 53-79.

⁴⁴¹ “Discussion with Semojonov,” 10 June 1948, cited in *Wilhelm Pieck - Aufzeichnungen zur Deutschlandpolitik 1945- 1953*, ed. Badstübner, Rolf und Wilfried Loth, (Berlin: Akademie, 1994), p. 233; Staritz, *Geschichte der DDR*, p. 32.

⁴⁴² Quoted in *Wilhelm Pieck - Aufzeichnungen zur Deutschlandpolitik 1945- 1953*, ed. Badstübner, Rolf und Wilfried Loth, (Berlin: Akademie, 1994), p. 282.

constitution and adopted the “Manifesto to the German People,” calling for a “National Front for Unity and a Just Peace.”⁴⁴³

Nonetheless, further Soviet actions would, the Truman administration acknowledged, “to a great extent [...] determined by the further measures which the occupation powers take in western Germany.”⁴⁴⁴ Stalin in fact seems not to have made the final decision on setting up the GDR until after the September 15 election of Konrad Adenauer as federal chancellor. The following day, a SED leadership delegation -- Pieck, Ulbricht, Grotewohl, Oelßner -- arrived in Moscow for yet another meeting to receive instructions on the set-up of a Eastern German regime. In their meetings with Soviet officials -- Politburo members Malenkov, Beria, Bulganin, Molotov, Mikoyan and Kaganovich, SMA chief Chuikov and his political adviser Semenov -- Pieck argued that the establishment of the GDR had become unavoidable since the “Western occupation powers under American leadership [were working] towards a colonization of the West” and were — “by integration into the North Atlantic Pact and by the occupation statute” — establishing “their absolute rule over the Western population.” In this situation, it was necessary to “proceed now in the Soviet occupation zone with the creation of a German government.” The new government would be “based on the Potsdam Accords and call for the German unity, a peace treaty and national independence.” According to Pieck, the new regime would receive additional legitimacy through a “campaign for the uncovering of the Western government as organ of the Western powers” which would create a “call by the people for a German government.”⁴⁴⁵ Yet it took another eight days before Stalin gave

⁴⁴³ Riddleberger to Secretary of State, 20 May 1949, NARA, RG 59, 740.00119 Control (Germany)/5-2049; Riddleberger to Secretary of State, 30 May 1949, NARA, RG 59, 740.00119 Control (Germany)/5-3049;

⁴⁴⁴ Riddleberger to Secretary of State, 7 April 1949, NARA, RG 59, 862.00/3-3149. American officials understood this quite well, nearly universally sharing the belief that “much will presumably depend upon bizonal and/or trizonal developments.” Memorandum by Brewster Morris, 29 May 1948, enclosed in Murphy to Secretary of State, 29 May 1948, NARA, RG 59, 862.00/5-2948.

⁴⁴⁵ Dietrich Staritz, “Die SED, Stalin und der ‘Aufbau des Sozialismus’ in der DDR. Aus den Akten des Zentralen Parteiarchivs“ *Deutschland Archiv*, (1991), pp. 685-700.

the green light on the foundation of the GDR and assured economic support (though to a lesser degree than the Germans had asked for). Stalin agreed to the postponement of election to the fall of 1950, and advised the SED to facilitate its transformation to a “party of a new type” by a purge of its membership. A joint meeting of the *Volksrat* presidium and the Democratic bloc on October 5 demanded unanimously that the *Volksrat* in an “act of national self-defense” reconstitute itself as the Provisional GDR parliament (Volkskammer) and elect a “constitutional” government – which it did in a session on October 7. Three days later, Moscow endorsed the action, reconstituting the Soviet military government as the Soviet Control Commission (SCC) and overtly ceding authority to the new government in Berlin, including the establishment of a foreign ministry. On October 11, the Volkskammer and the Länderkammer elected Pieck president, and the following day, Grotewohl presented his cabinet, with SED functionaries occupying key ministries. With the new regime installed, Stalin cabled his blessings, hailing the GDR as the “foundation for a united, democratic and peace-loving Germany” and a “turning point in European history.”⁴⁴⁶

It is important to understand that the division of the country and the establishment of the GDR did not give the Truman administration the sense of “advantage” that it had hoped for. To be sure, with Konrad Adenauer the West had a thoroughly anti-communist leader in place who was committed to Germany’s place in the West, and as the Marshall Plan aid took hold growing economic prosperity could be expected to further foster political stability of the fledgling Federal Republic. The Communist Party (KPD) remained a marginal force in West Germany politically. But as the process of setting up the German Democratic Republic had unfolded under their eyes, American observers were left to conclude that the USSR’s chief aim in Germany remained “the conquest of the

⁴⁴⁶ On October 15, the USSR established diplomatic relations with the GDR.

whole nation,” HICOG Soviet affairs specialist David Mark reiterated the prevailing view in terms heavily connoting the warlike intentions ascribed to Moscow.⁴⁴⁷ Discounting the idea that the Soviet Union would ever accept a neutralized Germany prevented from threatening Soviet security or a non-militarized Germany along Western democratic lines, Mark strongly suggested that the Soviets would be “satisfied with nothing less than a Bolshevized Germany, within the Soviet satellite orbit, and serving as a springboard for the communization of the rest of Western Europe.”⁴⁴⁸ From Moscow, Ambassador Alexander Kirk, in equally martial terms, endorsed the view that the Kremlin regarded the eastern zone primarily as a strategic base for conquest, “not only of Berlin, but also [of the] far-more important western zones, including [the] key Ruhr area” and the “eventual domination of all of Europe.”⁴⁴⁹ To Kirk, the set-up of the GDR with its claim for all-German representation revealed the manner in which the Kremlin had endeavored “to ride two horses at once: the rapid communization of the Soviet zone; and the capture of all [of] Germany.”⁴⁵⁰ The latter objective had prevented the Soviets from proceeding as rapidly and radically in their own zone as “they would undoubtedly liked to have done.”⁴⁵¹ The new High Commissioner John J. McCloy warned Washington that division had not settled the situation in Germany: they were in fact only witnessing the next phase in the “struggle for the soul of Faust.” The creation of the GDR, said McCloy, had injected a “new threat” into postwar German politics, and at a minimum the Soviets had acquired important new propaganda tools. They could exploit the appeal of Berlin as the capital of the new Germany in the East, and the potential for trade with Germany’s eastern neighbors, the country’s traditional trade outlet, compared favorably with the problems the Federal

⁴⁴⁷ HICOG Berlin 18 to Department, 9 January 1950, RG 466, HICOG Berlin EAD, Box 1, folder 1:351.

⁴⁴⁸ Ibid.

⁴⁴⁹ Kirk to Secretary of State, 18.1.1950, RG 59, 762B.00/1-1850. See also RG 466, HICOG Berlin: Eastern Affairs Division, Folder 1:351.

⁴⁵⁰ Ibid.

⁴⁵¹ Ibid.

Republic was facing in regaining markets in the West. East Germany would not be just another Soviet “vassal state:” the Soviets, McCloy surmised, might “be planning to make East Germany their major satellite.”⁴⁵²

Within weeks the new East German government indeed renewed earlier all-German unity campaigns with added vigor. In February 1950, the new GDR Foreign Minister Georg Dertinger publicly demanded the immediate conclusion of a peace treaty with a united Germany and described the GDR as the “trustee of the entire German people.” The same month, the People’s Congress movement formally reconstituted itself as the “National Front,” proclaiming the “Program of the National Front of the Democratic Germany.” Denouncing the West, the National Front platform demanded the reunification of Germany through a “national plebiscite,” the termination of the occupation statute in West Germany, and the expansion of trade with the Soviet Union and the other people’s democracies. The SED also decided to have the Free German Youth (FDJ) stage a mass youth rally in Berlin, the *Deutschlandtreffen*, in late May.

These activities notwithstanding, Stalin demanded even greater focus on all-German unity from the SED. During a trip to Moscow in early May 1950, he scolded SED leaders Pieck, Grotewohl and Ulbricht for their lack of emphasis on all-German activities. The Soviet leadership ordered the SED regime to strengthen its activities in the West. On its return to the SED Politburo adopted a self-critical resolution, admitting that the party was “insufficiently oriented towards all-German tasks.” Given that “the main task is the development of an all-German policy, the leading organs of the party must not limit themselves to their duties in the GDR.”⁴⁵³ Increased efforts to mobilize the West Germans against rearmament and for unity became the focal point of the SED’s Third Party Plenum in July 1950. A telegram from the convention to Stalin called upon the SED to “develop

⁴⁵² Thomas A. Schwartz, *America’s Germany*. John J. McCloy and the Federal Republic of Germany (Cambridge: Harvard UP, 1991), 66-67.

⁴⁵³ BArch-SAPMO, NY36/556, Bl. 174.

even more strongly that heretofore an all-German policy of struggle for the preservation and support of peace, for the united, and independent democratic German Republic.” Echoing the Soviet leader, Pieck asked his party to oppose “certain circles within our Party” that “limited their policy and work merely to the territory of our Republic and neglected the all-German tasks.” In the same vein, Grotewohl proclaimed that “we cannot be content with the successes of the German Democratic Republic alone: it has to be all of Germany.”⁴⁵⁴

2. “Ideological Rollback:” Defining the Cold War Discourse in Germany

For McCloy, the establishment of two competing German regimes had, if anything, heightened the sense of confrontation in Germany – and a sense of vulnerability on the part of the West. The way the founding of the GDR had been staged was only one reason for the profound sense of uncertainty engulfing McCloy and his colleagues at the U.S. High Commission. Fears that with the Communist-run state in Germany Stalin had acquired a new instrument for pursuing his larger goals in this most important of Cold War battlegrounds fed into increasingly gloomy assessments of the “worldwide correlation of forces” that to many seemed to have shifted in favor of the USSR. 1950 The Soviet Union’s first successful nuclear bomb test and the victory of the Chinese Communists in the Chinese civil war in 1949 heightened anxieties about the Soviet Union’s next moves in Europe, culminating in the near apocalyptic thinking about World War III that infused much of the discussion in Washington in early 1950.

American officials in Berlin quickly became preoccupied with trying to anticipate the Soviet “master plan” for using the GDR as a “geographic base and its organized political, economic and military resources as instruments to dislodge the Western Allies

⁴⁵⁴ Staritz, 84.

and their sponsored German governments from Western Germany and Berlin.”⁴⁵⁵

Mirroring the pervasive fears of Soviet plans for launching the war with the West – notions that crystallized in “NSC-68” drafted in April, U.S. analysts increasingly assumed that the Soviets were operating according to a specific timetable. This timetable was presumably determined by Marxist preconceptions (such as the inevitable economic crisis in the West), internal developments in the GDR, and the worldwide “correlation of forces.” 1950 then would be a decisive year: All events in the GDR and Berlin, High Commission officials argued, as well as all temporary and permanent programs would be “exploited, designed and adapted” to serve National Front objectives.

HICOG’s GDR watchers warned that “if the opportunity is ever judged ripe, organized mobs will be directed against Western Allied installations.”⁴⁵⁶ This was particularly true for Berlin: Soviet plans, they pointed out, called “for the elimination of the ‘imperialistic bridgehead,’ and all SED and mass organization members [were] to give priority to this task.” The planned May Day Rally in East Berlin was predicted to be ‘a rehearsal and pre-test for the Youth Rally on May 28, probing the degree of West Sector support and resistance.’ The Youth Rally was regarded “as the first of a series of attempts (...) to organize [the] Germans [for] so-called ‘direct action,’” i.e. the use of force against the Western Allies and the Western sector city government to “dislodge them from Berlin.” The SED might “possibly send or permit organized or mob action against West Berlin installations” and “permit, encourage or direct provocation to street fighting in West Berlin in order to precipitate repressive police action, which would be used as an excuse for further attack.” The National Front Congress, the SED Party Congress in July, the announcement of the completion of the Two-Year Economic Plan on Activists’ Day

⁴⁵⁵ Memorandum, “Germany —Soviet Zone: Soviet and U.S. Objectives and Tactics,” RG 466, HICOG Berlin, EAD, Folder 1:351, Box 1.

⁴⁵⁶ Memorandum, “Germany —Soviet Zone: Soviet and U.S. Objectives and Tactics,” RG 466, HICOG Berlin, EAD, Folder 1:351, Box 1.

(October 13), and the general elections on October 15 would provide additional stages in a timetable for increased propaganda and agitation for the National Front. In view of Dertinger's demands for peace treaty as well as the impact of formal GDR independence and Soviet troop withdrawal on the West German public, HICOG officials, finally, considered a separate peace treaty between the USSR and the East German regime a serious possibility during 1950.⁴⁵⁷

Long-term developments too seemed to favor the GDR: HICOG officials predicted that the Soviets would, during 1950, expand the "alert police," estimated then at some 50,000 troops. Though they remained unsure whether the ultimate purpose of these forces would be the GDR counterpart to the Soviet state security or the nucleus for a future army, these units "might conceivably (probably in disguise) play some part in the planned conquest of all Berlin."⁴⁵⁸ Perhaps most disconcerting were the long-term effects of the communization of the East German schooling system, "operating on the most vulnerable portion of the population." With continued Soviet control, "a generation of youth will be bred which will in large majority sympathize with communist objectives and policies, and which will supply willing manpower for army, police, industry and agriculture." The existence of a "great mass of indoctrinated youth in the East" would provide "exceptional opportunities" for Communist penetration of a future united Germany.⁴⁵⁹

Such dire prediction suggested that it more would required than the economic and political stabilization and integration of Western Germany set in motion with the Marshall Plan and the establishment of the Bonn Republic. The United States could not simply rely

⁴⁵⁷ U.S. intelligence for GDR preparations for "aggression into Western zone probably around Christmas of 1950," see FBI report, 2 November 1950, enclosed in Nicholson/SY to Laukhuff/GPA, 28 November 1950 (FOIA release to author).

⁴⁵⁸ U.S. intelligence for GDR preparations for "aggression into Western zone probably around Christmas of 1950," see FBI report, 2 November 1950, enclosed in Nicholson/SY to Laukhuff/GPA, 28 November 1950 (FOIA release to author).

⁴⁵⁹ Memorandum, "Germany — Soviet Zone: Soviet and U.S. Objectives and Tactics," RG 466, HICOG Berlin, EAD, Folder 1:351, Box 1.

on the notion that East Germany would one day succumb to the “magnet effect” of a free and prospering Federal Republic. West Germany’s very ideological identification with the West, McCloy sensed, was at stake in view of the powerful national yearning for national unity and the professed willingness from the East to instrumentalize these deep-seated sentiments throughout Germany to its advantage. For the Truman administration, the perceived threat in Germany was thus as much ideological as military in nature; military security was intrinsically linked to the ideological challenge posed by the East: security concerns fed into German anxieties about the country’s division and future.

The Soviet offensive, American policymakers hence recognized, required more than a military response. Countering the Soviet/East German challenge resulted in a massive effort to inoculate the Federal Republic ideologically.⁴⁶⁰ But even that would not suffice: U.S. officials in Germany were convinced that it would take nothing short of a Western counteroffensive, one that would seek to directly influence the “hearts and minds” of the Germans in East (and West) and undermine Moscow’s hold on its “base” in the heart of Europe. In their thinking, U.S. officials in Germany mirrored broader concerns within the Truman administration over Moscow’s global ideological offensive heralded in with the establishment of the Communist Information Bureau (Cominform) in September 1947. And just as the administration in Washington sought to marshal new resources and instruments as it came to understand the emerging confrontation with the Soviet Union to be ideological as much as military-strategic in nature, McCloy sought to expand his “Cold War apparatus.”

In Washington, the “National Security Act” had led to the creation in 1947-1948 a new top decision-making body for national security policy, the National Security Council: it would coordinate among the various national security departments (including the newly

⁴⁶⁰ On the West German program, see Frank Schumacher.

created Department of Defense and the Central Intelligence Agency). With one of its first policy guidelines, NSC-4 , the National Security Council had acknowledged the need for a more aggressive and integrated approach to influencing public opinion abroad, both in the West as beyond the Iron Curtain. NSC-4 demanded the “immediate strengthening and coordination of all foreign information measures of the US government designed to influence attitudes in a direction favorable to the attainment of its objectives and to counteract effects of anti-US propaganda.”⁴⁶¹ While the State Department was responsible for these overt propaganda measures, the new CIA was given charge of a broad array of covert measures “to counteract Soviet or Soviet inspired activities which constitute a threat to world peace and security, or are designed to discredit and defeat the United States in its endeavors to promote world peace and security.”⁴⁶² Within months, NSC directive 20/4 would further expand the CIA’s authority to undermine the Kremlin through a broad psychological warfare strategy.

McCloy had been involved in the process in Washington before being appointed by Truman to head the U.S. High Commission in Germany. He now set out to create a “NSC” for HICOG’s sprawling activities. In February 1950, McCloy set-up a “Political and Economic Projects Committee” (PEPCO). Composed of officials from the political, economic, public affairs and intelligence branches of HICOG, the committee oversaw the coordination of HICOG operations. PEPCO was to advise him on Soviet and East German activities with the aim of anticipating, countering and frustrating potential and actual moves by the East.⁴⁶³ In effect, PEPCO became the operational and intelligence headquarters for a more aggressive approach towards the GDR. A few weeks later, a

⁴⁶¹ NSC 4, 9 December 1947, NARA, RG 273, NSC Policy Papers, Box 1, quoted in Riller, *Funken für die Freiheit*, p. 24.

⁴⁶² NSC 4-A, Memorandum, Souers to Director of Central Intelligence, 17 december 1947, DDEL, White House Office Records, NSC Staff papers 1948-1961, Box 40, Folder “Psychological and Information Programs (1). See also Riller, *Funken für die Freiheit*, pp. 24-25.

⁴⁶³ McCloy to State Department, 20 April 1950, NARA, RG 59, 511.62B/4-2050.

“Soviet Zone Reporting and Programming Office” was established in Berlin. Headed by Foreign Service officer George Morgan and drawing its personnel from the HICOG Berlin Element’s Political Affairs Division and the economic and intelligence offices of HICOG in Frankfurt, the “Eastern Affairs Division,” or Eastern Element, as it was eventually called, bore primary responsibility for political and economic reporting and studies on the Soviet Zone and the preparation of policy and programs vis-à-vis the USSR in Germany designed by PEPCO.⁴⁶⁴

The United States also cooperated with—and in part funded—a number of anticommunist organizations in West Germany and the Western sectors in Berlin, such as the Kampfgruppe gegen Unmenschlichkeit (KGU), the Untersuchungsausschuss freier Juristen (UfJ), and the east bureaus of the West German political parties, in particular the SPD Ostbureau.⁴⁶⁵ RIAS took on increasing significance in tangibly reaching many East Germans. Controlled by HICOG but staffed mainly with German personnel, RIAS grew ever more popular in the GDR: U.S. intelligence agents estimated that more than 70 percent of East Germans listened on a regular basis.⁴⁶⁶ Widely regarded as “the only source of objective news available to the [GDR] population,”⁴⁶⁷ RIAS, as McCloy, put it, constituted “the spiritual and psychological center of resistance in a Communist-dominated, blacked-out area” and “poison to the Communists.”⁴⁶⁸

But much to the frustration of the administration, the West German political class, while eager to claim its right as a sole representative of the German people, was far less

⁴⁶⁴ See “Reprogramming Study,” enclosed in Glen Wolfe to Arthur Kimball, 6 September 1950, NARA, RG 59, Lot file 55D371.

⁴⁶⁵ Kai-Uwe Merz, *Kalter Krieg als antikommunistischer Widerstand. Die Kampfgruppe gegen Unmenschlichkeit 1948-1959*. (München: Oldenbourg, 1987); Frank Hagemann, *Der Untersuchungsausschuss Freier Juristen 1949-1969* (Frankfurt: Lang, 1994); Helmut Bärwald, *Das Ostbüro der SPD*. (Krefeld: Sinus, 1991).

⁴⁶⁶ Hagen, *DDR*, p. 30.

⁴⁶⁷ Burton B. Lifschultz, CIA-Eastern European Division to Allen Dulles, 10 July 1953, DDEL, C.D. Jackson Papers, Box 74.

⁴⁶⁸ McCloy to Secretary of State, 24 August 1950, NARA, RG 59, 511.62B4/8-2450. On RIAS’ role, see the excellent work by Schanett Riller, *Funken für die Freiheit*.

interested in actively opposing the threat from the East. The Federal Republic appeared to HICOG officials “too much on the defensive” against the Eastern unity propaganda.” The State Department tried to impress West German officials with the need for a more active policy on the reunification issue. McCloy himself repeatedly insisted that “we must get the western Germans more on the offensive against the eastern Germans,” but had to admit that Adenauer was “not interested in this question.”⁴⁶⁹ Headed by former Soviet Zone CDU chief Josef Kaiser, the newly created “Ministry of All-German Affairs” seemed to lack authority, funding and ambition. Even SPD leader Kurt Schumacher, whose party still had extensive ties to former Social Democrats in the East, had little to suggest other than that policy towards the GDR had to be planned on a long-term basis. Towards HICOG, Schumacher argued that it was essential to keep up the courage of the masses and “make them feel that they had something to hope for.” But HICOG officials found it difficult to “keep him on p[oin]t, esp[ecially] as to what actually might be done re[garding the] E[astern] Zone.”⁴⁷⁰ Internally, HICOG officials had to admit that in the months following the founding of the GDR, U.S. efforts had themselves been “almost exclusively of a defensive character.”⁴⁷¹

McCloy hoped that the new organizational set-up within HICOG would allow him to take a more integrated and aggressive approach that would address the Germans in the east and challenge the SED regime on its territory. Early deliberations within the U.S. High Commissioner’s office in late 1949 had brought out potential elements of a more active policy that appealed directly to the East German population. A first plan, aptly named “Touchback,” had called for a variety of measures that would impede Sovietization efforts in the GDR by “maintaining the morale and will to passive resistance among the

⁴⁶⁹ Quoted in Schwartz, *America’s Germany*, p. 89.

⁴⁷⁰ “Record of Conversation with Dr. Schumacher,” 12 January 1950, RG 466, HICOG Eastern Element, Box 3, Folder 3, 352:06.

⁴⁷¹ Memorandum, “Germany — Soviet Zone: Soviet and U.S. Objectives and Tactics,” RG 466, HICOG Berlin, EAD, Folder 1:351, box 1.

great majority of anti-Soviet East Germans.” Through radio and “coordinated clandestine printed material distribution” Western information media were to aim at keeping the East German population informed of conditions in the West, “hammering at Soviet propaganda myths” and repeating the West’s desire for German unification through free elections. In addition to ensuring Berlin’s role as a “model and prosperous Western pocket deep within the Soviet Zone,” U.S. presence in Berlin would “facilitate all Western Allied operations behind the Iron Curtain.”⁴⁷² Yet the plan had lacked effective coordination and implementation.

Far more concerted had been the initial effort to assure the global non-recognition of the new Communist regime in Eastern Germany. On October 10, 1949, the Allied High Commission called the “so-called government of the People’s Republic of Germany” an “artificial creation” of an assembly that had “no mandate for this purpose.” Pointing to the postponement of the elections for a constituent assembly “to insure that the elections when they are held shall follow the pattern already set in other satellite states,” the AHC declared that “this so-called government which is devoid of any legal basis and has determined to evade an appeal to the electorate has no title to present Eastern Germany.” It had an “even smaller claim to speak in the name of Germany as a whole.”⁴⁷³ Meeting in Paris in the next month, the Western allies firmed up the common line toward the GDR: they would neither recognize the GDR diplomatically nor take any actions that would imply recognition: they would be “opposed, in present circumstances, to *de jure* or *de facto* recognition of ‘The German Democratic Republic’” -- called on other governments to adopt a similar attitude.⁴⁷⁴

⁴⁷² Memorandum, “Germany —Soviet Zone: Soviet and U.S. Objectives and Tactics,” NARA, RG 466, HICOG Berlin, EAD, Folder 1:351, Box 1.

⁴⁷³ McCloy to Secretary of State, 10.10.1949, NARA, RG 59, 862.00/10-1049.

⁴⁷⁴ Trade with the GDR should solely be conducted through the intermediary of private organizations such as chambers of commerce. With regard to the negotiation of trade agreements, “the situation existing before the creation” of the GDR should be maintained: they would only negotiate through the intermediary of the

The unison Western response to the set up of the GDR was a remarkable achievement, and it reflected the extent to which the second German state was perceived as threatening Western efforts in Europe. After all, despite grandiose declarations about the “liberated” Europe, in particular the fate of Poland’s and its neighbors only a few years earlier, Washington had quickly resigned itself to communist-led governments in Warsaw and other Central European capitals. While scaling back diplomatic representation, the Truman administration had not denied the other emerging Soviet “satellites” -- the fledgling Polish government nor its allies in Prague, Budapest or Bucharest -- their legitimacy as an actor in the international arena. The joint diplomatic blockade of East Germany also contrasted with the divided Western response towards the other new communist state established in 1949 -- the People’s Republic of China. The Truman administration had chosen to back the claim by Chiang-kai Shek’s Nationalists, banished to the island of Formosa following their defeat at the hands Mao Zedong’s communist forces, that the Kuomintang represented the only legal government of China. But unwilling to negate the political reality of the “new China” and forgo a major market, the British government had recognized the PRC on January 5, 1950.

On East German recognition, however, Washington and its European allies saw eye to eye. While Washington alerted Western hemisphere and Marshall Plan partner governments in Europe to U.S. interests in this matter, the Attlee government pressed its Commonwealth to adopt a similar attitude. U.S. diplomats assiduously sought to undercut an East German trade mission headed for Latin America in December 1949, and actively shored up support for non-recognition among the European neutrals, all of whom had stakes in East Germany – the existence of 5,000 Swiss residents in the GDR in the case of Switzerland, the dependence on East German rail lines in the case of Sweden and close

Soviet authorities. The six countries also agreed to oppose the participation of the East German government in international organizations. Circular 1201, Department of State to American Diplomatic Officers, 10 February 1950, NARA, RG 59, 762B.02/2-1050.

trade ties to the Baltic coast in the case of Finland. They were helped by the often dilettantish steps of the new East German government, which in categorical terms demanded recognition as a prerequisite to doing business.⁴⁷⁵

The American-led “diplomatic blockade” denied the GDR international legitimacy, and would do so for well over two decades. Yet non-recognition alone, such the widespread feeling among HICOG’s cold warriors, would not suffice to regain the initiative in Germany. Critical to seizing that initiative was the West’s ability to define the public discourse on the very central issue of the day: German unity. The formula HICOG planners came up with was as simple as it was genial: demanding free elections as the basis for German reunification. Not only was the call for free elections firmly grounded in historical tradition and consistent with the American policy since the end of World War II: Free all-German elections, so the assumption was, would assure the defeat of communism at the polls and hence be central to effect unification on Western terms. Calling for such elections would “place the United States clearly on record as being in favor of German unification” and – presuming Soviet opposition to the idea -- “expose the insincerity of the Soviet and East German ‘National Front’ program” for German unity. More than any other measure, free elections, HICOG planners calculated, would capture the imagination of the East German population (the West Germans had, after all, gone through a series of democratic elections), counter the East German “elections” scheduled for October 1950, and put the SED on the defensive. Eager to assure that the project appealed to the Germans in the Soviet zone, PEPCO insisted that the proposal indicate that the all-German elections pave the way towards an all-German constituent assembly in which the East Germans could participate in the framing of a new German constitution.

⁴⁷⁵ William Glenn Gray, *Germany’s Cold War: The Global Campaign to Isolate East Germany, 1949-1969* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2003), pp. 14-15.

McCloy's call for free elections and German unity, initially formulated at a press conference on January 3 and later substantiated at a press conference on February 28, came off with apparent success. While there is little evidence of how the proposal was received in Eastern Germany, HICOG analysts felt that it had "tapped a mainspring of German feeling" which, "if properly directed," could "delay and possibly disrupt Soviet plans and timetable for East Germany."⁴⁷⁶ Much of the West German public indeed reacted enthusiastically to the proposal, and on March 22, the Bundestag seconded McCloy's initiative by adopting a resolution that called for all-German elections to a National Constitutional Assembly under the control of the Four Powers or the UN.

Two days after the Bundestag proposal, PEPCO began to consider, as part of the campaign for all-German elections, the "systematic barrage via all U.S. media of propaganda at the Soviet Zone." In early April, moreover, HICOG's Eastern Element embarked upon developing an "all-inclusive propaganda outline for the next six months," up to the October elections in the GDR. The major part of this effort would be carried out through RIAS, though clandestine distribution to the GDR was envisioned as well. In contrast the preceding months when West German and Berlin media had given considerable play to the "free elections" theme for one or two days and then allowed the story to be dropped, Eastern Element officials now argued that "this line must be hammered until it comes as naturally to every German's mind as eating." At least one five minute daily radio broadcast on RIAS and other West German radio stations was to feature "a new angle of this subject," in addition to "spot announcements of suitable slogans during the station breaks throughout the broadcasting period. Similarly, with the U.S.-controlled *Neue Zeitung* taking the lead, all West Berlin and some West German newspapers "must at least print some election, unification, or anti-Communist slogan near

⁴⁷⁶ Memorandum, E.A. Lightner and H.C. Ramsey, n.d., NARA, RG 59, HICOG Berlin, Political Affairs, Box 3.

the masthead” on a daily basis. Topping off the propaganda scheme, David Mark of Eastern Element recommended that signs (some of them flashing electric signs) with election and unification slogans be set up along the inner-German demarcation line, highway exits and sector entries, along with other slogans such as “You can relax now; you are in an area of freedom and democracy.”⁴⁷⁷ PEPCO approved the proposals in mid-April; by early May, a special branch within HICOG Berlin’s Office of Public Affairs was set up to coordinate these propaganda efforts.⁴⁷⁸

Yet the project had raised fundamental concerns about the basic goals of American policy – and about the appropriate relationship between policy and propaganda. Surprised by the initiative, Federal Chancellor Adenauer, for one, was keenly sensitive to any unilateral actions on the part of the Allies, fearful that a deal might be struck over the heads of the Germans. In Washington, the new Secretary of State Dean Acheson warned McCloy that it might be dangerous to proceed “too far along [the] road of Ger[man] unity based on free elections alone.”⁴⁷⁹ State Department officials were worried that other conditions, such as the elimination of the GDR alert forces, would have to be attached to the reunification procedure to assure an outcome compatible with Western security interests. Even some of McCloy’s close advisors were uncertain about the *ultima ratio* of American policy: “Is it firm U.S. policy to favor and now press for a unified Germany? (...) Is it now time to arouse the hopes of the East Germans? Should we take steps to encourage East Germans to resist Sovietization?”⁴⁸⁰

McCloy faced yet another dilemma: if the U.S. failed to follow up his statement with a concrete plan for unification, German opinion in East and West would likely conclude that the initial move had lacked sincerity on the part of the United States. Yet the

⁴⁷⁷ Memo, David E. Mark/HICOG Political Affairs Division to PEPCO, 7 April 1950, RG 466, Box 2.

⁴⁷⁸ Page to PEPCO, 26 April 1950, RG 466, HICOG Berlin, Political Aff Division, Box 2.

⁴⁷⁹ Memorandum, Acheson to HICOG, 3 April 1950, FRUS 1950, IV, 618.

⁴⁸⁰ Memorandum, E.A. Lightner and H.C. Ramsey, n.d., RG 59, HICOG Berlin, Political Affairs, Box 3.

U.S. proposals were unlikely to force any change in Soviet policy in Germany, and would hence be “essentially a propaganda move on our part.” The predicament of any further move on German unification was that “to be successful it must not appear as such.”⁴⁸¹

HICOG did endorse a practical follow-up measure that did not smack of propaganda: the Allied High Commission should negotiate a nationwide electoral law with the Soviet Control Commission. This proposal, however, elicited little enthusiasm from either London nor Paris. Suspecting that particularly the French would drag their feet on any issue that would raise the specter of unification, HICOG officials were prepared to engage in “a unilateral propaganda campaign which would keep the issue alive.”⁴⁸² They agreed that even a joint psychological warfare campaign with the British was out of question for now: any “joint program might handicap our freedom of action without according substantial reward.”⁴⁸³ In the end, the Western foreign ministers did endorse McCloy’s initiative in late May, supporting the Bundestag’s call for holding elections to a national assembly, though not without important stipulations: German unity was to be based on the principles of free elections, freedom of movement and parties, as well as economic unity, and the foreign ministers agreed that the elimination of all paramilitary troops had to be a precondition for free elections. On May 25, the three Western High Commissioners proposed to their Soviet counterpart to start with the preparations of an election law that would conform to the foreign ministers’ proposal.

⁴⁸¹ Memorandum, E.A. Lightner and H.C. Ramsey, n.d., RG 59, HICOG Berlin, Political Affairs, Box 3.

⁴⁸² H.C. Ramsey, “Minutes of the Tenth Meeting of PEPCO (3 April 50),” 3 April 1950, HICOG Berlin, Political Affairs, Box 3.

⁴⁸³ H.C. Ramsey, “Minutes of the Tenth Meeting of PEPCO (3 April 50),” 3 April 1950, HICOG Berlin, Political Affairs, Box 3.

3. Preventing “Roll up:” The United States and the 1950 FDJ *Deutschlandtreffen* in Berlin

McCloy’s free elections initiative was soon overshadowed by East German preparations for the *Deutschlandtreffen*, a mass youth rally in Berlin planned by the SED-dominated Free German Youth for Whitsuntide. The Soviet-licensed press had given the rally considerable prominence since December 1949, and by early 1950 a major propaganda build-up was under way. The *Deutschlandtreffen* would provide an impressive soundboard for SED propaganda, demonstrate the “superiority” of the GDR and dramatically underscore the GDR’s all-German appeal.⁴⁸⁴ The FDJ’s ambitious young leader, Erich Honecker, was eager to demonstrate the fighting force his organization could bring to bear in the East-West confrontation. Under the slogan “The Free German Youth invades Berlin,” Honecker envisioned thousands of FDJ members --dressed in the widely recognized blue FDJ uniforms -- crossing the sector border and marching in several columns into the West.⁴⁸⁵

Within weeks American officials – as well as their British and French co-occupants – grew suspicious that the GDR planned to use the *Deutschlandtreffen* as a major part in the Soviet-East German campaign “to roll up the Western imperialist bridgehead in Berlin.”⁴⁸⁶ Western intelligence agencies soon confirmed that the rally might escalate into a major military crisis: In January, the U.S. European Command (EUCOM) reported that the FDJ rally was “specifically directed [against the] west[ern] sectors,” which tied in “with continuing Soviet efforts [to] make [the] allied position [in] Berlin untenable and consistent with Communist practice [of] provoking riots for political

⁴⁸⁴ Michael Herms, *Heinz Lippmann: Porträt eines Stellvertreters* (Berlin: Dietz, 1996), p. 87.

⁴⁸⁵ Ulrich Mählert and Gerd-Rüdiger Stephan, *Blaue Hemden, Rote Fahnen: Die Geschichte der Freien Deutschen Jugend* (Opladen: Leske&Budrich, 1996), p. 81.

⁴⁸⁶ Maj.-General G.K. Bourne/Office of the G.O.C. Berlin, to the U.K. High Commissioner, Wannerheide, 23 February 1950, PRO, FO 371/84981.

advantage.”⁴⁸⁷ The planned demonstration, according to a further EUCOM report, would include the Western sectors of Berlin, “with or without the permission of the Western Sector authorities.”⁴⁸⁸ “Reliable” sources reported that the FDJ Central Council was planning to send large groups of 10-12,000 well-trained FDJ members to the West as “blitz groups” for agitation and demonstration purposes. The agitation supposedly included “throwing of stones at shop windows containing American goods.” One member at the Council meeting allegedly remarked that a “certain number of dead must be expected.”⁴⁸⁹ Other sources indicated that the Whitsuntide Rally would be used to “instruct and train the youth in East Germany and Berlin in the art of cold revolution,” which would produce “what the blockade failed to achieve, namely a unified Berlin under a communist hegemony.”⁴⁹⁰ Further aggravating the potential for armed conflict was the news that the GDR’s para-military police would participate in the rally, “confirmed” by well-placed U.S. sources within the FDJ’s leadership in late February.⁴⁹¹ By mid-March, HICOG’s Office of Intelligence even predicted that alert police units would participate on a large scale.⁴⁹² Most everyone within HICOG suspected that Moscow was behind the move, and an intelligence report on the proceedings of the January 31 FDJ Central Council meeting seemed to confirm that assumption: Honecker apparently stated that he already had received instructions from Moscow that the *Deutschlandtreffen* would be carried out in a military manner.⁴⁹³

⁴⁸⁷ Heidelberg to Secretary of State, 30 January 1950, NARA, RG 59, 762A.00(W)/1-3050.

⁴⁸⁸ USPOLAD Heidelberg to Department of State, 8 February 1950, NARA, RG 59, 762B.00/2-850.

⁴⁸⁹ Taylor to Secretary of State, 11 March 1950, NARA, RG 59, 762B.00/3-1150.

⁴⁹⁰ Maj.-General G.K. Bourne/Office of the G.O.C. Berlin to the U.K. High Commissioner, Wannerheide, 23 February 1950, PRO, FO 371/84981. -- By early March 1950, HICOG Intelligence had gained access to the records of meetings of the FDJ’s central organizing committee the November 1949. HICOG Frankfurt to Secretary of State, 2 March 1950, NARA, RG 59, 762A.00/3-250.

⁴⁹¹ Heidelberg to Secretary of State, 20 February 1950, NARA, RG 59, 762A.00(W)/2-2050.

⁴⁹² Frankfurt to Secretary of State, 18 March 1950, NARA, RG 59, 762B.00/3-1850.

⁴⁹³ According to the report, Honecker had declared that the time for pacifism was over, we are prepared to bear arms.” The head of the *Deutschlandtreffen* organizing committee, Gerda Sredzki, ominously predicted that the Americans would back out of Berlin “just like they retreated from the Reichsbahn Headquarters Building U.S. POLAD Heidelberg to Department, 10 March 1950.

To be sure, reports on communist strong-arm tactics were “often conflicting,” and HICOG officials suspected that that “may well be intentional.”⁴⁹⁴ But even if the SED was not planning for organized large-scale violence during the mass rally, visions of thousands of FDJ youth streaming into the western sectors took their toll on the morale of West Berliners. Reflecting the increasing hysteria among West Berlin public opinion, SPD leader Kurt Schumacher demanded in March that U.S. tanks should be readied to defend the city against a potential mass invasion by the Free German Youth.⁴⁹⁵ Rather than giving the FSJ efforts greater credence, the Western commandants initially resolved to “play down this subject at the present time and for as long as possible” in order to avoid further deterioration of morale.⁴⁹⁶ A nine-member “Standing Action Committee,” appointed by the commandants, took charge of coordinating information and developing countermeasures. One of the first issues the committee saw itself confronted with was a letter from the FDJ leadership asking for permission to use the Olympic Stadium in the Western sectors for the rally.⁴⁹⁷ Not until March 2 did the Commandants decide to prohibit publicly all organized marches and all demonstrations in the Western sectors on the part of the FDJ and to turn down the FDJ request. Individual FDJ members would still be allowed to enter the Western sectors; “no Chinese wall” would be set up along the Western Sector boundaries. Eager to avoid escalating the siege mentality in Berlin, HICOG also decided early on that the first line of defense in the western sectors would be the West Berlin police and that life there should be “as normal as possible during Whitsuntide.”⁴⁹⁸

But as the rally drew closer, preparations for a violent invasion were set in motion. The Western city commandants agreed in mid-March to increase the West Berlin

⁴⁹⁴ Taylor to Secretary of State, 11 March 1950, NARA, RG 59, 762B.00/3-1150.

⁴⁹⁵ Hays to secretary of State, 10 March 1950, NARA, RG 59, 762b.00/3-1050.

⁴⁹⁶ British High Commission to Foreign Office, 11 February 1950, PRO, FO 371/84978.

⁴⁹⁷ Berlin to Secretary of State, 4 February 1950, NARA, RG 59, 762A.00/2-450.

⁴⁹⁸ Berlin to Secretary of State, 18 February 1950, NARA, RG 59, 762A.00/2-1850.

police force permanently by 2,000 men (to overall 12,000 men) and authorize the use of tear gas, smoke bombs, gas masks and water throwers. Auxiliary units made up out of deputized and uniformed members of the anti-communist Independent Union Organization (UGO) would reinforce regular West Berlin Berlin police in sensitive spots.⁴⁹⁹ Occupation troops were readied as the “second line of law and order,” in case the German police would be overwhelmed. Plans anticipated having 6,000-7,000 Allied military effectives in Berlin during the event. Additionally, three battalions would be readied to reinforce the Allied forces in Berlin by air, and joint Allied maneuvers in the Hanover area would allow for a “road march over the autobahn to Berlin.” 75,000 rounds of canister were available in the Western zones for use in Berlin. Plans also called for a unified command and communications system covering West Berlin.⁵⁰⁰ The State Department, moreover, instructed the Allied Combined Travel Board, in charge of authorizing travel to East Germany, to “make [a] special effort” to deny entry permits to some 20,000 West German youths expected to attend, promising that it would take “all possible steps to prevent American youths from participating” in the meeting.⁵⁰¹ Propaganda efforts were primarily aimed at fortifying West Berlin and German opinion; attracting and subverting FDJ contingents was deemed too risky.⁵⁰²

The problem, Western officials realized, was as much psychological as military in nature. Top echelons of the British High Commission blamed the purported East German plans on the West’s abandonment of the German Railway Administrative Building after East German forces had seized it the preceding January. The West’s reaction had

⁴⁹⁹ Berlin to Secretary of State, 18 February 1950, NARA, RG 59, 762A.00/2-1850.

⁵⁰⁰ H. C. Ramsey, Memorandum, “Minutes for the Ninth Meeting of PEPCO (16 March 50)” 20 March 1950, HICOG Berlin, Political Affairs, NARA, RG 466, Box 3; H.C. Ramsey, “Minutes of the Tenth Meeting of PEPCO (3 April 50),” 3 April 1950, HICOG Berlin, Political Affairs, NARA, RG 466, Box 3; Geoffrey Lewis to Phillip Jessup, 14 April 1950, NARA, RG 59, 762A.00/4-1450 (FOIA).

⁵⁰¹ Depart of State to HICOG Frankfurt, 24 February 1950, NARA, RG 59, 762B.001/2-1250.

⁵⁰² Memorandum, E.A. Lightner and H.C. Ramsey, n.d., NARA, RG 59, HICOG Berlin, Political Affairs, Box 3.

“undoubtedly been interpreted as a sign of weakness and may correspondingly encourage the belief that violent action might not be met with firmness.”⁵⁰³ Offering a glimpse of what might be expected on a much larger scale, 3,000 FDJ functionaries met in East Berlin on March 1 under the slogan “Berlin must be ours.”⁵⁰⁴ On the night of March 2, three torchlight parades took place in the Soviet sector, and the following night, about 500 FDJ youth, accompanied by *Volkspolizei* and loudspeakers, held speeches along the border with the U.S. sector, without, however, crossing the borderline. Worried that the FDJ meeting would further undercut West Berlin morale, McCloy increasingly became “very keen on the propaganda side being properly organized,” even considered flying in a propaganda or psychological warfare expert to assist HICOG and contemplated the necessity of a “fairly substantial Deutschmark fund for use in this way.”⁵⁰⁵

McCloy was not the only one within the Truman administration increasingly alarmed by the prospect of the FDJ rally. Secretary Acheson expressed himself “deeply concerned” over the *Deutschlandtreffen* during McCloy’s visit to Washington later that month.⁵⁰⁶ Acheson’s concerns prompted a HICOG — State Department planning meeting to agree on further military as well as propaganda measures that would demonstrate to the West Berlin public that the West was determined to withstand the blue-shirt onslaught. Throwing aside earlier cautions, the United States would seek to undermine FDJ morale and discourage participation in the *Deutschlandtreffen* by playing on the fears of parents of the Young Pioneers as to what might happen if things spiraled out of control. Among other measures, the State Department authorized covert “confusion broadcasts” (which would announce that the rally had been called off) and considered a number of counter-attractions: The Economic Cooperation Administration (ECA) would furnish support up

⁵⁰³ Robertson to Bevin, 7 March 1950, PRO, FO 371/84981.

⁵⁰⁴ Berlin to Secretary of State, 3 March 1950, NARA, RG 59, 762B.00/3-350.

⁵⁰⁵ British High Commission to Foreign Office, 11 February 1950, PRO, FO 371/84978.

⁵⁰⁶ H. C. Ramsey, Memorandum, “Minutes of the Ninth Meeting of PEPCO (16 March 50)” 20 March 1950, NARA, RG 466, HICOG Berlin, Political Affairs, Box 3.

to DM 1 million for sports events, air displays, automobile shows and musical attractions that would divert attention from the FDJ gathering. In early April, the Western Allied Commandants in Berlin stocked up their budget for Allied propaganda efforts, which involved the distribution of some 60,000 letters and 400,000 leaflets in the Soviet sector and the GDR.⁵⁰⁷ They also agreed to provide extra equipment such as gas masks and grenades as well as some DM 5,000 to West Berlin organizations “for secret intelligence work in obtaining information re Soviet sector preparations.”⁵⁰⁸

By mid-April key officials within the Truman administration were wondering whether they had an international crisis of major proportions on their hand. Ambassador-at-large Philip C. Jessup, who had played a central role in resolving the first Berlin Crisis, was now arguing for alerting the U.N. Security Council regarding the situation in Berlin.⁵⁰⁹ A few days later journalist Walter Lippmann called on the administration to appeal to the Soviets to cooperate with the United States in preventing violence and bloodshed, and if such an appeal proved unsuccessful, to place the U.N. Security Council on formal notice that there was a threat to the peace in Berlin. On April 28, Army Secretary Frank Pace raised the Berlin rally and the projected courses of action for discussion at the National Security Council, “pointing up the possibilities of international difficulties that might result from this action, seeking approval of the progressive application of military measures as planned (...).”⁵¹⁰

While U.S. policymakers at the highest levels of the national security apparatus in Washington were discussing how to react to a potential invasion of West Berlin that was presumed to be Soviet-inspired, Honecker’s ambitious plans deflated in the face of Soviet

⁵⁰⁷ DM 13,000 were added to the existing budget of DM 20,000.

⁵⁰⁸ H. C. Ramsey, Memorandum, “Minutes of the Ninth Meeting of PEPCO (16 March 50)” 20 March 1950, NARA, RG 466, HICOG Berlin, Political Affairs, Box 3; H.C. Ramsey, “Minutes of the Tenth Meeting of PEPCO (3 April 50),” 3 April 1950, HICOG Berlin, Political Affairs, NARA, RG 466, Box 3; Taylor to Secretary of State, 10 April 1950, NARA, RG 59, 762B.00/4-850 (FOIA release to author.).

⁵⁰⁹ Jessup to Hickerson, 17 April 1950, NARA, RG 59, 762A.00/4-1750.

⁵¹⁰ Byroade to Webb, 1 May 1950, NARA, RG 762B.00/5-150.

objections to the military overtones of the event. Nor had it apparently escaped the Soviet government that the Western powers had reinforced their garrisons in Spandau and Zehlendorf. On April 6, SED party leader Wilhelm Pieck apparently was admonished by Soviet High Commissioner Chuikov to tone down the “exaggerated propaganda.”⁵¹¹ Later that month, Honecker saw himself in the line of fire as Moscow officials “at the highest levels” expressed their annoyance over the crisis created by the militant plans for the *Deutschlandtreffen*. Soviet youth officers present at the Central Council chastised Honecker and harshly criticized the invasion project as a “circus” and the East German propaganda as “primitive:” It had only fed the cause of the warmongers in the West. Plans for marches to the western sectors were cancelled: not a single FDJ member was to go west.⁵¹² Later that month Honecker proclaimed in the FDJ journal *Junge Welt* that the youth organization had “no intention of forcing [its] way into the Western sectors as high commissioners and their German lackeys wish.” The goal, Honecker argued, was “to win the hearts of the Berliners over to [the] new German youth and the national front of [a] democratic Germany.”⁵¹³

It is uncertain whether Stalin raised similar concerns with Ulbricht when the SED leader headed a SED delegation to Moscow in early May. Certainly plans for the *Deutschlandtreffen* were not on the agenda for the Germans’ nightly session with the *vozhd*,⁵¹⁴ With fresh memories of the Berlin blockade debacle, it is unlikely that Stalin was intent on launching into another crisis over Berlin. More importantly, the FDJ’s militant approach was out of sync with Stalin’s priorities in Germany. Rather than being focused on consolidating SED control, the Soviet leader reproached the East Germans for

⁵¹¹ Badstübner/Loth, eds., *Wilhelm Pieck – Aufzeichnungen zur Deutschlandpolitik*, p. 341.

⁵¹² Dieter Borkowski, *Für jeden kommt der Tag: Stationen einer Jugend in der DDR* ((Berlin: Das Neue Berlin, 1990, pp. 230-32.

⁵¹³ Berlin to Secretary of State, 19 April 1950, NARA, RG 59, 762B.00/4-1950.

⁵¹⁴ Badstübner/Loth, eds., *Wilhelm Pieck – Aufzeichnungen zur Deutschlandpolitik*, pp. 345-348.

lacking commitment to the all-German tasks and goals.⁵¹⁵ Stalin was convinced that the new German state had the potential to hold considerable sway over segments of West German society – a view shared by many within the Truman administration. It was precisely these segments – West Germany’s neutralist and progressive “bourgeois” circles – that Honecker’s provocative plans would deter from cooperation with the GDR.

By early May intelligence and diplomatic channels had confirmed this turn of events in Washington. HICOG informed the administration that the mass rally would be a propaganda effort: “barring some major change in the situation, the Commies will not attempt major, organized parades and demonstrations in [West] Berlin during Whitsun.” Rather than trying to “take over the West Sectors,” the GDR’s intention would be to mount the “most impressive possible mass demonstration and spectacle in the East Sector.”⁵¹⁶ The Army leadership agreed: the threat posed by the rally was now “primarily a political one.”⁵¹⁷ Reassured and relieved, Truman could tell the NSC on May 4 that he “felt the necessary precautions were being taken.”⁵¹⁸

In the zero-sum thinking so prevalent in the Truman administration’s foreign policy approach at the time, the sudden change of course in East Berlin was seen as holding the potential for new, unexpected problems: With the threat of violence considerably lessened, U.S. officials worried, West Berliners might now be attracted to the rally activities in East Berlin and venture in massive numbers into the Soviet sector, possibly providing the East Germans with a propaganda victory in turn. “Any such exodus” was therefore “regarded as undesirable” in the eyes of the administration. PEPCO now considered hastily arranging a football match in the Olympic stadium, a bicycle race

⁵¹⁵ Ibid.

⁵¹⁶ E.C.Wendelin/HICOG Berlin Element to Perry Laukhuff, Division of German Political Affairs, Department of State, 6 April 1950, NARA, RG 59, 762A.0221/4-650 (FOIA release to author).

⁵¹⁷ Pace to Secretary of Defense, enclosed in NSC 70, A Report to the NSC by SecDefense, 28 April 1950, NARA, RG 73.

⁵¹⁸ Shepard to Conger, 8 May 1950, nARA, RG 59, 762.00 MAY DAY/5-850 (FOIA).

along the Avis, or a regatta on the Wannsee as ways to prevent the “draining off of West Berliners to the East sector.”⁵¹⁹ Others, however, feared that staging counter-attractions “of similar entertainment value” in West Berlin would “reflect adversely upon the West by permitting disparaging comparisons capable of political exploitation.” PEPCO also worried that the Soviets might “score [a] propaganda coup by permitting Whitsuntide to pass peaceably,” and some within the State Department argued that any additional public warnings to the Soviets might “leave us looking unduly alarmed” and “frightened by a peaceful gathering of mere children.”⁵²⁰ If the demonstration developed in an essentially peaceful manner, “we do run the real risk of looking somewhat over-excited if not foolish”.⁵²¹

While the “definite change of intention” on the part of the GDR authorities meant that the *Deutschlandtreffen* no longer required preparations for the outbreak of violence, its potential for a major propaganda victory for the GDR spurred the Truman administration into the seizing the offensive.⁵²² Under Secretary of State James Webb now suggested counter-attractions “designed to detract from the preparations made by the Communists and turn the rally into a United States propaganda advantage.” At its meeting on April 19, the Standing Action Committee had already agreed on a program of offensive propaganda directed to various parts of the GDR population, focusing on refugees (April 26), parents (May 3), sportsmen and sports leaders (May 10) and the churches (May 17). Other measures called for the covert distribution of an abridged version of the George Orwell novel “1984” (“through an American agency,” probably the CIA), the distribution of propaganda letters to FDJ functionaries and Soviet Zone residents

⁵¹⁹ Frankfurt to Secretary of State, 8 May 1950, NARA, RG 59, 762B.00/5-850; H.C. Ramsey, “Minutes of the Fifteenth Meeting of PEPCO (8 May 50),” 11 May 1950, BICOG Berlin, Political Affairs, Box 3.

⁵²⁰ Byroade to Webb, 1 May 1950, NARA, RG 59, 762B.00/5-150.

⁵²¹ Perry Laukhuff, Memorandum, 17 April 1950, enclosed in Hickerson to Jessup, 19 April 1950, NARA, RG 59, 762A.00/4-1750.

⁵²² Frankfurt to Secretary of State, 8 May 1950, NARA, RG 59, 762B.00/5-850.; “Eight Report of the Standing Action Committee,” 24 April 1950, PRO, FO 371/84984.

as well as the display of 500,000 anti-rally adhesive propaganda stickers.⁵²³ By late April, the top U.S commander in Europe, General Handy, could inform the Department of the Army that “psychological warfare was “being pushed aggressively by all means ” and that “extensive undercover operations are being conducted in the East Zone to undermine support.”⁵²⁴

The impact of Western efforts to undermine the *Deutschlandtreffen* soon became evident. Internal FDJ reports noted “the systematic spread of the false news by the Rias” had created “certain unrest” among the East Berlin population, which initially took “a negative attitude” towards the rally and greeted the youth in a “bit reserved” manner.⁵²⁵ In its report to the NSC, the State Department noted on May 3 that efforts to “instill fear in Soviet Zone parents so that they may prevent their children from participating in the rally” had been “fairly successful.” McCloy cabled to Washington that the Soviets were encountering difficulty in creating the desired enthusiasm for the rally,” and intelligence reports indicated that RIAS broadcasts were “causing drops in FDJ and *Junge Pioniere* applications” for participation in the rally.⁵²⁶

Much to the relief of American observers, the *Deutschlandtreffen* went by without major incidents. Just before the four-day meeting began on May 27, the East German organizers introduced slight changes in the plans for the major demonstration on May 28, moving the route of the march farther away from the Western sector boundaries.⁵²⁷ *Volkspolizei* units heavily guarded all sector borders, quarters, demonstration and recreation areas, reflecting East German anxieties to avoid trouble.⁵²⁸ It now seemed “obvious that Communist policy was to prevent participants in the rally from entering

⁵²³ Allied Komandantura Berlin, Report of Sub-Committee “B” (Propaganda), 17 April 1950, PRO, FO 371/84984.

⁵²⁴ CINCENR Heidelberg to Department of the Army, 23 April 1950, HSTL, HS Truman Papers, PSF.
⁵²⁵ Report, 6 June 1950, BArch-SAPMO, DY 24/1503

⁵²⁶ “Eighth Report of the Standing Action Committee,” 24 April 1950, PRO, FO 371/84984.

⁵²⁷ Frankfurt to Secretary of State, 27 May 1950, NARA, RG 59, 662A.62B/5-2550.

⁵²⁸ Heidelberg to Secretary of State, 27 May 1950, NARA, RG 59, 762A.00/5-2750.

West sectors.” Despite the efforts of the *Volkspolizei*, supported in some case by Russian troops, in prohibiting rally participants to go west, “sometimes by force” several thousand of them found their way across the sector lines “bent on sightseeing.”⁵²⁹ According to American intelligence sources, all in all about 440,000 youth participated in the meeting; internal FDJ estimates put the number of West German participants at 27,000 (of which 35% belonged to the FDJ.)⁵³⁰ According to U.S. authorities, 42 FDJ members and 36 *Volkspolizei* members deserted to the West.⁵³¹ To many within the Truman administration, the outcome of the FDJ rally was, as U.S. ambassador in Moscow, Alexander Kirk put it, an “impressive example that firmness and determination results in rolling back Soviet encroachment attempts.”⁵³² McCloy personally informed Acheson, that, “we have deflected another blow at Berlin.”⁵³³

Yet the *Deutschlandtreffen* also indicated “what a police state can do if it sets out to regiment people, particularly youth.”⁵³⁴ HICOG officials in Berlin agreed that the meeting represented a “major achievement [in] organization and indoctrination [of the] German youth.” The failure to carry out the originally proclaimed intention to hold mass demonstrations in West Berlin “should not obscure the significance [of the] actual achievement.”⁵³⁵ Observing that the Kremlin was making “substantial progress along well-known lines toward assimilation of East Germany,” U.S. officials considered it “remarkable” that a “foreign imposed totalitarian order is successfully taking hold despite

⁵²⁹ Berlin to Secretary of State, 31 May 1950, NARA, RG 59, 762A.00/5-3150.

⁵³⁰ Frankfurt to Secretary of State, 22 June 1950, NARA, RG 59, 762B.00/6-2250; SAPMO-BArch DY 24/A, 11.8040; see also Harms, *Heinz Lippmann*, p. 88.

⁵³¹ Berlin to Secretary of State, 31 May 1950, NARA, RG 59, 762A.00/5-3150.

⁵³² Kirk to Secretary of State, 31 May 1950, NARA, RG 59, 762B.00/5-3150.

⁵³³ McCloy to Acheson, 29 May 1950, NARA, RG 59, 762B.00/5-2950,

⁵³⁴ McCloy to Acheson, 29 May 1950, NARA, RG 59, 762B.00/5-2950. See also McCloy’s remarks captured in note by Blankenhorn, in Institut für Zeitgeschichte, ed., *Akten zur Auswärtigen Politik der Bundesrepublik Deutschland 1949/50: September 1949 bis Dezember 1950* (Munich: Oldenbourg, 1997), p. 66; and Lothar Albertin, “Politische Jugendarbeit und nationale Frage im geteilten Deutschland 1945-1961: Zu wenig Diskurse im Kalten Krieg,” *Doppelte Zeitgeschichte*, ed. by Arnd Bauerkämper, Martin Sabrow and Bernd Stöver (Bonn: Verlag J.H.W. Dietz Nachfolger, 1998), p. 37.

⁵³⁵ Berlin to Secretary of State, 30 May 1950, NARA, RG 59, 762B.00/5-3050.

negative antagonisms.” Much like Ulbricht had announced, the rally had to be seen as an “impressive demonstration of strength,” with the FDJ “patently reactivating many Nazi psycho and social patterns, [...] utilizing the still potent residues of the Hitler era.” East German youth were “in the hands of remorseless and experienced molders,” though in their majority still “plastic.” Reflecting the continued pessimism that beset American thinking about the situation in Germany, a major after-action report by HICOG judged that the “pending [a] major change in the world picture, [the] commie steam roller in East Germany [was] unlikely [to be] halted by any local tactics.”⁵³⁶ All one could hope for was some delaying action “keeping alive some elements of plasticity until the strategic context was more favorable.”⁵³⁷

4. “Hotting Up” the Cold War

The SED’s success in staging the *Deutschlandtreffen* reinforced efforts within the Truman administration to develop a more aggressive and coordinated program for countering Soviet and SED control in East Germany. Though time was perceived as working against the West, the East Germans were not yet considered entirely lost to communist indoctrination. Even the FDJ rally had shown that the “Commie digestion process” in Eastern Germany seemed “far from complete.”⁵³⁸ But the passing of time seemed to run in favor of the SED authorities, and HICOG warned Washington in early June that “time for action is now.”⁵³⁹ The beginning of the Korean War three weeks later dramatically heightened the sense of vulnerability in western Germany. Many Germans

⁵³⁶ Berlin to Secretary of State, 2 June 1950, NARA, RG 59, 762B.00/6-250.

⁵³⁷ Berlin to Secretary of State, 2 June 1950, NARA, RG 59, 762B.00/6-250; for further information see Karl-Heinz Füssl, *Die Umerziehung der Deutschen: Jugend und Schule unter den Siegernächten des Zweiten Weltkriegs 1945-1955* (Paderborn: Schöningh, 1994), pp. 362-363.

⁵³⁸ Berlin to Secretary of State, 2 June 1950, 762B.00/6-250.

⁵³⁹ Berlin to Secretary of State, 2 June 1950, 762B.00/6-250.

were jolted by the apparent U.S. intelligence failure and early reverses in Korea.⁵⁴⁰ While Kim Il-Sung's forces overran South Korean positions, the eight Soviet divisions stationed in the GDR churned up for extensive maneuvers near Grafenwehr on the Czech border, adding to the tense atmosphere in Germany.⁵⁴¹ Meanwhile, East German para-military People's Police alert units were expanding. By July McCloy estimated them to number 50,000, adding to the 100,000-men strong regular police forces. Later that month, Ulbricht and other party leaders gave speeches at the SED's Third Party Congress outlining "grandiose schemes for the Sovietization of East Germany and the conquest of West Germany" and calling for mass resistance in West Germany against the occupation powers. Internally, HICOG officials warned that "the SED has never been in such satisfactory condition" as then, constituting an adequate Soviet tool for the attempted execution of current Soviet plans in Germany."⁵⁴²

Publicly McCloy sought to assure the West Germans: "I don't think there is going to be any attack," the High Commissioner could be heard. In fact McCloy argued, the events in Korea, "may make such attacks less likely."⁵⁴³ But internally McCloy gave Acheson an alarming estimate of Soviet moves in Germany for the remainder of the year. McCloy predicted that the USSR was "prepared to go very close to precipitating world war in order to win the whole of Germany within the next five years" and that Soviet strategy would be "somewhat analogous to that employed in Korea, i.e. [a] combination of consolidation of power in East Germany, [the] integration of East Germany within the orbit, pressure vis-à-vis West Germany, subversion from within and preparation for

⁵⁴⁰ H.C. Ramsey, "Minutes of the Twentieth Meeting of PEPCO (27 June 1950)," HICOG Berlin, Political Affairs Committee, Box 3. By early July, however, U.S. intelligence was obtaining information in East Germany according to which the "U.S. reaction in Korea had taken the Soviet Union by surprise." The Soviets were said to continue to be anxious to negotiate with the U.S. through the UN Security Council. Other intelligence sources "close to the East German Government" had stated that Russia did not want to provoke a third world war in Korea." HICOG Office of Intelligence, Soviet Zone Report No. 7, 5 July 1950 (FOIA release to author).

⁵⁴¹ *New York Times*, 8 July 1950, p. 1.

⁵⁴² Eastern Element/HICOG Berlin to Department of State, 31 August 1950, RG 59, 762B.00/8-3150.

⁵⁴³ *New York Times*, 8 July 1950, p. 1.

ultimate attack by GDR with East German troops.”⁵⁴⁴ McCloy expected stepped-up subversive activities and increased efforts to “maneuver [the] GDR into fuller diplomatic recognition.” He expected that the “danger period” for Berlin as the first point of attack would begin when the USSR granted the GDR some form of peace settlement and restored the GDR to full sovereignty. An elevation of the GDR to full sovereignty seemed “relatively certain” in connection with the October *Volkskammer* elections, through the “timing, extent of pressure acceleration of Soviet timetable” would depend closely on “Korean developments.”⁵⁴⁵

McCloy’s predictions seemed to be born out by the pressure from East Germany as the summer wore on. Anti-allied propoganda, rumors of war and threats of the inevitable conquest of Germany by the USSR were sweeping the Federal Republic “like an artillery barrage that precedes the general attack.”⁵⁴⁶ Rallies were being held throughout Western Germany, preceded by weeks of nervous speculation. Special committees were set up as centers for the scare campaign—and, as many suspected, a future program of sabotage threatened by the GDR leaders. At its national congress in East Berlin, the SED leaders proclaimed a massive plan for subversive action in western Germany, adopting a “fighting program” that called for incitement of strikes, pressure against recruits for West German police forces and mass demonstrations. In Berlin, American officials noted a “revived ‘cold war’” in a series of moves restricting traffic between the city and Western Germany. The “Communist softening-up process” was, the view of U.S. observers, taking effect, harassing tactics were shaking West German confidence and agitating East Germans with a sense of emergency. In one small town in Lower Saxony on the borderline to the GDR a man in Russian uniform suddenly appeared at the town hall and informed the mayor that

⁵⁴⁴ McCloy to Acheson, 22 July 1950, NARA, RG 59, 762B.007-2250.

⁵⁴⁵ McCloy to Acheson, 22 July 1950, NARA, RG 59, 762B.007-2250. The full memorandum was transmitted to the Department on August 4. See Frankfurt to Department of State, 4 August 1950, RG 466, HICOG Berlin/Eastern Affairs Division, Folder 1:351.

⁵⁴⁶ *New York Times*, 13 August 1950, p. E4.

Russian troops would come the next day to straighten out the zonal boundary to include the town's slate factory in the Russian zone. Only the appearance of a British officer the next day saved the situation, as the townspeople had prepared to evacuate by noon and had already dismantled the switchboard from the central telephone station.⁵⁴⁷

McCloy was frustrated by the "fundamental handicap" of not being able "to exert full measure of influence on the east Germans." The Soviets were in a far more advantageous position to influence developments, and "to frustrate our objectives in West Germany than we are in relation to East Germany." Nevertheless, the Soviets had not yet won the battle for the German minds, and McCloy argued that the "ultimate tipping of scales in Germany" would largely depend on each side deploying power "in sharper focus than either antagonist has thus far brought to bear on German scene."⁵⁴⁸ To that end McCloy approved a new psychological warfare program, "Program for PEPCO." Drafted and discussed within PEPCO since mid-April, "A Program for PEPCO," formed a "general blueprint for action," designed to "contain the USSR momentum" and advance U.S. policies by denial [of] those of [the] Soviets."⁵⁴⁹ According to the program, U.S. policy sought to "contain the Soviets more firmly in their own zone," to "stimulate a maximum of passive resistance to communist ideology, Soviet propaganda and the consolidation of totalitarian rule," to "encourage the belief of the East Germans in values of Western civilization," "assist them in overcoming a feeling of defeatism and of the inevitability of a Soviet triumph in Germany," to hold up to all Germans the pattern of Soviet encroachments on the liberties and resources of the East Germans and to "retard the Sovietization of East Germany." The policy program recommended by McCloy called for maintaining the policy of non-recognition of the GDR, keeping the political and psychological initiative on German unification, normalizing relations between East and

⁵⁴⁷ *New York Times*, 13 August 1950, p. E4.

⁵⁴⁸ McCloy to Acheson, 22 July 1950, NARA, RG 59, 762B.00/7-2250.

⁵⁴⁹ McCloy to Acheson, 22 July 1950, NARA, RG 59, 762B.00/7-2250.

West Germany, and for anticipating and frustrating any moves intended to consolidate the Soviet position in Germany. All in all, HICOG strove to place the Soviets on the defensive, allowing the United States to “extricate ourselves permanently from a position of merely seeking ways and means of parrying Soviet initiatives and moves.”⁵⁵⁰

More specifically, HICOG planners considered a series of measures which they saw essential elements of an effective strategy towards the GDR. Proposals reached from an information campaign that would convince the Germans that the National Front was an impediment to unity rather than its champion and that it was a “façade for Russian expansionism,” to mobilizing West German and West Berlin voluntary organizations for programs to support anti-Communist resistance in the GDR which would entail “liaison with the Ost-Buros of the West German parties and underground movements and the extension of various types of assistance, financial and otherwise.” Other proposals included using the West German Farmers’ Union to attack Soviet agricultural programs, penetrating the Hermes-Nadolny movement and turning it against the National Front, prohibiting National front activities in Western Germany, bringing East-West trade under closer control and supervision, exploiting opposition against the remilitarization in the GDR and “furnishing direct financial and other aid to trustworthy elements selected to advance our informational or political objectives.” To counter the effect of National Front propaganda, the PEPCO program even revived earlier ideas “to erect in Western Germany some Western-oriented mass movement” that could promote a unification modus in line with Western interests.⁵⁵¹

Most importantly, HICOG was eager to press ahead on the issue of free elections, an issue on which Americans believed they had gained the initiative since McCloy’s

⁵⁵⁰ “A Program for the Political and Economic Projects Committee”, 19 July 1950, RG 466, HICOG Berlin/Political Affairs Committee/PEPCO, Box 2.

⁵⁵¹ “A Program for the Political and Economic Projects Committee”, 19 July 1950, RG 466, HICOG Berlin/Political Affairs Committee/PEPCO, Box 2.

February 28 statement. Indeed, thus far Chuikov had not responded to the Western High Commissioners' May 25 initiative to draft an election law, and a Soviet Control Commission statement on all-Berlin elections, responding to West Berlin Mayor Reuter's April 20 initiative reflected Soviet defensiveness on the issue. Since early April, PEPCO had been developing a "systematic propaganda campaign" against the October 15 unity-list elections to the GDR *Volkskammer*. American officials felt strongly that intensified propaganda in favor of German unity would provide a "positive alternative which we should seek to substitute for the unity-list elections in the Soviet Zone," convincing the East Germans that in voting "no" they would be voting "yes" for the concept of free elections. The period leading up to the October 15 elections would at the same time be "of critical importance" given the "psychological adjustments which the German people as a whole will have to make as a result of West Germany's acceding to the Council of Europe and, as now seems most probable, East Germany's being more firmly integrated within the Soviet orbit." To forestall that the impending Federal Republic's admission to the Council would connote to many West and East Germans a "more permanent partition of Germany if not a writing-off of the East" and undercut the West all-German initiative, HICOG even favored a West German declaration that it was joining the Council of Europe on behalf of the entire German nation. It hence seemed "especially necessary to fix the responsibility for the more permanent partition of Germany on the Soviets."⁵⁵²

American eagerness put pressure on the GDR contrasted by British and French desires "not to hot-up the Cold War."⁵⁵³ London and Paris had considered a propaganda

⁵⁵² Materials for the Nineteenth Meeting of PEPCO, 29 June 1950, RG 466, HICOG Berlin/Political Affairs Committee/PEPCO, Box 2; see also H. C. Ramsey, "Agenda for the Nineteenth Meeting of PEPCO," HICOG Berlin, Political Affairs, Box 2.

⁵⁵³ This maybe in part rooted in the fact that the British seemed to have been considerably less concerned by the events in Korea. As far as Soviets intentions regarding Germany was concerned, British intelligence officers displayed towards their American counterparts an attitude "of calmness and no anxiety as to the immediate future. They are worried over the situation in Korea but not over the local situation." British intelligence reportedly held "the firm conviction that there are no indications of imminent Russian

campaign against the October 15 elections starting in the spring as “somewhat premature,” and even by late June were worried that “if started now, we might run out of propaganda material before the event.”⁵⁵⁴ As a result, Truman administration officials favored pursuing a unilateral propaganda campaign for all-German unity and against the Soviet zone elections.⁵⁵⁵ At the end of June, PEPCO approved a massive propaganda effort in East Germany in favor of free all-German elections through overt and covert media.⁵⁵⁶ The July PEPCO program, moreover, called for efforts to induce East German leaders to resist and denounce the Soviet intention to proceed with the unity-list elections, to organize a large-scale letter writing campaign from West to East Germans, and to encourage the GDR population to invalidate their ballots at the elections or to vote against the unity list.⁵⁵⁷

HICOG also considered ways and means to discourage and curtail collaboration by East Germans with the communist authorities in East Germany. Proposals called for stating publicly that political asylum for East German defectors was not an “unconditional right” and compiling a list of prominent East German collaborators who would be ineligible for political asylum, thus reversing a policy under which as late as June 1950 key GDR officials, such as East-CDU leader Otto Nuschke had apparently been invited by

aggression.” Robert F. Corrigan, USPOLAD Heidelberg to Department of State, 19 July 1950, NARA, RG 59, 762B.00/7-1950 (FOIA release to author).

⁵⁵⁴ H.C. Ramsey, “Minutes of the Nineteenth Meeting of PEPCO” (20 June 50), HICOG Berlin, Political Affairs Committee, 28 (?-illegible) June 1950.

⁵⁵⁵ “Minutes of Tenth Meeting of PEPCO,” 3 April 1950, NARA, RG 466, HICOG BE, Political Affairs Committee, Box 3; “Minutes of the Eighteenth Meeting of PEPCO,” 13 June 1950, *ibid.*. By the end of June, PEPCO sentiment was that (r)egardless of the outcome of the proposed tripartite program of political moves relating to these subjects (“propaganda programs on all-German elections against unity-list elections” -- C.O.) (...) it is recommended that PEPCO should at the present time adopt propaganda programs which, if necessary maybe carried forward on a unilateral basis.” See materials for the Twentieth Meeting of PEPCO on 27 June 1950, *ibid.*

⁵⁵⁶ “Minutes of the Twentieth meeting of PEPCO,” (Annex II), 27 June 1950, NARA, RG 466, HICOG BE, Political Affairs Committee, Box 3

⁵⁵⁷ “A Program for the Political and Economic Projects Committee”, 19 July 1950, RG 466, HICOG Berlin/Political Affairs Committee/PEPCO, Box 2.

U.S. intelligence to defect.⁵⁵⁸ Consideration of such measures was, however, quickly abandoned since they ran counter to U.S. defector and West German defector policies, and would — as a rigid formula — prove inexpedient “for tactical reasons [to] be adhered to in the ‘cold war’.”⁵⁵⁹

HICOG’s efforts to intensify the campaign against the GDR resonated with Washington. Responding to the “Program for PEPCO,” the State Department took issue with the key assumption that the psychological and political initiative seemed to rest naturally with the Soviets, “essentially due to their intention to extend control over Western Germany which is not — and presumably cannot be matched by equally firm aggressive intention on our side regarding Eastern Germany.” Contrary to the PEPCO estimate, the Department informed HICOG, the Soviet Zone was “exceedingly vulnerable to Western-type propaganda to an extent that our chances of interfering with Soviet policies inside the Soviet zone and influencing their course (e.g. elections) may be assumed to be considerably better than vice versa.” The State Department recommended to “further intensify the internal difficulties of the Soviet Zone regime “through a higher degree of coordination and planning, including the coordination of intelligence facilities.” To be sure, the questions “as to how far we should go in stimulating the East Germans openly to resist Soviet policies,” the Department conceded, was “a delicate one.” Careful consideration should be given, the Department argued, to the potential effectiveness of resistance and to the possibility that a violent Soviet reaction might render such resistance “too costly in terms of the advantages to be gained.”⁵⁶⁰

⁵⁵⁸ Memorandum, John B. Holt to George A. Morgan, 27 June 1950, RG 466, HICOG Berlin, Box 3, folder 1:352.

⁵⁵⁹ Minutes of the Twenty-First Meeting of PEPCO,” 11 July 1950, RG 466, HICOG Berlin/Political Affairs Committee/PEPCO, Box 3; HICOG Frankfurt to Department of State, 27 July 1950 (transmitting Minutes of PEPCO meeting of 18 July 1950), RG 59, 762A.00/7-2750.

⁵⁶⁰ Department of State to HICOG, 25 August 1950, HICOG Berlin, Political Affairs Committee, Box 3.

The State Department also bemoaned that RIAS was not in a position to draw upon the best Soviet Zone intelligence available and was instead forced to rely on second-rate sources. The Department recommended that the “total anti-Soviet Zone propaganda be engineered in a way “as to let the Soviets know we are stepping up this type of propaganda as a reply to the intensified anti-Western drive of theirs.” Western propaganda should constantly “strive to keep the image of Communist expansion before the Western German people.” Specific measures suggested by Washington included black-listing GDR officials for entry into the FRG and delaying, confiscating or “losing” mail from the GDR to KPD organizations in retaliation for Soviet interference with inter-zonal mail. Washington also expressed support for HICOG’s plans to encourage the East Germans to protest the unity-list voting procedure and to demonstrate their opposition to invalidate their ballots or voting against the unity-list candidates.⁵⁶¹

By the end of August 1950, McCloy could inform Washington that HICOG was intensifying its present program against Soviet policy and activities, devoting major efforts to the heightening anti-Soviet campaign. Unilaterally, HICOG was sharpening the tone of its overt publications and encouraging FRG officials and groups, such as the trade unions, youth and women groups as well as publishers, to increase pressure on Communist organizations in the Western zones. HICOG was supporting Soviet Zone refugee organizations and the compilation of so-called White Books on conditions in the GDR. HICOG officials, moreover, had been discussing psychological warfare plans with the U.S. Army’s European command.⁵⁶²

McCloy’s efforts to intensify the anti-Soviet efforts, however, were hampered by resources and allied considerations. Not only did HICOG need additional “money, slots

⁵⁶¹ Department of State to HICOG, 25 August 1950, HICOG Berlin, Political Affairs Committee, Box 3; Department of State to HICOG Frankfurt, 23 August 1953, (FOIA release to author). These suggested measures were welcomed and implemented by HICOG. See HICOG Frankfurt to Department of State, 31 August 1950, NARA, RG 59, 762A.00/8-3150.

⁵⁶² McCloy to Byroade, 29 August 1950, NARA, RG 59, 762A.00/8-2950.

and experienced personnel.”⁵⁶³ The British and French remained reserved towards much of the American effort, though by mid-September they were ready to step up propaganda against the Soviet Zone elections. Even more difficult was to get the “active and wholehearted cooperation”⁵⁶⁴ from the West Germans that the Department had demanded. The West Germans proved resistant to the idea of following-up on the Western High Commissioners’ letters to Chuikov, and despite continued efforts, HICOG officials admitted that “great success is not suspected.” In the end, the Western High Commissioners sent a letter to Chuikov on October 10, reminding the Soviet High Commissioner of his failure to respond to the May 25 letter and pointing to the fraudulent character of the East German elections.

Moreover, American plans for instructing the East Germans to stage a secret vote against the East Zone elections by mailing their expired ration cards to West Germany had to be abandoned due to SPD leader Schumacher’s opposition, despite the fact that PEPCO continued to consider the plans “excellent.”⁵⁶⁵ Schumacher argued that SED agents would go from house to house demanding old ration cards, and he felt sure that the West Germans had too little interest in such matters as to see to it that ballots received in the West were forwarded to some central tally office. Minister for All-German Affairs Kaiser proved hardly more enthusiastic: the Soviet Zone population, Kaiser suspected, was already intimidated to such an extent that it would not participate in sufficient numbers.⁵⁶⁶ In the end, RIAS refrained from encouraging oppositional East German to invalidate their

⁵⁶³ McCloy to Byroade, 29 August 1950, NARA, RG 59, 762A.00/8-2950.

⁵⁶⁴ State Department to HICOG Frankfurt, 23 August 1953 (FOIA release to author).

⁵⁶⁵ “Minutes of the Twenty-ninth Meeting of PEPCO held on September 12, 1950,” 13 September 1950, NARA, RG 466, HICOG Berlin. Political Affairs Committee, Box 3.

⁵⁶⁶ Conversations with Kaiser and Schumacher on 28 and 29 August 1950, in the report by Gordon Ewing, “SOVZONE Secret Ballot Project,” 25 September 1950, NARA, RG 59, HICOG Berlin, Political Affairs Committee, Box 3.

ballots or otherwise expose themselves, arguing that to cast one's ballot for the regime would "deceive the deceivers" on October 15.⁵⁶⁷

In the eyes of HICOG officials, the results of the October 15 elections were ambiguous. Some sources indicated that the elections had only "intensified the determination of the Soviet zone population to resist," and that the overwhelming poll results — 99% vote for the SED and Communist mass organizations — had no depressing effect. Reports of enthusiastic response by the East Germans to the RIAS line of "Deceive the Deceivers" were, HICOG officials admitted, contradicted by others. In particular within Protestant church circles, there was feeling widespread that the advice was "tantamount to nihilism" and to the individual's absolution from relying upon his own conscience as to moral issues, contrary to one of the central tenets of Protestantism. "Whatever the final wisdom of the matter is thought to be," U.S. diplomats advised, RIAS had to reckon in giving its advice that "there are serious resistance elements in the Soviet Zone who wish to keep alive and strengthen the thesis that the individual must resume personal responsibility [...] and be encouraged and sustained in this by advice from respected leaders and institutions, like RIAS."⁵⁶⁸ More disconcerting to HICOG officials, the October election results, following the success of the *Deutschlandtreffen*, were seen as further undermining the spirit of resistance of the East Germans.

⁵⁶⁷ Minutes of the Thirty-First Meeting of PEPCO, held on October 3, 1950," 17 October 1950, HICOG Berlin, Political Affairs Committee, Box 3.

⁵⁶⁸ Memorandum by John B. Holt, "Interview with [sanitized] Concerning Resistance Potential in the Soviet Zone," 6 November 1950 (FOIA to author).

5. Imagining Aggressive Rollback in Germany: The Carroll-Speier Report

As HICOG analysts had speculated, the elections provided a boost to the further legitimatization of the GDR and Soviet-GDR unity campaign, which was increasingly linked to the issue of West Germany's military integration. This issue was thrust to the forefront of the political agenda at the New York Foreign Ministers meeting in September and into the decision of the NATO foreign and defense ministers in Brussels in December to make use of West German forces. On October 20, the foreign ministers of the USSR, Albania, Bulgaria, Czechoslovakia, Hungary, Poland and Romania charged the Western powers with violating the Potsdam Agreements by intending to rearm Western Germany and demanded the conclusion of a peace treaty and the withdrawal of all occupation troops from German soil. In Point Four of the Prague declaration they proposed the establishment of an all-German Constituent Council, composed of East and West German delegates on a parity basis to prepare the "formation of a provisional, democratic, peace-loving all-German sovereign Government." On November 30, GDR Premier Grotewohl repeated these proposals for a constituent council, popularized by the SED propaganda machine with the slogan "Germans at one table!" (*Deutsche an einen Tisch!*) Earlier that month, the Soviet government had sent identical notes to the Western governments suggesting a four-power meeting that would deal with the "demilitarization" of Germany in line with the Potsdam Accords.

The Soviet initiatives caught the Western powers in moments of inter-Allied uncertainty and disagreements over how to proceed on German rearmament and of military setbacks in Korea. The Soviet moves lent ever greater urgency to the need for a more coordinated and effective psychological warfare effort in Germany. Two days after the *Volkskammer* elections, Frank Boerner, one of HICOG's leading 'psywar' specialists, left for consultations on the topic with the State Department. As a result, two external

consultants, Wallace Carroll who had headed the overseas branch of the Office of War Information during World War II, and communications specialist and OMGUS Information Control Division veteran Hans Speier, were dispatched by the Department to Germany to review and develop PEPCO's program.⁵⁶⁹

In their 38-page "top secret" report, "Psychological Warfare in Germany,"⁵⁷⁰ Carroll and Speier argued that the objective of U.S. policy was "to integrate the *whole* of Germany into Western Europe and thus make Germany a definite partner in the building of a healthy international community." [Emphasis added.] They assumed that East Germany was the "springboard for Soviet ambitions in the much more attractive areas to the West," but that the Soviet government would shrink from a general war in pursuing its goals. The United States had to get the GDR "back into a unified Germany, tied to the West politically, militarily, economically and culturally." Therefore the United States had to "destroy Soviet power in Germany." For this purpose "aggressive psychological warfare waged with a fixed purpose" would be required. Demanding to "shed the vestiges of our defensive mentality and combine the powerful means at our disposal in great psychological warfare offensive," they argued that U.S. efforts should be directed towards making the GDR a liability to the Soviets and forcing the Kremlin to withdraw its forces from East Germany -- "Operation Exit." Though the offensive and defensive military value of the Soviet Zone to the USSR might be so great that it might accept considerable economic losses and deal ruthlessly with political difficulties rather than abandoning the GDR, Carroll and Speier argued, "these considerations should not lead us to lower our

⁵⁶⁹ "Agenda for the Thirty-fourth Meeting of PEPCO, to be held on Tuesday, November 21, 1950," 20 November 1950, NARA, RG 466, HICOG Berlin, Box 3. On Carroll's background, see his *Persuade or Perish* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1948). For background on Carroll and Speier's mission to Germany, see his *From the Ashes of Disgrace. A Journal from Germany, 1945-1955* (Amherst, MA: The University of Massachusetts Press, 1981), pp. 8 and 68; and generally Simpson, Christopher, *Science of Coercion. Communication Research and Psychological Warfare 1945-1960*. (New York: OUP, 1994).

⁵⁷⁰ Wallace Carroll and Hans Speier, "Psychological Warfare in Germany: A Report to the United States High Commissioner for Germany and the Department of State, 1 December 1950 (FOIA release to author).

sight.” In pursuit of their stated aims, Carroll and Speier proposed a catalogue of measures ranging from economic warfare, aimed at exploiting GDR economic vulnerabilities by trade restrictions and by encouraging the defection of key economic personnel, to military measures such as military demonstrations and political initiatives on such controversial issues as the Oder-Neisse line. The idea of a “Return to Europe” would give American efforts in the GDR and Eastern Europe an attractive ideological framework.

German resistance in the Soviet Zone, Carroll and Speier argued, would be a most important pressure to be brought to bear on the Soviet authorities. Much of the “resistance” work had been confined to disseminating forbidden news and propaganda and giving valuable information to the West, and it suffered from a lack of coordination and cooperation, from jealousy and distrust among the organizations engaged in opposition work. According to the report, opposition in the GDR lacked “strategic direction;” neither was there “as yet an American long-range plan” that stated the goals and phases of the operation; nor was there a “timetable” of U.S. “political and military strategy towards eastern European satellites,” with which resistance work in the GDR could be coordinated. Given that the Soviet hold on the East German youth as well as Soviet-inspired East German military power were bound to increase, Carroll and Speier pointed to the “urgent need for long-range planning of a vigorous Resistance” in East Germany. Plans should provide for moving from “the present phase of operations which is predominately information and propaganda work, to phases of resistance proper, which would include the infiltration of selected Soviet zone organizations, such as the *Bereitschaften* and the *Volkspolizei*, sabotage, abduction, direct action against selected, highly placed functionaries, etc.”

In order to be most effective, the Carroll-Speier Report recommended giving “unified direction,” a kind of “unified command” --though not necessarily centralized

leadership--to the opposition movement within the GDR. Given that the resistance movement's activities would be integrated with overall U.S. strategy it would, moreover, be necessary "to reserve in fact, if not in law, certain planning and directive powers to U.S. agencies and to provide for effective U.S. liaison with the special activist groups which engage in the most advanced type of Resistance work." Far from harming its prestige, American steering of the Resistance would be "proof of the U.S. intention to unify Germany." Even before the active phase of "intensive subversive work" it would be necessary to have a "specific action plan" to keep the hopes of the East Germans alive. This was to be done by "creating the belief in the existence of a unified, strong, growing resistance movement within the soviet zone, which has a name, is secure and disciplined, acts according to plan and awaits its time."

Moreover, the East German population had to be convinced that interest in such peaceful liberation was intense in West Germany and the United States. In an effort to impress on them that the will to make sacrifices was there, it might "be possible to raise one or the other German victim of Soviet persecution to the level of legendary martyrdom." Since, according to Carroll and Speier, the spirit of resistance could not be evoked by propaganda alone, the report recommended measures to increase defection, unreliability and loyalty to the West among East German leaders, along with "controlled efforts to compromise influential Germans (...) whom we cannot hope to win over. Finally, "direct actions" would help to dramatize the opposition movement: "it may be advisable to abduct or execute the one or the other notorious German Communist who is widely hated in the Soviet zone." But not just the German communists would be targets: "Operation Exit" also proposed concerted efforts to increase defection among the Soviet forces in Germany, because it touched "sensitive nerves going back to the Kremlin." A clandestine

campaign was to “magnify the effects of defection and demoralization in the minds of the Soviet leaders.”

With its aggressive tone and ambitious approach to a coordinated psychological warfare program, the Carroll-Speier Report struck HICOG like a thunderbolt. The report reportedly evoked an “enthusiastic”⁵⁷¹ response in parts of the administration and was hailed as a “distinct contribution.” Assistant Secretary of State Edward W. Barrett, chairman of the Truman administration’s newly-created interagency Psychological Strategy Board in Washington, cabled from Washington that “he was “especially interested in HICOG’s reaction to the program toward East Germany.”⁵⁷² Much of the report indeed rang true with American officials, such as the complaint about the lack of effective propaganda coordination among Allies and Germans, which was compounded, as HICOG officials acknowledged, by the sheer “multitude of Allied and German organizations operating in this field,” by internal political squabbles within and rivalry among the German organizations, and by the poor relationship between intelligence and propaganda units on the American side. Propagandistically useful information from the intelligence agencies had been “little more than a trickle.” Certainly Carroll and Speier’s emphasis on East German youth as the most susceptible audience for Soviet propaganda met with wide support. Reinforcing the points made by the report, HICOG officials strongly advocated “an all-out offensive against the FDJ and the Soviet-Zone educational system.”⁵⁷³ With regard to individual measures proposed in the Report, HICOG quickly asserted that many of them coincided with existing U.S. efforts in Germany. It was

⁵⁷¹ Edward Barrett to Henry Kellermann and Joseph Phillips, 9 January 1951, RG 59, 511.62A/1-2651.

⁵⁷² “Minutes of the Thirty-Eighth Meeting of PEPCO,” 27 December 1950, HICOG BE, Political Affairs, Box 3. -- Barrett was, however, somewhat vague when it came to his own opinion: Asked by PEPCO members what U.S. political objectives and strategic timetable were, Barrett stated that “the basic aim was to do everything in our power barring appeasement, wherever and whenever, to deter Soviet aggression in the months ahead. We should increase the spirit of resistance to communism in the Curtain Countries and do all we can to pull them together in a common anti-Soviet effort.” Ibid. See also Department of State to HICOG Frankfurt, 4 January 1951, NARA, RG 59, 511.62/127-50.

⁵⁷³ Richard W. Sterling to Ramsey, 18 January 1951, HICOG Berlin, Box 3, folder 1:352.

thought that the Carroll-Speier Report actually minimized East Germany's dependence on the Federal Republic and argued that the economic warfare targets should be widened to include technicians and skilled labor. HICOG had evidence of GDR personnel shortages in these areas, and these could be "aggravated by carefully planned and executed measures." HICOG Intelligence was considering a plan which would deny specific key industries in East German specific critical materials, and Eastern Element was compiling a list of key economic personnel in preparation of a defection program. The report's Soviet defector program -- "Operation Exit"-- also found "complete agreement" by HICOG planners though they felt it should include "East German and orbit personnel and military figures."⁵⁷⁴

But beyond individual measures, Carroll-Speier Report highlighted many of the profound contradictions that beset American policy vis-à-vis East Germany. First, Carroll and Speier had assumed that German unification and the integration of all of Germany into Western Europe was an overriding goal in American policy. Comments in the debate generated by the report reflect that HICOG officials were far from sure that this was true: There was a "mass of empirical evidence" indicating that the Western powers did not regard German reunification as an integral part of policy towards Germany.⁵⁷⁵ East German public opinion, officials in Berlin argued, "consistently doubted the sincerity and determination of both the Allies and the Federal Republic in respect to unity." Western statements on unity had been "susceptible to being interpreted primarily as propaganda moves." After all, the Western Foreign Ministers' first basic statement of 26 May 1950 had been published on the eve of the *Deutschlandtreffen*, the next one, on October 9, had been made on the eve of the October elections in the GDR. "We have done little or nothing," High Commission officials argued, "to dispel the prevalent West German feeling

⁵⁷⁴ Henry Ramsey (PEPCO) to Walter Schwinn (Policy Planning Staff), 26 January 1951, NARA, RG 59, 511.62A/1-2651.

⁵⁷⁵ Ramsey to Department of State, 31 January 1951, NARA, RG 59, 511.62A/1-3151.

that German unification is an impossibility in the present context of East-West tensions.” Making it “crystal-clear that our policy not only contemplates the integration of West Germany into Western Europe” would go a long way “in stimulating resistance to Sovietization in inspiring the will to resist, in dispelling present doubts in respect to American aims in Europe.”⁵⁷⁶

In suggesting a catalogue of tactical measures, Carroll and Speier also assumed that the Soviet government would continue to shrink from general war—an assumption that the North Korean invasion – widely believed as having been engineered in Moscow – had called into question. Some HICOG officials argued that the report was based “on a too-rosy estimate of the balance of forces” in favor of the West. Reflecting the dire predictions of NSC-68, officials saw cumulative evidence that the USSR would “make a determined effort to take Eurasia within the next few years, even if such entails World War III.”⁵⁷⁷ With the Soviets possibly “prepared to seek certain objectives even at the risk of war,” the problem for psychological warfare was how to seize the offensive without provoking Soviet aggression. Some of the more militant measures in the paper, such as military demonstrations, sabotage, abductions and assassinations it might provoke the USSR into unleashing a world war and hence required “extreme caution from the standpoint of timing and execution.”⁵⁷⁸ Geared towards making the GDR a liability to the Soviet Union and increasing Soviet insecurity, the Carroll-Speier Report ignored, some within HICOG felt, that it might actually be in U.S. interest to “instill the Soviets with a false sense of security.” And it was by no means certain that the program would dislodge the Soviets from East Germany. After all, even Carroll and Speier had pointed out that the

⁵⁷⁶ Ramsey to Department of State, 31 January 1951, NARA, RG 59, 511.62A/1-3151.

⁵⁷⁷ Henry Ramsey (PEPCO) to Walter Schwinn (Policy Planning Staff), 26 January 1951, NARA, RG 59, 511.62A/1-2651.

⁵⁷⁸ Henry Ramsey (PEPCO) to Walter Schwinn (Policy Planning Staff), 26 January 1951, NARA, RG 59, 511.62A/1-2651.

Soviet had never withdrawn militarily from occupied territory without establishing a reliable satellite.⁵⁷⁹

Finally, to what extent were the East Germans willing to resist actively? HICOG officials felt that Carroll and Speier had been “somewhat over-optimistic,” after all, opposition to the Soviets and the regime considered to be “almost entirely devoted to the dissemination of forbidden news and propaganda.” Efforts to coordinate resistance activities had thus far failed.⁵⁸⁰ In the spring of 1951, HICOG’s “Reactions Analysis Staff” carried out a number of surveys on the “state of mind” of East Germans and resistance potential behind the Iron Curtain. The great bulk of respondents in the surveys characterized the post-election mood of the GDR residents as “very depressed,” with three out of four East Germans feeling that they could do nothing toward improving their political situation. Only 18 per cent of East zone residents could be counted on as a “core resistance potential.” The feeling of helplessness was least widespread among the East German youth, suggesting to HICOG that despite the special measures taken by the SED “to coddle and win over the East German youth, they are still the group that the West can count on most heavily for resistance to the East Zone regime.”⁵⁸¹

At the same time, HICOG assured Washington that it was engaged in efforts designed to evolve a plan for “effective and coordinated Resistance in the Soviet Zone,” including “a more widespread infiltration of the *Volkspolizei Bereitschaften*.” HICOG officials emphasized their organizing a Resistance movement and “preparing the mood for resistance” and recommended developing long-range plans to increase the strength of

⁵⁷⁹ Richard W. Sterling to Ramsey, 18 January 1951, HICOG Berlin, Box 3, folder 1:352; Henry Ramsey (PEPCO) to Walter Schwinn (Policy Planning Staff), 26 January 1951, NARA, RG 59, 511.62A/1-2651.

⁵⁸⁰ Henry Ramsey (PEPCO) to Walter Schwinn (Policy Planning Staff), 26 January 1951, RG 59, 511.62A/1-2651.

⁵⁸¹ Leo Crespi to Department of State, “Attitudes Behind the Iron Curtain,” 9 March 1951, NARA, RG 59, 762B.00/3-951; HICOG/Eastern Element to Department of State, Pro- and Anti-Regime Attitudes: Technical Intelligentsia,” 13 September 1951, NARA, RG 59, 762B.00/9-1451; HICOG/Eastern Element to Department of State, Pro- and Anti-Regime Attitudes: Agricultural Population,” 18 September 1951, 762B.00/9-1851; HICOG/Eastern Element to Department of State, Pro- and Anti-Regime Attitudes: Industrial Labor,” 29 September 1951, NARA, RG 59, 762B.00/9-2951;

clandestine networks operating behind the 'Iron Curtain' from West German bases and to "develop partisan warfare cadres." Reviving a proposal first raised the preceding spring, HICOG also proposed "Operation Debunk," a concerted propaganda effort to counter Soviet propaganda myths.⁵⁸²

East Berlin's seizing of the initiative on the question of German unity reinforced a sense of urgency among American officials. Adenauer's long-delayed January 15 reply to the Grotewohl letter -- it had reportedly gone through 29 drafts -- struck McCloy as "not entirely satisfactory from the psychological point of view,"⁵⁸³ particularly in view of the ground swell of public sentiment in favor of the Germans talking among themselves. According to HICOG polls, some 60% of Germans favored the German-German talks as proposed by Grotewohl in principle. It "must be conceded," McCloy told Acheson, that "the Grotewohl letter, aided by an unprecedented propaganda campaign of great variety and flexibility, [had] made a definite impact on West Germans and proved again that blood is thicker than ideology" with regard to German unity.⁵⁸⁴ By the beginning of 1951, U.S. intelligence had learned from a "fairly reliable source" a lengthy catalogue of measures to exploit the Grotewohl letter adopted at a SED Central committee meeting on January 9. The extensive program directed various mass organizations in the GDR to attack specific propaganda targets in Western Germany in order to preempt an anticipated West German "White Book" in the unity issue.⁵⁸⁵ Even leading German officials now indicated their concern over the mounting "Grotewohl campaign." Thousands of letters and telegrams from GDR cities and organizations were being mailed to their West German

⁵⁸² Henry Ramsey (PEPCO) to Walter Schwinn (Policy Planning Staff), 26 January 1951, NARA, RG 59, 511.62A/1-2651.

⁵⁸³ McCloy to Secretary of State, 18 January 1951, FRUS 1951, III, 1749-1751.

⁵⁸⁴ McCloy to Secretary of State, 18 January 1951, FRUS 1951, III, 1749-1751; see also "Neutrality sentiment in Western Germany," HICOG Frankfurt to Department of State, 26 March 1951, NARA, RG 59, 762A.00/3-2651.

⁵⁸⁵ HICOG to Department of State, 8 February 1951, NARA, RG 59, 762B.00/2-851.

counterparts. “We are not,” the High Commissioner warned, “through (the) woods on this issue.”⁵⁸⁶

Indeed, at a special session of the GDR *Volkskammer* on 30 January 1951 Grotewohl replied to Adenauer’s statement with a point by point contradiction, reiterating that the continuing need was for East and West Germans to sit down together for talks on German unity. At the end of the session, the *Volkskammer* adopted a resolution that repeated the call for an all-German Constituent Council.⁵⁸⁷ PEPCO was quick to conclude that Adenauer’s initial riposte had not countered the East Germans’ call for “Germans at one table!” effectively. Designed to exploit the growing neutralist sentiment in Western Germany and the restiveness of Germans to take things in their own hands, the *Volkskammer* resolution, with its conciliatory and non-polemic tone was a “singularly adroit document,” and left the impression of a genuine diplomatic move. It should hence “not be regarded solely as a propaganda move and is not so considered by a wide segment of West German opinion.”⁵⁸⁸ HICOG officials very much doubted that the Grotewohl initiative was a genuinely conciliatory move in view of “general Soviet history, dogma, inferred strategy, rational self-interest and present actions.”⁵⁸⁹ The continued trend towards communization of the GDR seemed to prove, some argued, that the Soviets had no hope of bringing about early unification; free elections in the GDR would destroy the SED regime, undermine Soviet prestige in the satellites, and constitute the loss of a “forward base” that would preclude any future “Korea-type action in Germany.”⁵⁹⁰ In this

⁵⁸⁶ McCloy to Secretary of State, 18 January 1951, FRUS 1951, III, 1749-1751.

⁵⁸⁷ HICOG Berlin to Secretary of State, 31 January 1951, NARA, RG 59, 762A.00/1-3151.

⁵⁸⁸ McCloy to Secretary of State, 4 February 1951, FRUS 1951, III, 1755-1756.

⁵⁸⁹ John Holt to Secretary of State, 13 January 1951, NARA, RG 59, 762A.00/1-1351. -- Herbert Marcuse with the Office of Research & Intelligence, however, disagreed: He argued that the “new East German proposals mark a fundamental change in position” in so far as expressed a willingness to negotiate the level of police forces throughout Germany and agreed to negotiating elections taking into account the proposals of the Bonn government and those of the GDR regime. Memorandum, 2 February 1951, NARA, RG 59, 662A.62B/2-151.

⁵⁹⁰ HICOG Berlin to HICOG Frankfurt, 13 January 1951, RG 466, HICOG Berlin, Box 1/EAD; John Holt and Secretary of State, 13 January 1951, RG 59, 762A.00/1-1351; see also Memorandum “Why the USSR is

view the Grotewohl initiative appeared as an integral part of Soviet strategy since the “legitimization” of the GDR at the October elections, aimed at neutralizing Germany under a demilitarization pact, disrupting Allied unity, impeding Western defense plans and isolating the Allied position in West Germany by fostering neutralist, defeatist and nationalistic sentiments.⁵⁹¹

There was a consensus that acceptance of the Grotewohl offer would in effect “hand control of Germany’s future to (the) Soviets.”⁵⁹² U.S. officials agreed that the Soviets would be “masterminding (the) GDR delegation behind the scenes” and would prolong East-West German talks for weeks to stall West German rearmament.⁵⁹³ By contrast, Ernst Lemmer, editor of the Berlin *Kurier* and the new chief of the CDU faction in the Berlin city assembly, suggested that the GDR drive could be throttled only by a “put up or shut up” counteroffer and felt it was “criminal” to let Grotewohl pose as the “unity apostle” whom the GDR was using with great skill and effect.⁵⁹⁴ But the majority of German politicians agreed that the offer was a “well-baited trap.”⁵⁹⁵

To “extricate” itself “from the present defensive position,” the Truman administration reasserted four-power competence of matters relating to German unification, thus taking the pressure off on the Adenauer government. In December, the United States had agreed to exploratory talks for a Council of Foreign Ministers’ meeting in response to a Soviet proposal in November. HICOG doubted that the Soviets would be

not likely to make concessions to the West involving a sacrifice of Communist control on Eastern Germany,” David E. Mark to John Holt, 26 January 1951, NARA, RG 466, HICOG Berlin:EAD, Box 3.

⁵⁹¹ Embassy Moscow to Department of State, 3 January 1951, NARA, RG 59, 762.00/1-351. Others felt that the communization thesis ignored the Soviets’ “inevitable compulsion for remodeling the satellites in the Soviet image,” and suggested instead that the Kremlin was “playing this particular game by ear,” uncertain of what steps it would take next.

⁵⁹² Secretary of State to the Office of the High Commissioner for Germany, 12 February 1951, FRUS 1951, III, 1757-1758; McCloy to Secretary of State, 4 February 1951, FRUS 1951, III, 1755-1756.

⁵⁹³ McCloy to Secretary of State, 6 February 1951, RG 59, 762A.5/2-251. In line with this thought, HICOG Bonn had earlier reported that both Grotewohl letters had been “written in the Kremlin.” Bonn to Secretary of State, 1 February 1951, NARA, RG 59, 762A.00/1-3151.

⁵⁹⁴ Berlin to Secretary of State 3 February 1951, NARA, RG 59, 662A.62B/2-351.

⁵⁹⁵ McCloy to Secretary of State, 6 February 1951, NARA, RG 59, 762A.00/2-651; McCloy to Secretary of State, 7 February 1951, 762.00/2-751.

willing to make a major concession on the unification issue, but had agreed, particularly at French insistence, to test the waters for a four-power solution while moving ahead with regard to the West German defense contribution.⁵⁹⁶ McCloy argued that the western approach to the anticipated Council of Ministers meeting should emphasize that the German problem could not be solved in the German context alone, but only in a European context. At the same time, McCloy sought to discredit the Grotewohl initiative in a “non-polemic manner” by suggesting that it was no answer to the unanswered letters that the Western High Commissioners had sent to Chuikov the preceding year. The difficulty remained that the Truman administration was not interested in getting the “unity of free elections ball rolling” and hence opening itself up to a Soviet counterproposal for a neutralized and demilitarized Germany just prior to a potential Council of Ministers’ meeting.⁵⁹⁷ On March 9, the West German parliament put forth a proposal for free elections, which Grotewohl flatly rejected on March 14, considerably undercutting his earlier initiative. West German political leaders and public press widely interpreted Grotewohl’s rejection as a “clear revelation of [the] real Sov-SED intention.”⁵⁹⁸ In Washington, the administration felt that the West had succeeded in keeping the unity issue alive and turning it into “one of our most useful propaganda themes.”⁵⁹⁹ As a result, the State Department argued, Germany unity had “virtually dropped out of Commie propaganda.”⁶⁰⁰

HICOG officials eagerly set about implementing elements of the psychological warfare program which Carroll and Speier had recommended.⁶⁰¹ With some satisfaction,

⁵⁹⁶ “Notes on Probable Soviet approach to a CFM and Consequences for the Western Allied Position,” HICOG Berlin, 26 January 1951, NARA, RG 466, HICOG Berlin, EAD, Box 3.

⁵⁹⁷ McCloy to Secretary of State, 14 February 1951 (FOIA release to author).

⁵⁹⁸ McCloy to Secretary of State, 16 March 1951, NARA, RG 59, 762A.00/3-1651.

⁵⁹⁹ HICOG Frankfurt to Secretary of State, 20 August 1951, NARA, RG 59, 511.62A/8-1651.

⁶⁰⁰ HICOG Frankfurt to Secretary of State, 20 August 1951, NARA, RG 59, 511.62A/8-1651.

⁶⁰¹ “PEPCO: Minutes of the Forty-fourth Meeting,” HICOG Frankfurt to Department of State, 7 March 1951, NARA, RG 59, 762.00/3-751.

they noted that West German leaders were increasingly inclined to support countermeasures.⁶⁰² Following Grotewohl's initiative, officials in the Ministry of All-German Affairs ("Kaiser Ministry") promised to do everything to counteract the initiative by a "stepped-up propaganda campaign."⁶⁰³ Meeting with HICOG public affairs chief Shepard Stone in early January, Kaiser, his state secretary Franz Thedieck, and SPD leader Herbert Wehner emphasized the desirability of cooperating and consulting "on as many anti-communist projects as possible." The Kaiser Ministry had just completed distributing some 30,000 pamphlets on the GDR elections throughout East Germany, and intended to do the same ("in large numbers") with the "Adenauer declaration." The West Germans, the Americans noted with some degree of satisfaction, were "becoming more conscious of the danger of infiltration from the East and more uneasy about the fact that little is being done to prevent it."⁶⁰⁴ On January 15, the Adenauer government issued a "White Book" on the unity question, for distribution in East and West Germany. About the same time, representatives from the political parties and non-governmental groups were discussing plans for establishing informal anti-Communist groups throughout the Federal Republic. McCloy thought that the effort was "encouraging," particularly that it had a broad political basis.⁶⁰⁵

In mid-April, GDR leaders launched a campaign for a remilitarization plebiscite with a "crescendoing timetable tentatively fixed," likely, HICOG thought, to climax in a plebiscite possibly as early as May 15. PEPCO decided to make the plebiscite a U.S. "intelligence target," though at that point the committee agreed that there was no legal

⁶⁰² See, for example, Carlo Schmidt's plea . HICOG Bonn to Secretary of State, 1 February 1951, RG 59, 662A.62B/1-3151.

⁶⁰³ McCloy to Secretary of State, 1 February 1951, NARA, RG 59, 762A.5/2-151.

⁶⁰⁴ Memorandum "Notes on Meeting with Kaiser, Thedieck, Wehner on January 4, 1951," 5 January 1951, NARA, RG 466, HICOG EE, Box 3.

⁶⁰⁵ McCloy to Secretary of State, 18 January 1951, NARA, RG 59, 762B.00/1-1851.

basis for prohibiting the plebiscite as such.⁶⁰⁶ From the start, the Americans felt hampered in opposing the plebiscite head-on by the fact that Western defense plans had not been definitely settled, and initially decided to give it the “silent treatment.”⁶⁰⁷ Much to the surprise of PEPCO, the West Germans themselves -- “without prodding” by HICOG -- initiated a nation-wide “exposure campaign,” determined to discredit the plebiscite. On April 25 the federal government banned the plebiscite altogether on constitutional grounds. Washington now grew concerned that the ensuing arrests and trials of plebiscite proponents would be used as an opportune platform to propagate neutralism and detract from the Western defense program. The State Department urgently cabled HICOG to delicately suggest a line for the prosecution that might turn the trials to the psychological advantage: “identify and expose [the] real sponsors, agents and victims of the plebiscite.”⁶⁰⁸ Much to the relief of HICOG, the West German interior ministry indicated that police action against the plebiscite would be “primarily preventive in nature” and foresaw few arrests.⁶⁰⁹

What advice HICOG-controlled media would give to the East Germans on how to handle the plebiscite, scheduled for June 3-5, 1951, proved even more divisive. Based on the experience of the October elections, HICOG’s Berlin Element decided that Western media outlets should neither advise the East Germans to vote “no” nor to vote “yes” on a ballot that asked “Are you against the remilitarization of Germany and for the conclusion of a peace treaty with Germany in 1951?” Instead, Western media would express their sympathy with the East Germans’ predicaments over what choice to make. While advice for a “no”-vote would not prevent an overwhelming proportion of East Germans to vote

⁶⁰⁶ “PEPCO: Minutes of the Forty-fourth Meeting,” HICOG Frankfurt to Department of State, 7 March 1951, NARA, RG 59, 762.00/3-751

⁶⁰⁷ PEPCO to Secretary of State, 18 April 1951, FRUS 1951, III, 1767-1768.

⁶⁰⁸ Department of State to HICOG, 28 April 1951, NARA, RG 59, 762A.00/4-2651.

⁶⁰⁹ HICOG Bonn to Department of State, 5 May 1951, 762A.00/5-551, FRUS 1951, III, 1773. -- By early May, McCloy could report that the anti-plebiscite campaign was “developing satisfactorily. McCloy to Secretary of State, 1 May 1951, NARA, RG 59, 762A.00/5-151.

“yes,” it might cause conscientious “resisters” to expose themselves and ultimately reduce resistance potential within the GDR. Endorsement of a “yes”-vote, however, as in October 1950, had come under considerable criticism by church circles and youth leaders for absolving the individual from personal responsibility and for constituting a “blow at their will to resist.”⁶¹⁰ By June 1 it became evident that no “united front” existed between the Americans, the Kaiser Ministry and the SPD. In the last days preceding the plebiscite three different courses of action were broadcast to the East Germans.⁶¹¹ Exasperated by the intra-German dissensions, HICOG officials let the party leaders know that “a united front on the Eastern question is too important to U.S. propaganda media to permit clashing personalities and thin skins to disrupt it.”⁶¹²

The SED regime unleashed what U.S. observers called a “terrific barrage of propaganda,” which reportedly was even more intense, if somewhat less overt, than in the fall of 1950. The SED mobilized some 150,000 agitators and, SED strong man Ulbricht undertook a last-minute “stomping tour” through the GDR.⁶¹³ Predictably, the GDR government reported an affirmative vote of 95.79%. Nevertheless, the plebiscite, from HICOG’s point of view “clearly proved a failure.”⁶¹⁴ Thanks to the Federal Government’s ban and the Allied High Commission’s suspension of papers which “propagandized” the plebiscite or criticized allied interference for ninety days assured that the plebiscite’s impact in West Germany was limited. HICOG doubted that more than 700,000 votes had been obtained in the Western zones, many, it suspected, obtained “under false pretenses,”⁶¹⁵ Particularly noticeable was that the degree of opposition to the plebiscite had been

⁶¹⁰ Eastern Element to PEPCO, 28 May 1951, NARA, RG 466, HICOG Berlin, EAD, Box 1.

⁶¹¹ Maj.-Gen. G.K. Bourne/Office of the GOC to UK High Commissioner Ivone Kirkpatrick, 14 June 1951, NARA, RG 466, HICOG Berlin/EAD, Box 1.

⁶¹² McCloy to Secretary of State, 6 June 1951, NARA, RG 59, 762A.00/6-651.

⁶¹³ Maj.-Gen. G.K. Bourne/Office of the GOC to UK High Commissioner Ivone Kirkpatrick, 14 June 1951, NARA, RG 466, HICOG Berlin/EAD, Box 1

⁶¹⁴ Eastern Element to Department of State, 18 July 1951, NARA, RG 59, 762B.00/7-1851; HICOG Bonn to Secretary of State, 8 June 1951, NARA, RG 59, 762A.00/6-851.

⁶¹⁵ HICOG Bonn to Secretary of State, 8 June 1951, NARA, RG 59, 762A.00/6-851.

higher in areas bordering on West Berlin, West Germany, Poland or Czechoslovakia. Even more striking was that the percentage of official “no”- votes was considerably smaller among the youth -- youths between the age of 16 and 18 were allowed to cast a special vote -- than among the rest of the population, demonstrating that the youth was among the most vulnerable targets to indoctrination.⁶¹⁶ But even if it lacked immediate deep impact on the East German population, American officials feared events such as the plebiscite contributed to “chipping away at the core of the anti-regime resistance.”⁶¹⁷

The Carroll-Speier Report had projected psychological warfare in a long-range perspective but failed to address HICOG’s immediate needs in dealing with the Soviet anti-remilitarization campaign. In July 1951, HICOG consultant Edmond Taylor provided an “Interim Plan for Intensified Psychological Warfare in Germany”⁶¹⁸ for that purpose. Designed as a “basic guide for increasing the effectiveness” of American psychological warfare efforts, the plan limited itself to the period “up to June 1, 1952” -- hence focused on what was perceived as the likely critical period of negotiating the German defense contribution. The “Taylor Plan,” as it became known, did not propose new initiatives. Its purpose rather was to assure optimizing existing programs. Central to the Taylor Plan was the belief that “propaganda is only effective when it endlessly hammers home a few simple themes. These themes had to be “concentrated,” “recurrent,” “clear,” “simple” and “interlinked.” The plan called for a “heightened emotional tone in propaganda on constructive themes,” such as European unity, by “more vigorous use of mass-participation and mass-action techniques to generate enthusiasm,” by greater reliance on more militant pro-Western groups in Germany, by “more aggressive and hard-hitting

⁶¹⁶ George A. Morgan to Department of State, 18 July 1951, NARA, RG 59, 762B.00/7-1851; Maj.-Gen. G.K. Bourne/Office of the GOC to UK High Commissioner Ivone Kirkpatrick, 14 June 1951, NARA, RG 466, HICOG Berlin/EAD, Box 1.

⁶¹⁷ George A. Morgan to Department of State, 18 July 1951, NARA, RG 59, 762B.00/7-1851.

⁶¹⁸ Edmond Taylor, “Interim Plan for Intensified Psychological Warfare in Germany,” 18 July 1951 (FOIA release to author). Sections of the report -- likely dealing with covert operations -- are still classified.

counterpropaganda,” and by “introducing a more dramatic and spectacular flavor” to all American-sponsored or stimulated propaganda activities: “We must be prepared on a 24-hour basis seven days a week to exploit instantly any propaganda opportunity created by spot news development.”

Reflecting a greater optimism about the general world situation -- “operators can look forward to carrying out their work under the most favorable conditions since 1946” -- the plan demanded the reorientation and integration of all propaganda towards the overarching goal of European unity. As the Carroll-Speier Report, the Taylor Plan demanded a greater coordination between all existing propaganda, intelligence, political and cultural programs.⁶¹⁹ Taylor admitted that the Interim Plan was essentially a counter-offensive plan aimed at defeating communist psychological warfare in Western Germany, as he assumed “the impossibility at this time of achieving any major positive psychological warfare objectives behind the Iron Curtain.” Nevertheless, the plan prescribed intensified psychological warfare efforts aimed at Eastern Germany, in particular continued vigorous attacks on Communist police state methods and slave labor practices behind the Iron Curtain. Propaganda towards the GDR was also to “play” the German unity theme “hard,” tied in with a special campaign in West Germany “to remember their East Zone brothers.” Following the ratification of the Schuman Plan a plebiscite was to be organized in East Germany via RIAS and other channels to obtain approval of East Germans as future citizens of United Germany and Europe entitled to be consulted about such a vital step.” Taylor also argued in favor of exposing the “Communist Peace Aggression” to discredit Soviet propaganda. While this term might appear “awkward” at first, it would “pay big dividends when the communists shift from peace appeals to terror-propaganda, provocation of incidents” and other more tangibly

⁶¹⁹ Edmond Taylor, “Interim Plan for Intensified Psychological Warfare in Germany,” 18 July 1951 (FOIA release to author).

violent actions. Toward the end of the period covered by his plan, Taylor advised, it would be time to prepare for the stepped-up psychological and economic warfare recommended in the Carroll-Speier Plan.⁶²⁰

Taylor had warned that in the intensified propaganda efforts “we should be careful to avoid sounding like Goebbels”⁶²¹ but that was exactly what some charged it did: The methods proposed by Taylor, some within HICOG’s Eastern Element commented, “smack entirely too much of totalitarian propaganda methods” which would “merely dull the senses.”⁶²² Berlin officials criticized the plan’s emphasis on “quantity rather than quality,”⁶²³ and demanded that the West had to be sensitive “to the Easterner’s probable aversion against having only Spam [directed at them].” As to Taylor’s call for glorifying American democracy, Holt pointed out that the Voice of America was not popular in the East thanks to its “too much idealizing of America, too smugly superiority-conscious.”⁶²⁴ HICOG Eastern Element chief George A. Morgan told Taylor that the “high voltage propaganda” advocated by the Interim Plan would likely arouse old European prejudices against American “super-salesmanship” and Americans as “Russen mit Bügelfalten.”⁶²⁵ Nevertheless, the plan was discussed in the course of the summer, along with an expose on the “Exploitation of the Return to Europe Concept,” written by Ramsey. Ramsey argued that as a positive adjunct to U.S. policy in Western Europe, the concept would counter the increasing “psychological fatigue” among Soviet orbit population: “Hope and a mood of resistance, especially among the youth, will not persevere indefinitely in the absence of a clearer enunciation of United States and Western policy objectives vis-à-vis Eastern

⁶²⁰ Edmond Taylor, “Interim Plan for Intensified Psychological Warfare in Germany,” 18 July 1951 (FOIA release to author).

⁶²¹ Edmond Taylor, “Interim Plan for Intensified Psychological Warfare in Germany,” 18 July 1951, p. 21. (FOIA release to author).

⁶²² Memorandum by MJS, n.d., NARA, RG 466, HICOG Berlin Element, Box 3.

⁶²³ Typed Notes, n.a., n.d., NARA, RG 466, HICOG Berlin Element, Box 3.

⁶²⁴ John B. Holt to George A. Morgan, “Comment on Taylor Paper,” n.d., NARA, RG 466, HICOG Berlin, Box 3.

⁶²⁵ George A. Morgan to Edmond Taylor, “Comments on first draft of “Interim Plan for Intensified Psychological Warfare in Germany,” 8 August 1951, NARA, RG 466, HICOG Berlin, Box 3.

Europe.” Stripped of any connotations of a return to prewar Europe, the “Return to Europe” concept was thought to become “predominantly popular” in the satellite countries, where it could counteract that the growing belief that the West had written off the East.

In addition continuing resistance and defector programs, Ramsey suggested several projects, such renewed demands for German unity and invitations to Eastern European countries that paralleled to each Western step towards European integration. One such step would be the creation of an International Freedom Legion of Soviet orbit dissidents, a precursor to the later Volunteer Freedom Corps. Ramsey also proposed the establishment of East-West institutes to study the problems “entailed in integrating a semi-Sovietized nation into a European union.” Within such institutes, “the more intelligent defectors” could be subsidized and “certain notorious nationalist communists, such as Gomulka of Poland, might be induced to defect for purposes of serving in such institutes.”⁶²⁶

HICOG approved both papers in principle in early August and by late September merged the Taylor Plan with the Ramsey paper.⁶²⁷ In its final form, the “Interim Plan” maintained much of the tone and themes of the original draft, but significantly, the strengthening and increase in resistance to the East German Communist regime “in preparation for more active and organized forms of resistance after June 1952” had become the leading objective. Among the themes to be exploited was “The Five-Year Plan for Liberation:” indirectly it was to be suggested to the East Germans that “the liberation of East Germans is confidently expected within a period from three to five years hence.” Generally, the Interim Plan called for a “substantial shift from overt to covert and gray activities,” due to a large degree to the limits which the envisaged contractual

⁶²⁶ Henry C. Ramsey, “Exploitation of the ‘Return of Europe’ Concept,” 24 July 1951, NARA, RG 466, HICOG Berlin, Box 3.

⁶²⁷ HICOG Frankfurt to Secretary of State, 2 August 1951, NARA, RG 59, 762A.00/8-251; HICOG Frankfurt to Department of State, “Minutes of the Fifty-Third Meeting of PEPCO (July 31, 1951),” 3 August 1951, NARA, RG 59, 762A.00/8-351.

agreement with the Federal Republic would place on U.S. overt propaganda. In seven, still largely classified annexes, the Interim Plan outlined specific programs which would implement its general approach. Annex “E,” “Special and Semi-Covert Activities,” envisaged among other things, the “creation of permanent German agencies” that would allow for implementation of psychological warfare activities following the contractual agreements. Annex E also provided for clandestine support for a permanent European youth camp, a strong, militant youth organization, an inter-European radio agency, speakers’ bureaus, study centers and research institutes of various kind, available to produce gray films, pamphlets, posters, and stage rallies, spots festivals and plebiscites as well as large-scale polls. As envisaged, for example, the projected youth organization would agitate militantly for a united Europe, that is, “within the broad letter of the law,” engage in “the crashing of borders, the publishing of ‘black books,’ ‘raids,’ and ‘invasions,’” as well as more “orthodox activities” such as parades and wall writing. The Taylor Plan also suggested that such an organization have clandestine cells in Eastern Europe.⁶²⁸ In November, Washington approved most of the aforementioned projects.⁶²⁹

6. Target: East German Youth

East German youth remained central to American psychological warfare efforts, reinforced by the SED’s plans, announced in January 1951, to host the World Youth Festival (WYF) in Berlin in August of that year. The decision by the communist controlled World Federation of Democratic Youth (WFDY) in November 1950 to hold its third convention in Berlin (following meetings in Prague in 1947 and Budapest in 1949) underlined the importance of Berlin and Germany as central staging grounds for the globalizing Cold War: with nearly one and a half million expected participants from all

⁶²⁸“Interim Plan for Intensified Psychological Warfare in Germany,” HICOG Frankfurt to Department of State, 28 September 1951 (NARA FOIA release to author).

⁶²⁹ State Department Airgram A 1622, 23 November 1951 (NARA FOIA release to author).

over the world expected to come to Berlin for a 14-day display of international solidarity, the festival was designed to make a powerful statement on behalf of the world's youth for the new German state and against West German rearmament.⁶³⁰ The program would include mass singing of fighting songs for peace, performances of national dances and international sports contests. It also was a recognition of East Germany's successful orchestration of the May 1950 *Deutschlandtreffen* and the FDJ's growing importance in the socialist world's youth movement. Having survived the debacle over the militant posturing of the Whitsuntide rally, FDJ chairman Erich Honecker headed the prestigious preparatory committee alongside WFDY president Enrico Berlinguer and International Union of Students chairman Joza Grohman.

Given the sheer difference in size, Communist world preparations for the World Youth Festival quickly outdid those for the *Deutschlandtreffen*. No efforts seemed to have been spared to provide the more than a million young people with transport, food and lodging in a city still reeling from the devastation that the war had brought about. At the beginning of February 1951, the site of the old Hohenzollern Palace was leveled to create a vast assembly area, which on May Day that year was given the name "Marx-Engels-Platz." To give the city a prosperous air, the East Germans set about renovating some of the monuments in downtown area (such as the Arsenal Museum and the Brandenburg Gate), and several new luxury stores opened in the main streets. "Socialist Sundays" saw FDJ members constructing and renovating stadiums, pools and camp sites. The some 120,000 foreign participants were to be accommodated in hotels, boarding houses and private rooms; most of the East German visitors would sleep in huge group tents. The organizers set up some 542 kitchens to feed the delegates and recruited some 6,000 doctors, 20,000 nurses and 50,000 medical assistants to provide free care for the rally

⁶³⁰ HICOG Frankfurt to Department of State, 8 January 1951, NARA, RG 59, 762B.00/1-851.

participants. All in all, the costs of hosting the festival amounted, according to official GDR sources, to some 160 million East German marks (\$48 million at the official exchange rate), which bore heavily on the GDR economy.⁶³¹

American officials quickly came to realize that the World Youth Festival would differ from the May 1950 *Deutschlandtreffen* in its larger international appeal, and, more importantly, its lack of overt threats for an invasion of West Berlin. To be sure, East Berlin police was reinforced and a 920-strong youth battalion was recruited to reinforce the *Volkspolizei*. Some Western officials fretted over the potential for a violent crisis.⁶³² Yet the festival preparations bore none of the militancy that had beset the run-up to the *Deutschlandtreffen*; threats on West Berlin ran counter to stated purpose of the gathering as a peace demonstration against the anticipated rearming of the Federal Republic. East German measures that aimed at keeping the assembled youth from visiting the West seemed to confirm that an “invasion” of the West Berlin was not on the agenda.

The Truman administration took the event seriously nonetheless. Contrary to British nervousness over the unprecedented influx of youth into the GDR capital, the administration now saw the event as an opportunity for a massive counteroffensive. In striking difference to *Deutschlandtreffen*, the emphasis within HICOG planning turned almost exclusively on exploiting to the maximum this chance for contact with youth from behind the “Iron Curtain.” In February, the Western Berlin commandants formed the so-called “August Committee” that would coordinate Western preparations. At first HICOG planners agreed that they should avoid “trying to beat the Communists at their own game” by staging a Western youth rally. Last minute counterattractions might also play into the

⁶³¹ Joel Kotek, *Students and the Cold War* (London: MacMillan, 1996), pp. 189-191.

⁶³² Jones to Department of State, 20 April 1951, NARA, RG 59, 800.4614/4-2051.

hands of the communists by showing undue concern, defensiveness, on top of further highlighting the festival. The West would do best by displaying “normalcy” in Berlin.⁶³³

That things were not left to “being normal” was evident in the systematic efforts the allies took to undermine the participation of Western youth in the perceived communist-front event: Throughout the spring, American and Allied authorities in Germany tightened border controls along the inner-German borderline to forestall illegal departures of Western German youth to Berlin. Carefully transit permits were screened to deny potential foreign participants access to Berlin via West Germany. Key communist youth leaders, such as Joliot Curie, were blacklisted for visa refusal. U.S. counterintelligence officials also suggested deterrence by “dealing out a number of exemplary sentences” to FDJ agitators apprehended in West Berlin. With the *Deutschlandtreffen* in mind, HICOG launched a scare campaign to scare parents of FDJ members into keeping their kids at home. American officials in West Germany even encouraged the right-wing *Bund Deutscher Jugend* (BDJ) to conduct “harassing operations” against the FDJ, despite the fact that the extremist BDJ’s principles were “not considered completely compatible with U.S. interests.”⁶³⁴ In Washington, the State Department took the 65 American citizens slated to join the WYF under surveillance; lists of purported “subversives” headed for Berlin, including eight southern Australians and five Ceylonese, poured in from embassies and consulates around the world.⁶³⁵

As the World Youth Festival drew closer, intelligence reports confirmed that the SED was discouraging any thought of violence. With a sense of vulnerability waning further, the Americans in Berlin increasingly favored the kind of countermeasures which

⁶³³ Marion Mitchell to Louis Wiesner, 7 February 1951, RG 59, 762B.00/2-751, and enclosures.

⁶³⁴ Headquarters, 66th Counter Intelligence Corps Detachment, European Command, to Director, Intelligence Division, Headquarters, European Command, “Recommended Action for Coming World Youth Festival;” n.d. [3 January 1951]; and T.L.Squier (OI HICOG) to Col. Marshall, n.d.; R.W. Benton (PA/TC) to PEPCO, 29 June 1951, NARA, RG 466, HICOG Berlin, Box 3.

⁶³⁵ Kotek, *Students and the Cold War*, pp. 192-193.

they initially had sought to avoid. As early as February, Deputy High Commissioner Samuel Reber and HICOG Public Affairs director Shepard Stone had argued in favor of staging “political and psychological demonstration on the part of the West European countries (...) to offset the effect of the Communist festival.” West Berlin was to be “in a very normal way, full of very desirable attractions such as good films, music programs etc. at the time of the Communist festival.”⁶³⁶ In March, Stone and his colleagues suggested holding a European Youth Festival -- with the U.S. role in the program to be kept secret.⁶³⁷ U. S. authorities in Berlin requested four mobile motion picture units complete with projection facilities to broaden East-West sector border showings “to facilitate contacts with and influence upon Communist youth brought to Berlin for political purposes.” They would provide an “invaluable border attraction,” especially “since we’re not attempting competitive sideshows per se.”⁶³⁸ HICOG officials later advanced the idea holding a major plebiscite on the subject of European union as a major counter-attraction and discussed the idea with Reuter, who responded enthusiastically. Given that other German leaders responded more ambiguously and that the British and French were “dragging their heels” in using allied funds for the project, this idea was finally abandoned.⁶³⁹

Nonetheless, compared to the efforts in May 1950 to contain the East Germans to the Soviet sector, by the spring 1951 U.S. policy had come full circle. By the end of May, State Department cabled McCloy that plans were on the way for “coordinated global campaign to counteract and discredit (the) Communist World Youth Congress.”⁶⁴⁰ Earlier that month, the “August Committee” had finalized various countermeasures such as a

⁶³⁶ “PEPCO: Minutes of the Forty-Third Meeting (February 13, 1951), enclosed in HICOG Frankfurt to Department of State, 1 March 1951 (FOIA release to author).

⁶³⁷ “Minutes of the Forty-fourth Meeting of PEPCO,” Frankfurt to Washington, 7 March 1951, RG 59, 762.00/3-751.

⁶³⁸ Jones to HICOG Frankfurt, 6 March 1951, NARA, RG 59, 511.62A5/3-651.

⁶³⁹ McCloy to Acheson, 28 May 1951, FRUS 1951, III, p. 2005-2006.

⁶⁴⁰ Secretary of State to McCloy, 23 May 1951, FRUS, 1951, III, p. 2004.

Marshall Plan exhibit, a *Europazug* display and a television exhibit. Some two million pamphlets and satirical booklets were to be distributed to the visiting youth; Radio Free Europe would feature broadcasts by prominent iron curtain refugees on the World Youth Festival.⁶⁴¹ By July, intelligence reports indicated that the Soviets were intent on imposing stricter bans against visits to Berlin than had been the case during the *Deutschlandtreffen*. Reflecting the more aggressive stance outlined in the Carroll-Speier and Taylor Plans, High Commission officials abandoned the normalcy concept in their approach to the World Youth Festival altogether. Discarding the “ostrich attitude,” U.S. policy was to be “more positive and aggressive than heretofore contemplated” and take full advantage of the “an unusual opportunity to propagandize [the] Eastern youth. With no barrels held, HICOG now appropriated additional \$200,000 in funding for counter-attractions, though it was agreed that the dramatic increase needed to “be handled very delicately” vis-à-vis the British, French and West Germans.⁶⁴² PEPCO now favored issuing a public invitation to the East German youth to come to visit West-Berlin; a targeted hospitality program at some 50 youth centers would be awaiting the 200,000 WYC participants that were expected to visit the Western sectors.⁶⁴³ Leaving nothing to chance, the Western youth officials would “receive preparatory courses [in] history politics, international events enabling them to converse intelligently with the visitors to the West.”⁶⁴⁴ Arguing that the risk of a mass defection was minimal, the Americans rather expected that an open invitation would cause the Soviets to tighten the ban against visits to the West. This in turn would allow a “prison psychology” to develop among many of the

⁶⁴¹ McCloy to Acheson, 28 May 1951, FRUS 1951, III, p. 2005-2006.

⁶⁴² “PEPCO: Minutes of the Fifty-Second Meeting (Held July 9, 1951), HICOG Frankfurt to Department of State, 10 July 1951, RG 466, HICOG Berlin, Box 3.

⁶⁴³ Ibid.

⁶⁴⁴ Page to Shepard Stone, 17 July 1951, FRUS 1951, III, pp. 2008-2010, here p. 2010.

East German youth, a result that would be “one of the more tangible propaganda advantages which the West might hope to obtain from the World Youth Festival.”⁶⁴⁵

The 14-day World Youth Festival, which culminated in what an evidently impressed American observer called a “monster parade”⁶⁴⁶ by the FDJ through the Soviet sector, did provide Americans with the unprecedented opportunity to influence “the largest group of East German youth ever to come into contact with the West.”⁶⁴⁷ Of the approximately 1.4 million East Germans and 35,000 youth from abroad participating in the festival, over half a million (according to some estimates more than 680,000) turned their backs on sports, cultural events and speeches in the eastern sector and visited West Berlin “to taste the forbidden fruits of capitalism.”⁶⁴⁸ (The Americans counted 1,004,206 crossings into West Berlin, though this number probably included repeat visitors.) So crowded were the Zoo Station area or the Kurfürstendamm with blue-shirted and blue-skirted youth that, as one American observer noted, one could have the impression that the festival was being held in the Western sectors.⁶⁴⁹ Among the chief attractions was RIAS; by August 16 nearly 7,000 crowded into the station’s facilities.⁶⁵⁰ Kurt Schumacher and Jacob Kaiser were on hand to assure them that “under Soviet domination they could never hope to become free and equal,” and eleven teenage World Youth Festival delegates found themselves surprise luncheon guests of McCloy, though it remained an open question whether they were “awed more by their proximity to the top-ranking United States official in Germany than by the quantity of the food served to them.” McCloy, who apparently got

⁶⁴⁵ HICOG overrode the objections of Berlin city authorities, who cautioned against the invitation in light of the 20,000 youth that had used their West-Berlin visit the previous year to “defect” permanently to the West and substantially added to the economic strains of the city. “PEPCO: Minutes of the Fifty-Second Meeting (Held July 9, 1951), HICOG Frankfurt to Department of State, 10 July 1951, NARA, RG 466, HICOG Berlin, Box 3.

⁶⁴⁶ *Christian Science Monitor*, 13 August 1951, p.1.

⁶⁴⁷ Morgan to Acheson, 12 September 1951, FRUS 1951, III, pp. 2014-2022.

⁶⁴⁸ *The New York Times*, 8 August 1951, p.1; *Christian Science Monitor*, 14 August 1951.

⁶⁴⁹ *Christian Science Monitor*, 13 August 1951, p.1.

⁶⁵⁰ *New York Times*, 17 August 1951, p.6; Joel Kotek, Youth Organizations as a Battlefield in the Cold War,” *The Cultural Cold War in Western Europe 1945-1960*, ed. by Giles Scott-Smith and Hans Krabbendam, eds., (London/Portland, OR: Frank Cass, 2003), p. 177.

so wrapped up in the discussion that he lost two hours in his schedule, pledged to the young visitors that “we will do everything we can to help you,” and sent them on their way with the assurance that “the Lady of Liberty still holds aloft her torch in New York harbor, and one day freedom and peace will come not only for Western but also for Eastern Germany.”⁶⁵¹

Free meals, free theater tickets and free sightseeing was particularly enticing in light of massive organizational shortcomings of the festival:⁶⁵² “We get worse food than at home, and that is pretty bad, and sleep likes pigs in straw in cellars,” one young participant was quoted.⁶⁵³ East German participants were especially outraged by the far larger food rations and better accommodations received by the few West German and foreign participants. Numerous participants “defected,” including young Traude Eisenkold, who East German propaganda had reportedly built up as the “ideal progressive woman” and as such was to be the “queen” of the proceedings. “I’d rather pound a typewriter, even scrub floors, in the West than be a Communist glamour girl in the east...” she apparently told AP.⁶⁵⁴ In a last-ditch dramatic effort to halt the flow of East German youth to the West by exposing the alleged brutality of West Berlin police (and perhaps to re-establish his credibility in the wake of severe criticism for some of the logistical deficiencies at the World Youth Festival), FDJ leader Erich Honecker led some 8,000 FDJ members, organized in 50-men groups, for an “invasion” into the Western sectors on August 15. The “disturbance mission,” however, proved ineffective, and by the next day, West Berlin police reported “all quiet on the eastern front.”⁶⁵⁵

⁶⁵¹ *New York Times*, 17 August 1951, p.6; *New York Times*, 18 August 1951, p.3. *Washington Post*, 18 August 1951, p. A2.

⁶⁵² Western authorities distributed more than one and a half million free meals. See Kotek, *Students and the Cold War*, p. 196.

⁶⁵³ *New York Times*, 8 August 1951, p.1.

⁶⁵⁴ *Washington Post*, 7 August 1951.

⁶⁵⁵ Jones to McCloy, 16 August 1951, FRUS 1951, III, pp. 2012-2014, here p. 2012; *New York Times*, 17 August 1951, p.6.

The World Youth Festival therefore turned out to be, in HICOG's opinion, "a gain for the West." American officials expected the East German youth who had "tasted a non-Communist atmosphere" to be long affected by the experience. The rally was considered to have contributed to "the strengthening of East German anti-regime and pro-Western sentiment, a factor which should not be underestimated for its effect upon future attitudes in East Germany."⁶⁵⁶ According to some accounts, a million pieces of literature had been distributed, and "many youngsters planned to smuggle them back."⁶⁵⁷ But while the West had shown the young East Germans that it was determined not to "write them off," many of them, officials suspected, would likely be disappointed that no "immediate radical alleviation" of their situation was in store. Over-optimistic assumptions about the resistance potential of young East Germans were therefore misplaced. Aside from the "generally submissive nature of the East German population," HICOG argued, it had to be recognized that the motives of many festival attendees had non-political. Rather, left to their own devices, many had been impelled to go West by curiosity, by free snacks and the desire to buy Western goods. Many were "not necessarily pro-West" and revealed a lack of information, a misunderstanding and skepticism about Western policies. Though they might not subscribe to the communist program, the HICOG analysts noted, "many East German youth reflected in their reactions to certain ideas, in their modes of expression, and in their mental images the effects of Communist propaganda." Once again, the large mass demonstration had illustrated the "ability of a totalitarian regime to carry along the masses via a small proportion of hard core fanatics."⁶⁵⁸

⁶⁵⁶ Morgan to Acheson, 12 September 1951, FRUS 1951, III, pp. 2014-2022.

⁶⁵⁷ *Christian Science Monitor*, 14 August 1951.

⁶⁵⁸ Morgan to Acheson, 12 September 1951, FRUS 1951, III, pp. 2014-2022.

7. Mobilizing East German Resistance Spirit: The U.S. Reaction to the 1952 Stalin

Note in New Light

Negotiations on the European Defense Community (Paris Treaty) and the contractals terminating the occupation statute (Bonn Treaty) entered their final stages in late 1951. In March, the so-called “Stalin note” raised the stakes by new bold proposals on German unification. Delivered by Soviet deputy foreign minister Andrei Gromyko, the measures suggested in the note differed significantly from earlier Soviet proposals. The Soviet government proposed to conclude a peace treaty with a unified but neutral German state, which would be permitted to build-up national armed forces. After initial hesitation, Washington and its allies concluded that the note had to be taken seriously. From Moscow’s perspective it would optimally create a German state that could be drawn into Moscow’s orbit, minimally it would threaten to impede the imminent conclusion of the contractals and EDC. The note had, as Acheson’s advisers admitted, the “ring of considered policy,”⁶⁵⁹ omitted demands for four-power control long dismissed by the Western allies, and reversed the previous Soviet position on German armed forces. But only an actual relaxation of controls in East Germany, it was felt at Foggy Bottom, would impact West German and Western European opinion enough to delay or block the conclusion on the EDC.⁶⁶⁰ U.S. intelligence agencies estimated that the Soviets would not pay such a price. Administration officials were far more concerned that actual Russian measures, such as speaking invitations by the GDR to prominent West Germans, re-licensing of the SPD in the GDR, or a proposal for all-Berlin elections under quadripartite supervision might in fact succeed in undermining West German support for the EDC while not really endangering the Soviet position in the GDR.⁶⁶¹

⁶⁵⁹ M. Scummon and R.W. Tufts to Nitze, 14 March 1952, NARA, RG 59, 762A.00/3-1452 TSF.

⁶⁶⁰ Memorandum from John Ferguson to Acheson, 27 March 1952, NARA, RG 59, 762A.00/3-2752 TSF.

⁶⁶¹ Memorandum from John Ferguson to Acheson, 27 March 1952, NARA, RG 59, 762A.00/3-2752 TSF.

Historians have focused on the question of whether the Western reaction to the Stalin note was too defensive; too wedded to containment rather than a roll-back of Soviet power beyond the Oder-Neiße, possibly missing an opportunity to achieve the unity of the country. That debate has ignored the fact that the American response to the Stalin note fit into a larger offensive strategy to counter Soviet moves in Germany. Since the previous December, the Psychological Strategy Board had set out, at the suggestion of CIA director Walter Bedell Smith, to develop a national psychological strategy plan to strengthen pro-integration sentiment in the Western Germany and to make East Germany a strategic liability to Moscow.⁶⁶² Over a period of several months, the PSB's "Panel F," which included officials from State, defense and the CIA and relied on outside consultants such as Carroll, Speier, Philip Davidson, Walt Rostow and Henry Kissinger, developed a plan codenamed "Plutonic" (later renamed "Pocketbook") which built on the Carroll-Speier-Report and the "Interim Plan" ("Taylor Plan").⁶⁶³ In their discussions, panel members envisioned "blasting the [West] Germans out of their political apathy"⁶⁶⁴ and emphasized the need for "the most definite, vigorous, ambitious, psychological offensive against the Soviet position in Eastern Europe." Nowhere did Soviet vulnerabilities seem more pronounced than in East Germany where "extensive, sharply offensive and effective psychological operations, both overt and covert" were already under way, supported by German resistance organizations. East Germany offered a "particularly favorable and perhaps decisive terrain."⁶⁶⁵

⁶⁶² See the organization review by James Riddleberger in his memorandum to Undersecretary of State, David K. Bruce, 6 August 1952 (FOIA release to National Security Archive).

⁶⁶³ In August 1952, the codename "Plutonic" was changed to "Pocketbook." Memorandum by Charles Johnson, 12 August 1952, NARA, PSB 091 Germany/ 12 August 1952 (FOIA release to National Security Archive).

⁶⁶⁴ Memorandum from John M Anspacher to Edmund Taylor, 23 January 1952, Harry S. Truman Library, Mandatory Review Release to author; Memorandum from R. Hirsch to Taylor, 4 February 1952, HSTL, MRR to author.

⁶⁶⁵ Charles McCarthy, Executive Officer, PSB, to Col. Henry A. Byroade, Department of State, 7 February 1952, 762a.00/2-752 TSF, FOIA release to author.

There was growing evidence that the East German populace seemed to favor West Germany's inclusion into Western defense arrangements. Letters and visitors received by RIAS in early 1952 suggested that many believed that only a (West) European army could bring enough pressure on the East to bring about a peaceful solution of the German question.⁶⁶⁶ Further research by HICOG into popular attitudes behind the iron curtain revealed that the defense debate in the Bundestag in February 1952 in particular contributed to crystallizing East Zone opinion, convincing many that only through a militarily strong Western Europe would it be possible to force Moscow to negotiate a peaceful and lasting solution of the German problem. Following the World Youth Festival and the 1951 *Kirchentag* in Berlin, the Bundestag defense debate had become the "third miracle for the West."⁶⁶⁷ On 10 March 1952, the very day Stalin sent his note on German unification, Berlin officials informed Washington that the Western policy of integration was regarded by the majority of East Germans not as precluding but rather furthering unification.

But U.S. officials in Berlin also cautioned that the remarkable degree of "immunity" the East Germans had maintained vis-à-vis their government's unity campaign depended to a large extent on the actions of the Western powers. East Germans saw free, internationally supervised all-German elections as a corollary to integration and wanted constant and concrete reassurances to that effect.⁶⁶⁸ The Stalin note offered an opportunity to do just that. Throughout the note exchange, the State Department continued to emphasize the importance of free elections as central to any Western response.

Increasingly convinced that the West had more to gain by a careful proposal for

⁶⁶⁶ Memorandum from Marion Mitchell to Charles Hulick, 25 February 1951, NARA, RG 466, HICOG Berlin/EAD, Box 1, Folder 2 351.2.

⁶⁶⁷ HICOG Berlin to Department of State, 30 July 1952, NARA, RG 466, Box 11, HICOG Berlin/EAD, Folder 2; and HICOG Berlin to Department of State, "East German Opinion on German Unity and West German Defense," 30 July 1952, NARA, RG 59, 762.00/7-3052.

⁶⁶⁸ HICOG Berlin Eastern Affairs Division to Department of State, 10 March 1952, NARA, RG 59, 762.00/3-1052.

negotiations, Acheson at the end March of even signaled his willingness to enter into negotiations with the Russians. Unwilling to run the risk of such an offensive counterstrategy, the British and French governments, with Adenauer's support, added conditions to the Western counterproposal, such as settling the issue of Germany's eastern border (Oder-Neisse line). Most importantly, the Western notes sent to Moscow on March 25 insisted that a unified Germany would be free to enter any alliance it saw fit to choose, a demand Moscow was expected to resist at all cost.

Maintaining a sense of insecurity on the part of the Soviet occupiers and the Grotewohl regime was essential, Truman administration officials believed, in order to create conditions under which Moscow would in the long run agree the unification of Germany, and in order to counter, more immediately, the SED regime's mounting scare campaign against West Berlin and Western Germany and to slow its efforts to consolidate its hold on power in the eastern zone.⁶⁶⁹ While State and Defense Department officials referred to East Germany's "liberation from communist control" as the ultimate goal of U.S. policy vis-à-vis the GDR in their discussions in early 1952, the immediate focus was on Berlin.⁶⁷⁰ McCloy was concerned about new threats to drive home to the West Germans the perils of rejecting the Kremlin offer: Berlin was the "obvious point of exploitation." Moscow and East Berlin would attempt to unsettle West German confidence by launching a "creeping blockade" of the city, creating East German armed forces, staging border incidents and setting off "rumblings" of Soviet military power.⁶⁷¹ Following the Western rejection of the Stalin note, McCloy expected a "scare campaign" to parallel the fizzling diplomatic exchange, climaxing possibly in a full-fledged war scare as ratification of the contractals grew nearer. Border incidents, plane incidents and troop

⁶⁶⁹ Psychological Strategy Board, "Ad Hoc Panel on Germany (Code name Plutonic)," 6 February 1952, Harry S. Truman Library, Mandatory Review Release to author.

⁶⁷⁰ "Statement of Policy on Berlin and Soviet Zone of Germany," jointly written by State and Defense Departments (for NSC), 22 January 1952, NARA, RG 59, 762.00/1-2252, FOIA release to author.

⁶⁷¹ McCloy to Secretary of State, 13 May 1952, NARA, RG 59, 762.0221/5-1352.

concentrations or maneuvers could all be “part of the game,” as could be a closing of the GDR border and a proclamation of GDR sovereignty.⁶⁷² Incidents of military police stoppage between Berlin and Western Germany indeed increased, as did the militancy of the SED leaders towards the West. In early May, Ulbricht threatened West Berlin security, while communist riots in Essen underlined the potential for disturbances in the Western Germany. While the Germans had come to regard threats from the GDR as “cries of wolf wolf,” the “crust of West German courage,” McCloy warned, was “understandably thin.”⁶⁷³ The High Commissioner suggested using police and military measures to deter the Soviets from actions that might trigger a real war scare and called for a propaganda offensive which particularly should “stress Ger[man] unity as [a] goal basic to tri[partite] policy on Germany.”⁶⁷⁴ In Washington, Acheson approved McCloy’s request and asked for speedier build-up of the Berlin stockpile.⁶⁷⁵ West Germans and Berliners took the “war of nerves” in strides, and American officials concluded that the Soviet and East German pressure campaign was actually stiffening the resolution of many Germans.⁶⁷⁶

The administration, however, soon realized that the most significant thrust of Soviet and SED policy was in the direction of further isolating the East German population. In early April 1952, Stalin had in fact told the East German leaders, in an apparent reaction to the Western rejection of his March offer, to “organize an independent state.” The Soviet leader demanded that they turn the relatively open demarcation line between East and West Germany into a “border,” and that everything needed to be done to “strengthen the defense of this border.” Stalin also decreed the creation of an East German army--“without making much noise”--announcing that the “pacifist period” was over--

⁶⁷² McCloy to secretary of State, 22 May 1952, NARA, RG 59, 762.0221/5-2252.

⁶⁷³ McCloy to Secretary of State, 13 May 1952, NARA, RG 59, 762.0221/5-1352.

⁶⁷⁴ McCloy to secretary of State, 22 May 1952, NARA, RG 59, 762.0221/5-2252, McCloy to Secretary of State, 23 May 1952, NARA, RG 59, 762A.0221/5-2452.

⁶⁷⁵ McCloy to Secretary of State, 23 May 1952, NARA, RG 59, 762A.0221/5-2452.

⁶⁷⁶ McCloy to Secretary of State, 11 July 1952, NARA, RG 59, 762A.007-1152.

"[pacifism] was needed in the past but not any more."⁶⁷⁷ Finally, he also sanctioned the piecemeal socialization of GDR agriculture and industry, but "even now they should not shout about socialism."⁶⁷⁸ Within weeks, HICOG Berlin noted GDR efforts to reorganize the East German border police and the construction shacks being erected near the Elbe autobahn bridge.⁶⁷⁹ Intelligence reports also detailed alleged Soviet plans discussed in Chuikov's office in late March to establish a 30 km restricted zone around Greater Berlin to cut off the East Zone "masses" from easy access to the city. The construction of a by-pass rail and by-pass canal that would have obviated the need to cross the western sectors reinforced the increasing conviction on the part of many in HICOG that short of risking war by forcing an end to Western allied presence in Berlin, Soviet and SED leaders sought to "to insulate the East zone population from it."⁶⁸⁰

That was precisely what the cold warriors on the Psychological Strategy Board sought to avoid. By summer, the Plutonic team had overcome initial bureaucratic infighting and agreed to a program that called for exploiting a free West Berlin as a "show window of democracy" (as well as a base for psywar operations), holding out hope for a unified and democratic Germany and encouraging the continued "disaffection" of East Germans towards the SED and defection from the ranks of the Soviet and GDR military and para-military forces. The final plan, PSB D-21, drafted largely by a working group within the Department of State and considerably "watered down from earlier drafts" which had also called for substantive economic and military measures, approved non-attributable psychological, political and economic "harassment activities in the Soviet Zone" and preparation "under controlled conditions for such more active forms of resistance as may

⁶⁷⁷ Conversations between Joseph V. Stalin and SED leadership, 7 April 1952, Library of Congress, Dmitri Volkogonov Collection. A copy can be found in Arkhiv Prezidenta Rossiiskoi Federatsii, Moscow (AP RF), fond (f.) 45, opis' (op.) 1, delo (d.) 303, list (l.) 179.

⁶⁷⁸ Ibid.

⁶⁷⁹ HICOG Berlin to Department of State, 14 May 1952, NARA, RG 59, 762B.00/5-1452.

⁶⁸⁰ N. Spencer Barnes to Department of State, 21 April 1952, NARA, RG 59, 662A.662B/4-2152.

later be authorized.” RIAS, Voice of America and other official information media were to “create a climate conducive to disaffection,” and publications disseminated in the GDR were to discredit communist personalities and “stimulate resistance attitudes.”⁶⁸¹ In particular, the CIA was charged to develop “controlled resistance nuclei capable of expansion and deployment for the purpose, when authorized, of conducting sabotage and other activities”⁶⁸² and to encourage East Germans to work with “controlled resistance networks” in passive harassment measures such as work slow downs, faulty workmanship, misrouting of shipments to reduce the GDR’s economic contribution to Soviet military-industrial complex. Similarly, East Germans were to cause administrative inefficiency through non-compliance with governmental regulations. U.S. media would make sure that the growing resistance attitudes as a result of these activities would not be lost on Moscow. At the same time, PSB D-21 called for informing the Soviet Zone of world events and demonstrating U.S. willingness to negotiate German unity provided that a “reasonable basis” for such negotiations existed.⁶⁸³ Concurrent to the development of PSB D-21, a plan for “Day X” was developed for the coordination of psychological warfare between civilian and military agencies in time of war, including planning for more active resistance and sabotage.⁶⁸⁴

PSB D-21 provided for the continuation of the two most significant information outlets, RIAS and the pony edition of the *Neue Zeitung*, both designed in particular to

⁶⁸¹ Psychological Strategy Board, PSB D-21 Working Draft, 28 July 1952 (FOIA release to National Security Archive); memorandum, “German plan (PSB D-21)”, from William Korns (PSB Office of Coordination) to Mr. Sherman, 7 August 1952, NARA, PSB 091 Germany (7 August 52), FOIA release to author; Psychological Strategy Board, PSB D-21, 9 October 1952 (FOIA release to National Security Archive).

⁶⁸² This quote is probably contained in a PSB D-21 section that remains classified in the draft and final copies but is quoted in a related HICOG review of an earlier version: HICOG Memorandum from Gregory Henderson (HICOG Berlin Element) to W. J. Convery Egan, 3 September 1952, NARA, RG 59, 511.62a/9-352, FOIA release to author.

⁶⁸³ Psychological Strategy Board, PSB D-21 Working Draft, 28 July 1952, FOIA release to National Security Archive.

⁶⁸⁴ Memorandum from Walter K. Schwinn to Geoffrey Lewis, 27 June 1952, NARA, RG 59, 511.62A/6-2752.

reach audiences in eastern Germany.⁶⁸⁵ Given the lack of access to operational sources by the CIA (which was charged with much of the covert operations), only an incomplete account of covert and semi-covert psychological warfare activities authorized under PSB D-21 exists.⁶⁸⁶ But it seems clear that PSB D-21 continued earlier practices by the administration to “stimulate” German organizations “to increase their independent propaganda activities” in Germany and seeking “German sponsorship for American produced or inspired information.”⁶⁸⁷ Much of HICOG’s support continued to fund anti-communist books, pamphlets and posters for distribution by German parties and groups to East Germans. Thus HICOG spent DM 222,000 in September 1952 to underwrite a book-publishing program with the publishing house Kiepenheuer and Witsch which over the following six months would produce titles such as “Nationalismus und Kommunismus” (by Lothar von Ballusek, in 20,000 copies), “Die Satellisierung der Sowjetzone” (by Gerd Frieddenrich, in 20,000 copies) and French author Anton Ciliga’s “Sibirien (in 5,000 copies), to be distributed at no charge through “special channels” to the GDR.⁶⁸⁸ Other activities included efforts to exploit the forced evacuation of the GDR border population and the GDR “celebration” of the anniversary of the bombing of Dresden.⁶⁸⁹

The PSB’s blueprint for pursuing a Cold War vis-à-vis East Germany remained controversial within the Truman administration. State Department officials initially took

⁶⁸⁵ Memorandum from Richard Strauss (GER/P) to Perry Laukhuff (GER), 1 December 1952, NARA, RG 59, 511.62A/12-152.

⁶⁸⁶ PSB D-21 was adopted in its final version on 9 October 1952. as early as August, the Board had established a “Plutonic” coordinating panel that would assist the various agencies in implementing the directive. See John Sherman (PSB) to Earl Sohm (State Department), 3 September 1952 (FOIA release to author)

⁶⁸⁷ Memorandum “Highlights Review of PW Operations (PUB, Policy Staff),” from Alfred V. Boerner (HICOG/PUB) to Mrs. Allen (HICOG/PUB), 19 march 1952, NARA, RG 59, 511.62A/3-1952.

⁶⁸⁸ Alfred Boerner (HICOG/PUB) to G.G.Wolfe (HICOG/ED), 16 September 1952, NARA, RG 59, 511.62A/9-1652.

⁶⁸⁹ Memorandum, “U.S.-UK Informational activities with respect to Psychological operations,” from HICOG Bonn to Department of State, 14 July 1952, NARA, RG 59, 762A.0221/7-1452, FOIA release to author.

exception to any suggestions of “increasing our potential aggressiveness,”⁶⁹⁰ and some within HICOG wondered aloud whether encouragement of resistance groups would not imply support of violent actions that would raise the very “same objections which are the West’s most justified complaints against Communism.” To these “front-line observers” these were not abstract questions: members of a West Berlin resistance organization were being tried for trying to “impede the flow of strategic materials” by means of dynamite. There was growing opposition among West German and Berlin circles, especially church circles involved in humanitarian aid activities, to the extreme measures of various Berlin-based resistance organizations, especially the *Kampfgruppe gegen Unmenschlichkeit* which threatened the last remaining links with counterparts in the East.⁶⁹¹ With its calculated risk of violence, people in West and East were “beginning to feel that the West after all may be willing to sacrifice human beings in the East for its ends—sacrifice them when it cannot protect them, sacrifice them without hope of immediate change of conditions.”⁶⁹² Less controversial at the time but no less significant in the long run was the questionable notion that ground swell of resistance in the GDR could be inspired and “controlled” by the United States. Internally, top HICOG officials acknowledged that “some of the means used, particularly by [the] Kampfgruppe,” were “questionable” and needed to be coordinated more effectively “in the future to insure activities are confined within generally approved framework.”⁶⁹³

PSB D-21’s sweeping call for disaffection and defection came under similar criticism. Indiscriminate defection, HICOG officials argued, would lead to a break-up of

⁶⁹⁰ Transcript of Panel “F” Working Group Meeting, 7 April 1952, HSTL, HSTP, Psychological Strategy Board.

⁶⁹¹ See HICOG Bonn to Secretary of State, 5 October 1952, NARA, RG 59, 762A.00/10-452.—the head of the Kampfgruppe, Ernst Tillich, was expelled from the SPD later that year. See HICOG Berlin to Department of State, 10 November 1952, NARA, RG 466 HICOG Berlin/Eastern Element, Box 3, Folder 3: 352.06.

⁶⁹² Memorandum, Comments of Psychological Strategy Plan Prescribing Specific Courses of Action with Respect to Germany,” from Gregory Henderson (HICOG/PUB) to W.J. Convery Eagan, 3 September 1952, NARA, RG 59, 511.62A/9-352 (FOIA release to author).

⁶⁹³ High Commissioner Donnelly to Secretary of State, 4 October 1952, NARA, RG 59, 762A.00/10-452.

“resistant Soviet Zone society:” it would be “a disaster” if those involved in resistance work in the GDR were “to defect and exchange their vital jobs in the East for unemployment in the West.” RIAS had therefore “long and consciously leaned over backward in avoiding any implication that we encourage defection.” Even more targeted defections of military and para-military forces were considered highly questionable by some in the field, as they might exacerbate unemployment in Western Germany and in the long-run “boomerang” to the detriment of U.S. interests given insufficient reception programs in the West.⁶⁹⁴ More fundamentally, the psychological strategy plans suffered from an integrated overall statement of U.S. policy on Germany. Internally, State Department officials insisted that they could not give any “definite assurance” to the Germans that integration would achieve unification, rather that integration was a condition of unification “on your terms.”⁶⁹⁵ But that link was precisely what American officials in Germany felt would provide the justification for any action program of the sort suggested in “Pocketbook.” The United States, they advised, had to state “(a) how integration of the Federal Republic will promote unification, (b) how the Soviet zone fits into this, (c) what positive contribution the East Germans can make as part of the joint effort to attain the goal of unity.” If the East Germans were made to feel they were “contributing partners and not just objects of U.S. and Western Allied policy,” U.S. officials in Berlin argued, they would “respond to a passive resistance program, even if it entaile[ed] personal risks.”⁶⁹⁶

⁶⁹⁴ Memorandum, Comments of Psychological Strategy Plan Prescribing Specific Courses of Action with Respect to Germany,” from Gregory Henderson (HICOG/PUB) to W.J. Convery Eagan, 3 September 1952, NARA, RG 59, 511.62A/9-352 (FOIA release to author); Memorandum, “Brief Comments on PSB D-21 Document,” from N.S. Barnes to the Director, 5 September 1952, NARA, RG 59, 511.62A/9-552; Howland Sargeant (State Department) to Admiral Kirk (PSB), 30 September 1952, NARA, RG 59, 511.62A/9-1152.

⁶⁹⁵ Minutes of Working group meeting of Panel “F”, 17 April 1952, Harry S. Truman Library, Harry S. Truman Papers, Psychological Strategy Board.

⁶⁹⁶ Memorandum, “Brief Comments on PSB D-21 Document,” from N.S. Barnes to the Director, 5 September 1952, NARA, RG 59, 511.62A/9-552.

8. Conclusion

After the establishment of the GDR, the Truman administration developed – and to a certain extent implemented -- an increasingly aggressive psychological warfare strategy that aimed at denying legitimacy to the new German state, seizing the initiative in the East-West German discourse over the national question, mobilizing the resistance potential in East German and turning the SED regime into a strategic liability for Moscow. In the wake of the *Deutschlandtreffen*, the Truman administration became increasingly convinced that – rather than “containing” the GDR behind the increasingly tighter Iron Curtain – maintaining contact with the East German population was critical to keeping alive the “spirit of resistance,” particularly among the East German youth, and to keeping the SED regime off balance. West Berlin still offered manifold opportunities for such efforts, but intensified pressure on the GDR suffered from lack of West German and Western allied support for a more aggressive policy and, more importantly, from the incongruence of American policy goals in Germany – in particular American ambivalence on the effecting German unification in the short term. Credibly serious peaceful pursuit of German unification was essential to keeping alive the spirit of resistance in the East, yet from Berlin to Washington American officials were doubtful that German unity could be restored in the foreseeable future – and that it was in United States national interest. Given these doubts, how far was the United States willing to go should resistance in East Germany take on a more active character?

IV

Economic Cold War Against the GDR

1. Beyond the Counter-Blockade: U.S. Economic Warfare

As Walter Ulbricht and his colleagues in the SED politburo were staring down the abyss of a popular revolt in June 1953 that seemed to engulf the Communist authorities in their demise, its most ardent adversary held out a helping hand.⁶⁹⁷ At the very height of the crisis, Konrad Adenauer's government renewed an interzonal trade agreement that helped the embattled GDR regime to appease its population by ameliorating the food shortages its policies had produced. The incident highlighted the ambivalent attitudes in Germany towards using lingering economic ties between the two German states as political-strategic weapons in the Cold War.

By contrast, trade restrictions and other "economic warfare" had played a central role in American policy since the beginning of that confrontation. With loans, reparations, and, most prominently, the European Recovery Program, Washington had leveraged its unrivaled postwar economic prowess to induce Soviet and (inter)-West European cooperation. Once the Soviet "totalitarianism" had replaced Nazism as the "main threat," the Truman administration had sought to curtail strategic exports to the U.S.S.R, and, more generally, to prevent East-West trade from augmenting the war potential of the Soviet bloc. On March 1, 1948, the United States instituted a wide-ranging catalog of export controls. In August, the administration instructed Averell Harriman, the Special Representative in Europe for the Economic Cooperation Administration (ECA), to negotiate the adoption by Western European countries of two lists of goods which should

⁶⁹⁷ For more information on the uprising, see the following chapter.

either be denied to Soviet bloc countries entirely (“1A List”) or limited in quantity for export (“1B List”).

Though sympathetic to American thinking, Western European Marshall Plan recipients dragged their feet on cutting off trade with Eastern Europe. The issue pitted the United States against its major Western European allies. In January 1949 Britain and France agreed on a list of commodities to be embargoed, but the Anglo-French list fell far short of the U.S. 1A list. Not until the fall of 1949 did the majority of Western European countries agree to put in place export controls and coordinate policy with the United States and other ECA countries. The issue remained a sore point in U.S.-Western European relations, even after the export controls accords of January 1950, which created a joint coordinating committee (COCOM). While American commercial interest in Eastern Europe and Russian was negligible, ECA recipients claimed that their recovery efforts depended on the expansion of trade with their traditional commercial partners in the East. Washington’s expansive notion of goods capable of contributing to Soviet bloc war potential—which included the basic economy of Communist countries—would lead in the eyes of many Europeans to severing all economic relations with the East and amount to all-out industrial warfare. The controversy reached deep into the Truman administration itself where those concerned with stabilizing Western Europe to prevent Communist exploitation of postwar socio-economic degradation and political fatigue, and later with building up Western European economic and military cohesion and strength, confronted those primarily focused on holding down Soviet bloc strength and reconstruction.⁶⁹⁸

Germany, under military occupation and then High Commission authority, was forced to implement the more comprehensive 1A and 1B lists, reinforcing the breakdown

⁶⁹⁸ Tor Egil Førland, *Cold Economic Warfare*, pp. 38-120; Michael Mastanduno, “Trade as a Strategic Weapon: American and Alliance Export Control Policy in the Early Postwar Period,” *International Organization* 42 (Winter 1988), pp 121-150; Vibeke Sørensen, Economic “Recovery versus Containment: The Anglo-American Controversy over East-West Trade, 1947-1951,” *Cooperation and Conflict* 24 (June 1989), pp. 69-97.

of prewar trade patterns and German economic unity of the former Reich, envisioned in the Potsdam Accords and sought by German business. Traditionally, eastern-central Germany had been the country's bread basket and heavily depended on imports of hard coal and steel as well as heavy-industrial products from the Ruhr (and to a lesser extent from Upper Silesia, which after the war came under Polish administration), which it in turn processed into finished goods. Wartime economy had only accelerated eastern Germany's degree of specialization in processing industrial goods. By 1946, the Soviet zone was almost completely dependent on the West for iron and coal, for 92% of its pressed metal and for 84% of its concrete supplies. With the disintegration of the Control Council, the exchange of goods throughout Germany gave way to the exigencies of separate zonal economies. Drastically different reparation policies sharpened the disparities between the zones' industrial complexion: Red Army looting and SMA dismantling weakened the SBZ economy to the brink of collapse, while Washington's determination to turn the Rhein-Ruhr into the economic catalyst of European reconstruction propelled the western zones into the opposite direction. Evidenced in his sudden reparations stop in May 1946, General Clay did not hesitate to leverage the SBZ's growing dependency on western zone goods for political ends.

But West Germany's economic superiority had one weak spot that Stalin sought to exploit as his access to the western zones diminished. The 1948 "blockade" of Berlin was Stalin's attempt to turn the Soviet zone's weakness into strength, leveraging in turn the city's dependence on its hinterland (particularly in brown coal, electricity and chemicals) and to forestall the London program.⁶⁹⁹ But the Soviet leader's attempt at blitz economic warfare failed to reach its main objective, not least due to a "counter-blockade" which hit the SBZ hard and left western officials impressed with the possibilities of economic

⁶⁹⁹ William Stivers, "The Incomplete Blockade. Soviet Zone Supply of West Berlin, 1948-1949," *Diplomatic. History* (1997), pp. 569-602.

warfare. Though the Jessup-Malik agreement and the resulting Paris Council of Foreign Ministers' meeting ceded the Soviet demand that interzonal trade resume at its pre-1948 levels, plans for the imminent establishment of a separate West German state and Washington's new export control offensive undercut any Soviet efforts to reestablish Germany's economic unity. Much as the threat of another blockade became a recurrent nightmare of American officials, the SBZ's dependence on Western Germany became an obsession for Moscow and its SED allies. Reducing weakness and dependence on the West, acutely felt by both, put a shift in trade partners and the build up heavy industries uppermost on the minds of GDR authorities: "Our only resort is a radical import from the East."⁷⁰⁰

Creating the GDR's own industrial base, however, required machine tool, steel and iron imports from the West, where the Ruhr industrials were only all too eager to resume supplying their traditional outlets. In 1947, the Minden Trade Agreement, which had replaced the state council agreements regulating the flow of trade since late 1945, reinforced the traditional regional structure: two-thirds of the Soviet occupation zone's imports were iron and steel, deliveries to the Western zones were made up largely of grains, sugar, potatoes and textiles. Under close supervision by the occupation powers, representatives of the new West German government and the Eastern DWK began to negotiate a new trade agreement. On October 8, 1949, one day after the establishment of the GDR, the negotiations resulted in the so-called Frankfurt Agreement. The agreement projected trade between the two German states through June 1950 with a total volume of 312 million Deutsche Mark. The Frankfurt Agreement introduced regulations that would characterize interzonal trade until 1990: To avoid fixing exchange rates between East and

⁷⁰⁰ Quoted in Gunter Mai, "Das Trojanische Pferd: Innerdeutsche Handelsbeziehungen zwischen Blockbildung und inter-systemarer Symbiose (1945-1989)," *Ost-West-Beziehungen: Konfrontation und Détente, 1945-1989*, ed Gustav Schmidt, vol. 2, (Bochum: Universitätsverlag Dr. N. Bockmeyer, 1993, p. 437.

West mark, the West German “Bank of German States” (the later *Bundesbank*) and the East German “*Deutsche Notenbank*” set up clearing accounts, with “clearing units” (*Verrechnungseinheit*, VE) and a “swing.” To avoid diplomatic recognition, and to include Berlin, formally under Allied authority, the agreement was signed by representatives on behalf of the two “supreme economic authorities of the economic area of the German Mark” (adding DM-West and DM-East, respectively). Neither side considered trade with the other German state as foreign trade: A newly-created “Ministry of Foreign Trade, Inner-German Trade and Procurement” was put in charge of future interzonal trade dealings by the GDR. In the Federal Republic, the Adenauer government created a “*Treuhandstelle für Interzonenhandel*,” an agency under the public (but non-governmental) entity of the *Deutscher Industrie- und Handelstag*. Yet neither Moscow nor the Western allies abandoned their control right entirely: interzonal trade remained, until the end of the Cold War, one of the few areas for which the allies reserved their original occupation powers.⁷⁰¹

The very fact that a new interzonal trade agreement came into effect at the very moment Washington sought to severely limit East-West trade was a remarkable achievement on the part of the German authorities. It reflected the strong interest in West German industry to continue trading with the East—as well as the growing leverage the Adenauer government assumed vis-à-vis the Western Allies, particularly the United States. West Germans would increasingly question their submission to tougher export control standards than were exercised in other Western European countries. But the new IZT also demonstrated in a very practical sense the continued significance of the “German question” for the United States: prism-like, it fractured American Cold War strategy in Europe.

⁷⁰¹ For a useful overview of the history of interzonal trade, still useful Hanns-Dieter Jacobsen, *Die Ost-West-Wirtschaftsbeziehungen als deutsch-amerikanisches Problem* (Baden-Baden: Nomos, 1986).

2. The Western Steel Embargo, 1950-1952

Efforts on both sides to insulate interzonal trade from the Cold War in Germany did not even survive the first trade cycle set in motion by the IZT. In early 1950 the Soviet authorities resumed interfering with trade traffic between West Berlin and the Federal Republic. On January 13, the Soviets impounded eleven German trucks loaded with non-ferrous scrap at the Soviet check-point leaving Berlin. Six days later, the Soviets prohibited any furniture from being moved out of Berlin. By January 20, all trucks carrying non-ferrous iron scrap, furniture or any items on the Western restricted lists were held up at the Soviet check-point in Helmstedt. Two days later, numerous trucks from Berlin, seemingly picked out at random, were turned back at Helmstedt indiscriminately; moreover, the restrictions were expanded to interzonal trains. The crescendo of blows to FRG-Berlin trade, the U.S. Army's European command headquarters warned, was a "deliberate Soviet plan to sabotage the economic rehabilitation of Berlin." Other incidents would certainly follow, "leading up to major demonstrations next spring." Moscow's ultimate motive was "complete control in Berlin."⁷⁰² Eight months after the end of the first Berlin crisis, Washington pondered the prospects of a "little blockade"⁷⁰³ and a re-imposition of the Western counter-blockade.⁷⁰⁴

In weighing their options, the Truman administration soon focused its attention on interzonal trade. By January, West German steel deliveries to the GDR threatened to over-obligate that clearing-account by about DM 8 million. Four-fifths of all East German imports fell into the iron and steel sector—far exceeding the quota of one-third originally

⁷⁰² Intelligence Summary No. 78, Headquarters European Command, 1 February 1950, enclosed in U.S.POLAD to Secretary of State, 7 February 1950, NARA, RG 59, 762A.00/2-750.

⁷⁰³ Cable, COMGENU.S.AFE Wiesbaden to Secretary of States, 10 February 1950, NARA, RG 59, 762A.00(W)/2-1050. See also "Memorandum: Berlin Blockade statement," Walter H. Dustman to Henry Byroade, 2 February 1950, NARA, RG 59, 962.50/2-250

⁷⁰⁴ Memo, L.A. Wieser, 23 January 1950, NARA, RG 59, 962A.50/1-2350.

agreed to in the 1949 Frankfurt Agreement. Moreover, East German promises of potato, grain and sugar deliveries had not been carried out. Adding to concerns about Berlin's position were concerns in Washington that West German trade with the East zone prolonged the FRG's dependence on foreign aid, and more importantly, directly fed into the Soviet economic and military build-up through reparation payments. Declaring that it was "imperative" to take action to "protect the West German economy," the Western Deputy High Commissioners decided on February 2 to impose an embargo on all steel shipments which were under order from the GDR. In the event that the steel embargo would not produce satisfactory results, it could be extended to other vital commodities. Behind the joint concern for the FRG economy, however, were divisions between the Americans and their European allies over instrumentalizing interzonal trade to exert pressure on access to Berlin. In the end, the High Commissioners agreed that the embargo would be taken under the provisions of the interzonal trade agreement, "and not necessarily connected with the interruption of traffic by [the] Soviets."⁷⁰⁵

Washington favored a more forceful reaction that included an increase in military convoys between West Germany and Berlin. Beyond an embargo on steel deliveries, the State Department suggested to instruct the Federal Government to establish control points along the GDR and Berlin sector border denying movement of commercial supplies by highway except through the control points. The measures were to be justified under the IZT, "but will in reality set up control machinery along Soviet zone border which will enable countermeasures that we may agree upon later." Less inclined towards such drastic steps, the British and French Deputy High Commissioners continued to argue for a gradual application of countermeasures "under [the] guise of protection of the West German

⁷⁰⁵ Cable, Hays to Secretary of State, 2 February 1950, NARA, RG 59, 762A.0221/2-250.

economy.” All of it should be done with “minimum publicity.”⁷⁰⁶ Given British and French skepticism about deploying IZT as a tool for economic warfare, the Allied High Commission for now stuck with just the steel embargo. Professing to be “increasingly disturbed” at the persistent credit imbalance, the High Commissioners “requested” an immediate suspension of Western deliveries of valuable steel until the IZT accounts between the Federal Republic and the GDR would even out. Otherwise, they noted, West Germany “would be financing the economic recovery of the eastern zone at the expense of its own earnings in foreign exchange.”⁷⁰⁷ It could “not be justified to use ERP aid in this way to extend credits to the SBZ,” the High Commissioners told Adenauer.⁷⁰⁸ On February 8, the Federal Economics Minister Ludwig Erhard instructed the *Länder* economic administrations to immediately cease issuing new *Warenbegleitscheine* for iron and steel deliveries to the GDR until March 15.

The steel embargo could not have hit the GDR at a worse time. The very day after the steel embargo was put in effect, the GDR government adopted the ambitious 1950 plan for reparations to the U.S.S.R. A large part of the reparation payments were in those areas in which the GDR was dependent on imports from West Germany: 75 percent of the East German reparations in 1949 had consisted of machine and heavy machine deliveries.⁷⁰⁹ The 1950 plan charged the Ministry for Inner-German Trade with obtaining metal and

⁷⁰⁶ Cable, Hays to Secretary of State, 2 February 1950, NARA, RG 59, 762A.0221/2-250. On 7 February, the U.S. embassy in London reported that British Foreign Minister Bevin was “considerably upset” by the widespread press reports that the embargo was a first step in the direction of a counterblockade in retaliation for Soviet harassment of Berlin communications: “He called Kirkpatrick to his office first thing this morning and pointed out that he had only agreed to embargo on condition that it would not be linked to Soviet restrictions on transportation and that every effort would be made to keep publicity to [a] minimum.” Holmes to Secretary of State, 7 February 1950, NARA, RG 59, 962.50/2-750.

⁷⁰⁷ Cable, Hays to Secretary of State, 3 February 1950, NARA, RG 59, 762A.0221/2-350.

⁷⁰⁸ Memorandum [on a Discussion in the Federal Economic Ministry on 8 February 1950] by Schmidhuber, 9 February 1950, BArch, B 102/108271.

⁷⁰⁹ Karlsch, *Allein bezahlt?*, pp 182-184.

ball-bearings—a task now much more difficult.⁷¹⁰ Internally, GDR officials conceded that the steel embargo had effectively upset the reparation plan.⁷¹¹ Imports from the Federal Republic were also crucial to the SED's Five-Year Plan, which had been in the works since September 1949 and scheduled to be announced at the SED's Third Party Congress in late July 1950.⁷¹² By then, only 28,500 tons of iron of a planned total of 90,000 tons had been delivered from Western Germany; similarly, only 77,725 tons of a total of the needed 195,500 tons of rolling mill products had been received. "To resolve this difficult shortage caused by the steel embargo," GDR premier Grotewohl confidentially informed Soviet Control Commission chairman Chuikov as late as August, had "thus far not been possible."⁷¹³ East Berlin fully realized its dependence on inner-German trade, particularly West German rolling mill products. Additional imports from other capitalist countries, such as Belgium or the Netherlands, were impossible due to lacking trade agreements and valuta.

The GDR government therefore set out to achieve a rescission of the steel embargo. Apparently unknown to the Western allies at first, East German interzonal trade negotiator Orlopp met with his West German counterpart Kaumann from 14-21 February, promising that the GDR would carry out the terms of the Frankfurt agreement until its expiration on 30 June if the West issued *Warenbegleitscheine* for orders placed since 8 February.⁷¹⁴ A few weeks later, at a meeting in Düsseldorf, GDR Inner-German Trade Ministry officials urged West German iron and steel producers to intervene with Bonn to repeal the embargo, particularly in light of the fact that the trade imbalance which had

⁷¹⁰ See the reparations plan, as "Anlage 1 zum Protokoll der 15 Sitzung der Regierung vom 9. Februar 1950," BArch DC 20/I/3-12, pp. 5-8; published in *Dokumente zur Deutschlandpolitik*, II Series, Vol 3 (Munich: R. Oldenbourg, 1998), pp. 587-589.

⁷¹¹ BA Coswig DC 2 No 17091, p. 92.

⁷¹² See Letter, Wilhelm Pieck to Stalin, 28. Februar 1950, SAPMO-BArch, Pieck Papers, NY 4036/736a, pp. 62-63; *Dokumente zur Deutschlandpolitik*, II Series, Vol 3 (Munich: R. Oldenbourg, 1998), p. 602.

⁷¹³ Otto Grotewohl to Vassily Chuikov, 7 August 1950, SAPMO-BArch Grotewohl Papers, NY 4090/338, pp. 145-149; see also *Dokumente zur Deutschlandpolitik*, II Series, Vol 3 (Munich: R. Oldenbourg, 1998), pp. 908-910.

⁷¹⁴ Page to Secretary of State, 27 February 1950, NARA, RG 59, 862.00/2-2750.

occasioned the embargo had become largely rectified. West German industrials, many of whom had been opposed to the steel embargo from its inception, promised quick fulfillment of outstanding deliveries of some 16,000 tons of steel and promised to work “with all means towards eliminating the problems for the further fulfillment of the Frankfurt Agreement.”⁷¹⁵ Nevertheless, the embargo remained in effect.

By April, East Berlin took a more assertive position. On April 21, the GDR adopted a law “on the Protection of Inner-German Trade,” making *Warenbegleitscheine* compulsory for trade between the GDR and West Berlin. In May, the SED regime threatened to cancel existing contracts with West German companies. Hand in hand with threats to cut off trade with West Germany altogether went renewed efforts to increase efforts to import rolling mill products from Austria, Belgium, France, Britain, and Finland through three-way agreements and barter deals. The East German trade ministry now demanded that the Soviet Control Commission not resume negotiations with the Western powers unless the steel question had been resolved.⁷¹⁶ At the end of July, the Grotewohl government resolved to obtain critical materials preferably through imports from Eastern Europe to avoid the “dangers of blockades and embargos.”⁷¹⁷ But the plan to diversify steel imports proved futile: Not only did alternative imports fall far short of the requirements, but more importantly, Moscow refused to increase its steel deliveries to the GDR (though it provided some 70 million DM in Valuta to for rolling mill products from the West) and insisted on continuing deliveries to the Federal Republic to balance East German imports of strategic goods.⁷¹⁸ The steel embargo aggravated Soviet dissatisfaction

⁷¹⁵ BA Potsdam DL 2 No. 1624, pp. 182-183.

⁷¹⁶ BA Potsdam, DL 2, No. 1379, p. 136; von Heyl, *Innerdeutscher Handel*, pp. 66-67.

⁷¹⁷ Anlage: Beschlüsse zur Verbesserung der Erfüllung des Reparationsplanes vom 28. Juli 1950,” SAPMO-Barch, NY 4090/338, pp. 126-128; published in *Dokumente zur Deutschlandpolitik*, II Series, Vol 3 (Munich: R. Oldenbourg, 1998), pp. 900-901.

⁷¹⁸ During a meeting chaired by Minister George Handke on July 5, it was stated that only 110,000 tons out of 150,000 tons of required steel imports were still unaccounted for. “Besprechung bei Minister Handke,” 5 July 1950, BA Potsdam DL 2 No 3798, p. 60.

with East German reparation payments. Karlshorst frequently interfered and modified the reparations plan, and lamented the lag in GDR deliveries. Signaling their interest in further West German deliveries, Soviet officials repeatedly urged East German officials to fulfill the Frankfurt agreement according to schedule “at all costs.”⁷¹⁹ Eager to make the GDR independent of West German steel imports in the long run, the SED regime later that summer launched the construction of two new rolling mills, the Eisenhüttenkombinat West in Calbe and the Eisenhüttenkombinat Josef Stalin (later: East) near Fürstenberg at the Oder.⁷²⁰

Meanwhile the Americans grew increasingly exasperated with ‘their’ Germans. With indications that the embargo was only partial and that the Ruhr industrialists were applying pressure to have even this limited embargo lifted by March 15, the administration was certain that West German efforts had fallen far short of “quickly bringing pressure on the Soviets which might force them to give up their present harassing tactics [around Berlin].” With the IZT agreement being the “pivot on which to swing our entire plan of action,” and a selective embargo seemingly ineffective, the State Department called for an immediate “general embargo;” Western authorities would completely cease to issue *Warenbegleitscheine*. To further avoid future trade imbalances, the State Department suggested a new procedure that, in addition to the *Warenbegleitscheine*, would require Western shipments to show proof that adequate funds had been earmarked by the *Bank deutscher Länder* before actually letting the merchandise cross the frontier. Finally, HICOG and the Federal Government were to make the physical control of the movement of goods to the Soviet Zone more effective by setting up border check-points. Given likely

⁷¹⁹ Orlopp to Minister for Inner-German Trade, Foreign Trade and Procurement, Handke, 17 April 1950, Barch, DL 2/7, pp. 434-435; *Dokumente zur Deutschlandpolitik*, II Series, Vol 3 (Munich: R. Oldenbourg, 1998), pp. 680-681.

⁷²⁰ Jochen Czerny, *Der Aufbau des Eisenhüttenkombinats Ost 1950/51* (Dissertation, University of Jena, 1970).

British and French opposition, HICOG was to “concentrate purely on the trade agreement and [the] necessity of living up to its terms.”⁷²¹

At American urging, the Allied High Commission also “overruled the Bonn Government” on the lifting of the embargo agreed upon by the Orlopp-Kaumann talks in February.⁷²² HICOG felt that the agreement secretly negotiated and signed by Kaumann was at best “unsatisfactory,”⁷²³ but, along with the British and French, McCloy hesitated repudiating the agreement outright at first. Instead, the Allied High Commission would intervene promptly if trade did not come into reasonable balance and urge the “sacking” of Kaumann, a “rather notorious bad actor.”⁷²⁴ Kaumann, HICOG officials claimed, kept the Allies and even Adenauer and Erhard “ill-informed” about his negotiations with the Eastern authorities.⁷²⁵ They called on the Adenauer government to “clean house” and replace Kaumann “immediately with person ministerial caliber and Western-oriented political viewpoint.”⁷²⁶ Kaumann, in fact, had obtained authorization from Erhard,⁷²⁷ but rather than admitting to Allied interference, Adenauer denied that he had sanctioned the compromise.⁷²⁸ In the end, Kaumann remained in place, but so did the embargo.

By mid-March, the GDR had made up most of the trade deficit, yet the embargo stayed in effect: on March 16, the state governments were instructed to continue the suspension of *Warenbegleitscheine* indefinitely.⁷²⁹ By the end of the month, pressure by West German industrialists for a resumption of Western deliveries became increasingly

⁷²¹ Department of State to HICOG Frankfurt, 23 February 1950 (FOIA release to author).

⁷²² HEC-ID “Intelligence Summary,” 15 March 1950, enclosed in U.S. POLAD to Department of State, 18 March 1950, NARA, RG 59, 762A.00/3-1850.

⁷²³ Page to Secretary of State, 27 February 1950, NARA, RG 59, 862.00/2-2750.

⁷²⁴ McCloy to Byroade, 2 March 1950, FOIA release to author.

⁷²⁵ HICOG Frankfurt to Secretary of State, 6 April 1950, 462A.62B31/4-650.

⁷²⁶ Berlin to Secretary of State, 24 March 1950 (FOIA release to author).

⁷²⁷ Draft agreement, sent by Leopold to Federal Ministry for Economics, 22 February 1950, enclosed in Cable, Kaumann to Federal Ministry for Economics, 1 March 1950, BA Koblenz B 102 No. 108251.

⁷²⁸ Memorandum of Conversation between the Federal Chancellory Liaison and U.S. IZT Representative Stroh on 4 March 1950, 6 March 1950, BA Koblenz B 102 No. 108251.

⁷²⁹ Cable, Federal Ministry for Economics to the Länder governments and Berlin magistrate, 16 March 1950, BA Koblenz B 102, No. 108251.

vocal. Kaumann warned that that the East might cancel existing contracts, and Erhard demanded that Adenauer intervene with the Allies to allow the resumption of trade negotiations. On May 22, Adenauer finally requested the Allies to allow a “far-reaching relaxation” of the embargo.⁷³⁰ U.S. officials, however, continued to see the embargo as an exquisite tool to ensure trade balance between the Western and Eastern part of Germany and the enforcement of export controls. To be true, the balance on “A” account under the Frankfurt Agreement—the imbalance in favor of the West had been the overt reason for the steel embargo—had changed to the credit of the Eastern side, largely due to the delivery of what U.S. officials considered overpriced quantities of sugar. But out of the total of DM 83.7 million West German deliveries under account “A” of the Frankfurt Agreement, deliveries at a value of DM 66.8 million were for iron and steel, with the remainder going to non-ferrous metals, machines, ball-bearings, calcinated soda and textile raw materials—thus not to those highly manufactured commodities for which the FRG was seeking new markets. Among the deliveries from the GDR, only the commitment with regard to sugar and potatoes had been kept to the satisfaction of the West.⁷³¹

Moreover, after a brief period of improvement following the institution of the embargo on February 8, Soviet harassment of Berlin’s lifelines had started again. During March, non-ferrous scrap and even furniture shipments from West Berlin to West Germany were confiscated, on the grounds that metal from the SBZ had been included with the scrap. In early April, Soviet authorities intensified the checking of barges containing scrap steel consigned from West Berlin to Hamburg. Tightening interzonal

⁷³⁰ Erhard to Adenauer, 15 march 1950, BA Koblenz B 102 no. 108251; Memo by Schmidhuber (Federal Ministry for Economic), 22 May 1950, *ibid.* – On 28 May, Erhard told the U.S. Commandant in Berlin, Taylor, that “he feared furthe Soviet blockade measures unless [the] embargo were relaxed.” Taylor to Secretary of State, 29 may 1950, NARA, RG 59, 862.00/5-2950.

⁷³¹ Undated Memorandum [May 1950], “Review of Soviet Interference Berlin-West German Trade and Transport,” NARA, RG 59, Lot 55D371, Box 3.

border controls hence would help to implement the IZT agreement and East-West security controls, but also, as the State Department informed the U.S. High Commissioner in late May, “put us in readiness to take counter measures as reply to Soviet restrictions on Berlin transport.”⁷³² In view of the Soviets’ and East Germans’ restricting Berlin access ever more “thoroughly and impudently,” the State Department was now ready to consider restricting “critical Western [German] deliveries to [the] East (...) as direct retaliatory measure,” including the maintenance and real enforcement of the steel embargo until Soviet and German restrictions were lifted.⁷³³

Ever fonder of the idea of using an interzonal trade embargo as the key weapon in the Cold War over Berlin, the administration in Washington was ever less inclined to relinquish direct control over interzonal trade matters. The West Germans insisted that trade between the two Germanies could not be considered “foreign trade,” which fell within the “reserve powers” withheld by the former occupiers; after all, that would have undermined non-recognition policy and the very notion of German unity that underlay Western and West German policy. Yet that seems to have been exactly what the Truman administration was driving at: Authority over the control of trade and payments across the zonal border remained firmly in Allied hands, and in fact, was expanding.⁷³⁴ By late April, a joint tripartite Frankfurt-Berlin trade and transport committee within the Allied High Commission recommended that the German border controls be supervised by allied authorities to “provide a flexible means of exerting retaliatory measures.” The committee also recommended the drafting of new German custom procedures that would apply to the interzonal border and greater control over postal consignments.⁷³⁵ Based on the

⁷³² Top Secret State Department cable to HICOG Frankfurt, 26 May 1950 (FOIA release to author).

⁷³³ Ibid.

⁷³⁴ Memorandum on Interzonal Trade by the Permanent Representative of the Federal Republic of Germany at the Consultative Group in Paris, Kroll, 20 June 1950, BA Koblenz, VS-B-102/1, published in *Dokumente zur Deutschlandpolitik*, II Series, Vol 3 (Munich: R. Oldenbourg, 1998), pp. 837-838.

⁷³⁵ Frankfurt to Secretary of State, 21 April 1950, NARA, RG 59, 962.50/4-2150.

recommendations of a newly-formed tripartite “Joint Berlin Committee” (JBC), the Allied High Commission instructed West German authorities in mid-June to establish checkpoints in Berlin at its Western approaches as well as along the sector border, along with “roving controls.” The Allied High Commission also asked the Federal Government to establish a federal agency to implement export control programs and to install a communications net from checkpoints in the Western zones to Berlin.⁷³⁶ Any new trade agreement was to be contingent on new guarantees of open Berlin communications. At least 25 percent of the orders covered by the agreement were to be placed in Berlin, stipulated within a special Berlin East-West trade agreement. The city would become the center for the East-West trade machinery, the JBC proposed, and the Treuhandstelle would move from Frankfurt to Berlin.⁷³⁷ To demonstrate its seriousness, Washington also refused to grant the West Germans authority to negotiate a new interzonal trade agreement. On June 30, the Frankfurt Agreement therefore lapsed without extension.

The sudden breakdown of the IZT mechanism (that is: of any legal basis for interzonal trade) did not have the impact the Truman administration had hoped for. Rather than negotiating new terms to accommodate the West, Ulbricht turned to trade negotiations with individual West German state governments. He had some success, in particular with Niedersachsen state government led by Günter Gereke. Illegal trade across the inner-German border spiked. An increasingly organized contraband system was making a virtual mockery out of the iron and steel embargo. Soviet zone firms dispatched large but undervalued consignments of goods to Western Germany in return for high-value commodities. Besides outright smuggling through West Berlin or over the “green border,” deliveries were declared as being carried out under old, pre-steel embargo contracts; others

⁷³⁶ McCloy to Secretary of State, 27 July 1950, FRU.S., 1950, Vol. IV, p. 865.

⁷³⁷ Berlin Joint Committee, “Study of Subjects Placed on the Draft Agenda for the First Meeting of the Berlin Joint Committee (BK/BJC(50)1),” 3 June 1950, NARA, RG 59, 762A.00/6-350 SP.

were documented under false descriptions or had outright forged documentation.⁷³⁸

According to the testimony of one trucker who, intoxicated and loose-lipped, told his scheme long and loudly at the crossing point Helmstedt, he and his colleagues would load vehicles with legitimate cargoes in West Berlin for points in West Germany and obtain credentials for passage through the GDR checkpoint at Marienborn. After having sold three-fourths of his cargoes illegally in West Berlin, the drivers would proceed to Marienborn where an obliging East Zone guard would for a small bribe confiscate the remainder of the cargo and give the driver a receipt that purported to show that the entire load had been taken. Upon return to Berlin, they would advise the shippers to apply for insurance. Others made a practice of buying metal scraps in West Berlin, adding a few pieces smuggled in from the eastern zone. They would then drive into the East Zone and sell most of their load en route, sure to have the rest confiscated at the border on account of the SBZ origin of some of the remaining pieces.⁷³⁹ According to some accounts, some \$3 million worth of steel was smuggled from West Germany into the Soviet Zone in the six months following the beginning of the embargo.⁷⁴⁰

Keen on avoiding a complete break in the legal flow of goods, West German officials, once again without consulting the Western Allies, issued interim regulations that provided for a limited continuation of trade on a barter basis.⁷⁴¹ Rather than forcing the Soviets to back down, McCloy and his staff expected continued “harassing action” around Berlin.⁷⁴² Within days, therefore, the Allied High Commission permitted the *Treuhandstelle für Interzonenhandel* to resume preliminary trade negotiations with the

⁷³⁸ HICOG Eastern Element to Department of State, 5 September 1950, NARA, RG 59, 462A.62B31/9-550; HICOG Intelligence to Department of State, 11 September 1950, NARA, RG 59, 462A.62B/9-1150; “Examples of Illegal Export from Western Germany to the East,” HICOG Frankfurt to Department of State, 15 November 1950 (FOIA to author).

⁷³⁹ “Berlin smugglers to face new curbs,” *New York Times*, 18 August 1950, p. 10.

⁷⁴⁰ East-West Zones ready steel accord,” *The Washington Post*, 12 August 1950, p.3.

⁷⁴¹ McCloy to Secretary of State, 17 July 1950, NARA, RG 59, 462A.62B/7-1750.

⁷⁴² Morgan (HICOG Berlin) to Secretary of State, 8 July 1950 (FOIA release to author.); McCloy to Secretary of State, 17 July 1950, NARA, RG 59, 462A.62B/7-1750.

GDR government on a month-by-month extension of the Frankfurt agreement until September 30, but the talks quickly deadlocked. The East Zone representative, Orlopp, refused to accept West German demand for a written guarantee that Eastern authorities would not interfere with communications and transport between Berlin and the Federal Republic prior to a lifting of the steel embargo. Western officials had also pointed out the Eastern side had to cease its interruption of the power and water supplies for West Berlin.⁷⁴³

For two weeks, the talks stalled, and it was the West who blinked. With the onset of the Korean War, it was now the Americans who sought to avoid a complete break-down of the negotiations for fears about the dangers to Berlin's economy and the likelihood of a new blockade that would parallel the crisis in the Far East. U.S. officials also expected that the East German regime would turn more aggressive after the October 15 *Volkskammer* elections secured its power base.⁷⁴⁴ On July 20, the High Commissioners agreed to extend the Frankfurt agreement until September 30 and to permit steel and iron shipments, though the Federal Republic was secretly instructed to limit deliveries of the critical steel roll mill products to 10,000 tons per months.⁷⁴⁵ At Washington's behest, Bonn informed the GDR representatives now that any agreement would be "null and void" if the East did not remove existing or re-imposed new restrictions on access to Berlin.⁷⁴⁶ Despite such threats, East Berlin refused to formally recognize a link between IZT and Berlin access; all that Orlopp was ready to commit to was granting that no special conditions be applied to

⁷⁴³Memorandum of Conversation between the Representative of the GDR Government for Interzonal Trade, Orlopp, and the head of the Treuhandstelle für Interzonenhandel, Kaumann, 6-7 July 1950, B-Arch DL/2/7, pp. 332-334;

⁷⁴⁴Department of State to HICOG Frankfurt, 11 November 1950, NARA, RG 59, 462A.62B31/10-1950.

⁷⁴⁵Report by Kaumann to Kleiner on negotiations with Lefort and Stroh, 10 July 1950, BArch, B 102/108246; Cable, Koelfens to Kaumann, 11 July 1950, BArch, B 102/108246.

⁷⁴⁶McCloy to Secretary of State, 27 July 1950, FRUS 1950, IV, pp. 864-865; Page/Berlin to Secretary of State, 27 July 1950, NARA, RG 59, 462A.62B31/7-2750; McCloy to Secretary of State, 27 July 1950 (FOIA release to author).

trade between West Berlin and the Federal Republic.⁷⁴⁷ On August 11, Orlopp and Kaumann signed the interim agreement that lifted the trade embargo. Negotiations for a new IZT agreement that would take effect on October 1 were to start almost immediately.⁷⁴⁸

As a prelude to the negotiations, Orlopp declared that East Germany's most urgent steel requirements were being bolstered by shipments from Britain, France, the Netherlands, Sweden and Denmark and thus were immune to any pressure from the West through the steel embargo.⁷⁴⁹ Despite these claims, some of which were quickly denied by the British and French governments, U.S. officials felt that the West was in a strong negotiating position and urged the West German negotiators to exploit the GDR's dependence upon West German commodities to their best advantage. Key West German officials, such as Kaumann, did not share this view, but the Truman administration was hopeful that "recent events"—an allusion to the North Korean invasion and ensuing widespread fears in Germany—would probably force the Germans into cooperating. "Extremely reluctant to see present agreement extended," the State Department instructed HICOG; the new agreement was to achieve the "most advantageous economic exchange," guarantee the participation of West Berlin and minimize the export of strategic commodities." But Washington was "not now willing [to] precipitate a breakdown of the negotiations" if it would result in a complete break-down of trade because of the danger of a renewed Berlin blockade. Equally disastrous would be if all controls of interzonal trade would be lost.⁷⁵⁰ A September 5 agreement that assured the delivery to West Berlin of

⁷⁴⁷ Report from Kaumann to Kleine on negotiations with Orlopp, 13 July 1950, BArch, B 102/108246; Memorandum of Phone Conversation by Kutscher, 20 Juli 1950, BArch, B 102/108246; Report by Kaumann and Kleine on negotiations with Orlopp, 27 July 1950, BArch, B 102/108246.

⁷⁴⁸ Agreement on the Extension of the Interzonal Trade Agreement, 11 August 1950, *Dokumente zur Deutschlandpolitik*, II Series, Vol 3 (Munich: R. Oldenbourg, 1998), p. 281; Page to Secretary of State, 11 August 1951, NARA, RG 59, 462A.62B31/8-1150.—The negotiations started on September 6.

⁷⁴⁹ "Soviet Zone holds; West sends steel," *New York Times*, 17 August 1950, p. 16.

⁷⁵⁰ Department of State to HICOG Frankfurt, 14 September 1950 (FOIA release to author).

some 2,600,000 tons of brown coal briquettes, followed 11 days later by an agreement between the power companies in West and East Berlin (which supplied an average of 850,000 kilowatt hours daily of the 2,000,000 kilowatt hour consumption of the Western sectors), initially seemed to augur well for the IZT negotiations. But by late September the negotiations had gone nowhere. At midnight on September 20, following an intense face-off between Russian and British soldiers near the Gatow airfield in which about 100 British troops, supported by armored cars and machine guns, forcibly retook an area of 150 yards of British sector territory seized earlier that day by more than a dozen Soviet soldiers, the East cut the power supply for the Western sectors of the city. Western officials professed to have been prepared for a power cut—"We simply threw our switches." But when West German efforts to obtain a resumption of power proved in vain, the Federal government broke off the IZT negotiations. One week later, armed British "Tommys" occupied West Berlin canal locks and detained forty-five Soviet zone barges in swift retaliation for Western barges held up by the Soviets.⁷⁵¹ Within days, the Allied High Commission decided that the Frankfurt agreement would not be extended again; *Warenbegleitscheine* would only be issued for unfulfilled contracts placed prior to October 1; no barter transactions were permitted.⁷⁵² Any WBS that had already been issued would expire on 1 January 1951. Once again, the Truman administration hoped that a lapse of the trade agreement would coerce the GDR into a coal and electricity agreement for West Berlin, and accommodating Western conditions for a trade agreement. The Western Commandants in Berlin were less sure of such leverage: Moscow, they argued, would only gain through a lapse of the agreement as illegal trade worked in the favor of the East.⁷⁵³

⁷⁵¹ "British in Berlin Check on Barge Traffic in Retaliation of Russian Interference," *New York Times*, 28 September 1950, p. 21.

⁷⁵² McCloy to Secretary of State, 10 October 1950, NARA, RG 59, 462A.62B31/10-1050.

⁷⁵³ Allied Kommandatura Berlin, "Suspension of East/West Trade Negotiations," BK/Allied High Commission(50)60, 20 October 1950, enclosed in HICOG Berlin Element to Department of State, 24 October 1950, 462A.62B/10-2450 (FOIA Release to author).

Frustrations over GDR harassment of Berlin meshed with concerns about Soviet-East German designs for Berlin after the October 15 elections in the GDR. HICOG began drawing up countermeasures and, here too, discussions within the Allied Interzonal Trade Working Party as well as PEPCO and Eastern Element “clearly brought out” that the only effective countermeasure to Soviet restrictions on traffic and communications between Western Berlin and the Federal territory were the commodity deliveries from West Germany to the GDR. Assuming that East Germany continued to be “dependent to a considerable extent” on the FRG for the successful fulfillment of its Five Year Plan due to commence 1 January 1951, the denial of critical items was considered the most effective weapon against any interference with Berlin communications.⁷⁵⁴ There was general agreement within HICOG and tripartite agencies that the West had to “place [its] house in order” to be able to effectively control the flow of goods and to keep the industrialization program in the GDR “off balance.” The stage-by-stage retaliation program eschewed a tit-for-tat type reprisal, as the Soviets capacity for interference in certain fields vastly outweighed the options open to the West. Rather than trying to match every Soviet move, the West would retaliate through a phased control of interzonal trade, involving not only commodities on the international export control lists, but also items essential for the fulfillment of the GDR’s Five-Year-Plan.⁷⁵⁵

French and British officials within the IZTWP warned that if countermeasures would go too far, the West ran the risk of provoking a complete blockade.⁷⁵⁶ Once again American officials favored a more aggressive approach, arguing that Western trade

⁷⁵⁴ Allied High Commission/FOREX/IZTWP, “Countermeasures,” 14 October 1950, enclosure to HICOG Berlin Element to Department of State, 24 October 1950 (FOIA release to author); see also Memorandum from Eastern Element to PEPCO, 28 September 1950, NARA, RG 59, HICOG Berlin, Political Affairs, Box 2.

⁷⁵⁵ Ibid; Memorandum by H. C. Ramsey/PEPCO, undated, NARA, RG 59, HICOG Berlin, Political Affairs, Box 3.

⁷⁵⁶ Allied High Commission/Foreign Trade and Exchange Committee, 14 October 1950, enclosure to HICOG Berlin Element to Department of State, 24 October 1950 (FOIA release to author); see also Memorandum from Eastern Element to PEPCO, 28 September 1950, NARA, RG 59, HICOG Berlin, Political Affairs, Box 2.

restrictions alone were unlikely to cause or prevent a full-fledged Soviet blockade. Should Moscow decide on a complete blockade, the U.S. High Commissioner suggested, the Western powers would have to take countermeasures beyond trade restrictions, such as preclusive purchases from other countries of goods that would otherwise be shipped to the GDR, the closing of the Panama Canal or the Suez Canal, sabotage of East German and Soviet industrial installations, or a coordinated campaign to drain vital manpower from the Soviet Zone through defection. HICOG's Eastern Element even suggested encouraging the Federal government to initiate legislation "similar" to the GDR "Law in the Protection of Internal German Trade."⁷⁵⁷ Once the GDR elections had passed without signs of increased Soviet aggressiveness towards Berlin, the State Department advocated "increased pressure" to use the "present breathing spell" to improve the Western position in Berlin and to obtain a more satisfactory trade agreement. Washington wanted to seize the initiative from the Soviets in the trade field, and "the time may now be more ripe than at any time recently for such moves."⁷⁵⁸

There was general agreement that far more had to be done to stop trade leaks across the border. The Western Commandants in Berlin urged improving custom controls along the zonal border to stop black trade but also transit legal shipments commensurate with Soviets practices.⁷⁵⁹ The State Department suggested tightening up existing trade procedures in the absence of a trade agreement to decrease the flow of goods and urging the West Germans to concede only the "very minimum." Once again Washington wondered whether "pressure to remove Kaumann as too conciliatory [would] have any effect on the FEDREP attitude on [the] negot[iation]s." Eager to effect a tighter guarantee

⁷⁵⁷ Memorandum, George Morgan (Eastern Element) to PEPCO, 24 October 1950, NARA, RG 466, HICOG Berlin, Political Affairs Division, Box 2.

⁷⁵⁸ Department of State to HICOG Frankfurt, 11 November 1950, NARA, RG 59, 462A.62B31/10-1950.

⁷⁵⁹ Allied Kommandatura Berlin, "Suspension of East/West Trade Negotiations," BK/Allied High Commission(50)60, 20 October 1950, enclosed in HICOG Berlin Element to Department of State, 24 October 1950, 462A.62B/10-2450 (FOIA Release to author).

for Berlin's participation in any future trade agreement, Washington officials suggested "linking Berlin exports in some fashion into quid pro quo system," possibly by making West German deliveries contingent upon Berlin trade."⁷⁶⁰ In line with instructions from Washington, HICOG got the West German government to agree that any future trade agreement would include formalized commodity exchange guarantees for Berlin. The entire interzonal trade control system would be tightened up. IZTWP had already recommended establishing a central *Warenbegleitscheine* issuing agency that would work in close coordination with the West German Central Licensing Agency. Once the negotiations were resumed, HICOG also assured Washington that it was maintaining a "tight rein" on interzonal trade negotiations by daily and weekly conferences with the West German team.⁷⁶¹

Yet the lapse of the trade agreement, the suspension of the negotiations, and the continued embargo proved far less an effective weapon than Washington and Frankfurt had hoped for. In the absence of a trade agreement, Western controls over the flow of trade were practically non-existent, resulting in, according to one HICOG official, was "smuggling on a grand scale" between the two Germanies.⁷⁶² Iron, steel and non-ferrous metals, in particular fine metals sheets, high quality seamless tubes, and ball-bearings were smuggled from West Germany and West Berlin, in return for sugar, coffee alcohol, spirits, fuel and lubricating oil were illegally imports from the GDR. U.S. army intelligence had received information as early as August that the Soviet Control Commission had instructed the SED to use the unutilized capacities in the GDR's textile industry for illegal sales to West Germany (directly or through Switzerland) to obtain West Marks.⁷⁶³ That same month—two months after the beginning of the Korean War—custom unit troopers

⁷⁶⁰ Department of State to HICOG Frankfurt, 11 November 1950, NARA, RG 59, 462A.62B31/10-1950.

⁷⁶¹ HICOG Frankfurt to Department of State, 29 November 1950 (FOIA release to author).

⁷⁶² "German Goods Aid Soviets in Arming," *New York Times*, 14 April 1951.

⁷⁶³ U.S.POLAD Heidelberg, "Illegal Interzonal Trade to Sustain the Soviet Zone Armament Potential," 18 August 1950 (FOIA release to author).

were stunned to see railroad flatcars rolling up to the Schirnding border cross point loaded with 105 United States Army two-and-a-half-ton and six-by-six trucks consigned to the East, the first batch of 1,050 shipped by the Frankfurt firm “Trucks and Spares.” Though in perfect condition, the export license described the vehicles as “spare parts” from U.S. army surplus stocks that had been turned over to the Germans. Berlin, contrary to the American schemes to turn the city into the heart of interzonal trade control machinery, became the central node for the flourishing illegal exchange. Information obtained by HICOG set the overall amount of illegal trade through Berlin alone at some DM 800 million. Contrary to statements by Federal economic Minister Erhard that illegal trade was “hardly measurable,” some German estimates ran as high as DM 1,000,000,000 (\$238,000,000) for the annual total of West Germany’s illegal trade with the GDR—four times the amount specified in the Frankfurt agreement, with an estimated 40 percent of the going directly from the GDR to the Soviet Union and other bloc countries.⁷⁶⁴ In the fall of 1950, U.S. and other allied intelligence agencies uncovered several large illegal trade organizations cooperating with the Russians. Based in Berlin and Vienna, the complex and far-flung smuggling ring extended to Switzerland, Belgium, Sweden, French North Africa and the Netherlands and involved some of Germany’s oldest and most respected business concerns, including the Rheinische Röhrenwerke in Mühlheim/Ruhr and the Berlin Iron and Steel Stock Company, with the Berlin concern Haselgruber as key operator. Despite the embargo, Moscow had received an estimated 300,000 tons of steel in 1950.⁷⁶⁵

West German *Föderalismus*, or decentralization of authority to Länder governments, prevented efforts to effect greater central supervision and control, and federal authorities were reluctant to introduce political arguments aimed at changing the

⁷⁶⁴ “German Goods Aid Soviets in Arming,” *New York Times*, 14 April 1951.

⁷⁶⁵ “Illegal Trade of the Haselgruber Firm and Associates,” HICOG-Eastern Element to Department of State, 24 October 1950 (FOIA release to author); “Germans Seek End To Smuggling Ring,” *New York Times*, 9 April 1951, p.7.

Länder constitutions. Länder economic offices were more or less ignoring the implementation of federal controls because of the pressure of local business and industry, and American officials found the physical setup for the issuance of *Warenbegleitscheine* “appalling,” especially in Nordrhein-Westphalia, the most significant industrial area.⁷⁶⁶ While Washington regarded the Federal Republic as the “greatest single source of strategic commodities for the Soviet area,” the Federal Government continued to be unwilling to clamp down on illegal trade and to make a strong effort to enforce trade controls.⁷⁶⁷ The West Germans in particular resented being held to stricter export controls by the Allied High Commission than the international lists of restricted strategic goods, the so-called 1A and 1B lists adopted by the Western Consultative Group in Paris. The Adenauer government intended to include some 1-A and 1-B list commodities in a new trade agreement, and the West German delegate to the Consultative Group, Hans Kroll, continued to charge the Western Powers with discrimination against West Germany, arguing that Germany was required to enforce export controls specifically rejected by the majority, and demanded that controls should be uniform and voluntary.⁷⁶⁸ The West German position would have “very unfortunate repercussions” in the U.S., Truman administration retorted, and the State Department swiftly informed HICOG that it would likely have to “veto” any IZT agreement that would include any 1-A or 1-B commodities.⁷⁶⁹

Into the winter of 1950-51, U.S. officials continued to emphasize that the West had a “very advantageous position,” given the East Germans’ deficit under the old agreement (the GDR had a debt of approximately 11 million clearing units) and the devastating

⁷⁶⁶ HICOG Berlin to Secretary of State, 18 November 1950, NARA, RG 59, 762A.00/11-1850.

⁷⁶⁷ Background Papers for Byroade’s Trip to Germany, 29 January 1951, NARA, RG 59, 762A.00/1-2951.

⁷⁶⁸ Paris to Secretary of State, 19 September 1950, NARA, RG 59, 462A.509/9-1950.

⁷⁶⁹ Department of State to HICOG Frankfurt, 26 September 1950, NARA, RG 59, 662A.62b31/92650.

economic “setbacks” they were suffering as a result of the embargo.⁷⁷⁰ A November 4 agreement on the supply of electricity for Berlin suggested to HICOG officials that the East was “extremely anxious” to resume negotiations for a new trade deal.⁷⁷¹ The West Germans, on the other hand, were far less sanguine about the prospects for the talks. Early on they expected that it might be necessary to offset the receipt of essential foodstuffs for Berlin through the delivery of rolling mill products, and generally viewed Berlin’s supply situation far more precarious than their U.S. counterparts.⁷⁷² The West Germans also doubted that the East would agree to allow all industrial items to be listed in general categories “subject to specification,” a stipulation that would allow the West to apply export controls on particular items. Moreover, the West Germans argued (and HICOG agreed) that the “East delegation will never agree to deliver coal, grain, sugar, potatoes and gasoline to West Berlin and receive only secondary manufactured items.”⁷⁷³

Without Allied approval, the Germans initialed a protocol for the liquidation of the Frankfurt agreement, which extended the date of liquidation to March 31. When HICOG threatened to veto the protocol, the GDR authorities stated that if the protocol was not signed, they would not be able to guarantee some 90,000 tons of coal deliveries per month and electricity for the Western Sectors after 1 January 1951. Though some within HICOG at the time were inclined to believe that a power or coal stoppage could have been prevented by retaliatory threat, HICOG, in the end, withdrew its veto “in view of the possible consequences to Berlin.”⁷⁷⁴ More importantly, while Washington was ready to reduce interzonal trade to a minimum as long as West Berlin obtained essential supplies,

⁷⁷⁰ HICOG Berlin to Secretary of State, 20 October 1950, NARA, RG 59, 462A.62B31/10-2050.

⁷⁷¹ Berlin to Secretary of State, 7 November 1950 (FOIA release to author). The resumption of delivery of electric power from East Germany to West Berlin was announced on November 10; the arrangement provided for 400,000 kilowatt hours daily for the Western sectors.

⁷⁷² HICOG Frankfurt to Department of State, 13 November 1950, NARA, RG 59, 762A.00/11-1350.

⁷⁷³ HICOG Frankfurt to Secretary of State, 19 October 1950, NARA, RG 59, 462A.62B31/10-1950.

⁷⁷⁴ McCloy to Secretary of State, 14 December 1950, NARA, RG 59, 762A.0221/12-1450; HICOG Frankfurt to Department of State, 30 March 1951, NARA, RG 59, 462A.62B31/3-3051.

German resistance to the Adenauer government efforts to enforce export controls and embargo policies reflected a deeper desire to do everything possible to maintain trade with the Eastern Zone of Germany, an “instinctive feeling,” as one U.S. official noted, that “Eastern Germany is really part of Germany.”⁷⁷⁵ The removal of Kaumann as chief West German negotiator, seen by many as too conciliatory, HICOG officials hence warned, would have no effect on this basic attitude towards negotiations.⁷⁷⁶ Eager to continue trade beyond the 31 December lapse of the IZT extensions, the West Germans, on 19 January 1951, presented the Allies with an advance (*Vorgriff*) arrangement that established quotas for deliveries applicable against the total requirements envisaged in a new IZT agreements, with a total trade volume worth \$80,000,000.⁷⁷⁷ Arguing that the advance agreement would be more practical than individual cash or barter transactions, McCloy agreed.⁷⁷⁸ Under the “advance agreement, trade went on between February and 30 April; a later extension provided for continued IZT through 2 July 1951.⁷⁷⁹

3. Designing the Industrial Cold War

On 1 January 1951, elaborate ceremonies took place in Fürstenberg on the Oder, near the “peace border” with Poland to dedicate a new steel mill and formally launch an ambitious GDR’s five-year plan. Under the plan, first outlined by Ulbricht a few months earlier, industrial production was to be increased 190 percent, accelerating production in particular strategic materials, such as iron, steel and nonferrous metals where East Germany faced critical shortages. The plan underscored the SED’s efforts to relieve its dependence on West German imports—and eliminate what American officials continued

⁷⁷⁵ HICOG Frankfurt to Department of State, 30 March 1951, NARA, RG 59, 462A.62B31/3-3051.

⁷⁷⁶ HICOG Berlin to Secretary of State, 18 November 1950, NARA, RG 59, 762A.00/11-1850.

⁷⁷⁷ HICOG Frankfurt to Secretary of State, 2 February 1951, NARA, rg 59, 462.62B31/2-251.

⁷⁷⁸ HICOG Frankfurt to Secretary of State, 2 February 1951, NARA, rg 59, 462.62B31/2-251.

⁷⁷⁹ Memorandum, “Berlin Trade Talks Deadlocked,” 27 June 1951, RG 59, Lot 55 D 371, Box 3.

to be their most effective weapon in defending access to Berlin. Concerned with the GDR's drive for self-sufficiency, U.S. officials in Berlin were impressed with the "rapid headway" that the GDR was making. Despite the GDR's overall lagging behind the FRG, "the Soviet Zone authorities and their Russian masters are eminently successful in achieving their economic aims (...)." The SED's 1949-1950 economic plan, which had been ridiculed in the West as "utterly fantastic," had "by and large been fulfilled," particularly in the steel and mechanical engineering industries, a noteworthy achievement as the GDR had to reconstruct most of its production capacities that had been dismantled in 1945 and 1946.⁷⁸⁰ It suggested that the new plan could not be ignored.

Against the specter of East German self-sufficiency, Truman administration officials demanded a far more "aggressive economic policy." Arguing that the Frankfurt agreement (and illegal trade) had allowed the East to receive some DM 300 million in essential goods (as opposed to DM 100 million on the part of the West) and "to pick out the raisins from the cake," the West should abandon their approach to IZT negotiations "based on the idea of maximizing trade." Frequent German complaints over Western double-standards in East-West trade had cloaked the lack of initiative and aggressiveness in this field; lacking an international border, strong interdependence between the two economies, the issue of unity and West German feelings for their brethren in the East meant that Germany could not be treated equally in East-West trade matters with other European nations. What was needed, U.S. diplomats in Berlin argued, was a more adequate allied organization "to implement a 'Cold War' in the economic field," as well as efforts in West Germany to "dispel the fallacies of their irrational approach to German unity," which would help overcome "German resistance and inertia." Future trade agreements should include a firm contractual obligation of the GDR to carry out a certain

⁷⁸⁰ Memorandum, "Critique of Our Economic Warfare Position in Germany," Eastern Element to PEPCO, 2 February 1951, RG 466, HICOG Berlin Element, Box 2.

amount of trade with Berlin and a system for controls over incoming and outgoing goods to ascertain Soviet-East German fulfillment of these obligations, as well as effective unilateral system of sanctions. If the West continued to buy Berlin's survival by making concessions to the East, "we may win the battle of Berlin [only] to lose the war against the East."⁷⁸¹

Congressional and Bundestag committee investigations in the spring of 1951 added to the sense of urgency in efforts to choke off the illegal flow of strategic war materials. A Senate-State Department fact-finding mission toured Germany and found controls lacking. A Congressional subcommittee under representative Laurie C. Battle, Democrat of Alabama, prepared legislation that would cut off aid to countries "trading with the enemy." In May 1951, McCloy was forced to admit that West Germany had sent \$103,748,000 worth of iron and steel products, machinery and chemicals eastward—with the blessing of the Allies. The admission followed a scathing 53-page report published by the Bundestag's All-German Affairs Committee led by its fiercely anti-communist chairman, Social Democrat Herbert Wehner, in April 1951 that estimated illegal transfers at four times the legal trade. Howard Jones, one of the top U.S. diplomats in Berlin, publicly threatened to withhold Marshall Plan aid if the Adenauer government did not become serious about curbing the illicit trade with the East.⁷⁸² In a demonstrative move — probably aimed as much at the American as at the German public—McCloy deployed the 7751st Military Police Customs Unit to the 350-mile American-Soviet frontier line "to plug the holes in the iron curtain." When a Chinese communist party delegation appeared in East Berlin later that month to negotiate for vital materials, Jones announced a series of measures to prevent the Chinese from purchasing strategic goods produced in west

⁷⁸¹ Memorandum, "Critique of Our Economic Warfare Position in Germany," Eastern Element to PEPCO, 2 February 1951, RG 466, HICOG Berlin Element, Box 2.

⁷⁸² "German Goods Aid Soviets in Arming," *New York Times*, 14 April 1951; "west Acts to Check Illegal Trade to East," *Christian Science Monitor*, 27 April 1951, p. 7.

Germany, including roving military police controls along the sector border, stricter documentation requirements for goods moving East and the transfer of a MP customs unit to bolster the anti-smuggling forces in West Berlin.⁷⁸³

Efforts at economic warfare against the GDR were not limited to denying East Germany critical materials. In late 1950, HICOG's Eastern Element identified fifty-three industrial plants slated to play a crucial role in the fulfillment of the SED's Five-Year Plan as targets for –unspecified– Western actions. Even more promising for exploitation was East Germany's manpower shortage. Far less favorable than that of the Federal Republic, Western observers predicted that the GDR's demographic structure would become dangerously critical “after 1961.”⁷⁸⁴ The exodus of young males from the GDR was “very harmful to the normal development of a healthy society,” but without immediate effect. HICOG soon focused on the shortage of technical intelligentsia, technical auxiliary personnel and skilled workers as major “bottlenecks” for the economic expansion in East Germany.⁷⁸⁵ In February 1951, HICOG's Eastern Element proposed a covert defection program aimed at some 200 top scientific and technical personnel and some 25,000 key technical specialists, whose defection would have a “serious disruptive effect” on the GDR.⁷⁸⁶

⁷⁸³ “U.S. Acts to Bar Red China Buying From West Berlin,” *The Washington Post*, 22 May 1951, p B10.

⁷⁸⁴ The analysis pointed in particular to the “proletarianization of women employment” in East Germany—the SED regime's efforts at using women in industrial jobs such as mining, steel making and heavy machine manufacture: One could well formulate the situation by saying that the population structure of the Soviet Zone as it developed—as an aftermath of the war but also in consequence of communist political and economic policies following the war with its strong preponderance women is in conflict with the forced drive of industrialization and with the special emphasis placed on the development of heavy industry. If this conflict can only be solved by sacrificing what according to Western standards the role of women should be within the social structure—then this is only another example that the economic objectives of communist Eastern Germany are drawn up with little regard for the economic and social benefits to the population.” HICOG-Eastern Element to Department of State, 20 February 1951, NARA, RG 59, 862B.06/2-2051.

⁷⁸⁵ HICOG-Eastern Element to Department of State, 20 February 1951, NARA, RG 59, 862B.06/2-2051.

⁷⁸⁶ Memorandum “Denial of Key Manpower to the Soviet Zone Economy,” HICOG-Eastern Element to PEPCO, 23 February 1951, RG 466, HICOG Berlin, Political Affairs, Box 2.

At its March 13 meeting, PEPCO approved the first phase of the project for implementation by HICOG's Office of Intelligence.⁷⁸⁷ Within weeks, this program was under way.⁷⁸⁸ The more ambitious second part of the program, the defection of 25,000 highly skilled personnel and their families, however, quickly ran into difficulties even within HICOG. HICOG's Displaced Populations Division, the Office of Economic Affairs (OEA) and the Office of Labor Affairs argued that the Federal Republic would be unable to absorb the additional 100,000 persons or willing to finance the program, and the program might discriminate against the Soviet Zone refugees now in West Germany. Though Eastern Element continued to favor the second phase as well, maintaining that "the obstacles aren't insuperable," Labor Affairs and OEA won out, and the program was launched selectively and based on the principle that defections should not be encouraged until positions could be obtained for the defectors involved.⁷⁸⁹ By early May, a "small and discreet investigation" by the Office of Labor Affairs in the Ruhr for the purpose of estimating the capacity of the coal and steel industries to absorb key technicians from the GDR proved to be "discouraging."⁷⁹⁰ In June, PEPCO therefore agreed to a reduced but concentrated program limited to five or six key industries designed to attract personnel from the GDR that would be hard to replace.⁷⁹¹

As HICOG was deliberating more effective economic warfare against the GDR, Moscow once again tightened the economic lifelines for Berlin. After a new round in the "battle of the canals"⁷⁹² in March, the GDR authorities started requiring West Berlin-based

⁷⁸⁷ McCloy to Secretary of State, 15 March 1951 (FOIA release to author).

⁷⁸⁸ "Minutes of the Forty-Seventh Meeting of PEPCO [10 April 1950]," 25 April 1951, NARA, RG 466, Berlin Element, Political Affairs, Box 2.

⁷⁸⁹ George Morgan to H.C. Ramsey, Memorandum, "Sovzone Key Manpower," 11 April 1951, NARA, RG 466, HICOG Berlin, Political Affairs, Box 2; H. C. Ramsey, Memorandum, "Implementation of the Carroll-Speier-Paper: Denial of Key Manpower to Soviet Zone Economy," NARA, RG 466, HICOG Berlin, Political Affairs Division, Box 2.

⁷⁹⁰ HICOG Frankfurt to Department of State, 10 May 1951 (FOIA release to author).

⁷⁹¹ "PEPCO, Minutes of the Fifty-first Meeting of the Committee," HICOG Frankfurt to Department of State, 25 June 1951, NARA, RG 59, 762A.00/6-2551.

⁷⁹² AP report, "U.S. Protests Six Attacks on Berlin-Bound Trains," not dated [March 1951].

firms in mid-May to supply “certificates of origin” to accompany the *Warenbegleitscheine* submitted to the Soviet Control Commission in order to have the Soviets stamp and approve of the shipments of goods from West Berlin to the Federal Republic. Purportedly an effort to protect against the illegal flow of materials from the Soviet Zone via Berlin to the West, the Soviet Control Commission refused to stamp *Warenbegleitscheine* for West-bound goods from Berlin in seventeen commodity groups without detailed proof of origins of the raw materials in various components of manufactured goods. By the end of May, approximately 1,500 *Warenbegleitscheine* had accumulated in Karlshorst, and a further 4,000 were held by the West Berlin Senate pending clarification of the situation. On 31 May, the Allied High Commission met to discuss the new restrictions, and decided that the Germans would not yield to the new Soviet requirement since its imposition would be a violation of the New York Agreement of 1949. The Allied High Commission also asked the Berlin Allied Kommandatura to prepare for the implementation of Allied countermeasures if the West Berlin authorities were unable to obtain a solution by negotiation within ten days. On 11 June, each of the West Berlin commandants dispatched a letter to Soviet commandant Dengin pointing to the illegality of the Soviet demand. In Berlin, the Allied Kommandatura suspended the ongoing negotiations for a new interzonal trade agreement.⁷⁹³

While the Western Allies were readying for countermeasures, the West Berliners were less inclined to make an issue of the proof of origin. West Berlin Deputy Mayor Schreiber and Economics Senator Eich told the Commandants on 10 June that in their view the situation was satisfactory since *de facto* only 40% of Berlin’s shipments were affected—largely non-ferrous and sugar products, and that the certificates of origins were an acceptable demand. In fact, the Senate returned the approximately 4,000

⁷⁹³ HICOG Berlin to Bureau for German Affairs, Department of State, 28 June 1951, NARA, RG 52, 462A.26B31/6-2851.

Warenbegleitscheine to the West Berlin firms, informally suggesting they provide proof of origin to accompany the WBS. Governing Mayor Reuter, who one week earlier had called on the Allied Commandants to express his concern, now told the Allies that “the time was not ripe for opposing the Soviets.” Displaying a caution that sharply contrasted with his usual demand for firm reactions to Soviet encroachments, he argued that it might be better to “muddle along” five or six months longer until Berlin would be in a stronger position. Was this the time, Reuter asked, “to rock the boat if arrangements could in fact be made to keep trade flowing?”⁷⁹⁴

Washington and HICOG officials strongly opposed giving into the Eastern demand, warning that Berlin’s whole position would be imperiled all the more if the West accepted such a clear-cut violation of the New York and Paris agreements. The Allied Kommandantura instructed Reuter on June 10 to implement the refusal to submit the new documentation and let the Soviets know that this was done at allied instruction. Two days later, the Soviet authorities returned more than 700 WBS unstamped. McCloy and the State Department now urged that countermeasures were “essential.”⁷⁹⁵

The Allies, however, continued to postpone the institution of countermeasures. A ‘joint front’ of the Allies was hampered by an increasingly evident reluctance on the part of the French and British governments to heighten tensions over the issue. According to the French High Commissioner, the Soviets were “justifiably” trying to ensure that items fabricated in West Berlin employing raw materials which were in short supply in the Soviet Zone would not be shipped west, and the Western allies should not appear “as if they were protecting ‘some sort of black market.’” In Washington, the French officials felt that the West’s juridical situation on the proof of origin was “not good,” and doubted that the allies could assert a clear violation of the New York and Paris Agreements. What was

⁷⁹⁴ Jones to Secretary of State, 10 June 1951 (FOIA release to author).

⁷⁹⁵ Department of State to HICOG Frankfurt, 13 June 1951 (FOIA release to author).

of greatest concern to the French, however, was that if “reprisal warfare” developed, West Berlin would suffer more than East Berlin. Hence the West should proceed very cautiously in this matter and “avoid an provocation which could lead to a new blockade.” To some degree the West had “already imposed a semi-blockade” upon itself, and in the end, the French predicted, the West would have to back down a lose “a terrific amount of face.”⁷⁹⁶ French and British officials also exhibited considerable anxiety over the possible effect of any public disclosure of the goods that would be embargoed by the West, which might provide the Soviets with an excuse for citing a violation of the 1949 Jessup-Malik Agreement and invoking a new blockade.⁷⁹⁷ The French government had little interest in provoking a crisis with national elections approaching. Hence French officials in particular exerted every effort to prevent or delay the dispatch of any further letters to Dengin.

On his own, the French Commandant de Noblet sought out his Soviet counterparts and discussed the possibility of quadripartite discussions of the trade crisis. Without prior advice to U.S., moreover, the French Economic Counselor Le Fort sounded out West German IZT representatives on the prospects of getting Soviet agreement to a withdrawal of recent trade restrictions in return for a prompt conclusion of a trade agreement between East and West Germany.⁷⁹⁸ Privately, French officials seriously raised the question as to whether U.S. and British authorities really wished to achieve a settlement of the current crisis.⁷⁹⁹ Moreover, embarrassing information from the West Berlin Senate indicated that the Soviets had—apparently only in a verbal manner—required certificates of origin as early as September 1950, for the shipments of textiles, rubber and sugar products, though the

⁷⁹⁶ Slater to Secretary of State, 14 June 1951, NARA, RG 59, 462A.62B/6-1451; Memorandum of Conversation between M. de Juniac (French Embassy) and Perry Laukhuff, 15 June 1951, NARA, RG 59 Lot 55 D371, Box 3.

⁷⁹⁷ Memorandum of Conversation between French and British embassy and State Department officials, 27 June 1951 (FOIA release to author).

⁷⁹⁸ HICOG Berlin to HICOG Frankfurt, 18 June 1951, NARA, RG 466: HICOG, Allied High Commission/U.S.SEC, Box 16.

⁷⁹⁹ HICOG Berlin to HICOG Frankfurt, 18 June 1951, NARA, RG 466: HICOG, Allied High Commission/U.S.SEC, Box 16.

instances in which the Soviets had demanded proof of origins had supposedly not exceeded 5-10% of all WBS submitted. The revelation tended to undercut the hardline U.S. position that, with the expectation that that at least 75% of Berlin's outgoing trade would come to a standstill with a week, the new restrictions threatened to result in a new blockade.

Realizing that the issue was by no means clear-cut, and that "it would be difficult to contemplate another blockade situation without [public] support," American Commandant Hayes argued "the first objective was to put [the] Western Allies in [a] more favorable light." Hays suggested proposing to the Soviets that only items included in the legal trade agreements which cover Berlin could be shipped from the Western sectors. Moreover, in light of the serious repercussions that might result from the countermeasures, Hays also argued that the Soviets be alerted that the Western allies were serious by at once taking certain administrative and commercial measures which would cause disruption of Soviet zone and sector.⁸⁰⁰ Administration officials in Washington strongly endorsed Hays' line, suggesting that if the envisioned second note would not evoke a favorable Soviet response, the Allies should promptly institute the retaliatory embargo.⁸⁰¹ Internally, the Allied High Commission proceeded to ready itself for an immediate selective embargo on all iron, steel and machinery products, in line with plans laid down the previous fall. Federal authorities would stop issuing WBSs for shipments, and within 72 hours, shipment would begin to be intercepted at the zonal border.⁸⁰² A second letter to Dengin, sent on June 15, reaffirmed the Western Commandants' refusal to accept the certificate of origins requirement, but also proposed that, on a reciprocal basis, to take measures to prevent illegal trade and called for a 5 July meeting of quadripartite experts to discuss the matter.

⁸⁰⁰ Slater to Secretary of State, 14 June 1951, NARA, RG 59, 462A.62B/6-1451.

⁸⁰¹ Acheson to HICOG Frankfurt, 14 June 1951, NARA, RG 59, 462A.62B/6-1451.

⁸⁰² See enclosure to J.E. Slater to Bureau of German Affairs, Department of State, 14 June 1951, NARA, RG 59, 462A.62B/6-1451.

Pending conclusion of the matter, instructions concerning the submission of certificates of origins would be rescinded. Meanwhile, through the East Germans, the Soviets had signaled interest in the outlines of a deal involving the resumption of the IZT negotiations, which had been advanced by the French. There were other signs that the Soviets were shifting to amore conciliatory approach: The Soviet Control Commission's Transitstelle was not immediately returning Warenbegleitscheine submitted without certificates of origin, possibly indicating that they foresaw some possibility of a settlement. And a late night 14 June East German news service dispatch quoted "informed sources" that "the matter was very simple; those who have interrupted the negotiations need merely resume them."⁸⁰³ As early as June 16, the West German trade representatives relayed the news that the East German authorities, "of their own accord" had resumed the stamping of *Warenbegleitscheine* without requiring proof of origin. Simultaneously, GDR authorities now demanded that an IZT agreement be signed within forty-eight hours. Later that day, the Allied High Commission met and informed the Berlin Commandants that, without meeting the GDR demands, the Germans could be authorized to resume the IZT negotiations. Two days later, Dengin agreed to quadripartite talks in Berlin, but asserted Soviet rights over Berlin's external trade.⁸⁰⁴

From the Truman administration's perspective, the successful conclusion of the trade negotiations depended on a number of factors: First, and in many respects more important than the terms of the new agreement, was the signing of a new interzonal trade ordinance by the Federal Government, which would provide for the government's complete control of practically all interzonal commodity movements, prevent the export of strategic and short supply goods. Without these, HICOG officials internally admitted, any new agreement would be essentially meaningless. No less important in light of the Berlin

⁸⁰³ HICOG Berlin to HICOG Frankfurt, 18 June 1951, NARA, RG 466: HICOG, Allied High Commission/U.S.SEC, Box 16.

⁸⁰⁴ See also Department of State to HICOG Frankfurt, 17 June 1951, NARA, RG 59, 662A.62B31/6-1751.

trade crisis was that the new agreement would stipulate free access to Berlin (or if that was unobtainable, a subsequent exchange of letters that stipulated that the continuance of the IZT agreement was dependent on the uninterrupted flow of goods and persons between Berlin and the Federal Republic). An escape clause, the State Department insisted, would be necessary to provide for the possibility of voiding the agreement if the Soviets or East German resumed trade restrictions, such as the proof of origin requirement. Similarly, the State Department warned HICOG that the new IZT agreement had to reflect COCOM policy to prevent the export of certain categories of strategic goods and to drastically reduce others. The fewer strategic goods were included in the agreement, administration officials advised, “the less danger in the next few months of serious trade disruptions or other consequences of the Kem Amendment implementation.” Not convinced that past IZT commodity exchanges had on balance worked to the advantage of the Federal Republic and West Berlin, Washington threatened that it “would not be able to permit HICOG [to] approve [an] IZT agreement” that did not provide at least as great of an economic benefit to the FRG as it did to East Germany. Specifically, the Department criticized the understanding that had been reached between Kiefer and Miller in early June, before the trade crisis escalated.⁸⁰⁵ The overall commodity exchange, the Truman administration prescribed, should not exceed 450 million clearing units each way, with hard deliveries being cleared through two hard accounts which would ensure tight quid pro quo controls.⁸⁰⁶

Negotiations on a new interzonal trade agreement quickly deadlocked again, when, on June 25, the East German representatives refused to combine the IZT agreement with discussion on the Berlin traffic restrictions. Orlopp, the East German negotiator informed

⁸⁰⁵ HICOG Frankfurt to Secretary of State, 20 June 1951, NARA, RG 466: HICOG, Allied High Commission/U.S.SEC, Box 16; Department of State to HICOG Frankfurt, 21 June 1951, NARA, RG 466: HICOG, Allied High Commission/U.S.SEC, Box 16.

⁸⁰⁶ HICOG Frankfurt to Secretary of State, 20 June 1951, NARA, RG 466: HICOG, Allied High Commission/U.S.SEC, Box 16.

Kaumann that if agreement were not reached by July 3, “everything would collapse.”⁸⁰⁷ With almost 8,000 WBS awaiting approval by the Soviet Control Commission by the end of June, Washington in turn was inclined to bring the negotiations to a halt, particularly in light of the “apparent failure [of the] Soviets to completely remove recently-imposed restrictions.” The State Department reiterated to HICOG the “need for immed[iate] Western countermeasures including selective embargo and breaking off IZT negot[iation]s if Sov[iet] restriction [had] not in fact [been] lifted.” While the administration would not object to an extension of the *Vorgriff* agreement if the talks continued productively, it otherwise held to the view that “the gradual decline of shipments from [the] Western Zones [would] appear effective form of pressure on the East Zone.”⁸⁰⁸ Once the existing trade agreement had lapsed and trade effectively been stopped on 3 July, the negotiations resumed and quickly led to a draft agreement which was initialed on 6 July. The draft trade agreement called for a commodity exchange of DM 482 million, covering the period from February to December 1951. While the overall volume and the swing accounts, especially those for hard goods such as hard goods and coal, had been reduced as compared to earlier drafts, strategic exports to the GDR exceeded critical West German imports by DM 100 million and would hence come under the purview of the Kem amendment lists. Arguing that this was the price to be paid for maintaining the Western position in Berlin, McCloy’s characterized the deal as “probably the best that can be obtained.”⁸⁰⁹ McCloy hence allowed the West German negotiators to initial the agreement despite the growing backlog in *Warenbegleitscheine*. A letter from the West Germans would, however, threaten that the agreement would be “deprived of effect” in the case of

⁸⁰⁷Memorandum, “Berlin Trade Talks Deadlocked,” 27 June 1951, NARA, RG 59, Lot 55D371, Box 3.

⁸⁰⁸Acheson to HICOG Frankfurt, 28 June 1951 (FOIA release to author).

⁸⁰⁹McCloy to Secretary of State, 4 July 1951, NARA, RG 59, 462A.62B31/7-451.

Soviet interference with Berlin traffic, and the agreement would not be signed until settlement of the Berlin WBS problem.⁸¹⁰

The two quadripartite meetings on July 5 and 9 did not resolve the deadlock.⁸¹¹ To the dismay of the State Department, the Western Allied officials had proceeded to discuss legal and illegal East-West German trade, even agreed in a minute that legal trade should be expanded, without, as the Department had asked, resolving the WBS matter first.⁸¹² Concerned that the Western Allies were giving a “cumulative false impression [of] weakness and over-eagerness,” the Americans wanted the talks limited to the *Warenbegleitschein* issue and became increasingly convinced that Karlshorst was not prepared to lift the restrictions.⁸¹³ Two days after the failed four-power meeting, the Western Berlin commandants agreed that the talks would not be resumed—the Soviets had invited their counterparts for a third meeting at the Soviet headquarters on July 17—and that countermeasures, primarily a refusal to sign the IZT agreement and an embargo of iron, steel, mineral oil, rubber products, chemicals and machinery, hard goods critical for the East Zone to fulfill its five-year plan.⁸¹⁴ On July 12, the Allied High Commission accepted Commandants’ recommendations, deciding to institute countermeasures by July

⁸¹⁰ HICOG Frankfurt to Secretary of State, 6 July 1951, NARA, RG 466: HICOG, Allied High Commission/U.S.SEC, Box 17.

⁸¹¹ “Verbatim Transcript of Quadripartite Meeting of Experts on Berlin Trade,” NARA, RG 59, 462A.62B/7-651 FOIA release to author); on the 9 July meeting see HICOG Berlin to Secretary of State, 11 July 1951, NARA, RG 59, 460.509/7-1151; McCloy to Secretary of State, 4 July 1951, NARA, RG 59, 462A.62B31/7-451; HICOG Frankfurt to HICOG Bonn, 11 July 1951, RG 466: HICOG, Allied High Commission/U.S.SEC, Box 17; “Berlin Trade Situation,” Memorandum [for Acheson], 12 July 1951, RG 59, Lot 55D371, Box 3.

⁸¹² Acheson to HICOG Frankfurt, 7 July 1951, NARA, RG 59, 462A.62B31/7-551; and NARA, RG 466: HICOG, Allied High Commission/U.S.SEC, Box 17. The Department hence asked HICOG not to sign the minute unless it retroactively specified that it referred specifically to West Berlin-West German trade.” Ibid.

⁸¹³ Acheson to HICOG Frankfurt, 7 July 1951, NARA, RG 59, 462A.62B31/7-551.

⁸¹⁴ HICOG Berlin to Secretary of State, 11 July 1951, RG 59, 460.509/7-1151; for the State Department’s endorsement see Department to HICOG Frankfurt, Bonn and Berlin, 12 July 1951, NARA, RG 466: HICOG, Allied High Commission/U.S.SEC, Box 17; and Department of State to HICOG Frankfurt, 15 July 1951, NARA, RG 466: HICOG, Allied High Commission/U.S.SEC, Box 17.

18.⁸¹⁵ The next day, the Western Commandants sent yet another letter to their Soviet counterpart, demanding a resolution of the WBS issue.⁸¹⁶ Unfazed by the possibility of retaliation, the Soviets remained restive as ever to stamping WBS, returning some 1,400 WBS unstamped on July 13, and 1,500 on July 15.⁸¹⁷

Soviet interference, the commandants warned, was creating an “increasingly serious economic and polit[ical] sit[uation] in this city.”⁸¹⁸ According to their estimates, some 12,000 tons of goods (at a value of DM 70 million) were held up for shipment to the Federal Republic by late July. By early August, over 10,000 WBS were retained by the Soviet authorities. The Allied Kommandatura recommended a small, largely symbolic commercial airlift of some 250 tons daily to encourage the West Berliners which would have “beneficial psychological effect and afford [a] good propaganda weapon” and signal the Russians that “we mean business.”⁸¹⁹ A week after the Soviets failed to respond to further Western assurances that the IZT agreement would be signed as soon as the WBS would be cleared,⁸²⁰ a token airlift was launched on 27 July, flying some 2,800 tons out of the city within the first month, and more than 6,600 tons by mid-October.⁸²¹

Washington and the High Commission had considered the non-signature of the IZT agreement an “extremely strong bargaining weapon,” which “should not be sacrificed until all conditions we can reasonably expect to obtain have been satisfied,”⁸²² yet by the end of

⁸¹⁵ AGSEC(51)1182, 12 July 1951, see HICOG Bonn to HICOG Frankfurt, 16 July 1951, NARA, RG 466:HICOG, Allied High Commission/U.S.SEC, Box 17. The Allied High Commission decision tasked the Economics Committee to prepare the countermeasures.

⁸¹⁶ HICOG Bonn to HICOG Frankfurt, 16 July 1951, NARA, RG 466:HICOG, Allied High Commission/U.S.SEC, Box 17.

⁸¹⁷ HICOG Berlin to Secretary of State, 15 July 1951, NARA, RG 59 462A.62B31/7-1551; HICOG Berlin to Secretary of State, 16 July 1951, FOIA release to author).

⁸¹⁸ HICOG Berlin to Secretary of State, 21 July 1951, NARA, RG 59, 462A.62B31/7-2151.

⁸¹⁹ HICOG Berlin to Secretary of State, 16 July 1951, FOIA release to author); HICOG Berlin to Secretary of State, 21 July 1951, NARA, RG 59, 462A.62B31/7-2151.

⁸²⁰ McCloy to Department of State, 20 July 1951, NARA, RG 466: HICOG, Allied High Commission/U.S.SEC, Box 17.

⁸²¹ CINCU.S.AFE Wiesbaden to COFS U.S.AF Washington, 12 October 1951, NARA, RG 59, 762A.00(W)/10-1251.

⁸²² Department of State to HICOG Frankfurt, 15 July 1951, NARA, RG 466: HICOG, Allied High Commission/U.S.SEC, Box 17; and RG 59, 462A.62B31/7-1551.

July it had also become clear that this alone would not force the Soviets to reverse their position. HICOG's Berlin Element estimated that the Soviets could hold out the trade standstill for another two months "without much hurt," and would be prepared to hold much longer "if the wider econ[omic] and pol[itical] results grow more likely meanwhile." The mission observed that the Soviets had found the harassment of Berlin exports valuable beyond what may have been initial goals, such as forcing more favorable terms for an IZT agreement. Given the success in creating inter-allied and Allied-German tensions, it had become a device to prevent the tightening of East-West control, to undermine West Berlin and to contribute to the ongoing effort to upset the Adenauer government before the end of 1951.⁸²³

At the same time it became evident that a Western embargo on spare parts and engineering products would aggravate the inadequate supply situation in East Germany. The GDR had an inadequate machine production capacity to carry out major investment projects in the mining metallurgy and power industries. Not surprisingly, the 1951 production plan heavily emphasized increases in heavy engineering, but even after the first quarter failure to achieve production targets had already been admitted. While East German coal and steel requirements could be obtained from other "orbit countries," this was true for machinery only to a much more limited extent. HICOG Berlin hence argued to extend the existing trade embargo to critical "soft" commodities such as machinery, chemicals and rubber products.⁸²⁴ Washington strongly endorsed the Berlin mission's call.⁸²⁵ Under pressure from Washington, the Allied High Commission agreed, and the embargo took effect on 3 August 1951. Intelligence confirmed that as a result of the cessation of trade production difficulties and delays in reparation and export orders in the

⁸²³ Frankfurt to Secretary of State, 29 July 1951, NARA, RG 59, 511.00/7-2951; see also Dispatch, "Soviet Outlook on 'Warenbegleitschein' Harassment," HICOG Eastern Element to Department of State, 26 July 1951, NARA, RG 59, 662A.62B/7-2651.

⁸²⁴ HICOG Berlin to Secretary of State, 1 August 1951, NARA, RG 59, 462A.62B31/8-151.

⁸²⁵ Department of State to HICOG Frankfurt, 7 September 1951, NARA, RG 59, 662A.62B/7-2651.

GDR had already occurred. British intelligence estimated that the GDR economy had been hurt even more than the quantitative loss of trade would suggest, given the critical nature of imports from the West.⁸²⁶ Particular shortages, it was reported, included screws, chains, magnets, spare parts and components for machine tools and compressors rubber cables, cables for dredges, ball-bearing rods, boiler tubs, wheel tires and electrodes, sheets for motor vehicles and grinding agents.⁸²⁷ In light of these findings, the State Department felt that the Western bargaining position was sufficiently strong “so that [a] solution which fails [to] achieve our minimum demands unacceptable.”⁸²⁸

Strong Western countermeasures were, however, undercut by internal Allied and Allied-West German disagreements. To be true, the British were as fed up as the Americans: the British Commandant complained internally that the “Russians and Fr[ench] have been playing us now for 6 weeks” and argued that time had come for decisive action.⁸²⁹ In the wake of the failed quadripartite meeting, the French government, however, warned not “to close the door to negotiations,” in fact argued that no basic principles were compromised by continuing interzonal trade negotiations despite the WBS backlog.⁸³⁰ French representatives doubted the effectiveness of any a trade stoppage. Claiming that it was essential to ensure that German public opinion was aware of the issues involved, the French Economic Advisor, on 16 July, disagreed with his colleagues that “time [was] yet ripe for any sanction to be imposed.”⁸³¹ By the end of July, the French

⁸²⁶ See “[British] Notes on the Present Position of Interzonal Trade,” HICOG/Eastern Element to Department of State, 29 August 1951 (FOIA release to author). The two British reports remain classified, but the substance can be gathered from HICOG Berlin to Secretary of State, 30 August 1951, NARA, RG 59, 462A.62B31/8-3151.

⁸²⁷ HICOG Berlin to Secretary of State, 30 August 1951, NARA, RG 59, 462A.62B31/8-3151.

⁸²⁸ Department of State to HICOG Frankfurt, 30 August 1951, NARA, RG 59, 462A.62B31/8-3051.

⁸²⁹ HICOG Berlin to Secretary of State, 15 July 1951, NARA, RG 59, 462A.62B31/7-1551.

⁸³⁰ See also HICOG Bonn to HICOG Frankfurt, 7 July 1951, RG 466: HICOG, Allied High Commission/U.S.SEC, Box 17.

⁸³¹ HICOG Bonn to HICOG Frankfurt, 16 July 1951, NARA, RG 466:HICOG, Allied High Commission/U.S.SEC, Box 17.

were “still hesitant to apply further countermeasures.”⁸³² Paris continued to appear “most anxious” to sign the new IZT agreement. In fact, the French Economic Advisor, asked by U.S. officials what his government would have done if free to act independently of other allies, gave the “[u]nhesitating reply that they would, of course, have agreed to submit certificates of origin.”⁸³³ The French repeatedly argued for a delay in instituting countermeasures, leading U.S. officials to complain about the “apparent defeatist attitude” and the “inescapable” impression of Soviet success in “working on Fr[ench]” to “divide western allies.”⁸³⁴ Hence HICOG warned that “if our firm stand weakened or [the] united western front here [is] broken by Fr[ench], we may well be faced with disastrous situation.”⁸³⁵

West German support for a tougher policy was similarly tenuous. The Adenauer cabinet finally, after being pressed by Washington for a “very long time,” drafted and approved a new government ordinance, which would allow for a more effective control of interzonal trade. Convinced that the new controls would in some ways be more important than the trade agreement itself, McCloy had made the signing the new trade agreement contingent on the new ordinance coming into effect. But despite the fact that the IZT agreement had been initialed, the ordinance had yet to be signed by Adenauer and published on the *Bundesanzeiger*. Moreover, subsidiary regulations had not even been drafted by 11 July.⁸³⁶ Rather than tightening the trade screws on East Berlin, the Adenauer government had relaxed its trade restrictions within days of the initialing of the new IZT agreement. On 9 July, Bonn approved *Warenbegleitscheine* for West German

⁸³² McCloy to Department of State, 20 July 1951, NARA, RG 466: HICOG, Allied High Commission/U.S.SEC, Box 17.

⁸³³ Page to Secretary of State, 24 July 1951, NARA, RG 59, 462A.62B31/7-2451.

⁸³⁴ HICOG Frankfurt to HICOG Bonn, 11 July 1951, RG 466: HICOG, Allied High Commission/U.S.SEC, Box 17, McCloy to Secretary of State, *ibid* and NARA, RG 59, 462A.62B31/7-1451; HICOG Berlin to Secretary of State, 15 July 1951, NARA, RG 59, 462A.62B31/7-1551 (FOIA release to author).

⁸³⁵ HICOG Berlin to Secretary of State, 15 July 1951, NARA, RG 59, 462A.62B31/7-1551 (FOIA release to author).

⁸³⁶ HICOG Frankfurt to HICOG Bonn, 11 July 1951, RG 466: HICOG, Allied High Commission/U.S.SEC, Box 17.

“soft commodities” (*Vorgriff b*) to the GDR—which included key commodities such as rubber, chemicals and machinery. The *Länder* Economics Ministries extended the validity of all WBS that had been issued prior to 3 July, when the advance agreement had lapsed. Though hard commodity deliveries—largely iron and steel, castings and mineral oil products--were still stopped at the border and the quantity of trade moving was apparently “negligible,” it signaled the Soviets that West Germans were eager to quick resume trade.⁸³⁷

The Adenauer government’s attitude stemmed in part from increasing pressure from German businesses, which complained about the “serious repercussions” the trade embargo had on West German production, particularly the chemical industry.⁸³⁸ Moreover, the SED regime stepped up its pressure on the Bonn government through organizations, such as most notoriously the GEFO in Hamburg, the *Deutsche Handelsgesellschaft Ost/West* in Düsseldorf, as well as certain lower Saxon trade circles. U.S. intelligence also reported that illegal trade, in particular “three-corner transactions,” using the Hamburg free port, were expanding. Other techniques included confiscation of West Berlin trucks on the Berlin-Helmstedt autobahn, which, as HICOG’s Berlin Element suspected, in some cases occurred in possible connivance with Western firms.⁸³⁹ There were even suggestions that the Treuhandstelle was facilitating “special barter contracts.”⁸⁴⁰

Confusion persisted in American eyes as to what exactly was happening “on the ground.” The Americans finally caught on that West Berlin firms were circumventing

⁸³⁷ The Commandants hence called for a revocation of the Federal; Government’s instructions on 11 July. HICOG Frankfurt to Secretary of State, 14 July 1951, NARA, RG 466: HICOG, Allied High Commission/U.S.SEC, Box 17; HICOG Bonn to HICOG Frankfurt, 16 July 1951, NARA, RG 466: HICOG, Allied High Commission/U.S.SEC, Box 17.

⁸³⁸ Memorandum of Conversation, “East-West Trade Agreement,” 15 August 1951, NARA, RG 59, 462A.62B31/8-1551.

⁸³⁹ HICOG Berlin to Secretary of State, 30 August 1951, NARA, RG 59, 462A.62B31/8-3151.

⁸⁴⁰ “[British] Notes on the Present Position of Interzonal Trade,” HICOG/Eastern Element to Department of State, 29 August 1951 (FOIA release to author); Hays to Secretary of State, 8 September 1951, 462A.62B31/9-851. HICOG noted that the British reports conveyed an “unfair picture of Kaumann.” Ibid.

Allied orders not to voluntarily submit certificates of origin, which explained at least in part why the Soviet Control Commission approved some WBS. Suggestions for an Allied penalty ordinance were kept “on ice,” as such a measure was bound to stir up widespread resentment at a crucial time when the commandants were eager to create and preserve public approval for the Allied stance.⁸⁴¹ Similarly, Washington also learned that West Berlin firms were submitting multiple *Warenbegleitschein* applications to the Russians, hopeful that at least some would be approved. Hence it was hard to realistically assess how severe the backlog actually was. American officials also had to profess widespread “ignorance of the situation” as it existed on the GDR-West German border.

By late July, furthermore, Kaumann was again talking to Orlopp, now proposing a joint investigation into questionable WBS cases as a way to resolve the dispute.⁸⁴² Washington strongly resisted any solution that legitimated Soviet claims to have a right to object to deliveries. Once accepted, Washington policymakers reasoned, the West would be at the whim of “any objections the Soviets might dream up” and give the Soviet a “veto” over West Berlin trade.⁸⁴³ By late August, however, the Allied High Commission had resigned itself to the fact that the East would not engage in an exchange of letters that made the continuation of trade contingent on unimpeded Berlin access and that the most that could be achieved was a unilateral West German statement to the East Germans on the conditions under which IZT would be carried out.⁸⁴⁴ While favoring one last attempt to resolve the issue through a direct approach by the High Commissioners to Chuikov, the U.S. commandant in Berlin, frustrated by weeks of “in vain haggling” seemed ready to

⁸⁴¹ HICOG Berlin to Secretary of State, 16 July 1951, FOIA release to author).

⁸⁴² HICOG Berlin to Secretary of State, 25 July 1951 (FOIA release to author).

⁸⁴³ Jones to Secretary of State, 11 August 1951, NARA, RG 59, 462A.62B31/8-1151.

⁸⁴⁴ Decision by the Allied High Commission at its 74th meeting on 30 August 1951, FRU.S. 1951, III, part 2., p. 1860.

“[cut] the Gordian knot” and sign the agreement.⁸⁴⁵ The State Department, however, did not approve the High Commissioners’ proposal.⁸⁴⁶

It is unclear whether Moscow realized how close Western Allied officials came to signing the agreement at that moment. What is clear is that the imposition of an unprecedented tax for the use of the Berlin-Helmstedt autobahn, imposed the day after the Allied High Commission decision, tended to stiffen Western resolve. In Berlin, the Commandants called the new tax exorbitant and interfering with free access to Berlin, and demanded that the removal of the tax should be made an additional condition to signing of the IZT agreement. Pointing to the psychological dimension of the Soviet action, the Commandants also recommended Allied transport of essential foodstuffs to the city, as well as a retaliatory tax on East German barges using West Berlin waterways.⁸⁴⁷ HICOG officials also noted that the “westmark” funds that the GDR would gain would in good part be allocated to finance illegal procurement of goods from Western Germany!⁸⁴⁸ Despite “French resistance to positive action on almost every point,” the High Commissioners and Berlin Commandants, meeting jointly, agreed a few days later to send a note of protest to Chuikov and to ask the West Berliners to prepare for the imposing taxes on East German barges passing through West Berlin.⁸⁴⁹ Additionally, Bonn was to consider imposing a tax on East German vehicles crossing Federal territory. U.S. Deputy High Commissioner George Hays “firmly rejected” a French proposal to sign the IZT agreement anyhow, reasoning that the vehicle tax made such an approach even more

⁸⁴⁵ Jones to HICOG Bonn, 1 September 1951, Department of State., ed., Foreign Relations of the United States, 1951, III, part 2, pp. 1860-1862.

⁸⁴⁶ Department of State to HICOG Frankfurt, 30 August 1951, NARA, RG 59, 462A.62B31/8-3051.

⁸⁴⁷ HICOG Berlin to HICOG Bonn, 3 September 1951, Department of State., ed., Foreign Relations of the United States, 1951, III, part 2, pp. 1862-1863; and NARA, RG 59, 462A.62B31/9-351.

⁸⁴⁸ HICOG Berlin to Secretary of State, 5 September 1951, NARA, RG 59, 462A.62B31/9-551.

⁸⁴⁹ Allied High Commission for Germany: Allied General Secretariat, AGSEC/Memo(51)36, Decisions taken in Berlin at the informal meeting of the Deputy High Commissioners with the Berlin Commandants held on 6 and 7 September 1951” (FOIA release to author); the text of the letter to Chuikov is contained in Allied High Commission for Germany: Allied General Secretariat, AGSEC/Memo(51)37, 7 September 1951” (FOIA release to author).

untenable. His British colleague chimed in in support, arguing that signing the trade deal would represent a “horrible loss of faith for the West.”⁸⁵⁰ The State Department wholeheartedly agreed and suggested that the new countermeasure be put in effect no later than 17 September: “Western hesitation or vacillation has never gained anything from [the] Sov[iets] except more trouble.”⁸⁵¹

By contrast, the West Germans were now urging immediate signature. Adenauer and Reuter, even Heuss impressed McCloy that the agreement had to be signed immediately, even with a written or oral statement to the East.⁸⁵² Brown coal deliveries for Berlin would be threatened by drawing out the negotiations, and the Soviets might suspect that the Americans had no intention of actually coming to an agreement. Once trade would resume, the Soviets would be less likely to risk its suspension through renewed harassment.⁸⁵³ “Under influence Fed[eral] Gov[ernmen]t,” Berlin city officials, moreover, were slow to carry out Allied orders, made in early September, to prepare a “comprehensive plan” to retaliate with a tax on East German barges, reflecting their unwillingness to engage in a new tax war.⁸⁵⁴ The Soviets were aware of the division within Allied ranks and not very likely to yield as long as these divisions existed.⁸⁵⁵ Kaumann and his deputy had resumed his talks with Orlopp on September 7. Within a week they agreed to create a mixed committee of representatives of the Treuhandstelle and

⁸⁵⁰ Hays to Acting Secretary of State, 7 September 1951, Department of State., ed., *Foreign Relations of the United States, 1951, III, part 2, pp. 1863-1867*; see also Allied High Commission for Germany: Allied General Secretariat, AGSEC/Memo(51)36, Decisions taken in Berlin at the informal meeting of the Deputy High Commissioners with the Berlin Commandants held on 6 and 7 September 1951” (FOIA release to author).

⁸⁵¹ Webb to HICOG Frankfurt, 15 September 1951, Department of State., ed., *Foreign Relations of the United States, 1951, III, part 2, p. 1871*.

⁸⁵² Hays to Secretary of State, 17 September 1951 (FOIA release to author).

⁸⁵³ McCloy to Webb, 22 September 1951, Department of State, ed., *Foreign Relations of the United States, 1951, III, part 2, pp. 1874-1875*.

⁸⁵⁴ Allied High Commission for Germany/Allied General Secretariat, AGSEC(51)1453, 18 September 1951 (FOIA release to author); Hays to Secretary of State, 17 September 1951 (FOIA release to author).

⁸⁵⁵ McCloy to Webb, 22 September 1951, Department of State., ed., *Foreign Relations of the United States, 1951, III, part 2, pp. 1874-1875*.

the Transitstelle, which would jointly verify doubtful WBS.⁸⁵⁶ Eager not to leave the power of final disapproval in Russian hands, Hays insisted that any refusal to stamp the dubious WBS which the Treuhandstelle continued to endorse as valid after a joint review would be considered an obstacle to normal traffic. West German officials assured Allied representatives that these conditions were acceptable to the GDR officials, though it remained unclear what exact procedure had been agreed on.⁸⁵⁷

A “mere verbal warning,” Hays insisted, was “entirely unacceptable.” Instead, Hays suggested, Kaumann was to submit a written statement to the Allied High Commission outlining the conditions under which he would—orally--agree to signing the trade agreement. The statement would note the assurances from the Eastern negotiators that WBS would be stamped without proof of origin, that in doubtful cases a joint examination would take place, but that the Treuhandstelle made the final determination; and that the GDR had agreed to cease other restrictions and reduce the autobahn tax to a reasonable level.⁸⁵⁸ Reasoning that the procedure would give the Soviets an opportunity to demonstrate their good faith—or show that the access restrictions really pursued larger political goals, Hays agreed to the signature of the IZT agreement. The agreement that would constitute the basic framework for trade between the two parts of Germany until 1990 was finally signed on 20 September 1951.⁸⁵⁹

As East and West Germans were fixing their signatures to the Berlin agreement, administration officials in Washington were “seriously concerned” about the course of action approved by the HICOG: a merely oral declaration would put the Western powers in a weak position in case it became necessary to suspend the agreement, and hence the

⁸⁵⁶ Allied High Commission for Germany: Economics Committee, ECON/Sec(51)155, 15 September 1951 (FOIA release to author); Jones to Secretary of State, 13 September 1951, NARA, RG 59, 462A.62B31/9-1351.

⁸⁵⁷ Hays to Secretary of State, 17 September 1951 (FOIA release to author); Hays to Webb, 19 September 1951, *FRUS*, 1951, III, part 2, pp. 1872-1873.

⁸⁵⁸ Hays to Secretary of State, 17 September 1951 (FOIA release to author).

⁸⁵⁹ Hays to Webb, 19 September 1951, *FRUS*, 1951, III, part 2, pp. 1872-1873.

Department felt “strongly” that the agreement should not be signed unless the West German statement to Orlopp at the time of signing would be made in writing, and unless Orlopp’s acceptance was clear.⁸⁶⁰ Too late! By the time the cable reached McCloy, the agreement had been signed. All that McCloy could do was to assure Washington that U.S. conditions had been put in writing to the East on 6 July, had been repeated privately and publicly, and accepted “explicitly” by Orlopp, who McCloy added, had been “frequently in touch with Grotewohl.”⁸⁶¹ Confronted with McCloy’s *fait accompli*, the State Department took until 26 September to formally agree to the action. It added to its concurrence that the immediate future would probably be the best time to lodge protests effectively—indicating that there was little faith in Soviet compliance.⁸⁶² State Department hence officials watched warily as trade between the two German states resumed in early October.⁸⁶³

Initially the signing of the IZT agreement seemed to work: the highway tax was drastically reduced, confiscations abated, and Eastern interference with parcel post shipments fell to a point where it was a “nuisance rather than a threat.” There was even some talk of a reopening of the Rothensee shiplift that had been closed since January “for repairs;” and no *Warenbegleitscheine* were returned unstamped. But within three weeks it became clear to Americans that the signing of the IZT agreement had not led to an improvement in the Berlin situation. Follow-up negotiations on sub-agreements, especially on the pivotal steel and iron shipments, were delayed and then proved contentious. Orlopp insisted upon increased deliveries of pig iron and rolled steel products within a shorter

⁸⁶⁰ Webb to HICOG Frankfurt, 19 September 1951, NARA, RG 59, 462A.62B31/9-1951.

⁸⁶¹ McCloy to Webb, 22 September 1951, *FRUS*, 1951, III, part 2, pp. 1874-1875.

⁸⁶² Acheson to HICOG Frankfurt, 26 September 1951, NARA, RG 59, 462A.62B31/9-2251.

⁸⁶³ Trade under the new agreement would actually not start until the end of October due to the fact that specification agreements had to be negotiated for a number of commodities. Shipments moving in early October were based on old WBS that had been valid prior to 2 July and been extended by the Länder Economics Ministries until 30 November, HICOG Frankfurt to Department of State, 10 October 1951, NARA, RG 59, 462A.62B31/10-1051.

period of time. More than 8,000 WBS were still being held by the Soviet Control Commission by early October—4,000 of them had been submitted since 20 September!⁸⁶⁴ Rather than expediting the processing of the permits, the Soviets had “actually (...) intensified their delaying tactics.”⁸⁶⁵ In the third week of October some 5,356 WBS were returned unstamped by the Soviets without any reference to the procedure established when the Berlin Agreement was signed.⁸⁶⁶ Interference with Western parcel post and water transportation also continued. And the East German negotiators refused to discuss restrictions on Berlin trade and communications, arguing that these matters were “exclusively for consideration by the four powers.”⁸⁶⁷

By mid-October the Truman administration was urging immediate suspension of the trade agreement--and any movements of goods.⁸⁶⁸ Kirkpatrick told Erhard that it was essential for the Federal authorities to demonstrate their solidarity with the Allies in taking countermeasures: “experience had proven that resolution and unity vis-a-vis the Russians had always produced the maximum effect.” “Doing nothing” would lead to “continued Soviet encroachment, the paralysis of Berlin trade and the eventual acquisition by peaceful means of Berlin by the Russians.”⁸⁶⁹ Though even the West German negotiators agreed that fulfillment of the conditions attached to the trade agreement was “less satisfactory than ever,” the Federal Government still refused to suspend the IZT agreement

⁸⁶⁴ HICOG Frankfurt to Department of State, 10 October 1951, NARA, RG 59, 462A.62B31/10-1051.

⁸⁶⁵ CINCU.S.AFE Wiesbaden to COFS U.S.AF Washington, 12 October 1951, NARA, RG 59, 762A.00(W)/10-1251; see also Lyon to Secretary of State, 30 October 1951, NARA, RG 59, 462A.62B31/10-3051.

⁸⁶⁶ HIGOG Frankfurt to Department of State, 5 November 1951, NARA, RG 59, 462A.62B/11-551.

⁸⁶⁷ “Minutes of Special Meeting held between the Deputy High Commissioners and the Mayor of Berlin and Representatives of the Federal Ministry of Economics,” 2 November 1951, NARAS, RG 59, 462A.62B3/11-251.

⁸⁶⁸ HICOG Frankfurt to Department of State, 20 October 1951, NARA, RG 51 462A.62B31/10-2051; Department of State to HICOG Frankfurt, 6 November 1951, NARA, RG 59, 462A.62B31/11-251.

⁸⁶⁹ Memorandum by the Allied High Commission for Germany, Restrictions Imposed by the Soviet Authorities on Trade between Berlin and Western Germany,” AGSEC(51)1610, 23 October 1951 (FOIA Release to author); “Minutes of the Twenty-Ninth Meeting of the Council of the Allied High Commission,” 24 October 1951, (FOIA Release to author).

immediately.⁸⁷⁰ Bonn's position was precisely one of "doing nothing,"—that is: no efforts would be made to start trade under the new agreement, and *Vorgriff* WBS were not to be revalidated beyond 30 November.⁸⁷¹ German officials proclaimed that more active measures would run the "considerable risk of retaliation, including the possibility of another blockade."⁸⁷² Rather than making a "propaganda demonstration," most German officials favored simply letting trade "fade out" as revalidated WBS expired. While West German IZT negotiator Leopold advised U.S. officials in Berlin that all deliveries from West had stopped, other *Treuhandstelle* officials admitted that deliveries were continuing.⁸⁷³

At a meeting on November 7, McCloy and Adenauer, finally agreed that "countermeasures" would automatically take effect on November 12, and the next day the High Commissioners reiterated this in a letter to Adenauer: No new WBS for pig iron, rolling mill products, iron and steel sheets, steel and iron machinery and rubber would be issued, none revalidated and a substantial amount of revalidated WBS would be revoked.⁸⁷⁴ Yet meeting with the HICOM Economic Committee on November 13, Westrick, Lenz, Kroll and other German officials denied that such an agreement existed, and, once they had conceded this issue, claimed that they had not had sufficient time to prepare a list of relevant WBS. While the Germans finally agreed to instruct the *Länder* economic ministries not to issue new WBS for the commodities targeted by HICOM, they continued to refuse to revoke officially any outstanding WBS. U.S. officials had "serious doubts" about the effectiveness of this procedure but faced the "usual Fr[ench] reluctance

⁸⁷⁰ HICOG officials attributed this to the experience of the seven-week interzonal trade embargo in August-September. HICOG Frankfurt to Department of State, 5 November 1951, NARA, RG 59, 462A.62B/11-551 (FOIA release to author).

⁸⁷¹ HICOG Frankfurt to Department of State, 9 November 1951 (FOIA release).

⁸⁷² Memorandum of meeting on 12 November 1951 of the Allied High Commission for Germany's, Economics Committee, 14, November 1951, NARA, RG 59, 462A62B31/11-1451 (FOIA release to author)..

⁸⁷³ Taylor to Slater/AGSEC, 10 November 1951, NARA, RG 59, 462A.62B31/11-1051.

⁸⁷⁴ AGSEC(51)1667; and Allied High Commission Economics Committee, ECON/Memo(51)25, 14 November 1951, NARA, RG 59, 462A.62B31/11-1451 (FOIA release to author).

to force drastic action” and British arguments that the issue was less important because all WBS would expire on November 30.⁸⁷⁵ “Convinced beyond doubt” that a solution of the IZT disputes was being blocked by “deliberate Soviet policy of preventing the East Ger[man] negotiation and action to eliminate them,” Berlin commandant Taylor warned against any further trade with the East, arguing that this would be interpreted as yielding to Soviet pressure, would allow the GDR to obtain badly needed materials and abandon the control of East-West trade to force a cessation of Soviet interference with Berlin’s trade.⁸⁷⁶ U.S. diplomats in Berlin also concluded that the possibilities of settling trade difficulties at the German level had been exhausted: without quadripartite discussions the Soviets would not yield to a more long-term solution. Prior to any four-power talks, however, “we must first demonstrate conclusively by action the firmness and solidarity of [the] west in opposing Soviet interference.”⁸⁷⁷ To bolster West German resolve, the High Commissioners agreed to try to expand the commercial airlift to 240 tons daily.⁸⁷⁸ At the same time, they ignored feelers advanced by the Soviets to engage in quadripartite discussions.⁸⁷⁹

But U.S. efforts to stiffen Western resolve on the embargo proved in vain. Adenauer seemed detached from the issue, leaving it to his Economic Ministry, the attitude of which U.S. officials characterized as one of “concession and accommodation.” To American officials, the West Germans did not appear to feel that they had as much at stake in Berlin as the Allies.⁸⁸⁰ As expected, the Adenauer government proved slow in following through on the Allied High Commission instructions. A week after the restricted

⁸⁷⁵ HICOG Frankfurt to Secretary of State, 13 November 1951 (FOIA release to author).

⁸⁷⁶ Taylor to HICOG, 10 November 1951, NARA, RG 59, 462A.62B31/11-1051.

⁸⁷⁷ HICOG Frankfurt to Secretary of State, 15 November 1951, NARA, RG 59, 462A.62B/11-1551 (FOIA release to author).

⁸⁷⁸ CINCEUR Heidelberg to CSU.S.A, 17 November 1951, NARA, RG 59, 762a.00(w)/11-1751; Bonn to Secretary of State, 20 November 1951, NARA, RG 59, 462A.62B31/11-2051.

⁸⁷⁹ Taylor to HICOG, 10 November 1951, NARA, RG 59, 462A.62B31/11-1051; HICOG Berlin to Secretary of State, 10 November 1951, NARA, RG 59, 462A.62B31/11-1051; McCloy to Secretary of State, 24 November 1951, NARA, RG 59, 462A.62B31/11-2451.

⁸⁸⁰ McCloy to Byroade, 4 January 1952, NARA, RG 59, 462A.62B31/1-452.

embargo was to take effect, the economics ministry had still not issued instructions to the interzonal border customs posts to stop shipments; HICOG officials estimated that by now the ministry's instructions would not reach the border before the end of the month, when all WBS would expire anyhow.⁸⁸¹ Moreover, the Adenauer government excepted certain shipments from the embargo—such as DM 15 million worth of cast iron pipe, which the GDR claimed were needed for water mains in the area of Halle and Bitterfeld to avoid an outbreak of typhus; and the sale of fish surplus, despite the known “record of the fishing firms as illegal East-West traders.”⁸⁸²

West German firms, moreover, were apparently undermining the embargo in other ways: Violating Allied Kommandatura and West Berlin Senate prohibitions, they were submitting *Warenbegleitscheine* directly to the Soviet Control Commission. Federal government officials claimed they had “no way of knowing” whether their instructions had been violated, and the commandants expected legal and administrative measures to prohibit the practice to have little effect.⁸⁸³ Within days of the Allied High Commission-decreed embargo, moreover, West German negotiator Kroll and an East German official named “Stoof”—purportedly chief of the GDR Planning Commission and a member of the SED politburo--were secretly meeting again to discuss a way out of the impasse.⁸⁸⁴ U.S. officials were uncertain as to who had initiated the discussions—or when exactly they took

⁸⁸¹ HICOG Mehlem to Department of State, 26 November 1951, NARA, RG 59, 462A.62B/11-2651 (FOIA release to author).

⁸⁸² HICOG Mehlem to Department of State, 26 November 1951, NARA, RG 59, 462A.62B/11-2651 (FOIA release to author).

⁸⁸³ HICOG Mehlem to Department of State, 26 November 1951, NARA, RG 59, 462A.62B/11-2651 (FOIA release to author); HICOG Berlin to Department of State, 4 February 1952, NARA, RG 59, 762A.0221/2-452.

⁸⁸⁴ HICOG Mehlem to Department of State, 26 November 1951, NARA, RG 59, 462A.62B/11-2651 (FOIA release to author); HICOG Bonn to Secretary of State, 24 November 1951, NARA, RG 59, 462A.62B31/11-2451. A few weeks later the was still considerable confusion as to the circumstances of the Kroll-Stoof talks. “The talks,” HICOG reported in mid-December, “are now believed to have been requested by the East through an intermediary who is nameless. (We feel it is at least possible that Kroll arranged the talks himself, but there is of course no proof of this.) Two meetings took place in East Berlin, the first about November 16, the second November 21. Dr. Kroll now reports that Herr Stoof is a Staatssekretar in the office of the GDR premier, president of the State Planning Commission and, most importantly, a member of the Soviet Zone politburo. Dr. Kroll emphasizes Stoof's high rank.” HICOG Mehlem to Department of State, 10 December 1951, NARA, RG 59, 462A.62B/12-1051.

place, and would only agree to allow an East-West German arrangement that would put the IZT agreement into operation provided that the WBS backlog would be eliminated, provide for a procedure would be in place for joint examination of problematic cases, and had the West German side declare that no certificates of origin would be submitted.⁸⁸⁵ It quickly became obvious, however, that Kroll had not attempted to trade a WBS solution for the IZT, but apparently held out additional Western concessions on “outstanding questions,” such as some 108 black-listed machinery (in particular rolling mill spare parts) shipments, which had been ordered by the GDR and partly paid under previous agreements, a major increase of the cast iron pipe, a speed-up of pig iron deliveries⁸⁸⁶ and joint examination of transit trade through FRG territory, all of which U.S. officials vigorously objected.⁸⁸⁷

In their efforts to assure an effective embargo, the Truman administration was also hampered by British and French reluctance to enforce the required controls. British officials did not want to support U.S. efforts to “clamp down on” the on-going interzonal shipments, as it would only serve to exacerbate Allied-[West German] differences at the very moment Washington, London and Paris were negotiating with Bonn over the contractals and a German defense contribution. Moreover, the allies had changed their position so often, one British foreign ministry official told the U.S., that “even the Sov[iet]s and East Ger[man]s do not know what the West’s policy is.” Rather than forcing the Germans to embargo items beyond the COCOM restrictions that the UK itself would ship to the East, British officials preferred to let the Germans “stew in their own juice” and

⁸⁸⁵ McCloy to Secretary of State, 27 November 1951, NARA, RG 59, 462A.62B31/11-2751.

⁸⁸⁶ To provide for 10,000 tons during December and additional 15,000 tons during the first three months of 1952.

⁸⁸⁷ McCloy to Secretary of State, 28 November 1951, NARA, RG 59, 462A.62B31/11-2851; for the differing Allied and West German draft proposals, see Sherwin Ehrlich (East-West Trade Group) to Department of State, 29 November 1951, 462A.62B/11-2951 (FOIA release to author); Record of meeting between Allied Economic Advisers and Federal Government representatives on 30 November 1951, 7 December 1951, NARA, RG 59, 462A.62B31/12-751 (FOIA release to author); HICOG Mehlem to Department of State, 10 December 1951, NARA, RG 59, 462A.62B/12-1051 (FOIA release to author).

let the embargo issue “simmer” for a while.⁸⁸⁸ Similarly, the French government favored leaving the initiative in interzonal trade matters to the West Germans whose “timidity [...] apparently suits them.”⁸⁸⁹ Neither seemed inclined to get involved in a course which might involve major risks. At no time, McCloy summarized the situation a few weeks later, had there existed Allied-German or even real allied unity: “This state of affairs must undoubtedly be known to [the] Sov[iet]s.”⁸⁹⁰

Hence HICOG officials reluctantly agreed not to prevent the Adenauer government from extending unused WBS through 31 December 1951 up to an amount of DM 3 million on non-embargoed items as well as WBS for fish up to the amount of DM 10 million.⁸⁹¹ British and French officials were furthermore willing to accept a West German proposal to sign agreements—one providing for a WBS solution in return for implementation of the IZT agreement, and a second one which settled “outstanding questions,” but Truman administration officials objected to the latter. At the same time, a COCOM meeting—over the objections of the U.S. delegate—endorsed the German view that spare parts for embargoed items were not subject to the embargo, thus opening the way for West German deliveries of rollers for East German rolling mills.⁸⁹² Despite Washington’s urging that “our primary lever to bring satisfaction from East must stem now from firmness” and that any concessions would be taken as signs of weakness—and direct U.S. intervention in London and Paris—the West Germans were allowed to proceed with several of their

⁸⁸⁸ HICOG Mehlem to Department of State, 10 December 1951, NARA, RG 59, 462A.62B/12-1051 (FOIA release to author); Penfield to Secretary of State, 3 January 1951, NARA, RG 59, 462A.62B31 (FOIA release to author).

⁸⁸⁹ HICOG Mehlem to Department of State, 10 December 1951, NARA, RG 59, 462A.62B/12-1051 (FOIA release to author).

⁸⁹⁰ McCloy to Byroade, 4 January 1952, NARA, RG 59, 462A.62B31/1-452.

⁸⁹¹ Memorandum by the Allied Economics Committee, c. 30 November 1951, NARA, RG 59, 462A.62B31/11-3051 SF (FOIA release to author), McCloy to Secretary of State, 30 November 1951, NARA, RG 59, 462A.62B31/11-3051.

⁸⁹² McCloy to Secretary of State, 7 December 1951, NARA, RG 59, 462A.62B31/12751.

proposed deliveries to the East.⁸⁹³ With the trade curtailment far from complete and Allied support for the embargo at best questionable, McCloy argued that “we consequently have all the disadvantages of a trade embargo without all the advantages, and our goal has not [...] been attained.”⁸⁹⁴

By the turn of the year, in the eyes of key Truman administration officials the embargo on metals, machinery and chemical deliveries from West Germany had largely lost its effectiveness as a weapon against Soviet interference with Berlin’s lifeline. Reflecting once again exasperation with West German unwillingness to enforce the embargo—and its lack of knowing exactly what was going on on the ground, the State Department was “surprised to note [the] extent of trade” that had taken place in December despite the embargo.⁸⁹⁵ The preceding six months, U.S. officials in Berlin surmised, had no doubt strengthened Soviet assumptions that an embargo—and potential hardships—would not be of sufficiently long duration to deter the Soviets given inter-Allied disagreements and West German refusal to follow trade restrictions that were tougher than those to which other Western countries were held.⁸⁹⁶ Moreover, the GDR had made great strides in procuring the most needed materials from other Western orbit countries, such as Belgium, Austria and Sweden, thus loosening its dependence on West Germany. Channels for third country deals that to a considerable degree nullified the West’s refusal to implement the IZT agreement had been well developed.⁸⁹⁷ In early January 1952, British intelligence received information that barter deals between East and West Germans were being worked out to secure goods prohibited for trade.⁸⁹⁸ “The trade embargo, the last

⁸⁹³ Department of State to HICOG Bonn, 7 December 1951, NARA, RG 59, 462A.62B31/12-751, see also McCloy to Secretary of State, 5 December 1951, NARA, RG 59, 462A.62B31/12-551.

⁸⁹⁴ McCloy to Byroade, 4 January 1952, NARA, RG 59, 462A.62B31/1-452.

⁸⁹⁵ Byroade to McCloy, 4 January 1952, NARA, RG 59, 462A.62B31/1-452.

⁸⁹⁶ “Appraisal of the Use of Trade Embargo as a Countermeasure against Soviet/GDR Interference with Free Access to Berlin,” Charles E Hulick (HICOG EE) to McCloy, 30 December 1951, NARA, RG 59, 462A.62B31/12-3051.

⁸⁹⁷ HICOG Berlin to Secretary of State, 12 March 1952, NARA, RG 59, 462A.62B31/3-1252.

⁸⁹⁸ HICOG Bonn to Secretary of State, 6 January 1952, NARA, RG 59, 462A.62B31/1-552.

remaining major weapon against Soviet harassment of Berlin communications has been lost,” HICOG officials pessimistically concluded. Time was running out as the GDR gained economic independence and less vulnerable to western pressures. The Soviets were “whittling down” the Western position in Berlin, blowing “hot and cold” and necessitating occasional retreats by the West which were ever harder to recover. What was needed, HICOG officials in Berlin demanded, was a weapon that went substantially beyond simply withholding strategic items and aimed at effectively hurting the self-sufficiency drive of East Germany.⁸⁹⁹

McCloy himself was far more concerned about maintaining allied-German unity than pursuing more aggressive economic warfare: “I feel that we cannot [...] permit [the] present disturbing state of disunity to continue.” Hence McCloy advocated securing allied agreement to upholding the current strict embargo for two to three months, at which point its effectiveness should be reassessed.⁹⁰⁰ His concern over assuring allied unity on interzonal trade policy led McCloy to reverse course less than two weeks later. Arguing that it would be better to initiate such a course rather than having his hand forced by the allies, McCloy now proposed permitting the resumption of interzonal trade on the condition that the allies would agree to institute a complete embargo would immediately be in case of substantial future harassment of access to Berlin. “Substantial harassment” would be defined as interference with Berlin communications on a scale that would necessitate an airlift.⁹⁰¹ The U.S. initiative would demonstrate that the U.S. was not out to restrict East-West (German) trade beyond the point needed to assure free access to Berlin.

⁸⁹⁹ “Appraisal of the Use of Trade Embargo as a Countermeasure against Soviet/GDR Interference with Free Access to Berlin,” Charles E Hulick (HICOG EE) to McCloy, 30 December 1951, NARA, RG 59, 462A.62B31/12-3051; Hulick to Secretary of State, 12 January 1952, NARA, RG 59, 462A.62B31/1-1252.

⁹⁰⁰ McCloy to Byroade, 4 January 1952, NARA, RG 59, 462A.62B31/1-452.

⁹⁰¹ McCloy to Byroade, 15 January 1951, NARA, RG 59, 462A.62B31/1-1552.

Following McCloy's proposal, the Allied High Commission formally approved the resumption of IZT on 1 February 1952.⁹⁰²

To be sure, in his decision to allow the resumption of IZT, McCloy could point—as he did in his discussions with the Germans—to an improvement in the Berlin access situation. The excessive autobahn tax and Soviet interference with parcel post had been drastically reduced, the Mittelland Canal/Rothensee shiplift had been re-opened on 2 November, and since the beginning of November the GDR Transitstelle had not returned any WBS unstamped and considerably reduced the backlog, though not yet to the normal “pipeline figure” of 3,000.⁹⁰³ HICOG was calling for an end to the commercial airlift—the “symbol of remedy for trade obstacles.” All the specific points of objections to implementing the Berlin agreement had in fact been removed, putting the Soviets and East Germans “in quite good position to insist that compliance has been given.”⁹⁰⁴ In addition, the trade embargo seemed to have successfully aggravated tensions between the Soviet Control Commission and the East German government. Under pressure to make good on reparation deliveries, East Berlin was eager to resume IZT. In “informal talks” with Kaumann in a Berlin café on 28 December and 2 January, GDR representative Horst Karsten, described as a “young (about 31 years old) extremely bright leader of the SED,” apparently conceded a “de facto junctim”⁹⁰⁵ between IZT and Berlin access, over which the Kroll-Stoof talks had broken down. West German officials suspected that besides a minor marketing crisis in view of a considerable stockpile of goods manufactured for interzonal trade, the GDR was trying to avoid a total breakdown of interzonal trade for

⁹⁰² AGSEC(52)102. See Bonn to Secretary of State, 7 March 1952, NARA, RG 59, 462A.62B31/3-652; HICOG Bonn to Secretary of State, 8 March 1952, NARA, RG 59, 462A.62B31/3-852. —The Allied High Commission approval was made contingent on written West German assurances that the Berlin agreement would again be suspended if access difficulties occurred. The Adenauer government provided such assurance in a letter dated 8 March 1952.

⁹⁰³ HICOG Bonn to Department of State, 5 January 1951, NARA, RG 59, 462A.62B31/1-452.

⁹⁰⁴ McCloy to Secretary of State, 19 January 1951, NARA, RG 59, 462A.62B31/1-1952.

⁹⁰⁵ Corrected from “junctum.”

political reasons. As the official in charge, moreover, Orlopp had a personal interest in getting IZT moving again.⁹⁰⁶ New discussions between Orlopp and Kaumann quickly led to a revised WBS procedure agreeable to both.⁹⁰⁷

Yet by mid-February, East Berlin refused to confirm the WBS procedure agreed upon by Kaumann and Orlopp; the Western negotiators informed their counterparts in turn that it would not be possible to resume the interzonal trade agreement after all.⁹⁰⁸ With West Berlin firms keen on maintaining the U.S.-funded airlift, the West Germans suggested to the Allied High Commission to keep the Berlin IZT agreement suspended while allowing for some interzonal trade to resume on a barter basis. Though barter transactions would have more easily allowed for a total trade stoppage at short notice, the State Department now objected to resuming trade even on a barter basis, as it would “in our view constitute [a] retreat from our earlier position that IZT be used as a weapon for protection of Berlin.”⁹⁰⁹ Foggy Bottom considered the West German proposal as largely motivated by pressure from business interests, not by concern for Berlin’s survival. McCloy in turn warned the Department that “we are losing position with both Ger[man]s and Russians [...]” Everybody else, the high commissioner assured Washington, was ready to agree to the West German proposal, putting the U.S. in an “extremely bad light.” The British and French were “barraging us daily for a decision,” and the West Germans started raising doubts whether the United States wanted IZT at all, lending a certain credibility to the “vicious” GDR press attacks on the U.S.. “Even heretofore staunch West Berliners,” McCloy reported, have been affected.⁹¹⁰ By April, McCloy agreed to maintain

⁹⁰⁶ HICOG Bonn to Department of State, 17 January 1951, NARA, RG 59, 462A.62B31/1-1751; HICOG Bonn to Department of State, 5 March 1952, NARA, RG 59, 462A.62B-3-552.

⁹⁰⁷ Hays to Secretary of State, 14 February 1952, NARA, RG 59, 462A.62B31/2-1452; HICOG Bonn to Department of State, 28 February 1952, NARA, RG 59, 462A.62B/3-2852 [sic].

⁹⁰⁸ HICOG Berlin to Secretary of State, 12 March 1952, NARA, RG 59, 462A.62B31/3-1252.

⁹⁰⁹ HICOG Bonn to Secretary of State, 8 March 1952, NARA, RG 59, 462A.62B31/3-852; Department of State, to HICOG Bonn, 9 March 1952, NARA, RG 59, 462A.62B31/3-852.

⁹¹⁰ McCloy to Secretary of State, 10 March 1952, NARA, RG 59, 462A.62B31/3-1052; McCloy to Secretary of State, 14 March 1952, NARA, RG 59, 462A.62B31/3-1452.

the airlift at West German expense and to give Allied High Commission approval of over DM 100 million in barter transactions, even though the proposed commodity exchange had developed into “clearly a small-scale trade agreement.”⁹¹¹ The agreement was signed on 5 May, followed by another agreement on 2 August 1952.⁹¹²

To McCloy and others within the Truman administration, the entire experience demonstrated that an IZT embargo, not to speak of more aggressive economic warfare measures, proved to be a highly problematic countermeasure against Soviet encroachments on Berlin access. Not only was it uncertain to what extent the embargo had been effective to deter Soviet harassment of Western access to Berlin and destabilize the GDR. After all, as late as 5 March 1952, shortly after the Kaumann-Orlopp discussions had stalled, East Berlin had interrupted the supply of electricity to West Berlin. (The West Germans retaliated by shutting off the electricity supply from Hamburg to Mecklenburg.) While Western officials estimated that the IZT was important enough to the GDR to induce a cessation of those harassments within the competence of the GDR, few doubted that it had any impact on the Russian calculations on Berlin and that it lent even greater impetus to East German efforts to circumvent the embargo by increased trade with and via other Western countries.⁹¹³ In fact, the IZT embargo had come at the high political price of allied and allied-German disunity that was not lost on the Soviets and undermined the economic and political impact of the embargo.

The West Germans had vigorously resisted any attempts to shut down interzonal trade completely and demonstrated a degree of independence if not deceptiveness vis-à-vis

⁹¹¹ EWSC/Secretary of State,(52)9, Economics Committee/Allied High Commission to Kroll (EWSC/Secretary of State, 3 May 1952, NARA, RG 59, 462A.62B/5-352; see also Adenauer’s letter to Ivone Kirkpatrick, 29 April 1952, attached to HICOG to Department of State, 3 May 1952, NARA, RG 59, 462A.62B/5-352.

⁹¹² HICOG Bonn to Secretary of State, 9 May 1952, NARA, RG 59, 462A.62B/5-952.

⁹¹³ Hays to Secretary of State, 14 February 1952, NARA, RG 59, 462A..62B31/2-1452; HICOG Bonn to Department of State, 22 April 1952, NARA, RG 59, 462A.62B31/4-2252. For an example of third country shipments, see American Embassy in Vienna to Department of State, 462A.62B9/60-2052 (FOIA release to author); “Vadiz firm ships Strategic Materials to East Germany,” HICOG Bonn to Department of State, 6 August 1952, NARA, RG 59, 462A.62B9/8-652.

Washington far beyond that evident in other areas. Kaumann and Kroll personified West German restiveness. After failed efforts to oust Kaumann, the Truman administration invited Kroll to Washington in July 1952 and gave him VIP treatment in an effort to impress him with the administration's "hard-core approach" in the Consultative Group, with Congressional and public interest in controlling East West trade, in particular in full implementation of the Battle Act. Kroll bemoaned Western discrimination against Germany, and in fact did not hesitate, as State Department officials noted, to make a number of "extravagant statements" about Germany's control efforts as compared to the lack on cooperation by other COCOM countries. Though Kroll seemed to come away with a better understanding of the U.S. position in what Washington considered a "very successful" visit, two weeks later he informed his allied counterparts that the Federal Republic would more than ever strive to develop trade with the Soviet bloc "to as great extent [as] possible" within the COCOM and Battle act framework, fulfill existing trade agreements and in fact try to negotiate agreements with those it did not already have trade pacts.⁹¹⁴

American delaying tactics in the resumption of interzonal exchanges had also reinforced West German and Western European suspicions that the U.S. policy aimed at discouraging, if not opposing even legal, non-strategic East-West trade. Many in Germany believed that the United States was neither sufficiently aware nor sympathetic to German national interests in preserving trade with East Germany and Eastern Europe. The widespread notion that the United States sought to throttle interzonal and East-West trade were reinforced by Moscow which in the spring of 1952 invited European governments to an international economic conference that held out the promise of increased East-West

⁹¹⁴ Department of State to HICOG Bonn, 11 July 1952, NARA, RG 59, 762A.13/7-1152 (FOIA release to author); Reber to Secretary of State, 28 July 1952, NARA, RG 59, 462A.62B31/7-2852.

commerce.⁹¹⁵ Internally, HICOG also estimated that the Western allies had undoubtedly lost in solidarity with the West Berliners over the WBS controversy and as a result might have “increased Soviet influence over the action of West Berlin firms.”⁹¹⁶ Hence the embargo had proved counterproductive, undermining in the minds of administration officials the very factor—Western Allied-West Berlin solidarity--that had forced the Soviets to end the 1948-1949 Berlin blockade.⁹¹⁷ “Again today,” the State Department’s Policy Planning staff argued, “the most effective counterpoise to Soviet policy will be clear-cut evidence of Western solidarity and will to act.”⁹¹⁸

4. Conclusion

The frustrating experience with the two interzonal trade embargos had a profound effect on U.S. policy in Germany. Based on the 1948-49 counter-blockade, the Truman administration had considered economic countermeasures against Soviet harassment and access restrictions to the western sectors to be the prime weapon in the Western arsenal to deter a strangulation of the city. But the two embargoes of 1950 and 1951 demonstrated that direct Western economic leverage was limited. Washington’s European allies were unable to shut down the flow of trade, legal and illegal, effectively, and unwilling to carry on even a limited embargo for an extended period of time, and Moscow knew it. The GDR was expected to reach economic independence from Western Germany by the end of 1951, and if not then, appeared to have made great strides on its way of achieving immunity against Western pressures within the span of a few years. Case in point was the

⁹¹⁵ HICOG Berlin to Secretary of State, 12 March 1952, NARA, RG 59, 462A.62B31/3-1252; Reber to Secretary of State, 28 July 1952, NARA, RG 59, 462A.62B31/7-2852.

⁹¹⁶ [EAD] to Berlin Element, 2 April 1952, NARA, RG 59, 462A.62B31/4-252.

⁹¹⁷ Memorandum from Isaiah Frank/EDT to Francis T. Williamson/EUR, 25 July 1952, with enclosed draft “Report of the Economic Countermeasures Working Group, NARA, RG 59, 762A.00/7-2552 (FOIA release to author).

⁹¹⁸ Memorandum, “Economic Countermeasures Against Soviet Harassment or Blockade of Berlin,” from Leon Fuller to Paul Nitze, 18 September 1952, NARA, RG 59, PPS Records.

expected completion in the spring of 1952 of a canal that would by-pass the western sectors, depriving the West of the means to block West Berlin waterways for East bloc barges. The preceding months had also demonstrated that Stalin had at his disposal a whole spectrum of “harassments” of Berlin communications short of a full blockade which would make the Allied position in the city untenable and would be tantamount to a military attack on the city. Such a “creeping blockade” could destabilize the city economically and psychologically, yet it would be hard to say at any point “This is it.” Western officials feared that Moscow could in fact turn the tables on the West by leveraging interzonal trade for political purposes, using the East-West trade issue in combination with the Berlin access problem in its struggle against West German rearmament. Even gloomier were the prospects for opposing the increasingly notorious efforts on the part of the SED authorities to shut out Western influence from the GDR, such as dismissals of GDR government employees with Western contacts, the expansion of the railroad outer ring designed to rout freight and passenger traffic around the Western sector, or the construction of a powerful radio transmitter designed to jam RIAS broadcasts. At the very moment the administration set out to plan for new Soviet and East German threats against the city in the months leading up to the signing of the contractals—and the “long siege (...) of fortress Berlin”—its options suddenly seemed precariously limited.⁹¹⁹

McCloy’s anxiety about the possibility of a new blockade spurred was shared by many in Washington and spurred a hectic effort within the Truman administration to develop new contingency plans.⁹²⁰ The result, NSC directive 132/1 set out a fairly complex system of contingencies and countermeasures. To deter a creeping blockade, the NSC called for demonstrating Western commitment to the city by public statements and

⁹¹⁹ HICOG Berlin to Department of State, 15 October 1951, NARA, RG 59, 462A.62B31/10-1551.

⁹²⁰ Laukhuff to Riddleberger, 15 May 1951, NARA, RG 59, 762A.5/5-1552 (FOIA release to author).

black and grey propaganda, maintaining a stockpile and preparing for a massive airlift. Significantly, NSC 132/1, adopted by the National Security Council on June 11, 1952, discarded the option of a military “probing action” to test Soviet intentions that had been advocated by Clay in 1948 and now by McCloy. Rather than sending a column through the GDR and likely resort to force at an early stage in the spiral of potential harassments, the directive prescribed emphasized economic reprisals, complemented by diplomatic and covert actions. Underlining the importance of Western ability to cut off West Berlin waterways, the State Department specifically suggested to the NSC the possibility of sabotaging the completion or operation of the canal built to by-pass Western Berlin.⁹²¹ The discussions in the NSC touched upon familiar measures such as strengthening and enforcing trade controls, but the Council charged an interdepartmental committee with exploring and refining the catalogue of economic countermeasures.

Projecting firmness, the Truman administration followed much of the script: at a news conference on May 14, Acheson reaffirmed his government’s determination “to maintain our position in Berlin and assist and protect the interests of the people of Berlin.” As they affixed their signatures to the EDC agreement in Paris less than a fortnight later, the three Western powers declared that they would “treat any attack against Berlin from any quarter as an attack upon their forces and themselves.” Visiting Berlin at the end of June, Acheson restated the tripartite guarantee once more and assured the Germans of the United States’ “abiding interest in the protection of Berlin.” To increase western staying power, the administration checked and accelerated the stockpiling program in cooperation with the Adenauer government. By June, a six-month stockpile was complete, except for a shortage in coal, and the achievement of a 12-month stockpile could be expected by April

⁹²¹ Department of State Policy Planning Staff paper, “Possible Soviet Action Against Berlin,” 29 April 1952 (FOIA release to author.)

1953.⁹²² The Air Force confirmed that it was ready to lift 600-700 tons daily to Berlin in the first 30 days of a blockade, capable to more than double these figures thereafter, and undeterred by potential Soviet “jamming.”⁹²³

Yet internally, the Truman administration quickly realized that there existed few effective economic measures adequate to counteract Soviet harassments short of a full-fledged blockade. The State Department believed that a “trade counterblockade” by the Federal Republic alone would be “ineffective and inadvisable” in light of growing trade possibilities through third countries, and HICOG Berlin officials discounted local countermeasures altogether.⁹²⁴ Given likely British and French reservations, was considering unilateral actions in addition to those taken in concert with U.S. allies. Officials at Foggy Bottom now favored broader measures such as increased curtailment of overflight rights, closing or restricting the Kiel Canal or lower Elbe River to “Bloc vessels” or limiting East German access to the long-distance phone facilities in the U.S. Sector in Berlin.⁹²⁵ The administration eventually ruled out localized (i.e. solely West German or West Berlin) countermeasures against East Germany altogether. The economic effect of even multilaterally construed global set of countermeasures would not be “the major factor in determining the Kremlin’s execution of a policy to harass or blockade Berlin.”⁹²⁶

Washington’s dilemma crystallized when, on July 24, the Soviet Control Commission informed the British government that the Rothensee shiplift was in need of

⁹²² “Notes on the Fifth Meeting of the Ad Hoc Berlin Committee,” 11 July 1952, NARA, RG 59, 762A.5/7-1552.

⁹²³ Laukhuff to Riddleberger, 15 May 1951, NARA, RG 59, 762A.5/5-1552 (FOIA release to author).

⁹²⁴ “Notes on the Fifth Meeting of the Ad Hoc Berlin Committee,” 11 July 1952, NARA, RG 59, 762A.5/7-1552.

⁹²⁵ Acheson to McCloy, 19 June 1952, NARA, RG 59, 762A.0221/6-1952 (FOIA release to author).

⁹²⁶ Memorandum from Isaiah Frank/EDT to Francis T. Williamson/EUR, 25 July 1952, with enclosed draft “Report of the Economic Countermeasures Working Group, NARA, RG 59, 762A.00/7-2552 (FOIA release to author); see also Memorandum from Williamson to Frank, 1 August 1952, 762A.00/8-152 (FOIA release to author).

repair and would be closed as of August 1.⁹²⁷ Coming on the heels of a series of Soviet harassments, and the kidnapping of West Berlin lawyer Walther Linse, one of the leaders of the staunchly anti-communist Investigative Committee of Free Jurists, XX Donnelly, McCloy's newly appointed successor, sensed yet another blow at West Berlin's confidence and economic survival. The Western powers immediately demanded five additional freight trains. If denied, Donnelly recommended "bottling up" East German barges within the Western sectors under the pretense of repair work on a selected bridge that would involve blocking of passage. This promised to be particularly effective since the canal by-pass had not yet been completed.⁹²⁸ Washington endorsed the call for a retaliatory response, along with a demarche in Moscow. Unless the Rothensee lock was reopened shortly, the Soviet harassments had reached a point at which they posed a "serious ultimate threat" and should set in motion a series of countermeasures.⁹²⁹ Yet preciously few such measures seemed available. Unilateral U.S. actions, the interdepartmental committee studying countermeasures had concluded, proved "impracticable." To be effective, a program had to include the British, French, Germans and a number of other powers, which would be difficult at best. Many in Washington and HICOG were frustrated by the "softness and vacillation on the part of our French and British allies in Berlin;" the British government in turn had questioned the feasibility of working out a precise countermeasure plan in advance, preferring "to play things by ear."⁹³⁰ The allied partners were worried that broadly defined countermeasures as proposed by the Truman administration would only evoke counter-reprisals and a "war of reprisals which was likely to turn out worse for Berlin in the long run. The State

⁹²⁷ HICOG Bonn to Secretary of State, 1 August 1952, NARA, RG 59, 762.0221/8-152; Robert C. Creel to Department of State, 21 November 1952, NARA, RG 59, 762A.0221/11-2152 (FOIA release to author).

⁹²⁸ Donnelly to Secretary of State, 1 August 1952, NARA, RG 59, 762.0221/8152.

⁹²⁹ Department of State to HICOG Bonn, 22 August 1952, NARA, RG 59, 762A.0221/8-2252.

⁹³⁰ Cecil Lyon to James Riddleberger, 27 August 1952, NARA, RG 59, 762A.0221/8-2752 (FOIA release to author); Department of State to HICOG Bonn, 22 August 1952, NARA, RG 59, 762A.0221/8-2252.

Department was left to instruct the field that “in fact our possibilities in this connection [countermeasures] likely in practice prove not as great as has been generally supposed.”⁹³¹

The growing realization of how hollow the administration’s countermeasure prowess actually was subtly started to influence the American approach to East Germany. West Berlin and, albeit to a lesser degree, Western Germany seemed increasingly vulnerable to Soviet-East German pressure as the GDR’s economy became increasingly immune to West German influence. Deprived of any effective countermeasure against “creeping” Soviet or East German restrictions on access, Truman administration officials realized that a long-term solution would involved “dealing” with East Germany. Notionally this ran counter to non-recognition and certainly to any roll-back efforts, yet in time Washington would come closer to accepting a greater degree of control of the access routes, in particular by East German officials. Despite an eruption that would shake the GDR to its core, within little more than a year secret Western Allied contingency plans called for the recognizing the authority of GDR officials in access route control as “Soviet agents.”⁹³²

Events in the GDR reinforced this trend in American thinking. In May 1952, the GDR government sealed off the border with the Federal Republic. Later that summer, the SED launched the final phase of transforming the Soviet Zone into a communist state, announced by Ulbricht at the July 1952 SED conference. The SED’s determined steps convinced the Truman administration to expect future problems from a further isolation of West Berlin from the Soviet sector and its GDR hinterland rather than direct interference

⁹³¹ Department of State to HICOG Bonn, 22 August 1952, NARA, RG 59, 762A.0221/8-2252; HICOG Berlin to Department of State, 24 October 1952, NARA, RG 59, 762A.0221/10-2452 (FOIA release to author).

⁹³² Hermann-Josef Rupieper, “Die Reaktionen der USA auf die Gründung der DDR,” *‘Provisorium für längstens ein Jahr:’ Die Gründung der DDR*, ed. Elke Scherstjanoi (Berlin: Akademie Verlag, 1993), pp. 59-66.

with the city's communications with the West.⁹³³ In fact, following the closure of the Rothensee shiplift, fears that other potential harassments effectively threatening West Berlin's survival, such a mass turnbacks of travelers to and from Berlin at GDR checkpoints or arrests of individual travelers by VOPOS, proved precipitous.⁹³⁴ East German efforts to isolate the zone, HICOG officials in Berlin wondered, "might even imply decision to live with us rather than to eliminate us."⁹³⁵ The long-term repercussions for Berliners and Germans generally of shutting down contact and access to East Germany were no less dire than the immediate threats of access harassment and blockade, yet they required a very different response -- one that turned interzonal trade from a counter-blockade weapon into an (at times subversive) tool for contact and aid.

⁹³³ "Ninth meeting of the Ad Hoc Committee on Berlin," 10 October 1952, NARA, RG 59, 762A5/10-1052 (FOIA release to author).

⁹³⁴ Donnelly to Secretary of State, 3 September 1952, NARA, RH 59, 762A.0221/9-352.

⁹³⁵ HICOG Berlin to HICOG Bonn, 15 August 1952, transmitted in HICOG Bonn to Secretary of State, 19 August 1952, NARA, RG 59, 762.0221/8-1952.

The United States and the 1953 Uprising

1. The Eisenhower Administration, Stalin's Death and the Origins of the 1953 Crisis

On July 9, 1952, SED leader Walter Ulbricht stepped in front of the Second SED Party Congress and, in a seven hour speech, announced the SED leadership's decision to proceed with the planned construction of socialism and with the creation of a "people's army" as well as to encourage "voluntary cooperative production" in agriculture and hand trades.⁹³⁶ To American observers at the time, the dramatic, book-length speech seemed designed for shock effect in Western Germany, but even so signified "turning point" in Soviet policy, "heralding the transformation of the GDR into a people's democracy."⁹³⁷ A number of other East and East-Central European states had already embarked upon this approach a few years earlier, seeking to promote rapid short-term economic growth. By late 1952, however, the devastating effects of these policies--both in human and economic terms--had gradually become evident, even in Moscow itself. Towards the end of that year, officials there were receiving a growing number of reports on economic dislocations and popular unrest. Soviet diplomatic and intelligence sources reported a state of "near-total chaos" in the Czechoslovak economy, "severe deficiencies" in Hungary, and

⁹³⁶ The SED (Sozialistische Einheitspartei Deutschlands) approved the program at its Second Party Convention, held from 9-12 July 1952. "Beschluss der 2. Parteikonferenz," *Neues Deutschland*, 13 July 1952, p.1; *Protokoll der Verhandlungen der 2. Parteikonferenz der SED, 9-12 July 1952* (Berlin: Staatsverlag der DDR, 1952); for the development leading up to the Second Party Conference, see Heinz Heitzer, "Entscheidungen im Vorfeld der 2. Parteikonferenz der SED (Februar bis Juli 1952)," *Beträge zur Geschichte der Arbeiterbewegung* 34:4 (1992), pp. 18-32; Gerhard Wettig, ed., *Die sowjetische Deutschland-Politik in der Ära Adenauer* (Rhöndorder Gespräche 16) (Bonn: Bouvier, 1997); Wettig, *Bereitschaft zu Einheit in Freiheit? Die sowjetische Deutschland-Politik 1945-1955* (Munich: Olzog, 1999); Elke Scherstjanoi, "Zwei deutsche Staaten?" *Tel Aviver Jahrbuch für deutsche Geschichte* 28 (1999), pp. 257-302.

⁹³⁷ Lyon to Secretary of State, 12 July 1952, NARA, RG 59, 762A.00/7-1252.

“extremely detrimental conditions and disruption” in Romania.⁹³⁸ Local communist rulers maintained control only through massive expansion of the largely Soviet-controlled security apparatus, mass terror, purges and show trials.

By the end of 1952, forced socialization in industry and agriculture drove East Germany’s economy into the ground, and socio-economic conditions became critical. Hardest hit was the "middle class", mainly small entrepreneurs and wealthier farmers (“kulaks”). In this new phase of the “class struggle”, the regime levied prohibitive taxes against remaining small and medium private enterprises in trade and industry. In addition, small business owners were, by April 1953, precluded from receiving ration cards, forcing them to buy food at exorbitant prices at state stores. The general population was directly affected as increased output targets for heavy industry caused consumer goods production, and hence the living standard to lag far behind that of Western Germany. Contrary to Stalin’s advice in April to entice farmers to join well-equipped and productive collectives voluntarily, the SED’s drive for collectivization coerced independent farmers into "production cooperatives," which met widespread public opposition. Those who refused to go along were subject to heavy, state-enforced delivery quotas. The resulting havoc caused food shortages throughout the GDR and other hardships such as frequent electricity outages or heating cut-offs affected virtually the entire East German population.

The regime also intensified its battles on other fronts. A particular target were the churches, especially the dominant Protestant Church and its active youth organization, the *Junge Gemeinde*, viewed by many young East Germans as a preferred alternative to the FDJ. The combined assault on society by the authorities, notably through the compulsory build-up of armed forces, put additional strains on the GDR’s socio-economic fabric.

⁹³⁸ Cited in Mark Kramer, “The Early Post-Stalin Succession Struggle and Upheavals in Eastern Europe (Part 1),” *Journal of Cold War Studies* 1:1 (Winter 1999), pp. 3-55, here: 6-7; see also the massive documentation in Galina Murashko et al, eds., *Vostochnaia Yevropa v dokumentakh rossiiskikh arkhivov*, vol. 2 (1949-53), (Moscow: Siberian Chronograph, 1998).

While prisons were filling up with the victims of socialist criminal "justice", an unprecedented number of East Germans fled to Western Germany. While some 166,000 people turned their back on the regime in 1951, and 182,000 in 1952, in the first four months of 1953, according to internal GDR statistics, some 122,000 East Germans left.⁹³⁹ As the Soviet intelligence chief could inform the CPSU Politburo, the GDR no longer held "any attraction to citizens of West Germany."⁹⁴⁰ Eager to close the last escape valve—the still open sector crossings in Berlin—and to put the pressure on the Western powers by increasingly harassing the Western outpost, the SED proposed to take the drastic measure of virtually closing off the border between the Eastern and Western sectors early in 1953, thus foreshadowing the construction of the Berlin Wall in 1961.

The growing crisis in East Germany coincided with a change of leadership in the USSR, and the dawn of a new era, in the wake of the death of Stalin on 5 March 1953. Even as the dictator lay dying at his dacha in the Moscow suburb of Kuntsevo, Georgii Malenkov and Lavrentii Beria plotted to seize the reins of power. Besides Malenkov and Beria, the newly-created CPSU Presidium included Vyacheslav Molotov, Nikita Khrushchev, Nikolai Bulganin, Kliment Voroshilov, Lazar Kaganovich, Anastas Mikoyan, Maksim Saburov and Mikhail Pervukhin, all of whom had held high positions under Stalin. The momentary pre-eminence of Malenkov in what was presented to the party and the outside world as the new "collective leadership" was underlined by his appointment on March 5 as chairman of the Presidium of the USSR Council of Ministers. Beria, Molotov, Bulganin and Kaganovich were appointed deputy chairmen.⁹⁴¹ Seemingly ready to break

⁹³⁹ "Analyse der Republikflucht," 1954, Bundesarchiv Potsdam [BA-Potsdam], Ministerium des Innern, Hauptverwaltung der Deutschen Volkspolizei (MI/HDV), 11/962. Within the first six months of 1953, over 225,000 people left the GDR.

⁹⁴⁰ "TsK KPSS," Top Secret Memorandum 708/I by S. Ignatiev, 19 February 1953, Arkhiv Sluzhby Veshnei Razvedki Rossiiskoi Federatsii (ASVR), F. 2589, tom. 7, D. 45513, Ll. 97-99, quoted in David E. Murphy, Sergei A. Kondrashev and George Bailey, *Battleground Berlin: CIA vs. KGB in the Cold War* (New Haven, CT, 1997), p. 156.

⁹⁴¹ Vladislav M. Zubok and Constantine V. Pleshakov, *Inside the Kremlin's Cold War: From Stalin to Khrushchev* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1996).

with the hard-line and paranoid approach that had placed the Soviet Union on the defensive worldwide, the new leadership immediately moved to set Soviet foreign policy on a more calm and flexible track. On March 15, Malenkov announced before a session of the Supreme Soviet that there was “no litigious or unresolved question which could not be settled by peaceful means on the basis of the mutual agreement of the countries concerned ... including the United States of America.”⁹⁴²

In the following weeks, the USSR signaled readiness for a truce in Korea; waived its long-standing claim for control of Turkish territory; and agreed to the appointment of Dag Hammarskjöld as new U.N. secretary general. The “hate America campaign” in the Soviet media was apparently called off; the Kremlin even hinted at its interest in a U.S.-Soviet summit on disarmament and other issues. Similarly, a growing consensus within the Moscow leadership seemed to emerge on the need for drastic changes in Soviet policies toward East-Central Europe that would help stabilize the deteriorating situation in the region. In Germany, Moscow’s espousal of “peaceful co-existence” translated into steps to ease the contentious traffic problem around Berlin and calls for a resumption of the quadripartite negotiations on safety in the Berlin air corridors. The Soviets also opened the Rothensee ship lock which had been closed since August; all of a sudden, the backlog of trucks on Helmstedt/Marienborn autobahn was cleared, and the stamping of the “Warenbegleitscheine” necessary for interzonal trade transactions rapidly increased.⁹⁴³

Stalin’s death and his successors’ “peace offensive” surprised the newly inaugurated administration of Dwight D. Eisenhower. Despite the fact that Stalin’s demise had been expected ever since the end of World War II, no one had examined the scenario very seriously. “Ever since 1946, I know that all the so-called experts have been yapping about what would happen when Stalin dies and what we as a nation should do about it,”

⁹⁴² *New York Times*, 17 March 1953, p. A6.

⁹⁴³ HICOG Berlin to Department of State, 27 March 1953, NARA, RG 59, 762.0221/3-2753.

Eisenhower complained at a cabinet meeting on 6 March. “Well, he’s dead. And you can turn the files of our government inside out--in vain--looking for any plans laid. We have no plan. We are not even sure what difference his death makes.”⁹⁴⁴ In fact, contingency plans did exist, but the key document, PSB D-24 (1 November 1952) was largely useless as an operative guideline, proclaiming only the “many uncertainties in this field” and blandly stating that “(1) Stalin must die sometime; (2) strains must be presumed to exist between individuals and groups closely connected with the problem of succession; (3) ... there is evidence of group dissatisfaction throughout the population of the Soviet Union.”⁹⁴⁵

The thinking of the president and his administration soon crystallized around the idea of a presidential speech. Internal disagreements, however, forestalled any immediate reaction to the events in Moscow. Presidential adviser C.D. Jackson, an old World War II psychological warfare hand and long-time editor of *Time & Life* magazine, favored an aggressive exploitation of this “first really big propaganda opportunity offered to our side for a long time.” Led by Jackson, the Psychological Strategy Board suggested formulating “A Message to the Soviet Government and the Russian Peoples” centering on a proposal for a four-power conference.⁹⁴⁶ By contrast, Secretary of State John Foster Dulles, though known for his fervent anti-communism and calls for “liberation” of the “captive peoples” of Eastern Europe, urged a more cautious approach. Dulles was also dead-set against a four-power meeting, because it would entail discussing German unification. Opening the “Pandora’s box” of the German question, he believed, was certain to disrupt the American

⁹⁴⁴ Stephen Ambrose, *Eisenhower*, vol. 2 (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1984), pp. 67-68; see also “Minutes of Cabinet Meeting, March 6, 1953,” DDEL, Dwight D. Eisenhower Papers, Ann Whitman file, Cabinet series, Box 1.

⁹⁴⁵ PSB D-24, NARA, RG 59, PSB Files.

⁹⁴⁶ The four powers controlling German affairs were the United States, Soviet Union, Britain and France. On Jackson, see H. W. Brands, Jr., *Cold Warriors. Eisenhower’s Generation and American Foreign Policy* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1988), pp. 117-137; and Valur Ingimundarson, “‘Der Chef des kalten Krieges’ C.D. Jackson psychologische Kriegführung und die deutsche Frage, 1953/54,” *Vierteljahrshefte für Zeitgeschichte* 46:2 (1998), pp. 221-251.

high-wire act of obtaining British, French and Italian, as well as West German, ratification for the “European Defense Community” (EDC), just as he feared it would upset plans for the impending West German federal elections. To the West Europeans and Americans, the EDC assured West German military integration into the Western alliance, and at the same time precluded the resurgence of Germany as an independent military power. To many Germans, it held out hopes, most immediately, for the end of the occupation regime and West Germany’s speedier attainment of sovereignty and international acceptance, as well as the admittedly distant goal of fulfilling the national desire for reunification on Western terms. But for both West Europeans and many Germans, negotiations with the Soviets remained a tempting alternative to pursuing a resolution of East-West differences and German unity. Dulles therefore apocalyptically suggested that negotiating with the Soviets would be “tantamount to inviting the fall of the French, German and Italian Governments, and possibly even rendering Mr. Eden’s position in the British government untenable.” If any official proposition was made that German unity could be obtained by some other vehicle, Dulles warned, “then certainly the EDC would be finished.”⁹⁴⁷

Soviet Premier Georgii Malenkov’s March 15 speech increased the pressure on the Eisenhower administration. Across the board, U.S. officials doubted that the speech or Moscow’s other conciliatory gestures indicated a basic change in Soviet policies and long-range objectives. But Malenkov, not Eisenhower, had seized the initiative. Everything now seemed to be “building up towards a new offer on Germany,” as the new U.S. ambassador in Moscow, Charles Bohlen, predicted—possibly even, “with Stalin gone ... a really big one involving Soviet withdrawal from Eastern Germany.”⁹⁴⁸ In the end, Eisenhower’s April 16 speech, “A Chance for Peace,” delivered before the American Society of

⁹⁴⁷ Dulles

⁹⁴⁸ Public Record Office (PRO), Foreign Office (FO) 371/106 532/NS 10345/9, “Minute,” Robert to Strang, as quoted in Klaus Larres, “Eisenhower and the First Forty Days after Stalin’s Death: The Incompatibility of Detente and Political Warfare,” *Diplomacy and Statecraft* 6:2 (July 1995), pp. 431-469, here p. 449.

Newspaper Editors in Washington, called for a “deeds not words” test of the Soviet peace campaign. Eisenhower suggested, among other things, an agreement to end the Korean War and to address the German and Austrian problem. He was careful, however, to avoid any mention of an East-West conference. The speech, as the State Department briefed its embassies, was designed to seize the political and psychological initiative from the USSR and would, as Dulles boasted to the newspaper editors after Eisenhower’s speech, turn the Soviet peace offensive “into a ‘peace-defensive.’” Internally, Dulles sounded more pessimistic: “The present course we are following is a fatal one for us and the free world. It is just *defensive*: we are always worrying about what the Soviets will take next. Unless we change this policy, or get some break we will lose bit by bit the free world, and break ourselves financially. (...) You can’t hold the world by just defensive action much longer.”⁹⁴⁹

It was British Prime Minister Winston Churchill, who, though initially rather dubious about a Soviet change of heart, was more willing to explore potential opportunities which seemed possible with the change of leadership, thus breaking with the skeptical and reserved reception which Moscow’s peace offensive had met in the West. On April 20, Churchill not only backed the U.S. “initiative” but also indicated that he favored high-level talks with the new Soviet leadership. Following the Pravda article of April 25, which had signaled Russian willingness for talks on Germany, the British Prime Minister, in a speech in Parliament on May 16, boldly called for a “conference on the highest level [...] between the leading powers without delay,” holding out the possibility of “a generation of peace.”

In going well beyond Eisenhower’s “deeds, not words” approach, Churchill was primarily motivated by his belief that a negotiated settlement was necessary to prevent

⁹⁴⁹ “Solarium Project: Principal Points Made by JFD,” 8 May 1953, Dwight D. Eisenhower Library (DDEL), Mandatory Review release.

nuclear war and that the new Soviet leadership was amenable to personal diplomacy. Moreover, the prime minister felt that the West could now negotiate from a position of strength and that Eisenhower was thus also ready for negotiations. Indeed, Churchill was afraid Eisenhower would himself take advantage of the moment, thus receiving the political credit which Churchill sought for himself and his country. Churchill's speech was received enthusiastically in Europe, and on May 21, Churchill was able to announce that a Western summit would take place in Bermuda in June, a move which was widely perceived to be preparatory to a meeting with the Russians.

It is unclear precisely when the East German leadership was informed of any impending changes in Kremlin policy toward the GDR. Unaware of the Kremlin's intentions--or perhaps in an effort to preempt any changes--Ulbricht, in a *Neues Deutschland* article published on 8 March (the day before Stalin's funeral), reasserted in the most vigorous terms his determination to proceed with the accelerated program of building socialism, including the creation of National Armed Forces, and he took pains to attribute these policies to Stalin directly.⁹⁵⁰ With the backing of General Vasily I. Chuikov, the commander in chief of Soviet Occupation Forces in Germany, and Semyonov, political advisor to the Soviet Control Commission. Ulbricht also renewed an earlier request for Moscow's authorization to place border guards along the sectors between West and East Berlin, continuing his efforts to isolate the Western outpost in the heart of the GDR. But once back from Stalin's funeral, however, Ulbricht fell noticeably silent. Grotewohl had apparently received his first inklings of the new Soviet leadership's intentions at the funeral in Moscow, namely that the GDR would be left to its own devices

⁹⁵⁰ *Neues Deutschland*, 8 March 1953.

to deal with its economic difficulties.⁹⁵¹ A few days later, Moscow denied Ulbricht a “green light” on any further measures of “border protection” along the sector line in Berlin. The Soviet Control Commission was instructed to explain “tactfully” to the SED that the “grossly simplistic” measures they were proposing would interrupt the “established order of city life,” would “create bitterness among the Berliners and produce economic dislocations, and, most importantly, place in doubt the sincerity of the policy of the Soviet government and the GDR government, which are actively and consistently supporting the unification of Germany and the conclusion of a peace treaty.” Closing borders, Moscow declared, would present a “clear disadvantage” in the USSR’s relations with the Western powers. Further, the Kremlin leadership wanted to be sure that any countermeasures against the “hostile forces” in West Berlin “aren’t hurried and aren’t simplistic.”⁹⁵² Similarly, Moscow’s propaganda directives for the month of April apparently admonished the East Berlin papers to cease their vitriolic attacks against the Western powers and to focus their attention on Adenauer as an opponent to the peaceful solution of the German question.⁹⁵³ The Soviet Control Commission also forced a scaling back of the massive numbers of arrests and trials the SED regime had inaugurated under the pretext of enforcing a law for the protection of people’s property. A report by the GDR Prosecutor’s Office, ordered by Karlshorst, estimated that if the regime continued to convict perpetrators of economic crimes at the current rate, “more than 40,000 people will be in prison by the end of 1953,” a situation that would be “simply unfeasible.”⁹⁵⁴

⁹⁵¹ Fritz Schenk, a personal assistant to GDR planning chief Bruno Leuschner, reports this in his memoirs, *Im Vorzimmer der Diktatur: 12 Jahre Pankow* (Cologne: Kiepenheuer and Witsch, 1962), p. 182; see also his “Wie die Regierung den 17. Juni erlebte,” *SBZ-Archiv* 13 (1962), p. 150.

⁹⁵² “Draft Instructions” from for Chuikov and Semyonov, 18 March 1953, Foreign Policy Archive of the Russian Federation, Moscow, F. 06, Op. 12, Papka 18, Port 283; document provided to author by Hope M. Harrision.

⁹⁵³ HICOG Berlin to Department of State, 30 April 1953, NARA, RG 59, 762B.00/4-3053.

⁹⁵⁴ Falco Werkentin, *Politische Strafjustiz in der Ära Ulbricht* (Berlin: Ch. Links Verlag, 1995), pp. 70-71.

By mid-April Ulbricht had somehow managed to reassure himself of Moscow's support, possibly by soft-pedaling some of the harshest features of SED policy. On 10 April, the USSR Council of Ministers reduced the level of compulsory GDR shipments from Soviet enterprises in East Germany, and three days later granted East Berlin further economic support. In his first major policy pronouncements since the March 8 statement, Ulbricht reiterated in two *Neues Deutschland* articles on April 15 and 16 that the construction of socialism in the GDR remained the most important contribution to peace and German unity, although he made no references to the creation of armed forces and to restrictive measures around Berlin. U.S. observers detected "[n]oticeably more restraint in tone than [the] usual Ulbricht style," including his reaffirmation of the voluntary nature of the production cooperatives and admission of mistakes by local courts and party officials in dealing with small and middle-class farmers. But the "de-dramatized" program, they noted, still stressed increases in productivity, especially in heavy industry.⁹⁵⁵ The "striking feature" of Ulbricht's pronouncements, U.S. officials observed, was how they fitted "neatly into the changed tactical position currently being followed by Moscow."⁹⁵⁶

Despite the elimination of some of the "frightening features"⁹⁵⁷ of SED policy, the party continued to put pressure on large segments of the population. On the political level, the regime sharpened the battle against potential centers of opposition such as the churches, as well as targeting certain key individuals. In mid-May the 13th SED Central Committee Plenum⁹⁵⁸ ousted Franz Dahlem, considered Ulbricht's only serious rival within the party, ascribing the move to further "lessons of Slánskýism," an allusion to the purged Czechoslovak Communist leader who had been executed as an "Anglo-American

⁹⁵⁵ HICOG Berlin to HICOG Bonn, 20 April 1953, NARA, RG, 762B.00/4-2053.

⁹⁵⁶ HICOG Berlin to HICOG Bonn, 20 April 1953, NARA, RG, 762B.00/4-2053.

⁹⁵⁷ HICOG Berlin to HICOG Bonn, 20 April 1953, NARA, RG, 762B.00/4-2053.

⁹⁵⁸ The Plenum was held in Berlin from 13-14 May 1953.

spy” in December 1952.⁹⁵⁹ The SED also renewed its drive for austerity, “vigilance” against foreign enemies, and internal party discipline; reinforced efforts to increase industrial productivity and the viability of the existing LPGs; and launched new measures to undermine the existence of small entrepreneurs. Ignoring the signs of growing dissatisfaction among the population, the Politburo had the CC adopt a 10 percent compulsory raise in industrial work norms, effective June 1. The GDR Council of Ministers eventually decreed the norm increase “recommended” by the Central Committee, but changed the deadline to June 30.

Eisenhower administration officials followed events in the GDR closely to see whether they gave any clue to Soviet intentions. Given how starkly Ulbricht’s March 8 restatement of hard-line policies had contrasted with the Soviet peace campaign developed *after* Stalin’s funeral, HICOG officials surmised that Ulbricht’s emphasis on the necessity to develop national armed forces might have represented an “independent decision of Ulbricht not cleared with the new Kremlin leaders.”⁹⁶⁰ German intelligence sources confirmed American suspicions that Ulbricht was “strictly a Stalin man,” nor entirely liked by any of the other Kremlin leaders, and now facing one of the most serious trials of his career: establishing himself firmly with the new Moscow leadership.⁹⁶¹ Rumors about Ulbricht’s volatile position persisted; information from the SPD East Bureau in Berlin predicted that Ulbricht “might be sacrificed by [the] Soviets.”⁹⁶² There were other signs that suggested that “Ulbricht may have had his wings clipped somewhat by Moscow”⁹⁶³

⁹⁵⁹ On Slánský, see Igor Lukes, “The Rudolf Slánský Affair: New Evidence,” *Slavic Review* 1 (Spring 1999), pp. 160-187.

⁹⁶⁰ HICOG Berlin to Department of State, 13 March 1953, NARA, RG 59, 762B.00/3-3153.

⁹⁶¹ HICOG Berlin to Secretary of State, 16 March 1953, NARA, 762B.00/3-1253.

⁹⁶² Berlin to Secretary of State, 9 June 1953, NARA, RG 59, 762B.00/6-953.

⁹⁶³ HICOG Berlin to Department of State, 30 April 1953, NARA, RG 59, 762B.00/4-3053. On 1 April 1953, HICOG Berlin reported that CIC had obtained an intelligence report late the previous month. The report contained propaganda directives given by chief Soviet editors of *Tägliche Rundschau* to German editors at a meeting on 17 March. They included, among other things, instructions to popularize the new men in the Kremlin through a series of biographies, to place strong emphasis on the activities of the West German

But however much out of step with Moscow Ulbricht had been, by mid-April it appeared that coordination between East Berlin and Moscow had been fully reestablished: U.S. officials had “every indication that Moscow [was] exercising complete control of SED policy and actions.”⁹⁶⁴

In fact, despite longstanding efforts to keep alive the spirit of resistance behind the “Iron Curtain,” American observers came to believe the SED led by Ulbricht to be in firm control of events—ironically precisely at the moment they started to unravel. Symptomatic of the degree to which American analysts overestimated the stability of the situation in the GDR was that the fact that the vastly increasing influx of refugees into West Germany from the East in early 1953 was initially considered to be weakening the ferment of unrest in the GDR. Rather than a sign of burgeoning unrest and deterioration, the growing flow of refugees pouring into Berlin was interpreted to indicate the East Germans’ decreasing energy to resist and morale. HICOG Berlin’s Eastern Affairs Division reported to Washington in February 1953 that it could not be expected “that even if called upon to do so, the East Germans would be willing and capable of carrying out a revolution unless such a call coincided with a declaration of war and/or assurance of Western military support.”⁹⁶⁵

As the stream of East Germans took on massive proportions that spring, the Truman administration considered the developments to be a deliberate measure by the SED regime rather than a reflection of the deteriorating situation in the GDR. “It is my opinion that Commies have capabilities of cutting stream drastically,” the newly-appointed U.S. High Commissioner in Germany, former Harvard president James B. Conant,

group “Deutsche Sammlung,” and to soft-pedal GDR media reports on West Berlin. Lyon to HICOG Berlin, 1 April 1953, NARA, RG 59, 962 B.40/4-153.

⁹⁶⁴ HICOG Berlin to Department of State, 30 April 1953, NARA, RG 59, 762B.00/4-3053.

⁹⁶⁵ HICOG Berlin to Department of State, 3 February 1953, NARA, RG 466, HICOG Berlin, Box 3.

reported.⁹⁶⁶ Panic therefore marked the initial American reaction to the refugee flood. In February, Conant estimated that more than 300,000 would cross the border to the West within the next hundred days.⁹⁶⁷ Despite a small airlift which flew about 1,000 refugees out of the city to West Germany every day, HICOG Berlin predicted that space in West Berlin was “bound to become tight” and that the “danger of epidemics as well as the “possibility of riots and disturbances inspired either by general discontent or Communists” could not be discounted.⁹⁶⁸ HICOG therefore unilaterally considered plans for a “crash evacuation” of refugees utilizing military aircraft and recommended a loan to the Federal Republic with an upper limit of \$100 million.⁹⁶⁹ In addition, HICOG pressed for changes in the West German refugee recognition policy which had resulted in an accumulation of a large number of non-recognized refugees who, as unemployables, constituted an intolerable burden to (West) Berlin’s economy and political stability. Faced with the possibility that the influx of refugees might reach “staggering numbers,” propelling the problem to “disaster proportions” and straining West German resources beyond their limits, Conant briefly considered abandoning the long-established policy of treating the refugee problem as an internal problem, the burden of which had to be and could be carried by the West Germans themselves.⁹⁷⁰

By April, however, when Adenauer arrived in Washington for his first visit to the United States (and the first such visit by any German leader since the war) and pleaded for economic assistance in the scope of \$250 million to cope with the refugee crisis, U.S. apprehensions had been largely alleviated.⁹⁷¹ West Germany seemed able to cope with

⁹⁶⁶ Conant to Secretary of State, 27 February 1953, NARA, RG 59, 862A.411/2-2753.

⁹⁶⁷ Ibid.

⁹⁶⁸ HICOG Berlin to Secretary of State, 5 March 1953, NARA, RG 59, 862A.411/3-553.

⁹⁶⁹ HICOG Berlin to Secretary of State, 2 March 1953, NARA, RG 59, 862A.411/3-253; Conant to Secretary of State, 27 February 1953, NARA, RG 59, 862A.411/2-2753.

⁹⁷⁰ Conant to Secretary of State, 27 February 1953, NARA, RG 59, 862A.411/2-2753.

⁹⁷¹ There are indications that Conant’s views on the refugee crisis changed as early as mid-March. See Conant to Secretary of State, 12 March 1953, NA, RG 59, 862A.411/3-1253.

the influx economically. By that time, it had also become obvious that the refugees were causing serious embarrassment and problems for the SED. U.S. observers concluded that the Soviets had overestimated the effectiveness of propaganda and dissuasion in stemming the refugee flood but considered extreme and drastic measures politically unfeasible. If the Western Allies exercised ingenuity, imagination, and determination to prevent the refugee flow from becoming a security problem in West Berlin, they could “turn potential danger into [a] positive asset” and “embarrass seriously and hurt Soviet-SED strategy and tactics in Ger[many].”⁹⁷² Consequently, the Eisenhower Administration stuck to established policy and denied West Germany any extra aid for the refugees and discharged its special responsibilities for Berlin by earmarking a mere \$15 million for refugee relief.

Ulbricht’s removal from the scene and a radical change in the GDR’s internal make-up seemed to American observers nearly unimaginable in view of his longstanding relationship with the Moscow leaders. Equally unimaginable was a change in Moscow’s long-range objectives in Germany that Ulbricht’s ouster would suggest. In March, they had warned that despite a “mellowing process” there were no signs that the basic tenets of Stalinist communism had been abandoned, and “a reversion of aggressive expansionism may be anticipated at a later date.”⁹⁷³ Within a few weeks American officials confirmed their earlier impressions: the SED apparatus was implementing “what amounts to basically the same internal SED program as before, with some slight outward modifications.”⁹⁷⁴

In fact, the East Germany’s future course was under intense review within the Soviet leadership in Moscow in the spring of 1953. It is still unclear whether this occurred in reaction to the March 19 Bundestag ratification of the EDC treaty, or to mounting

⁹⁷² HICOG Berlin to HICOG Bonn, 4 March 1953, NA, RG 59, 762B.00/3-453.

⁹⁷³ N.S. Barnes/HICOG Berlin to Department of State, 27 March 1953, NARA, RG 59, 762.0221/3-2753.

⁹⁷⁴ HICOG Berlin to Secretary of State, 30 April 1953, NARA, RG 59, 762B.00/4-3053; HICOG Berlin to HICOG Bonn, 20 April 1953, NARA, RG 59, 762 B.00/4-2053.

skepticism over the efficiency of Stalinist policies in the GDR and throughout Eastern Europe, or as part of a fundamental policy reassessment to try to forestall further moves towards West Germany's military integration, or a combination of all these factors. As Ivan Tugarinov, head of the Committee on Information informed the Third European Department of the Foreign Ministry (responsible for Germany) in mid-April, "there is a widespread assumption in the USA and the Western European countries that, in the near future, the Soviet government will come out with a proposal for convening a quadripartite conference to discuss the German problem." Tugarinov surmised that "the main reason for the alarm" in the West was that the "apparently pending announcement by the Soviet Union of new proposals on the German question" could "bring about the failure of American plans" to include West Germany in its "aggressive bloc."⁹⁷⁵ Rumors of a new Soviet initiative in Germany had been reinforced by Semyonov's recall to Moscow in mid-April as well as preparations for reorganizing the Soviet Control Commission as a new "Soviet High Commission" analogous to the Western High Commissions in West Germany.⁹⁷⁶

Interpreting the purpose, timing, and scope of the Soviet initiative on Germany has been controversial.⁹⁷⁷ Was it merely a propaganda move designed to forestall the further military integration of West Germany? Or did it reflect a new flexibility on the part of the post-Stalin leadership on the German Question, even to the extent of abandoning socialism in the GDR? The documentary record is still too fragmentary to provide a definite resolution of this question at this time. The essence of the discussions within the Soviet

⁹⁷⁵ Ivan Tugarinov, "On the Western Powers' Policy Regarding the German Question," published in *Uprising in East Germany, 1953*, pp. 52-66.

⁹⁷⁶ Elke Scherstjanoi, *Das SKK-Statut. Zur Geschichte der Sowjetischen Kontrollkommission in Deutschland, 1949-1953* (Munich: K.G. Saur, 1998), pp. 95-105.

⁹⁷⁷ This was apparent from the discussion between Gerhard Wettig, Wilfried Loth, and Elke Scherstjanoi at the conference on "The Crisis Year 1953 and the Cold War in Europe," organized by the Woodrow Wilson Int'l Center for Scholars' Cold War International History Project, The National Security Archive, and the Zentrum für Zeithistorische Forschung Potsdam, Potsdam, November 1996. See the conference volume, Klessmann, Christoph and Bernd Stöver, eds., *1953: Krisenjahr des Kalten Krieges in Europa* (Köln: Böhlau, 1999).

government went in the directions of boosting the prestige of the East German regime *and* resurrecting the idea of German unification. Perhaps inspired by Adenauer's visit to Washington, the head of the Soviet Foreign Ministry's Third European Department, Mikhail Gribanov, and Deputy Foreign Minister Georgii Pushkin proposed on April 18 to invite a GDR government delegation to Moscow headed by Grotewohl. They pointed out that no GDR government delegation had officially traveled to the USSR since 1949, and a visit would "increase the authority of the GDR." As a "new step" in the German question, Gribanov and Pushkin suggested the formation of a provisional all-German government composed of representatives appointed by the West and East German parliaments while preserving, at least for the time being, the GDR and West German governments. A provisional government would prepare recommendations for the unification process, and most importantly, would draft an all-German election law. Other Foreign Ministry proposals placed the formation of an all-German government at the center of the Soviet proposal to "retain the initiative on the German question," arguing that such a "new concrete step" would "evoke a broad positive response among the German people" and "expose the position of the (other) three great powers on the German issue."⁹⁷⁸ Semyonov, who had been urgently recalled to Moscow, similarly advised the leadership that it was important to "avoid the impression that the Soviet government is on this occasion limiting itself only to diplomatic posturing," and to take measures to strengthen friendly relations between the USSR and the GDR and increase the all-German and international prestige of the East German state. Overestimating—in remarkable symmetry to the GDR watchers at HICOG—the extent to which the SED was in control of the situation in the GDR, the

⁹⁷⁸ Memorandum on the German Question by Georgii Pushkin and Mikhail Gribanov to Molotov, 18 April 1943, published *Uprising in East Germany, 1953*, pp. 70; Soviet Foreign Ministry Memorandum "Regarding Further Measures of the Soviet Government on the German Question," 28 April 1953, published *ibid.*, pp. 71-73; see also Elke Scherstjanoi, "Die sowjetische Deutschlandpolitik nach Stalins Tod 1953. Neue Dokumente aus dem Archiv des Moskauer Außenministeriums," *Vierteljahrshefte für Zeitgeschichte* 46:3 (1998), pp. 497-549.

Soviet governments foremost Germany expert added that the East German government had “by now grown and strengthened to a sufficient degree to govern the country independently.” Since the existence of the Soviet Control Commission continued to emphasize sharply the inequalities between the USSR and the GDR, Semyonov recommended the “removal of the Soviet military authorities’ control over the GDR.” He noted that liquidating the Control Commission would constitute “clear, practical proof of the sincerity of the Soviet government’s proposals on all-German questions.”⁹⁷⁹

While the Eisenhower administration was worrying about Soviet-East German machinations behind the swelling refugee flow, Moscow apparently did not become aware of how quickly the situation in the GDR was deteriorating until May. This may have been partly due to Beria’s efforts after Stalin’s death to revamp the security apparatus, but also to the reorganizing and eventually dismantling of the Soviet Control Commission that spring.⁹⁸⁰ Based on a report by the KGB’s chief representative in Germany, Colonel Ivan Fadeikin, that spotlighted the growing refugee problem the SED had on its hands, KGB head Beria finally raised the issue on the CPSU Presidium on May 6.⁹⁸¹ Beria pointed out, the mass flight could be not be explained “increased hostile propaganda” in the GDR alone, but also by concerns over the effects of the hardline socialization policies.⁹⁸² The SED did “not conduct a sufficiently active fight against the demoralizing work carried out by West German authorities.”⁹⁸³ On May 14 the CPSU Presidium finally instructed the Soviet Control Commission “tactfully” to advise Ulbricht and Grotewohl that

⁹⁷⁹ “Memorandum on the German Question,” from Semyonov to Molotov, 2 May 1953, published in *Uprising in East Germany, 1953*, pp. 82-85.

⁹⁸⁰ Murphy, Kondrashev, and Bailey, *Battleground Berlin*, pp. 154-168; the quote is on p. 151-168, citing a report by Medvedev, 9 March 1953, SVRA, file 68881, vol. 3, p. 21-28, sec. 9.

⁹⁸¹ Lavrentii Beria to CPSU Presidium, Memorandum No. 44/B, “V Prezidium TsK KPSS,” 6 May 1953, ASVR, f. 2589, t. 7, d. 3581, ll. 326-328, here 327-328; cited in Kramer, “The Early Post-Stalin Succession Struggle (Part 1),” p. 23.

⁹⁸² SVRA file 3581, vol. 7; published as facsimile in Murphy, Kondrashev, and Bailey, *Battleground Berlin*, p. 157.

⁹⁸³ Quoted in Murphy, Kondrashev, and Bailey, *Battleground Berlin*, p. 158.

“collectivization in East Germany should be halted for at least the rest of the year.”⁹⁸⁴ Two weeks later, the Soviet leaders decided that the policy of “forced construction of socialism” had to be terminated altogether in order to avert a full-blown crisis and adopted as an “order” the final draft resolution on a “new course” for the GDR. The June 2 order, “On Measures to Improve the Health of the Political Situation in the GDR,” sharply criticized the SED’s policy of accelerated construction of socialism.⁹⁸⁵ The decree

⁹⁸⁴ Top secret draft memorandum, “Proekt ukazanii tt. Chuikovu, Yudinu,” 14 May 1953, with cover note from Molotov to the CPSU Presidium, AVP RF, f. 6, op. 12, p. 18, d. 278, ll. 39-40, cited in Kramer, “The Early Post-Stalin Succession Struggle (part 1),” p. 24.-- Less tactfully, Ulbricht was also to be rebuked for his 5 May speech commemorating Karl Marx, which declared that the GDR had attained the status of a people’s democratic state in which the dictatorship of the proletariat was to be carried out. “Politically misguided,” the Soviet leadership termed the speech, prone to “severely damage the struggle of both the GDR itself and the Soviet Union for the reunification of Germany on a peace-loving and democratic basis.” The CPSU leadership also criticized the Soviet Control Commission’s new Political Adviser, Pavel Yudin, for committing “an egregious error” by not intervening with Ulbricht and failing to consult Moscow. “Protokol No. 8 zasedaniya Prezidiuma TsK KPSS ot 14 maya 1953 goda,” 14 May 1953 TsKhSD, f. 3, op. 10, d. 23, ll. 41-42, cited in Kramer, “The Early Post-Stalin Succession Struggle (part 1),” pp. 24-25. For Ulbricht’s speech, see “Karl Marx--der größte Sohn der deutschen Nation: Aus der Rede des Genossen Walter Ulbricht auf der Gedenkkundgebung in Berlin zum 135. Geburtstag von Karl Marx am 5. Mai 1953,” *Neues Deutschland*, 7 May 1953, p.3. -- This might have been one of the reasons for Yudin’s replacement by Semyonov at the end of the month.

⁹⁸⁵ The debate in Moscow apparently culminated at the May 27 session of the Presidium of the Council of Ministers. Since the minutes of this meeting--if they exist--have not been declassified, it remains unclear exactly how the German issue played out, whether the crisis in East Germany led to arguments in favor of pursuing all-German concerns and even abandoning of socialism in the GDR altogether (as Beria allegedly argued), or whether it prompted the exact opposite, moving the debate away from more all-German considerations to consolidation of the GDR. On the Moscow debate see in particular Zubok, “‘Unverfrohren und grob in der Deutschlandfrage...’ Beria, der Nachfolgestreit nach Stalins Tod und die Moskauer DDR-Debatte in April-Mai 1953,” in *1953—Krisenjahr des Kalten Krieges in Europa*, edited by Christoph Klessmann and Bernd Stöver (Cologne: Böhlau, 1999), pp. 29-48; Scherstjanoi, “Die sowjetische Deutschlandpolitik nach Stalins Tod 1953,” pp. 497-549; Wettig, “Die beginnende Umorientierung der sowjetischen Deutschland-Politik im Frühjahr und Sommer 1953,” *Deutschland Archiv* 28:5 (May 1995), pp. 495-507; Wettig, “Zum Stand der Forschung über Berijas Deutschland-Politik im Frühjahr 1953,” in *Die Deutschlandfrage von der staatlichen Teilung Deutschlands bis zum Tode Stalin* (Studien zur Deutschlandfrage, vol 13) (Berlin: Duncker & Humblot, 1994), pp. 183-200; James Richter, *Reexamining Soviet Policy Towards Germany During the Beria Interregnum*, Cold War International History Project Working Paper No. 3. (Washington, D.C.: Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars, 1992); Lew Bezymenski, “Ein Exklusivbericht aus Moskau 1953: Berija will die DDR beseitigen,” *Die Zeit* 42 (15 October 1993), pp. 81-83; Richter, “Reexamining Soviet Policy Towards German in 1953,” *Europe-Asia Studies* 45:3 (1993), pp. 671-691; Amy Knight, *Beria: Stalin’s First Lieutenant* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1992); Wettig, “Sowjetische Wiedervereinigungsbemühungen im ausgehenden Frühjahr 1953? Neue Aufschlüsse über ein altes Problem,” *Deutschland Archiv* 25:9 (1992), pp. 943-958; Wettig, “Zum Stand der Forschung über Berijas Deutschland-Politik im Frühjahr 1953,” *Deutschland Archiv* 26 (1993), pp. 674-82; Wettig, “Neue Erkenntnisse über Berijas Deutschland-Politik,” *Deutschland Archiv* 26 (1993), pp. 1412; Wettig, *Bereitschaft zu Einheit in Freiheit?*, pp. 235-256. — Most likely the crisis in the GDR forestalled any decision on the overall issue of an initiative on Germany. After all, the May 27 session had been called to “analyze the causes which had led to the mass exodus of Germans from the GDR to West Germany and to discuss measures for correcting the unfavorable political and economic situation in the GDR.” See “Delo Beria,” 2 (1991), p. 144. According to the testimony by Malenkov, Molotov, Bulganin and Khrushchev at the July 1953 CPSU CC Plenum as well as later accounts by Khrushchev, Molotov, and Andrei Gromyko, Beria was not satisfied with merely adjusting the pace of socialization in East Germany.

acknowledged that the mass exodus of East Germans of all professions and backgrounds had created "a serious threat to the political stability of the German Democratic Republic" and called for a decided shift in economic policy on a broad front: an end to forced

Instead of terminating the forced construction of socialism, he allegedly shocked his colleagues with a proposal to abandon socialism in the GDR altogether in favor of creating a united, neutral and non-socialist Germany. "We asked, 'Why?,'" Molotov later recounted. "And he [Beria] replied, 'Because all we want is a peaceful Germany, and it makes no difference whether or not it is socialist.'" According to Molotov, Beria kept insisting on this point. A special committee, consisting of Beria, Malenkov and Molotov was apparently created to consider the matter, and, according to Molotov, following several discussions and a late evening telephone conversation, Beria finally gave in: "To hell with you! Let's not go to another meeting. I agree with your stand." Nikita Khrushchev, "Die Aktion," in Vladimir F. Nekrassow, ed., *Berija. Henker in Stalins Diensten. Ende einer Karriere* (Berlin: edition 9, 1992), pp. 323-324; Albert Resis ed., *Molotov Remembers: Inside Kremlin Politics. Conversations with Felix Chuev* (Chicago: Ivan Dee, 1993), pp. 334-335; Resis, *Molotov Remembers*, p. 335; see also Vojtech Mastny, *The Cold War and Soviet Insecurity* (New York: Oxford, 1996), p. 180.-- Beria's alleged zigzags on policy towards the GDR conform to what we know about his views. Much less ideologically committed than Molotov, or, as Molotov put it himself, "lacking deeper interest in fundamental policy decisions," Beria would not shy away from unorthodox, "heretical" solutions. Beria followed German affairs closely, and with a wide-ranging intelligence apparatus at his command (even as he set out to revamp it), Beria was better informed about the growing crisis in the GDR than many of his rivals, even Molotov, and he used his unmatched sources to challenge the foreign minister in his own field--foreign policy. It is possible that his exclusive knowledge among the leadership of the recent strides in Soviet nuclear weapons development (the USSR successfully tested a thermonuclear device later that year) might have given him less cause for concern about the wider repercussions of any radical solution in Germany. His shifting stance was also fully in line with what is now known about his tendency to withdraw proposals as soon as he faced strong opposition, such as Molotov and Khrushchev seem to have mounted within the Presidium. In his letters from prison, Beria later acknowledged displaying "inadmissible rudeness and insolence [...] toward comrades N.S. Khrushchev and N.A. Bulganin during the discussion on the German question." A year-and-a-half later, at the January 1955 CC CPSU Plenum, Beria's alleged ally in 1953, Malenkov, now under attack by Khrushchev and Molotov, "admitted" that he had been wrong when he held the view that "the task of socialist development in Democratic Germany" was "incorrect." "Today I admit that I essentially took a wrong position on the German Question." Secondary figures such as KGB operative Pavel Sudoplatov, a close collaborator of Beria, provide additional evidence of his position. In his controversial memoirs, *Special Tasks*, Sudoplatov recounts that as early as April, "[p]rior to the May Day celebration in 1953, Beria ordered me to prepare top-secret intelligence probes to test the feasibility of unifying Germany. He told me that the best way to strengthen our world position would be to create a neutral, unified Germany run by a coalition government. Germany would be the balancing factor between American and Soviet interests in Western Europe.... East Germany, the German Democratic Republic, would become an autonomous province in the new unified Germany." According to Sudoplatov, Beria intended to air the idea through his intelligence contacts in Central Europe and "begin negotiations with the Western powers." Similarly, Semyonov, who, as head of the responsible department within the Foreign Ministry, participated in the key meetings of the Soviet leadership on Germany (as well as the later meetings with the SED leaders), charges in his 1995 memoirs that Beria was pursuing a line on Germany which would have "disrupted the continuity of our policy on the German question and aimed at shocking the Soviet Union and eliminating the GDR." Semyonov reports that during a Presidium meeting in the second half of May 1953, Beria, when asked for his views, "took a paper out of his jacket pocket, without haste, as if he was the master of the house, put on his glasses, and read his own draft on German policy. It differed fundamentally from the one which I carried in my bag." Serious doubts, however, have been raised about the existence of a "Beria plan." Thus far, much of the evidence on Beria's role in the decision-making process within the Kremlin remains fragmentary, contradictory, and very likely biased. It is important to note that mention of Beria's alleged initiative on the German question was first made by his opponents at the July 1953 CPSU Plenum which condemned him, following his arrest on 26 June. It is probable that the charges about Beria's views on the German question, made by Khrushchev and others at the Plenum, were motivated largely by a desire to portray him in the most sinister manner possible--characterizing him as a traitor to the socialist cause, a Western agent and a provocateur. United in their fear of the brutal secret police chief and seeking to eliminate a powerful rival, Beria's opponents might well have fabricated, distorted, or exaggerated any difference of opinion on his part, in the very best manner of the Stalinist purges.

collectivization and to the war on private sector in industry, trade and agriculture, for a revision of the Five Year Plan at the expense of heavy industry, and a relaxation of political-judicial controls and regimentation. It directed the termination of coercive measures against the Protestant Church and denounced the "cold exercise of power" by the Ulbricht regime. Significantly, it did *not* explicitly demand a reversal of the controversial raised work norms.⁹⁸⁶ On the issue of *Deutschlandpolitik*, the resolution (much like the preceding drafts in the Foreign Ministry), ambiguously asserted that "at the present and in the near future" it was necessary to "put the tasks of the political struggle to reestablish the national unity of Germany and to conclude a peace treaty at the center of attention of the broad mass of the German people both in the GDR and in West Germany."⁹⁸⁷

The decree was handed to SED leaders Ulbricht and Grotewohl on 2 June, the same day they had been hastily ordered to Moscow.⁹⁸⁸ In their conversations at the Kremlin, Grotewohl noted, the Soviet leaders expressed their "grave concern about the situation in the GDR."⁹⁸⁹ The East German response, half-heartedly drafted the following night and tabled the next day, fell short of Soviet expectations. According to the memoirs of Rudolf Herrnstadt, editor of the SED party organ *Neues Deutschland*, the GDR leaders were subjected to a verbal beating. "Our document is [a] reversal, yours is [just] reform," an exasperated Kaganovich exclaimed.⁹⁹⁰ Beria was particularly aggressive, allegedly throwing the documents at Ulbricht across the table with the remark: "This is a bad rewrite of our document!"⁹⁹¹ According to Grotewohl's notes, the Soviet leaders acknowledged that "we all have made mistakes" and that the recommendations were not meant as

⁹⁸⁶ AP RF, f.3, op.64, d. 802, ll. 153-161. The German version of the decree, "Über die Maßnahmen zur Gesundung der politischen Lage in der Deutschen Demokratischen Republik," released in 1989, was first published in *Beiträge zur Geschichte der Arbeiterbewegung* 32 (1990), pp. 651-654.

⁹⁸⁷ Rolf Stöckigt, "Ein Dokument von großer historischer Bedeutung vom Mai 1953," *Beiträge zur Geschichte der Arbeiterbewegung* 32 (1990), p. 649.

⁹⁸⁸ Politburo member Fred Oelssner accompanied them, serving as translator.

⁹⁸⁹ Rolf Stöckigt, "Ein Dokument von großer historischer Bedeutung vom Mai 1953," *Beiträge zur Geschichte der Arbeiterbewegung* 32 (1990), p. 649.

⁹⁹⁰ Grotewohl Notes

⁹⁹¹ Herrnstadt

“accusations,” but insisted that “the starting-point for everything has to be a change in conditions in the GDR.” Demanding that the SED leaders should “not worry about [their] prestige,” Malenkov warned that “if we don’t correct [the political line] now, a catastrophe will happen.” The Soviet leaders appealed to the Germans to “correct fast and vigorously.” “Much time [has been] lost. One has to act quickly,” Molotov added, “[so] that all of G[ermany] can see it.”⁹⁹²

The SED delegation returned to East Berlin on June 5. Even before their arrival, Ulbricht and Grotewohl issued orders to purge all literature on the Second Party Conference from libraries. Several days of intense discussion within the SED Politburo ensued. Just as their colleagues had been in Moscow, many Politburo members were stunned and troubled by the Soviet document. During the June 6 SED Politburo session East Berlin Mayor and Politburo member Friedrich Ebert professed that reading the New Course document has pained him physically and wondered at one point “do we want socialism at all?”⁹⁹³ Semyonov, who had returned with the SED delegation from Moscow and participated in the sessions, warned that further deterioration would lead to virtual “annihilation” of “[the party’s] avant-garde role, even of the army,” and insisted that the SED leaders could not stop with reforms but had to reverse course: the state plants could

⁹⁹² The June 2-4 talks with the East German leaders presaged similar consultations with other satellite leaders, which, in each case, resulted in the announcement of a comparable “New Course” program. The Hungarian leadership (13-16 June 1953) was next, followed by Albanian leader Enver Hoxha on 15 June. Talks with the Czechoslovaks, Romanians, Poles and Bulgarians were planned for the following month. The transcript of the Soviet-Hungarian talks, discovered recently in the Hungarian National Archives, are much fuller than the fragmentary Grotewohl notes, and show striking similarities with the SED talks. As in the German case, the discussions focused on the “audacious” industrialization and socialization drive and abuses of power (especially by the security police) in Hungary, although cadre questions received considerable attention, too. As with the East Germans, the Soviet leaders “urgently” demanded changes and warned that “a catastrophe will occur if we do not improve the situation.” Once again, Malenkov and Beria were harshest in their criticism, although Molotov and Bulganin did not lag far behind. Unlike their criticism of the SED, Moscow’s unhappiness was directed at Premier and party chief Mátyás Rákosi, the embodiment of Stalinist rule in Hungary. The confrontation quickly produced changes: within days of their return from Moscow, Rákosi resigned the premiership which was given to the agrarian specialist and reform-minded Imre Nagy, although Rákosi stayed on as party leader.

⁹⁹³ “Diskussionsrede auf der Sitzung des Politbüros vom 6.6.1953,” SAPMO-Barch DY30/JIV 2/2/287; and “Protokoll Nr 33/53 der ausserordentlichen Sitzung des Politbüros des Zentralkomitees am 6.Juni 1953,” *ibid*; see also Scherstjanoi, ed., “Wollen wir den Sozialismus?,” *Beiträge zur Geschichte der Arbeiterbewegung* 32 (1990), pp. 658-680.

not provide consumer and luxury goods, therefore manufacture and private business were to be preserved. After all, Semyonov, ambitiously proclaimed, the GDR had to be turned into “a magnet for Western Germany, France and Italy.”⁹⁹⁴ One SED Politburo member spelled out what must have been on everybody’s mind: the only way “to get out of this catastrophic situation and improve our position” would be for the Soviet Union to give “us the same help that the USA is giving Western Germany through the Marshall Plan.”⁹⁹⁵ The Politburo finally decided to draw up a comprehensive statement on “the self-criticism of the work of the Politburo and the Secretariat,” and adopted public announcement of the New Course. Most Politburo members had agreed that the announcement warranted careful preparation of the party and the population at large, but Semyonov urged speedy implementation of Moscow’s instructions, insisting that the New Course had to be announced the next day while warning that “you may not have a state for much longer.”⁹⁹⁶ Heeding Semyonov’s order, the SED published the “New Course” program in *Neues Deutschland* on June 11.⁹⁹⁷

As expected by some of the SED leaders, the communiqué and its frank admission of past mistakes shocked many East Germans in and out of the party. Reports from local party organizations, carefully monitored by SED headquarters in Berlin, candidly described the widespread disappointment, disbelief, and confusion within party ranks, as well as among the populace. To many, the communiqué signaled the SED’s final bankruptcy and the beginning of its demise. Party members felt betrayed and “panicky,”

⁹⁹⁴ SAPMO, DY30 JIV 2/2/287.

⁹⁹⁵ Report by KGB Berlin Resident Fadeikin, 9 July 1953, published in *Uprising in East Germany, 1953*, pp. 309-313, here 310.

⁹⁹⁶ Herrnsstadt, *Das Herrnsstadt-Dokument*, p. 74.

⁹⁹⁷ The next day, the GDR Council of Ministers issued several new ordinances, returning the basic food ration cards taken away in May, and decreeing that properties would be returned to returning refugees or those who had been disowned under the February confiscation law. The June 11 announcement was reprinted in *Dokumente des Sozialistischen Einheitspartei Deutschlands: Beschlüsse und Erklärungen des Zentralkomitees sowie seines Politbüros und seines Sekretariats*, vol. IV (Berlin: Staatsverlag des DDR, 1954), pp. 428-430; for an English translation, see Arnulf Baring, *Uprising in East Germany: June 17, 1953*, (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1972), pp. 123-127.

some even called for Ulbricht's resignation. Many thought the SED retreat from crash socialization resulted from pressure by the West German government under Konrad Adenauer and the Western powers. In the small town of Seehausen, according to a local SED account, "the entire village is in the bar, drinking to the health of Adenauer." Another internal SED report summarized the developments: "broad segments of the population did ... not understand the Party's New Course, viewed it as a sign of weakness or even as a victory by the Americans or the Church."⁹⁹⁸ To make matters worse, the only segment of the population which seemed to have been excluded from the New Course liberalization was--paradoxically--the workers: the raised production norms that had been arbitrarily imposed in May remained in force. Labor dissatisfaction was further fueled when the SED regime, groping to maintain its authority, confirmed the controversial norm increases on June 13.⁹⁹⁹

The Eisenhower administration initially doubted the seriousness of the "New Course" announcement. Revealing their own cognitive blinders, U.S. diplomats looked at the possibility of a new course in East Germany only in respect to the "dangerous extent" to which it would open wide "the flood-gates for widespread optimism in both East and West Germany" about a change in Soviet intentions.¹⁰⁰⁰ U.S. intelligence estimates concluded that the recent Soviet move in [the] GDR, coupled with [the] Korean Armistice and other Soviet moves on [the] world chess board, represent a tactical and not ... strategic shift in Germany."¹⁰⁰¹ The CIA asserted that while the announcement of the New Course was designed to cope with the growing popular unrest and suggested at least an attempt at a basic solution of the refugee problem, the Russians' real intention was to "soften Western

⁹⁹⁸ Abt. Leitende Organe der Partei und der Massenorganisationen, "Analyse über die Vorbereitung, den Ausbruch und die Niederschlagung des faschistischen Abenteurers vom 16.-22.6. 1953," 20 July 1953, SAPMO-BArch, 2/5/546.

⁹⁹⁹ On the events leading up to 16-17 June, see Christian Ostermann, "New Documents on the East German Uprising of 1953," *Cold War International History Project Bulletin* 5 (Spring 1995), pp. 10-20.

¹⁰⁰⁰ Berlin to Secretary of State, 9 June 1953, NARA, RG 59, 762B.00/6-953.

¹⁰⁰¹ HICOG Berlin to Secretary of State, 15 June 1953, NARA, RG 59, 762B.00/6-1553.

skepticism.”¹⁰⁰² The State Department regarded the measures taken by the Ulbricht regime as "part of [a] build-up for a Soviet proposal for Four Power talks, probably on Germany," which were designed to “convince the world that [the] Soviet Union is prepared to compromise on Germany and that [the] Western Powers should therefore enter into talks with [the] Soviet Union before proceeding with the rearmament of the Federal Republic through [the] EDC.”¹⁰⁰³

Washington was in fact unaware of how pivotal Ulbricht’s position the the situation in the GDR had become.¹⁰⁰⁴ As late as June 2, the day Ulbricht was in Moscow to listen to Malenkov’s dire warnings, HICOG estimated that the economic crisis brought on by collectivization and socialization was not critical: "[T]here is currently no reason to believe the situation has reached the stage of catastrophe or that the GDR Government does not have the means at its disposal to prevent it from becoming such.”¹⁰⁰⁵ Soviet moves in Germany, such as the appointment of Semyonov as Soviet high commissioner on May 27, seemed to show more than ever that Moscow would guarantee the existence of the communist regime in the GDR. "Certainly no (rpt no) abandonment of East German Republic is indicated.”¹⁰⁰⁶ If anything, the reorganization of the Soviet Control Commission was seen as "prompted in part by pressure from East Germany" whose leaders recently appeared to be in an "assertive mood.”¹⁰⁰⁷ As the storm of criticism engulfed Ulbricht within the politburo, American GDR specialists in Berlin reassured Washington that the SED leader’s position looked “as strong or stronger than ever.” The SED boss was, as one report put it, simply “in [a] class by himself among German

¹⁰⁰² CIA, Office of Current Intelligence, 11 June 1953, DDEL, C.D. Jackson Records, Box 3.

¹⁰⁰³ Gen. Persons to President Eisenhower, 11 June 1953, DDEL, Dwight D. Eisenhower Papers, Ann Whitman File, International Series, Box 14.

¹⁰⁰⁴ See the first report on the New Course announcement in HICOG Berlin to Secretary of State, 11 June 1953, NARA, RG 59, 762B.00/6-1153. Re the SED’s new agricultural policy, see the same-day cable, HICOG Berlin to Secretary of State, 11 June 1953, NARA, RG 59, 762B.00/6-1153.

¹⁰⁰⁵ HICOG Berlin to Department of State, 2 June 1953, NARA, RG 59, 762.00/6-253.

¹⁰⁰⁶ Bohlen to Secretary of State, 29 May 1953, NARA, RG 59, 762.0221/5-2953. See also Lyon to Secretary of State, 30 May 1953, NARA, RG 59, 762.0221/5-3053.

¹⁰⁰⁷ Ibid.

communists as ideal and nearly irreplaceable East German representative for Moscow's purposes."¹⁰⁰⁸ Despite warning signals, therefore, neither Moscow nor Washington expected the unrest and dissatisfaction to develop into the popular explosion that would occur within days and upset their own carefully elaborated agendas.

2. The Best Chance for Rollback? The Eisenhower Administration's Reaction to the Unrest in the GDR

With the SED paralyzed and weakened, workers in East Berlin--and soon a growing number from other segments of East German society--decided to act on their grievances. A few days earlier, workers on several construction sites in the Stalinallee/Friedrichshain area had clashed with union and party officials, instituting work slow-downs or protests. On 12 June for example, six transport company workers had started a demonstration in front of the Brandenburg prison; by the end some 5,000 people had joined in.¹⁰⁰⁹ At the "Stalinallee Block 40" construction site in Berlin, workers decided to send a delegation to Grotewohl to deliver a petition to rescind the norm increase. Underestimating the explosiveness of the situation, Grotewohl ignored the demands of the workers, who were further infuriated the next morning (June 16) by an article in the union paper *Tribüne* that restated the necessity of the norm increases.¹⁰¹⁰ Within hours several hundred 300 workers had gone on the move. Hoisting banners, the demonstrators soon broadened their demands beyond the social-economic issues that had first sparked the protests to include political changes. Via Alexanderplatz and Unter den Linden, the bulk of the demonstrators moved to the government seat on Leipziger Strasse;

¹⁰⁰⁸Berlin to Secretary of State, 9 June 1953, NARA, RG 59, 762B.00/6-953.

¹⁰⁰⁹ Armin Mitter and Stefan Wolle, *Untergang auf Raten Unbekannte Kapitel der DDR-Geschichte* (Munich: Bertelsmann, 1993), pp. 76-77.

¹⁰¹⁰ Memorandum by Plaschke and Ambree to Grotewohl, 25 June 1953, BArch-SAPMO, NY 4090/437 (Grotewohl Papers); see also Manfred Hagen, *DDR Juni '53. Die erste Volkserhebung im Stalinismus* (Stuttgart: Franz Steiner Verlag, 1992), p. 38.

others went in the direction of the SED headquarters on Wilhelm-Pieck-Strasse. On the way, they managed to take over two sound trucks which they used to spread their calls for a general strike and a demonstration at the Strausberger Platz at 7 a.m. the next day. Following demonstration in front of the GDR House of Ministries, the workers return to their sites. Throughout the night of June 16 and early morning of June 17, the news of events in East Berlin spread quickly throughout the GDR--by word of mouth as well as by Western radio broadcasts. While Soviet troops entered the outskirts of the city early in the morning of June 17, crowds of workers began to gather at Strausberger Platz and other public places, and began marching towards the city center. By 9 a.m., some 25,000 people gathered in front of the House of Ministries, and tens of thousands more were en route via Leipziger Strasse or across Potsdamer Platz. Between 10 a.m. and 11 a.m., some 80 to 100 demonstrators apparently managed to storm the government seat, visibly demonstrating that the 500 members of GDR People's Police and State Security had been overpowered. Only the sudden appearance of Soviet military vehicles, and then tanks, seemed to prevent a complete takeover. Within an hour, Soviet troops had cleared and isolated the area around the government headquarters. Fighting between Soviet forces (and later GDR police) and the demonstrators, however, continued into the afternoon and night.¹⁰¹¹

Developments throughout the GDR mirrored the events in East Berlin. In several cities, such as Dresden and Karl-Marx-Stadt, observers had noticed the workers' "explosive mood" prior to 16 June, but most of the interruptions, strikes, and other actions had taken place at the workplace; only in rare instances had there been public demonstrations. Rumors about worker unrest in Berlin and impending strike actions had filtered to the rest of the GDR through long-distance commuters return home for the

¹⁰¹¹ See first-hand accounts published by Rainer Hildebrandt, *The Explosion: The Uprising Behind the Iron Curtain* (New York: Little, Brown, and Co., 1955); Hildebrandt, *Als die Fesseln fielen . . . die Geschichte einer Schicksalsverkettung in dem Aufstand des 17. Juni*, 3rd ed. (Berlin: Arani Verlags-GMBH, 1966); Hildebrant, *Der 17. Juni: Zehn Erlebnisgeschichten von Personen in verschiedenen Brennpunkten des Aufstandes* (Berlin: Verlag Haus am Checkpoint Charlie, 1983).

weekend. RIAS' afternoon broadcast on 16 June confirmed the news about the mass demonstrations in the capitol and the demands for a rescission of the norm increase, the resignation of the government and free elections; by mid-day on 17 June, the RIAS reports had reached broad segments of the East German population. Meanwhile, popular unrest was also spreading to the rest of the country. Strikes and demonstrations were particularly strong in industrial centers in central Germany, in the Magdeburg area as well as in Jena, Gera, Brandenburg and Görlitz. More than 500,000 people in over 560 East German cities and communities are now estimated to have participated in the first wave of protests between 16 and 21 June.¹⁰¹²

While the East German leadership was aware of the worsening mood in the country, the depth of the resentment and the extent of anti-regime actions no doubt came as a surprise: "The signal given on 15 June for intended strikes was not fully appreciated by the party and the union,"¹⁰¹³ an internal SED analysis later declared. It is still unclear how well- or poorly-informed the Politburo was about the developments in Berlin on the morning of 16 June, when it gathered for its regular Tuesday meeting. Under pressure from the demonstrators, and probably Soviet adviser Semyonov, the leadership, after hours of deliberations, decided to revoke the "administrative"--that is forced--norm increase.¹⁰¹⁴ The Politburo's decision, however, came too late to stop the demonstrations: by the time the news reached crowds at the House of Ministries, the protestors' agenda had expanded well beyond the issue of norm increases to include political changes. Later that night, the Berlin party *aktiv* met in the Friedrichstadtpalast. Ulbricht conceded errors--"Yes, mistakes were made"--even "with regard to the development of a personality cult,"

¹⁰¹² Kowalczyk, Mitter, and Wolle, eds., *Der Tag X*, p. 10.

¹⁰¹³ Abt. Leitende Organe der Partei und der Massenorganisationen, "Analyse über die Vorbereitung, den Ausbruch und die Niederschlagung des faschistischen Abenteuers vom 16.-22.6. 1953," 20 July 1953, Stiftung "Archiv der Parteien und Massenorganisationen der ehemaligen DDR" im Bundesarchiv [SAPMO-BArch], DY 30 J IV 2/202/15.

¹⁰¹⁴ Sitzungsprotokoll 36/53, SAPMO-BArch, DY 30 J IV 2/2/290.

but then tried to deflect blame onto the threat posed by “provocateurs from West Berlin. ... We are now getting to the point that tomorrow morning all party organizations in the plants, in the residential areas, in the institutions will start to work in time and that one is watchful everywhere: Where are the West Berlin provocateurs?”¹⁰¹⁵ Based on the myth of an external provocation, the SED leadership expected that a massive propaganda drive would be enough to cope with the crisis.¹⁰¹⁶

Much like the SED, the Soviets were completely surprised by the widespread protests that followed the demonstrations in East Berlin. Much of their initial reaction was therefore uncoordinated and improvised, caused not in the least by the Soviet Control Commission’s recent dissolution. According to his memoirs, Semyonov and the newly appointed commander of Soviet occupation forces, Colonel-General Andrei Grechko, agreed to deploy troops from their summer training camps back to the garrisons on June 15. Later in the evening of June 16, Semyonov met with the SED leadership and informed “our friends of the decision we had taken to send Soviet troops to the city of Berlin.” Early the next morning, Soviet tanks entered Berlin. By mid-morning, Semyonov had evacuated the SED Politburo to Karlshorst. At noon, the Soviet authorities terminated all tram and metro traffic into the Eastern sector and essentially closed the sector borders to West Berlin to prevent further demonstrators from reaching the city center; one hour later, they declared martial law in East Berlin.¹⁰¹⁷ Some of the worst violence occurred outside the East Berlin police headquarters, where Soviet tanks opened fire on “the insurgents.”¹⁰¹⁸ Executions (most prominently of West Berlin worker Willi Götting) and mass arrests

¹⁰¹⁵ The speech was partially transcribed by Manfred Hagen, *DDR*, pp. 54-55.

¹⁰¹⁶ Ulbricht secretly conferred with State Security chief Wilhelm Zaisser and the head of the nascent East German military forces, Heinz Hoffmann, early in the morning of 17 June about the deployment of KVP units, though many GDR/SED officials doubted their reliability and experience.

¹⁰¹⁷ Martial law was also declared in 167 of 217 East German cities and communities.

¹⁰¹⁸ In his memoirs, Semyonov claims that in the afternoon of 17 June, he was instructed from Moscow “to open fire on the insurgents, to establish military tribunals and to shoot twelve ring leaders. Announcements about the executions were to be placed all over town.” But he and Marshal Vasili Sokolovskii supposedly decided to have the troops “fire over the heads” of the demonstrators instead. Semjonov, *Von Stalin bis Gorbatschow*, p. 296.

followed. Overnight, the Soviets (and the MfS) arrested thousands of people; by 19 June, some 1,744 persons had been arrested; by 23 June some 6,000 people had been detained. In the course of the uprising, the authorities executed at least 20, and probably 40, persons including Soviet soldiers who refused to obey orders. In all some 8,000-10,000 people were arrested; more than 15,000 were given sentences (including 2 death penalties.) Elsewhere in Berlin and throughout the GDR, the Soviet military seemed to hold back and remain more passive; Soviet soldiers at times even displayed a friendly attitude towards the demonstrators.¹⁰¹⁹

Shortly before 9 p.m. on 17 June, Soviet Deputy Defense Minister and Chief of Staff Marshal Vassiliy D. Sokolovsky arrived in Berlin, along with Marshal L. A. Govorov, another high-placed Soviet official. Sokolovsky's dispatch to Berlin--rather than Beria's which apparently had been considered first¹⁰²⁰--indicated that in the eyes of the Soviet leadership a military crisis of major proportions had developed; reports from East Berlin that the British has declared martial law in their sector, and that NATO forces had been put on alert must have confirmed this assumption in Moscow. Cabling Moscow that the unrest had been "totally unexpected for the German Democratic Government as well as for our organs," Sokolovsky and other top Soviet officials assumed from the very first moment that the demonstrations and riots as a "major planned provocation" by the West in response to the "recently declared measures on normalization of the political situation in the GDR."¹⁰²¹ Late on 17 June, Grechko informed Soviet defense minister Nikolai Bulganin in Moscow that, "analyzing the situation, I have ... come to the conclusion that the provocation was prepared in advance, organized and directed from the

¹⁰¹⁹ Hagen, *DDR*, p. 104-123.

¹⁰²⁰ Semjonow, *Von Stalin bis Gorbatschow*, p. 294.

¹⁰²¹ Situation Report from Semyonov and Grechko to Molotov and Bulganin, 17 June 1953, Archives of the Russian General Staff, Moscow, F 16, Op. 3139, D. 155, LL. 1-3, published in *CWIHP Bulletin* 10 (March 1998), pp. 86-87.

Western sectors of Berlin.”¹⁰²² A few hours later, Sokolovsky confirmed this interpretation, arguing that the events were “apparently a major planned uprising covering the whole territory of the German Democratic Republic aimed at ... a coup d’etat.” Unable to fathom the widespread resentment of the regime, Sokolovskii saw “proof” of his conclusion in the observation that “the disorders began simultaneously” in Berlin and major East German cities, that “the same tactics ... were used everywhere,” and that “all the disorders took place under the same slogans.”¹⁰²³

Probably the first Western officials to take note of the demonstrations in East Berlin were the RIAS employees. The radio station had not lost its significance as an “alternative public opinion” within the GDR in the spring of 1953. Internal SED reports pointed to the widespread and, in fact increasing, reception of RIAS broadcasts in the spring of 1953.¹⁰²⁴ RIAS had certainly highlighted labor unrest and passive resistance in the preceding months and weeks.¹⁰²⁵ The radio station also cooperated with U.S. intelligence agencies operating in Berlin to collect information and facilitated the “recruitment of covert sources and agents in the Soviet Zone.”¹⁰²⁶ After the announcement of the New Course, local party officials reported increasing numbers of statements from

¹⁰²² Situation Report from Grenchko and A. Tarasov to Bulganin, 17 June 1953, Archive of the Russian General Staff, F. 16, OP. 3139, D. 155, LL. 12-14, published in *CWIHP Bulletin* 10 (March 1998), p. 89.

¹⁰²³ Sokolovsky and Marshal Leonid Govorv to Defense Minister Nicolai Bulganin, 18 June 1953, Archive of the Russian General Staff, F. 16, OP. 3139, D. 155, LL. 4-5, *CWIHP Bulletin* 10 (March 1998), pp. 89-90.

¹⁰²⁴ Abt. Leitende Organe der Partei und der Massenorganisationen, “Analyse über die Vorbereitung, den Ausbruch und die Niederschlagung des faschistischen Abenteuers vom 16.-22.6. 1953,” 20 July 1953, SAPMO-BArch, 2/5/546; Durchsage der B[ezirks] L[eitung] Leipzig,” 18 June 1953, SAPMO-BArch, NY 90/437.

¹⁰²⁵ On 9 July, State Department German specialist Eleanor Dulles, who had been in Berlin in mid-June, reported that the head of the Berlin Red Cross had told her that “the rise of the workers against the Communists and their revolt against [oppressive] labor conditions was due in large measure to the broadcast by RIAS which had been contrasting labor conditions under Communist and Democratic regimes for some weeks. The information disseminated through this medium was in his opinion a major factor in stimulating the revolt against the Communist leaders.” Dulles added that “My conversations with these demonstrators bore out this statement.” Memorandum, E. Dulles to Riddleberger, 9 July 1953, NARA, RG 59, 962A.40/7-953.

¹⁰²⁶ M.C. Partridge, Major General, G-2, to Allen Dulles, 3 August 1953, C.D. Jackson Papers, Box 74, DDEL.

the local population, such as, “All stations were lying, RIAS alone says the truth, our shackles are broken, we are free people again.”¹⁰²⁷ A SED report on the situation on 17 June in Leipzig noted that “many RIAS listeners” could be found among the workers.¹⁰²⁸

Labor dissatisfaction had been a central theme in RIAS broadcasts, and, based on information provided by workers from the Stalinallee construction site, RIAS reported on the afternoon of June 15 that protest strikes were being staged against the increase in work norms. Broadcast in the late evening and then again in the early morning of June 16, when reception throughout the zone peaked, these reports were based on scant evidence whose tenuousness initially led other radio stations not to send them. By noon (June 16), reports from various sources confirmed that demonstrations at the Stalinallee construction site had indeed taken place. After a short announcement of the news at 1:00 p.m., RIAS gave a lengthy account of the day’s events in the Soviet Sector on the 4:30 p.m. news, providing uncensored reports of the shift in the demonstrators’ demands from rescission of the higher work quotas and price cuts, to shouts of: “We want free elections.”¹⁰²⁹

Not surprisingly, then, it was RIAS to which the East Berlin workers turned on the afternoon of June 16 with requests for assistance in spreading their call for a general strike the next day.¹⁰³⁰ RIAS officials recognized that the rebelling workers expected the radio station to be their central coordinating point, since only RIAS could effectively establish a link between strikers and the general population. One of the worker delegates later recalled that they anticipated RIAS’ full support for their strike, followed by a Western Allied invasion to reestablish order.¹⁰³¹ Apparently unable to consult effectively with

¹⁰²⁷ Ibid.

¹⁰²⁸ “Information über die Situation in Leipzig und Espenhain am 17.6.1953,” 18 June 1953, SAPMO-BArch, NY 90/437.

¹⁰²⁹ Der Aufstand der Arbeiterschaft im Ostsektor von Berlin und in der sowjetischen Besatzungszone. Tätigkeitsbericht der Hauptabteilung Politik des Rundfunks im Amerikanischen Sektor in der Zeit vom 16. Juni bis zum 23. Juni 1953 [copy in Bundesarchiv Koblenz, J. Kaiser, Papers, NL 18/314], p. 3.

¹⁰³⁰ HICOG Berlin to Secretary of State, 16 June 1953, NARA, RG 59, 762B.00/6-1653.

¹⁰³¹ Hagen, *DDR*, p. 97.

Washington or HICOG Bonn, local RIAS officials opted for caution. Mindful of the warning by HICOG's Eastern Affairs Element Chief Charles Hulick that night—"I hope you know what you are doing. You could start a war this way"¹⁰³²—RIAS political director Gordon Ewing decided that the station could not directly lend itself as a mouthpiece to the workers, yet would factually and fully disseminate information about the demonstrations. This policy decision was soon confirmed in Washington.¹⁰³³

RIAS reports on the demonstrations contributed to spreading the news quickly throughout the GDR. The 7:30 p.m. broadcasts that evening featured the demonstrations, and reported that a delegation of construction workers had submitted a resolution for publication. The resolution stated that the strikers, having proved by their actions that "they were able to force the government to accept their justified demands," would, "make use of their power at any time" if their demands for lower quotas, price cuts, free elections and indemnity for all demonstrators would not be fulfilled. Moreover, RIAS reported that the demonstrators were determined to continue their protest and convinced that "strikes and demonstrations would not be limited to the workers of the Stalinallee site."¹⁰³⁴ Later that night, RIAS broadcasts came close to open encouragement of the protests. In his nightly comment, RIAS Program Director Eberhard Schütz called the regime's reversal on the norm question "a victory, which our Ostberliners share with the entire working population of the Soviet Zone." The regime would have never reacted as fast as it did, Schütz argued, if the workers had not manifested their opposition in discussions, passive

¹⁰³² The quote is from Stewart Alsop, "Courage in Berlin and Its Reward," *New York Times*, 20 July 1953. The name and details are given in an interview by Ewing, printed in Ilse Spittmann and Karl Wilhelm Fricke, *17. Juni 1953. Arbeiteraufstand in der DDR* (Köln: Verlag Wissenschaft und Politik 1988), pp. 234-237. See also Rainer Hildebrandt, *The Explosion*, pp. 46-69; Diethelm Prowe, *Weltstadt in Krisen. Berlin 1949-1958* (Berlin: Walter DeGruyter, 1973), p. 113.

¹⁰³³ HICOG Berlin to Secretary of State, 16 June 1953, NARA, RG 59, 762B.00/6-1653; "Bericht über die Geschehnisse am Mittwoch, dem 17. Juni 1953," n.d., SAPMO-BArch, NL 90/437.

¹⁰³⁴ Stefan Brant and Klaus Bölling, *Der Aufstand. Vorgeschichte, Geschichte und Deutung des 17. Juni 1953* (Stuttgart: Steingrüben, 1954), p. 5; see also the testimony of Wilhelm Grothaus, in "Augenzeugenberichte von streikenden Arbeitern," in *17. Juni 1953*, ed. Ilse Spittman and Karl-Heinz Fricke (Köln: Verlag Wissenschaft und Politik, 2nd ed., 1988), p. 136.

resistance and strikes throughout the zone. The East Berlin workers had not limited their demands to the question of work quotas but had indeed called for the resignation of the Pankow regime and introduction of Western-style liberties. “We would be unworldly and would not deserve the confidence of our listeners if we could not acknowledge the justification of the demands What the population of East Berlin and the Soviet Zone demands today and what it views as feasible is nothing less than the end to the totalitarian rule of the Kremlin’s German satellites.” Emphasizing that “everyone had to know himself how far he could go,” Schütz encouraged his listeners to support the demonstrators. “It is your task today to show the Soviet and German rulers that we do not accept ‘mistakes’ anymore as mistakes, that we and you expect a change of mind which is not limited to a rescission of the 10 percent increase in work norms but which creates conditions for free decisions which go way beyond the so-called ‘voluntary norm increases.’ We,” Schütz concluded, “would be happy to be able to report more such victories in the next days.”¹⁰³⁵

Following Jacob Kaiser’s admonition in a late night broadcast to his East German compatriots to shy away from provocations, RIAS’ late night news at 11:00 p.m.--in a deviation from its usual schedule, from then on in hourly intermissions--repeated the workers’ demand to continue the strike the next day, calling specifically for all East Berliners to participate in a demonstration at 7:00 the following morning at the centrally-located Strausberger Platz.¹⁰³⁶ In the early morning hours, West Berlin labor leader Ernst Scharnowski reassured the demonstrators that West German unions stood behind their colleagues and called upon the population for support: “Don’t leave them alone. They are fighting not only for the social rights of labor but for the human rights of everyone in the East Zone. Join the movement of East Berlin construction workers, of East Berlin tram

¹⁰³⁵ Brant and Bölling, *Der Aufstand*, p. 6.

¹⁰³⁶ Ibid.

and rail employees! Every town has its Strausberger Platz!”¹⁰³⁷ Within the Eisenhower administration, RIAS was later credited for the swiftness with which the strikes and disorders spread from East Berlin throughout the Zone, thus pushing the riots beyond a local crisis.

RIAS’ cautious but increasingly supportive stance during the early hours of the uprising mirrored the response of local Western officials. Meeting at 11 a.m. on 17 June, even before the Soviet declaration of martial law, the Western Berlin Commandants agreed that their primary duty was “to maintain law and order in their sectors.”¹⁰³⁸ West Berliners and Soviet Zone residents, they decided, “should if possible be dissuaded from mixing in East Berlin demonstrations where serious possibility of bloodshed existed.”¹⁰³⁹ Western Allied authorities were also concerned that “many demonstrators in border areas have been under the influence of alcohol” and pondered closing liquor stores and cafes in the border areas.¹⁰⁴⁰ Convinced that a SPD-sponsored solidarity demonstration scheduled for the evening of June 17 near the sector border would appear provocative, the Commandants ordered a change in site and reminded Acting West Berlin Mayor Conrad¹⁰⁴¹ and the head of the West Berlin police Johannes Stumm “that the status of Berlin is Allied responsibility,” warning of the “grave consequences” of circumventing Allied authority.¹⁰⁴² Later that evening the Commandants also issued a press release advising Berliners to adopt “a completely calm attitude” in the face of the riots in the East.

¹⁰³⁷ Brant and Bölling, *Der Aufstand*, p. 8; Hildebrandt, *The Explosion*, p. 66; HICOG Berlin to Secretary of State, 17 June 1953, NARA, RG 59, 762B.00/6-1753.

¹⁰³⁸ See also HICOG Berlin to Secretary of State, 17 June 1953, NARA, RG 59, 762A.0221/6-1753.

¹⁰³⁹ Ibid. Reportedly, U.S. forces were removed from the East-West German borderline, possibly signaling to the Soviets the defensive posture of the West. See C.D. Jackson to operations Coordinating Board, 3 November 1953, DDEL (Mandatory Review release to author).

¹⁰⁴⁰ Prowe, *Weltstadt in Krisen*, p. 116.

¹⁰⁴¹ Berlin’s charismatic Lord Mayor Ernst Reuter, one of the most widely respected West German politicians in the Soviet Zone and an activist by reputation, was at an international meeting of mayors in Vienna on 17 June. According to his own testimony, the Allies delayed his return to Berlin for 48 hours, an act which he later ascribed to “passivity, fear of incident, or lack of responsibility.” See Prowe, *Weltstadt in Krisen*, p. 116; for a different account see Wolfgang Pauls, *Kampf um Berlin* (München, 1962), pp. 226-227.

¹⁰⁴² HICOG Berlin/Berlin to Secretary of State, 17 June 1953, NARA, RG 59, 762A.0221/6-1753.

Moreover, the U.S. Commandant took the unprecedented step of “dissuading” Ernst Reger, editor of the popular Berlin daily *Tagesspiegel*, “from publishing inflammatory editorials.”¹⁰⁴³ Not until June 18 did the Western Commandants issue a formal letter to Soviet Major-General, Sergei Alexeyevich Dengin, protesting Soviet military actions in East Berlin.¹⁰⁴⁴ But Allied concerns about militant speeches and possibly provocative actions on the part of the West Germans in support of their compatriots soon ebbed. Speaking before the Bundestag later that day, Adenauer professed sympathy with the demonstrators but warned of a further escalation of irresponsible violence and rioting, a line echoed in the following hours and days by many West German public representatives.¹⁰⁴⁵

U.S. officials were equally eager to avoid escalating the crisis at first, even though they acknowledged that the Soviet military’s brutal suppression of the uprising afforded Washington an “excellent propaganda opportunity.”¹⁰⁴⁶ The Psychological Strategy Board agreed on June 17 that all possible moral support should be given to the “East Berliners,” both to help them achieve improvements and “to stimulate further Soviet repression,” which would provide “ammunition” for the future. Moreover, the administration should capitalize on the events propagandistically in other parts of Eastern Europe, especially where some resistance “had shown its head,” but also in the Far East.¹⁰⁴⁷ The administration also quickly agreed to step up defector programs to take advantage of the relaxation of travel restrictions between East and West. Intent on

¹⁰⁴³ HICOG Berlin to Secretary of State, 23 June 1953, NARA, RG 59, 762A.00/6-2353.

¹⁰⁴⁴ Soviet military commander of Berlin, Maj.-Gen. Dibrova, replied to the commandants’ letter on 20 June, arguing that the letter had described the events in the Soviet sector “in a distorted way,” and “decisively” rejecting the Western protest. Telegram, Lyon to HICOG Bonn and Department of State, 21 June 1953 (FOIA release to author). The Western Commandants rejected Dibrova’s “allegations that the disturbances of June 17 were the result of action by groups sent from [the] Western sectors of Berlin” in a reply to Dibrova on 22 June. Telegram, Lyon to HICOG Bonn, 22 June 1953 (FOIA release to author).

¹⁰⁴⁵ On Adenauer’s reaction see Hans Peter Schwarz, *Adenauer: Der Staatsmann 1952-1967* (Stuttgart: DVA, 1991), p. 84.

¹⁰⁴⁶ State Department to HICOG Bonn, 17 June 1953, NARA, RG 59, 762B.00/6-1753.

¹⁰⁴⁷ Memorandum, “Berlin,” George A. Morgan to C.D. Jackson, 18 June 1953, DDEL.

avoiding identifying the United States with the “Berlin incident” (and perhaps not quite sure what the U.S. role had been), Dulles advised Eisenhower to avoid questions “about our stimulating this.” Eisenhower agreed: he would say “just that we have always discouraged outbreaks unless there was a chance of their being beneficial or something along that line.”¹⁰⁴⁸ Eager not to detract from the spontaneity of the uprising, the administration at first eschewed any official high-level statements on the crisis.¹⁰⁴⁹

The administration’s initial response also stemmed from the failure of U.S. intelligence to provide precise and timely information on the uprising. Similar lack of information had handicapped American assessments of the unrest in Czechoslovakia two weeks earlier. A week after the events demonstrations in Plzen and other cities June 1 the embassy there could only report that “something serious is definitely happening but difficult to say exactly what.”¹⁰⁵⁰ In Berlin, Allied officials in fact at first wondered whether the Soviets had deliberately instigated the rebellion in order to create a convenient pretext to remove Ulbricht after all or – of far greater concern -- to move military forces into East Berlin in preparation for the capture of the entire city.¹⁰⁵¹ CIA reports also speculated about the possibility of a “controlled demonstration” by the regime, which had “flared up into near revolt.”¹⁰⁵² In Washington, officials initially relied on Associated Press reports that spoke of 50,000 demonstrators for their assessments. Meeting on June 17, the Psychological Strategy Board members decided to launch a “special fact-finding

¹⁰⁴⁸ “Telephone Conversation Between Dulles and Eisenhower, 17 June 1953, 10:10 a.m.,” DDEL John F. Dulles Papers, Telephone Conversations.

¹⁰⁴⁹ Memorandum, “East Berlin Demonstrations (briefing of the Under Secretary for PSB luncheon),” from Richard Strauss/GER to Phillips/P, 17 June 1953, DDEL, C. D. Jackson Papers, Box 3.

¹⁰⁵⁰ Wadsworth to Secretary of State, 10 June 1953, NARA, RG 59, cited in Stöver, *Die Befreiung vom Kommunismus*, p. 735.

¹⁰⁵¹ Working Paper Prepared in the Eastern Affairs Division, Berlin Element, HICOG, 25 June 1953, FRUS, 1952-1954, VII, pt. 2 (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1986), p. 1595.

¹⁰⁵² “Comment on East Berlin Rioting,” CIA Current Intelligence Digest, 18 June 1953, p. 9 (CIA FOIA release to author). French government officials were apparently particularly convinced that the uprising had started as an event staged by the Soviets. See Michael Gehler, “Von der Arbeiterrevolte zur spontanen politischen Volkserhebung: Der 17. Juni 1953 in der DDR im Urteil westlicher Diplomatie und Politik,” *Militär-geschichtliche Mitteilungen* 54:2 (1995), pp. 363-416.

operation” through their own channels “to determine first exactly what transpired in East Berlin and Pilsen, what its effects are likely to be, and what lay behind the whole affair.”¹⁰⁵³ As late as June 18, the Western Berlin Commandants apparently had “no precise information on hand” on the status of the strikes in East Berlin.¹⁰⁵⁴ Later that day HICOG Berlin did pass on “unconfirmed reports [of] unrest and strikes” in major GDR cities, but the scarcity of intelligence made it “impossible [to] evaluate [the] extent” of the disturbances. Reflecting the continued difficulties in assessing the uprising, the CIA’s Office of Current Intelligence by June 26 was still passing on unsubstantiated information to the effect that the demonstrations had reportedly been the subject of “elaborate prior planning.” CIA did feel certain that the popular unrest and anti-regime activity was not limited to East Germany but evident in neighboring countries such as Czechoslovakia, Romania, and Albania.¹⁰⁵⁵

Discussions in the NSC in Washington on June 18 were marked by a realization that while the unrest was a “sign of real promise,” it also “posed a very tough problem for the United States to know how to handle.”¹⁰⁵⁶ This was particularly true since the uprising coincided with unforeseen troubles in Korea. Only hours before, South Korean President Syngman Rhee had freed some 25,000 North Korean prisoners of war in a bid to torpedo armistice negotiations with Pyongyang. Despite the administration’s interest in extricating the United States from the Korean conflict, the NSC resolved to keep up the pressure on the Soviet Union by continuing the armistice talks. What Eisenhower called the “terrible

¹⁰⁵³ Memorandum, “Berlin,” George A. Morgan to C.D. Jackson, 18 June 1953, DDEL.

¹⁰⁵⁴ Memorandum, “East Berlin Demonstrations (briefing of the Under Secretary for PSB luncheon),” from Richard Strauss/GER to Phillips/P, 17 June 1953, DDEL, C. D. Jackson Papers, Box 3; HICOG Berlin to Secretary of State, 18 June 1953, 6 p.m., NARA, RG 59, 762A.0221/6-1853.

¹⁰⁵⁵ “German Socialists Report Unrest Prior to 16-17 June,” CIA Current Intelligence Digest, 26 June 1953, p. 12 (CIA FOIA release to the author).

¹⁰⁵⁶ “Minutes of Discussion at the 150th Meeting of the National Security Council on 18 June 1953,” 19 June 1953, DDEL (Mandatory review release to author). On the one-hour long debate in the NSC on the food program see the memoirs of the Director of the Mutual Security Agency, Harold Stassen (and Marshall Houts), *Eisenhower: Turning the World Towards Peace* (St. Paul: Merril/Magnus Publishing Corp., 1990), pp. 175-177.

situation” in Korea deepened the uncertainty about what to do about East Germany. A four-power conference, as favored by Churchill, continued to be an option. According to John Foster Dulles, the State Department was giving the idea a great deal of thought, but Eisenhower sharply disagreed. Anxious not to lend any semblance of moral approval to bloody Soviet suppression, the President declared that “he had supposed he had made it crystal clear that if there were to be a four-power conference he himself would not be present.” If anything, the uprising “certainly had provided us with the strongest possible argument to give to Mr. Churchill against a four-power meeting.¹⁰⁵⁷

Much like the morning after Stalin’s death, the uprising in East Germany caught the Eisenhower administration entirely off guard: How far Washington was prepared to go “if this thing really gets cracking” was really the “64-dollar question,” as presidential adviser C. D. Jackson put it during the NSC meeting. Following a report by CIA director Allen Dulles, Eisenhower, according to the now fully declassified NSC transcript, “inquired whether Mr. Jackson meant that we should intervene to prevent the slaughter by the Soviet forces.” Jackson replied, “not only that, but it was now quite possible that some of the satellite regimes were now prepared to follow the road Tito had taken.” Indeed, he added, “this could be the bell pealing the disintegration of the Soviet empire. Do we stand idly by, or do we help the disintegration? And how much responsibility are we willing to take for the results of helping?” With the question of intervening explicitly raised at the NSC meeting by Jackson, Eisenhower’s reactions show a remarkable degree of exaggeration in his assessment of the East German protests--and suggest what it would have taken for him to risk direct U.S. involvement. The decision to intervene, he said, “depended on how widespread the uprising became. Would the riots spread to China, or even possibly to the USSR itself? If this should happen, we would probably never have a

¹⁰⁵⁷ Ibid.

better chance to act, and we would be well-advised, for example to supply arms.” As to whether “we should ship arms to the East Berliners,” as Jackson seemed to advocate, Eisenhower reasoned, “that if to do so was just inviting a slaughter of these people, you certainly didn’t supply the arms. If, on the contrary, there was a real chance of success, you might well do so. Our problem was to weigh the prospects of success. In his opinion, the President added, the revolts have to be more serious and widespread than at this moment before they promised real success and indicated the desirability of our intervening.” Jackson pressed on, asking whether U.S. actions could “help [to] make this movement more serious and more widespread?” But Eisenhower thought such ideas premature. To him, “it was very important that the unrest spread to China, because while the USSR would have no great difficulty in crushing uprisings in Europe alone, they would find it tough to deal with trouble both in Europe and in the Far East.” For the moment, Eisenhower concluded that “the time to ‘roll them out for keeps’” had not “quite” arrived. Uncertain what could be done, Eisenhower finally asked the Psychological Strategy Board to devise a short-term plan on how to exploit the East German situation.¹⁰⁵⁸

As the administration, prodded by Jackson, searched for options for a more positive and active response to the uprising, the British and French remained more passive. This divergence among Cold War allies emerged as early as 17 June when the three Western Berlin Commandants drafted a joint communiqué in order to counter Communist allegations that the Western Allies were provoking the disorders. While the Commandants expressed “grave concern” and denounced the Soviets’ “irresponsible recourse to military force,” the British Commandant clearly preferred a softer approach than his U.S. counterpart, noting at one point that he had barely “succeeded in defeating the American

¹⁰⁵⁸ Ibid.

desire to insert in the statement words which would have implied that the Allies approved of the riots.”¹⁰⁵⁹ While the French government favored a “policy of watchful waiting,”¹⁰⁶⁰ Churchill, fearing the uprising would quash his hopes for a four-power summit, wanted to return to business-as-usual in Berlin as quickly as possible.¹⁰⁶¹ The British prime minister reacted violently to the Commandants’ June 18 statement. Citing diplomatic reports on the relatively restrained Soviet behavior, he harshly reprimanded the British representative, stating that “if the Soviet Government, as the occupying Power, were faced as you have described with widespread movements of violent disorders they surely have the right to declare Martial Law in order to prevent anarchy and if they acted in your words ... ‘with marked restraint and moderation’ this is no reason for making statements [as contained in the Commandants’ message]. We shall not find our way out of our many difficulties by making for purposes of local propaganda statements which are not in accordance with the facts.”¹⁰⁶² The Anglo-American strains resurfaced when the Commandants decided to issue another statement on 24 June, with the Americans again inclined “no doubt to make it considerably stiffer” than the British wished.¹⁰⁶³ London’s envoy also showed concern about the American sector, “where the propagandists do not

¹⁰⁵⁹ Tel., Ward to Foreign Office [henceforth FO], 20.6. 1953, Public Record Office, Kew Gardens, England [henceforth PRO], FO/371/103840, CS 1016/85.

¹⁰⁶⁰ Dillon/Paris to Secretary of State, 24 June 1953, NARA, RG 59, 762A.0221/6-2453.

¹⁰⁶¹ On British policy during the uprising see Klaus Larres, “Neutralisierung oder Westintegration. Churchill, Adenauer, die USA und der 17. Juni 1953,” *Deutschland Archiv* 45:6 (1993), pp. 568-583; Michael Gehler, “Der 17. Juni 1953 aus der Sicht des Foreign Office,” *Aus Politik und Zeitgeschichte* 25 (1993), pp. 22-31; John W. Young, “Cold War and Detente With Moscow,” in *The Foreign Policy of Churchill’s Peacetime Government, 1951-55*, ed. John W. Young (Leicester: Leicester University Press, 1988), pp. 55-80; M. Steven Fish, “After Stalin’s Death: The Anglo-American Debate Over a New Cold War,” *Diplomatic History* 10:4 (1986), pp. 333-355; Rolf Steininger, “Ein vereinigt, unabhängiges Deutschland? Winston Churchill, der kalte Krieg und die deutsche Frage im Jahre 1953,” *Militär-geschichtliche Mitteilungen* 36 (1984), pp. 105-144; Joseph Foschepoth, “Churchill, Adenauer und die Neutralisierung Deutschlands,” *Deutschland Archiv* 17:12 (1984), pp. 1286-1301.

¹⁰⁶² Tel. 168, Personal from Prime Minister to Coleman, 22.6. 1953, PRO, FO/371/103840, CS1016/85.

¹⁰⁶³ FO Minute, Roberts to Strang, 23.6.1953, PRO, FO/371/103841, CS 1016/116. See also Telegram, Lyon to HICOG Bonn, 22 June 1953 (FOIA release to the author). Lyon stated that “the U.S. Commandant strongly urged the inclusion of [a] sentence connecting Berlin incidents with incidents throughout zone. British and French insisted that any such broadening is responsibility of HICOMERS. Idea therefore had to be dropped.”

always seem to be under control.”¹⁰⁶⁴ Acting Foreign Minister Lord Salisbury soon warned of the “new and more dangerous American tendency ... to interpret the situation behind the Iron Curtain as already very shaky and therefore to advocate new although unspecified measures to encourage and even promote an early liberation of the satellite countries.”¹⁰⁶⁵

The American attitude--both in Washington and Berlin--soon grew tougher. There were several reasons for this. U.S. intelligence was beginning to get a clearer picture of the scope of demonstrations and strikes as they spread throughout East Germany. The extent of the unrest gave the administration grounds for greater confidence, particularly as it became apparent that news of the disturbances was reaching to other satellite countries where they would undermine communist authority even further. A second reason was political in nature: Eisenhower and Dulles were sensitive to the gap between the United States’ markedly restrained actions during the first days of the uprising and the rhetoric of “liberation” and “roll-back” on which they had campaigned and on which many East Germans expectations rested.¹⁰⁶⁶ They intended to make the most of this unexpected windfall. At the same time, the uprising also threatened to upset the U.S. agenda for Germany. While Washington had hoped to keep world attention focused on the FRG’s entry into the Western alliance, the New Course announcement and the ensuing uprising had thrust the issue of German reunification to the forefront, both on the international scene and in the West German election campaign, prompting calls for Four Power talks. “In addition to bringing back in increased strength the feeling that something must be done to unify Germany,” the U.S. High Commissioner in Bonn reported, the riots had also

¹⁰⁶⁴ Tel. 564, Ward to FO, 22.6. 1953, PRO, FO/371/103840, CS 1016/90.

¹⁰⁶⁵ Fish, “After Stalin’s Death,” p. 343

¹⁰⁶⁶ For background on the “liberation” policy, see James D. Marchio, *Rhetoric and Reality: The Eisenhower Administration and Unrest in Eastern Europe, 1953-1959*. (Ph.D. dissertation, American University, 1990); and Gregory Mitrovich, *Undermining the Kremlin.*

“created the new feeling that something *can* be done.”¹⁰⁶⁷ In East Germany, earlier SED actions such as publishing the June 9-11 communiqué were widely interpreted as steps towards unification. Moreover, many East Germans believed that the West was specifically pressuring the regime in this direction. As one report described the popular view: “they over there [have] finally succeeded in forcing a change of course here.”¹⁰⁶⁸

Sensing a broader shift in the Cold War balance of power, many East Germans apparently expected the United States and West Europeans to begin providing active support. In numerous discussions, local SED officials reported, the population believed that “the Soviet army, under pressure from the Western powers, was leaving the territories west of the Elbe, [...] the regime had fled to Russia, and American and British occupation forces would soon victoriously enter the area.”¹⁰⁶⁹ Others felt that this was the beginning of a process of “slowly [...] acquiring Western conditions,” while still others were expressing the view that “The SED has to go, it is time, they have run the country down. Soon we can start learning English.”¹⁰⁷⁰ As late as August, rumors that the U.S. would intervene led farmers to refuse further deliveries: “When the American comes, we will get more money for our cattle and will be able to afford more with it.”¹⁰⁷¹ Indeed, internal SED estimates on the population’s state of mind reflect that, until late summer, many East Germans believed that the West would not ignore their outcry.

¹⁰⁶⁷HICOG Bonn to Department of State, 6 July 1953, NARA, RG 59, 762B.00/7-653 (emphasis added). As early as 26 June, U.S. High Commissioner had notified Washington that since “the Berlin uprising there has been a groundswell on demand in press for initiative and immediate action on [the] part of [the] Adenauer Government toward achieving German reunification and reversing the previous order of priority: “First strengthening the West (EDC) and then reunification.” Cable, Conant to Secretary of State, 26 June 1953, NARA, RG 59, 762A.00/6-2653.

¹⁰⁶⁸“Stellungnahme der Parteiorgane nach dem 9./11.6. 1953,” n.d., SAPMO-BArch, DY 30,IV 2/5/526.

¹⁰⁶⁹“Information der Kreisleitung Oldenburg,” 12 June 1953, SAPMO-BArch, DY 30,IV 2/5/526;

“Stimmungsbericht von Magdeburg,” 12 June 1953, *ibid.*

¹⁰⁷⁰FDGB-Bundesvorstand, “Vertrauliche Information” No. 21, 13 June 1953, SAPMO-BArch, DY 30,IV 2/5/543.

¹⁰⁷¹Quoted in Lothar Dralle, “Das DSF-Archiv als Quelle zur Geschichte der DDR--der Volksaufstand vom 17. Juni 1953,” *Deutschland Archiv* 25 (1992), p. 841.

The Eisenhower administration was well aware of these expectations—and the dilemma they brought about. In the aftermath of the riots in Czechoslovakia, U.S. officials realized that “anything less than a full voiced attack” on the regime by Radio Free Europe and VOA would be taken as a “betrayal” by the very people who had waved US flags as they went on strike or into the streets.¹⁰⁷² After the initial wave of riots and demonstrations in East Germany, HICOG noted that “whether the SED suffers [a] further, perhaps crippling setback or substantially recovers [its] former power position (which could happen within the next six months) may depend largely on US policy.”¹⁰⁷³ There was also already public criticism of Western inaction, particularly of West German Chancellor Adenauer’s reserved response to the turmoil in East Germany. “[U]nless some sign is forthcoming very soon from the United States,” presidential adviser C.D. Jackson pointed out to Eisenhower in early July, “there could be a terrible letdown in both East and West Germany, which will seriously affect the U.S. position and even more seriously affect Adenauer’s position.”¹⁰⁷⁴ Others argued that if the U.S. confined its response to press comments and statements “we risk not only to lose the confidence of the Soviet Zone population, but may even cause considerable antagonism.”¹⁰⁷⁵

Moreover, while Moscow’s resort to force had upset its “entire German gambit”¹⁰⁷⁶ and impaired the Soviet negotiating position, in the U.S. administration’s eyes, it was still unclear how much the demonstrations and their suppression might deflect the Kremlin’s attempts to project an image of restraint--what the State Department called the

¹⁰⁷² Wadsworth to Secretary of State, 10 June 1953, NARA, RG 59, cited in Stöver, *Die Befreiung vom Kommunismus*, p. 735.

¹⁰⁷³ HICOG Berlin to Secretary of State, 29 July 1953, NARA, RG 59, 762B.00/7-2953.

¹⁰⁷⁴ Memorandum, C.D. Jackson to Eisenhower, 3 July 1953, DDEL, C.D. Jackson Papers, Box 41. For a brief biography of Jackson see H.W. Brands, Jr., *Cold Warriors. Eisenhower’s Generation and American Foreign Policy* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1988), pp. 117-137; Marchio, *Rhetoric and Reality*, pp. 95-96.

¹⁰⁷⁵ Memorandum, John Albert to Ned Roberts/Brad Connors, 18 June 1953, NARA, RG 59, 762B.00/6-1853. See also Memorandum, Revey to Kellermann, 18 June 1953, *ibid*; New York Times, 29 June 1953.

¹⁰⁷⁶ C.D. Jackson to John F. Dulles, 8 August 1953, DDEL, C.D. Jackson Papers, Box 40.

“Soviet-GDR moderation pose.”¹⁰⁷⁷ Washington still warned that “the Soviets might nevertheless make [a] bid to capitalize on [the] current East and West German demand for unification by calling for [a] conference allegedly pointed at satisfying this demand.”¹⁰⁷⁸ Therefore, the administration thought it was crucial to “keep [the] Soviets as much as possible on [the] defensive, with [the] aim of endeavoring [to] deflate any further gestures they may make at conciliation.”¹⁰⁷⁹ HICOG officials had noticed the “recognition and appreciation of the strikers and demonstrators of the fact that the Soviet soldiers maintained remarkable reserve, that there was no wanton shooting into the crowds.” Thus, they reported, many demonstrators believed that “maybe it is not impossible to negotiate with the Soviets.” HICOG officials concluded that if such a feeling should grow, “it could have a significant effect upon East German attitudes vis-à-vis the Soviets and the Western Allies, shifting, perhaps, their bitterness somewhat away from the former and directing it toward the latter, particularly if the West does nothing positive to bring about unification.”¹⁰⁸⁰ Indeed, as High Commissioner Conant warned from Bonn, unless some action was taken in the near future, the “Soviet[s] might regain control of the situation and recoup a major part of [their] lost prestige.”¹⁰⁸¹

Charged by the NSC to develop a response to the uprising, the Psychological Strategy Board, by the end of June, had drawn up an “Interim U.S. Plan for Exploitation of Unrest in Satellite Europe” (PSB D-45). PSB D-45 placed the East German uprising in the

¹⁰⁷⁷Department of State to HICOG Bonn, 16 June 1953, NARA, RG 59, 762.0221/6-1653.

¹⁰⁷⁸HICOG Berlin to Secretary of State, 22 June 1953, NARA, RG 59, 762.0221/6-2253.

¹⁰⁷⁹State to HICOG Bonn, 16 June 1953, NARA, RG 59, 762.0221/6-1653.

¹⁰⁸⁰HICOG Berlin to HICOG Bonn, 30 June 1953, NARA, RG 59, 762B.00/6-3053. As early as 25 June, HICOG informed the State Department that West German officials also “privately recognized that—perhaps remembering fairly recent history when German troops had put down popular uprisings— Soviet countermeasures had not been as violent as could be expected and that actually much less blood had flowed than would normally have been anticipated under the circumstances.” (Despatch, HICOG Bonn to Department of State, 25 June 1953, NARA, RG 59, 762A.00/6-2553).

¹⁰⁸¹Conant to Secretary of State, 26 June 1953, NARA, RG 59, 762B.00/6-2653. On Conant’s concern on the impact of the June 1953 uprising on the West German election campaign, particularly the renewed calls for a Four-Power conference, see James G. Hershberg, *James B. Conant: From Harvard to Hiroshima and the Making of the Nuclear Age* (New York: Knopf, 1993), pp. 659-665.

context of signs of unrest in Czechoslovakia, Poland, Romania, and Albania. While resentment over excessive production quotas, food shortages and low living standards had triggered the revolt, these grievances were, in PSB D-45's analysis, "overshadowed by the clearly expressed political objectives of the German rebels." More than anything, the uprising seemed to be "a kind of spontaneous direct-action plebiscite in which the East German masses voted with their fists for free elections, the reunification of Germany and the withdrawal of Soviet occupation forces." Expecting that, with popular resentment of the Soviets "near the boiling point," attempts might be revived, in different areas, to start local strikes, demonstrations, or other manifestations of continuing resistance, the PSB judged that the GDR uprising created "the greatest opportunity for initiating effective policies to help roll back Soviet power that has yet come to light."¹⁰⁸²

As they put the finishing touches on PSB D-45, Eisenhower's psychological warfare advisers were probably unaware how close Ulbricht, the strongest proponent of Soviet power in East Germany, came to be ousted or demoted. The day before the NSC decision, the three top Soviet officials in the Germany, Semyonov, Yudin and Sokolovsky, delivered to the Soviet leadership a 50-page report that called for a far-reaching "rollback" of Ulbricht's position as East Germany's leader. The three argued that the crisis had resulted from the badly-handled increase in industrial output norms. As the driving force behind this policy, Ulbricht came in for particularly harsh criticism.¹⁰⁸³ Semyonov's, Yudin's and Sokolovskii's "conclusions," reflected the urgency of Moscow's efforts to "improve the health of the situation in the GDR." In addition to his longstanding arguments in favor of relieving the GDR of its reparations, occupation and other economic

¹⁰⁸² "Interim U.S. Psychological Strategy Plan for Exploitation of Unrest in Satellite Europe (PSB D-45)," 1 July 1953, NARA, RG 273, NSC 158 Series.-- The NSC approved the PSB recommendations on 25 June with some modifications; after stipulating that "more emphasis be placed on passive resistance," Eisenhower signed off on the plan the next day.

¹⁰⁸³ "On the Events of 17-19 June 1953 in Berlin and the GDR and Certain Conclusions from these Events," Report by Sokolovsky, Semyonov, and Yudin, 24 June 1953, AVP RF, F. 06, Op. 12a, Pap. 5, Delo 301, LL. 1-51, published in *Uprising in East Germany, 1953*, pp. 257-285.

burdens and in extenuation of the 2 June decree, the report's authors now favored rather drastic structural and personnel changes. It was necessary, the Soviet German hands argued, to separate government and party functions more clearly, to liquidate Ulbricht's position as general secretary, and to reduce the size and responsibilities of what had been Ulbricht's machine (the Central Committee secretariat). They further recommended reorganizing the GDR government by integrating the Ministry for State Security into the Interior Ministry, elevating the role of the *Volkskammer*, jettisoning disliked ministers, and bringing in "more popular people ... with broader enlistment of representatives of other parties." Semyonov's, Yudin's and Sokolovskii's demarche, which reached Moscow on June 25, urged upon Moscow a radical enhancement of the GDR's image "in the eyes of the German population."¹⁰⁸⁴

This was precisely what the Eisenhower administration sought to avoid. PSB D-45, adopted as NSC directive 158 on June 29, sought to capitalize on the East German crisis by keeping the Soviets and the Ulbricht regime on the defensive in order to undercut their "peace and unity offensive" and to strengthen the position of those who favored West German rearmament and joining the EDC. The policy directive prescribed actions at two levels: First, the administration was to re-emphasize "at the earliest possible moment" strong U.S. support for German unification based on free elections, thereby responding to the momentum for Four-Power talks. This advice coincided with the views of U.S. diplomats in Germany who had pointed to the opportunity given by the rebellion to wrest the initiative on the unity issue away from the Soviets and to exploit Moscow's undermined position in Germany for "an offensive at the highest level."¹⁰⁸⁵ By early July, Adenauer had publicly reversed his long-standing opposition to a high-level East-West conference, and on 15 July the three Western allied foreign ministers, meeting in

¹⁰⁸⁴Ibid.

¹⁰⁸⁵Cable, Hulick to Secretary of State, 25 September 1953, NARA, RG 59, 762B.00/9-2553 (FOIA to author); Conant to Dulles, 26 June 1953, NARA, RG 59, 762B.00/6-2653.

Washington (in place of the cancelled Bermuda summit) called for a four-power foreign ministers' meeting on Germany for the coming fall.¹⁰⁸⁶

Secondly, the PSB D-45 strategy consisted of a variety of overt, covert and psychological warfare measures designed “to nourish resistance to Communist oppression throughout satellite Europe, short of mass rebellion ... and without compromising its spontaneous nature, [and] to undermine satellite puppet authority.”¹⁰⁸⁷ The proposed measures included a wide range of activities, from allocating \$50 million for the reconstruction of West Berlin to exploiting Soviet repressive tactics at the United Nations, launching “black” radio intruder operations to induce defections, and encouraging the “elimination of key puppet officials.”¹⁰⁸⁸ Beyond the list of proposals outlined in NSC 158, the administration also considered a number of other propaganda measures such as urging Adenauer to announce the building of “a Bundestag” in West Berlin on the grounds of the destroyed Reichstag. After the September 1953 elections, “an all-out push” would be made for this “perpetual monument” featuring “Hall of Heroes” in which the first hero would be Willi Götting, a West Berlin painter who had been shot by the Soviets during the riots.¹⁰⁸⁹ Others within the administration suggested celebrating a “day of mourning for the martyrs of East Berlin” or a “Go home, Ivan’ Day.”¹⁰⁹⁰ Despite C. D. Jackson’s emphasis on “the importance of vigorous implementation of PSB D-45 and its amended

¹⁰⁸⁶Hans-Peter Schwarz, *Adenauer*, p. 85; Hershberg, *James B. Conant*, p. 665.

¹⁰⁸⁷See also summary of PSB D-45, 22 June 1953, DDEL, White House Office Files, Office of the Special Assistant for National Security Affairs, Records 1952-1961, NSC Series, Policy Papers Subseries, Box 4; PSB, “Interim U.S. Psychological Strategy Plan for Exploitation of Unrest in Satellite Europe,” 1 July 1953, NARA, RG 273, NSC 158 series; NSC Executive Secretariat, “United States Objectives and Actions to Exploit the Unrest in Satellite States - A Report to the National Security Council”, 29 June 1953, NARA, RG 273, NSC 158 Series.

¹⁰⁸⁸See also summary of PSB D-45, 22 June 1953, DDEL, White House Office Files, Office of the Special Assistant for National Security Affairs, Records 1952-1961, NSC Series, Policy Papers Subseries, Box 4; Report on the Implementation of PSB D-45, Strauss to Stevens, 23 September 1953, NARA, RG 59, 862B.03/9-2353 (FOIA to author); see also White House Office Files, Office of the Special Assistant for National Security Affairs, Records 1952-1961, Special Series, Presidential Subseries, Box 1; H. W. Brands, “The Eisenhower Administration and the Volunteer Freedom Corps,” *Military Affairs* 52 (1988), pp. 7-11.

¹⁰⁸⁹Memorandum, Edward M. O’Connor to Abbott Washburn, 18 August 1953, DDEL, C.D. Jackson Records, Box 1.

¹⁰⁹⁰Letter, W.W. Rostow to C.D. Jackson, 22 June 1953, DDEL, C.D. Jackson Records, Box 1.

summary,” few of the measures, as far as one can tell from the declassified documents, were actually carried out. By far the most visible activity which did take place was a large-scale food program for East Germany, which the PSB approved on July 1. Popular sentiment, U.S. officials believed, might “crystallize on [the] food issue as [a] showdown point for [a] major test of strength.”¹⁰⁹¹ Indeed, at the very time the food offer would be publicly announced on July 10, the CIA reported indications of a “new uprising.”

By then, Ulbricht was walking a tight rope. Sometimes passive, seemingly even resigned, at other times belligerent, the besieged party leader appeared to be playing for time in early July. The struggle within the SED Politburo culminated during a night session of the politburo on July 7-8. According to surviving notes,¹⁰⁹² the debate quickly focused on whether Ulbricht should step down. Herrstadt refused to accept the position of first or general secretary, as had been proposed by MfS chief Zaisser. According to Zaisser, Ulbricht “was no more responsible for the wrong course (2nd Party Conference) than we all are.” Nevertheless, he added the leader’s attitude had “spoiled the Party,” and would undermine efforts to implement the New Course: “[To leave] the apparatus in the hands of W.U. would be catastrophic for the New Course.” One by one, the Politburo members declared their opposition to Ulbricht’s continued leadership; only Free German Youth League chief Erich Honecker¹⁰⁹³ and Party Control Commission Chairman Hermann Matern supported him. Again temporizing, Ulbricht prevented a decision by promising that he would make a statement at the forthcoming 15th SED CC meeting, scheduled for later that month. That night, he and Grotewohl left for an emergency meeting of the CPSU Plenum in Moscow.

¹⁰⁹¹ HICOG Berlin to Secretary of State, 6 August 1953, NARA, RG 59, 862B.00/8-653.

¹⁰⁹² The notes were taken by premier Otto Grotewohl.

¹⁰⁹³ On Honecker’s role, see Heinz Lippmann, *Honecker: Porträt eines Nachfolgers* (Düsseldorf: Verlag Wissenschaft und Politik, 1971), pp. 152-164.

When they reached the Soviet capital, the GDR leaders learned about dramatic changes. On 26 June, Lavrentii Beria had been arrested; simultaneously, Semyonov and Sokolovskii had received orders to detain Beria's aides, Goglidze and Kobulov, who were then in Berlin.¹⁰⁹⁴ Although Beria's arrest was not announced until July 10, the extraordinary CPSU Plenum accused the intelligence chief of a variety of nefarious acts, including a willingness to abandon the GDR. Adding to the crisis mode in Moscow, reports were reaching the Soviet capital that East Germany's neighbors were growing increasingly concerned about the spill-over effects from the upheaval. Large-scale strikes were even taking place in Soviet labor camps.¹⁰⁹⁵ Rumors of renewed unrest in the GDR which resurfaced in early July (strikes indeed occurred in mid-July) probably only reinforced any disinclination in Moscow towards sweeping changes on the ground. Given the dramatically changing equilibrium in the Kremlin, Moscow officials effectively shelved the Semyonov-Yudin-Sokolovskii report's far-reaching and politically sensitive proposals, focusing instead on the less provocative issues involving occupation costs, exchange rates, and improvements in Soviet troop stationing. Proposals calling for a reorganization of the GDR government would be removed from the agenda for the USSR Council of Ministers altogether. It is uncertain whether the SED presence in the Soviet capital had any influence on the decision-making process in Moscow; more likely, the Soviet leadership, preoccupied with the Beria affair and its internal (and empire-wide) ramifications, grew ever more inclined to maintain the *status quo*, to hold on to power in

¹⁰⁹⁴ Murphy, Kondrashev, and Bailey, *Battleground Berlin*, p. 176. According to a CIA report based on at least one MVD account, Kobulov and Goglidze were seized on 27 June, "brought to the airport under guard, trussed up, and placed aboard the Moscow-bound plane." Sokolovskii had overseen the arrest, "probably under Bulganin's orders, as they were arrested by Soviet army personnel rather than by the MVD, which apparently was not trusted to perform the job." Reflecting the Kremlin's line on Beria's alleged misdeeds regarding Germany, the report noted that "Beriya [Beria] supposedly remarked to Goglidze and Kobulov that Socialism in Germany was a joke and that the attempt to instill it there should be discontinued. They were sent to Berlin not for the purpose of straightening things out, but rather to create even more confusion in the German situation." Goglidze was eventually shot, the report said. (CIA Information Report (undated, late 1953), copy on file at the National Security Archive.)

¹⁰⁹⁵ Andrea Graziosi, "The Great Strikes of 1953 in Soviet Labor Camps in the Accounts of their Participants: A Review," *Cahiers du Monde russe et soviétique* 33:4 (October-December 1992), pp. 419-446

East Germany by means of reinforcing an experienced, reliable, albeit Stalinist and unpopular ruler.

With the news of Beria's arrest and the renewed emphasis on "collective leadership" that Grotewohl brought back from his trip to Moscow, Ulbricht must have sensed the opportunity to turn the tables on his foes. Increasingly certain of his continued support in Moscow, Ulbricht had gone on the offensive by mid-July. On July 18, he ousted Zaisser as security chief, five days later Zaisser, Herrstadt and Ackermann were expelled from the Politburo. At the 15th SED Plenum in late July, Ulbricht charged Herrstadt and Zaisser with inner-party conspiracy and linked them to Beria's alleged "criminal machinations," including his supposed readiness to sell-out the GDR.¹⁰⁹⁶ With support from Moscow, the SED also sought to shore up support by hurriedly launching a number of measures to appease the resentful populace, in particular overcoming the shortages in food supplies. But party officials acknowledged that many East Germans "displayed a hesitant and in part distrustful attitude towards the [New Course] measures inaugurated by party and regime."¹⁰⁹⁷ They wanted to "finally see deeds follow words."¹⁰⁹⁸

3. Retreat from Rollback? The Eisenhower Packages Program and the Dilemmas of Psychological Warfare

The Eisenhower administration's central response to the uprising also focused on the consumer goods shortages in the GDR. U.S. officials thought a program to provide the East German population with food ideally combined humanitarian motives with political-

¹⁰⁹⁶ See Victor Baras, "Beria's Fall and Ulbricht's Survival," *Soviet Studies* 27:3 (July 1975), pp. 381-395; on the impact of the uprising on the GDR security apparatus, see Gary Bruce, "The MfS, the West, and the June 17 Uprising" (paper presented at the conference "The Crisis Year 1953 and the Cold War in Europe, Potsdam, November 1996); for an interesting personal view by a former GDR security officer, see "1953 fing alles an..." *Deutschland Archiv* 26:7 (1993), pp. 846-855.

¹⁰⁹⁷"Zusammenfassung der Stimmung, Vorschläge und Kritik der Werktätigen zur Erklärung des ZK vom 22.6.53," 23 June 1953, SAPMO-BArch, NY 4090/435.

¹⁰⁹⁸Ibid.

psychological objectives. The distribution of food at no cost to the East Germans would help to alleviate the immediate crisis “but offer no long-range change in the deteriorating economic condition.”¹⁰⁹⁹ The food relief would demonstrate Adenauer’s sympathy for the East German brethren. High Commissioner Conant emphasized that “our primary objective should be to put Adenauer in [a] position to take decisive action with respect to [the] East Zone crisis.”¹¹⁰⁰ By placing the food program officially under West German auspices, as Conant urged from Bonn, the U.S. could “provide [a] powerful stimulus to the Adenauer election victory”¹¹⁰¹ and to Western resolve on the EDC. But the food program would also demonstrate continuing U.S. concern for the plight of the East Germans, yet keep the Soviets on the defensive and aggravate antagonisms between the SED regime and the populace.

Various schemes for implementing the program were considered. Outlining the options, State Department officials recognized that “[i]f humanitarian considerations were to take precedence over the psychological advantages to be gained, and the amount of food to be offered were [was] to be reduced considerably,” thus without U.S. governmental intervention and by unobtrusive methods, some food could certainly get into East Germany.¹¹⁰² But this ran precisely counter to the intention behind the program. Another proposal called for Chancellor Adenauer to issue a formal request to Eisenhower, who would respond by making food available from the Allied Berlin stockpile and from agricultural surpluses in the United States, supplemented by Army C-rations. The food would then be distributed through private channels, churches, and charitable organizations.¹¹⁰³ This option was soon discarded for the fear of endangering these inner-German links which were of vital importance to political prisoners and others supported

¹⁰⁹⁹Memorandum, Riddleberger to Smith, 6 July 1953, NARA, RG 59, 862B.49/7-653.

¹¹⁰⁰Conant to Secretary of State, 3 July 1953, NARA, RG 59, 862B.49/7-353.

¹¹⁰¹Conant to Secretary of State, 26 June 1953, NARA, RG 59, 762B.00/6-2653.

¹¹⁰²Riddleberger to General Smith, 7 July 1953, NA, RG 59, 862B.49/7-753.

¹¹⁰³*FRUS 1952-1954*, VII, 1611-1614.

by the churches in East Germany. The CIA, the Air Force, and the influential journalist Drew Pearson favored a riskier scheme by which the Air Re-supply and Communications Service, an arm of the U.S. Air Force, would send food to the East by way of balloons, a plan which ran into strong opposition from High Commissioner Conant.¹¹⁰⁴ Indeed, one proposal envisaged U.S. and Western food convoys arriving at selected Iron Curtain border points in East Germany, Poland, and Czechoslovakia demanding entrance on pre-announced days. If denied entry, “it might be very effective to arrive at the border points anyway on the day and at the time announced, and permit the news cameras and reporters [...] to cover the event of Soviet denial.”¹¹⁰⁵

“From a psychological point of view,” it was finally deemed most effective if the offer for food for East Germany was made by a direct approach to the Soviet Government.¹¹⁰⁶ Thus, on July 10, the program was officially announced by publication of an exchange of letters between Chancellor Adenauer and President Eisenhower. Simultaneously, Eisenhower’s note to the Soviets, offering \$15 million worth of food aid for the East Germans, was published.¹¹⁰⁷ Planned as a *fait accompli* regardless of Soviet reaction, rejection by the Soviets on July 11 came as little surprise.¹¹⁰⁸ Headed by Eleanor Dulles and Richard Strauss, an interdepartmental committee then decided to support a plan which placed the food packages—the so-called “Eisenhower packages”—at the disposal of the federal West German government for distribution to the East Germans. Modeled

¹¹⁰⁴ W.K. Scott to General Smith, 27 July 1953, NA, RG 59, 862B.49/7-2753; Frederick Ayer Jr., Special Assistant to the Secretary, Department of the Air Force, 29 July 1953, DDEL, C. D. Jackson Records, Box 2.

¹¹⁰⁵ Frederick Ayer Jr., Special Assistant to the Secretary, Department of the Air Force, 29 July 1953, DDEL, C.D. Jackson Records, Box 2.

¹¹⁰⁶ Riddleberger to Smith, 6 July 1953, NARA, RG 59, 862B.49/7-653.

¹¹⁰⁷ *Department of State Bulletin* 29:734 (20 July 1953), 67-69. For Adenauer’s 4 July 1953 letter to Eisenhower and Eisenhower’s response of July 10, see *FRUS, 1952-1954*, VII, 1615-16, 1617.

¹¹⁰⁸ For the “fait accompli” element in the offer see Edward M. O’Connor to C.D. Jackson, 8 July 1953, DDEL, C.D. Jackson Papers, Box 3, and Conant to Secretary of State, 11 July 1953, NA, RG 59, 862B.49/7-1153; for the Russian reaction, see O’Shaughnessy to Secretary of State, 11 July 1953, DDEL, White House Central Files (Confidential File), 1953-61, Subject Series, Box 37; *Neues Deutschland*, 12 June 1953; *Department of State Bulletin* 29:734 (20 July 1953), 68; and Fritz Schenk, *Im Vorzimmer der Diktatur. 12 Jahre Pankow* [Inside the Reception Room of the Dictator. 12 Years in Pankow] (Köln: Kiepenheuer Witsch, 1962), 226-31.

after a local Berlin “neighborly aid program,”¹¹⁰⁹ the food was made available to East Berliners and East Zoners at various distribution centers in the Western sectors of Berlin which were still accessible from the East, with distribution commencing on July 27.

Coinciding with the 15th Plenum at which Ulbricht sought to reassert authority, the aid scheme received an “overwhelming response”¹¹¹⁰ from the East Germans. By the end of the first day, HICOG could report that the number of applicants for food packages-- 103,743 packages were issued--had exceeded all expectations, a success attributed mainly to the heavy play RIAS gave to the operation.¹¹¹¹ By the third day, over 200,000 parcels were being issued daily. By the end of the program’s first phase (15 August), 865,000 people had come from East Germany and East Berlin to get food. Because many East Germans also carried identity cards belonging to friends and relatives--in order to receive several packages the average applicant collected about 3 apiece--altogether 2,598,202 parcels were given out. By mid-August, 75 per cent of East Berlin’s population had received one. Most importantly, however, two-thirds of the food went to people living in the Berlin periphery and to “deep zoners.”¹¹¹² A second program, lasting from 28 August to early October, evoked a similar response. In total, more than 5.5 million food packages were distributed.¹¹¹³

Within days of its launch, the food program’s impact was becoming evident. Underestimating the effectiveness of the American program, the SED initially reacted to the food distribution merely by intensifying propaganda. Noting the “relatively large number of inhabitants from all social strata” (reports emphasized the high proportion of

¹¹⁰⁹ While organized by Kreuzberg Mayor Kressmann, even this local initiative was perceived by the SED as “ist doch vom Ami gemacht” [done by the Americans]. SAPMO-BArch, IV 2/5/561.

¹¹¹⁰ HICOG Berlin to Secretary of State, 28 July 1953, NARA, RG 59, 862B.49/7-2853.

¹¹¹¹ HICOG Berlin to Secretary of State, 27 July 1953, NARA, RG 59, 862B.49/7-2753.

¹¹¹² Edward M. O’Connor to C.D. Jackson, DDEL, White House Central Files (Confidential File), Subject Series, Box 37; HICOG Berlin to Secretary of State, 17 August 1953, NARA, RG 59, 862B.49/8-1753.

¹¹¹³ More detailed statistics on the first phase can be found in Conant to Secretary of State, 17 August 1953, NARA, RG 59, 862B.49/8-1753.

women) and the large influx of people from outside the capital area going to Berlin to receive their packages, the SED ordered a massive propaganda drive (*Agitationseinsätze*) at rail stations and other strategic points. In Potsdam alone, 150,000 leaflets denouncing the food program were printed. Loudspeaker systems were installed in key spots, and the National Front orchestrated an intensified action of party agitators and party meetings. Newspapers and radio broadcasts denounced the “Bettelpakete” and named those who were caught receiving packages.¹¹¹⁴ Contrary to the grand-scale propaganda drive, few punitive actions other than occasional package confiscations were thought necessary.

By the end of the month, reports reaching the SED headquarters in Berlin sounded alarming. True, some East Germans believed the food relief to be “only propaganda for Adenauer,”¹¹¹⁵ but many responded enthusiastically. Party officials sent to West Berlin noted the rapidly increasing number of people on their way to receive packages.¹¹¹⁶ By July 31, train ticket sales had multiplied, in some cases by seven. Two-thirds of the passengers in trains from Berlin, the SED was informed, were carrying food packages.¹¹¹⁷ Party observers were obviously impressed by the patience the food recipients showed in waiting, often for hours, to receive their packages. “It is remarkable,” one report from Berlin noted, “that entire families and house communities were heading for the distribution points.”¹¹¹⁸ Others similarly noted the “*starker Andrang*,” or large throngs, at

¹¹¹⁴ SED/Abteilung Agitation [Department of Agitation] to Grotewohl, 29 July 1953, SAPMO-BArch, NL 90/437.

¹¹¹⁵ Kreisleitung der SED Rathenow [Local Party Headquarters in Rathenow] to Bezirksleitung der SED [SED District Leadership], 29 July 1953, SAPMO-BArch IV 2/5/561.

¹¹¹⁶ Abteilung Leitende Organe der Partei und Massenorganisationen, “1. Bericht über die Lage in Berlin - Ausgabe von Lebensmittelpaketen in den Westsektoren” [First Report on the Situation in Berlin - The Distribution of Food Packages in the Western Sectors], 29 July 1953, SAPMO-BArch, IV 2/5/561.

¹¹¹⁷ Abteilung Leitende Organe der Partei und Massenorganisationen, “IV. Bericht über die Ausgabe von Lebensmittelpaketen in den Westsektoren” [Fourth Report on the Distribution of Food Packages in the Western Sectors], 31 July 1953, SAPMO-BArch, IV 2/5/561.

¹¹¹⁸ Abteilung Leitende Organe der Partei und Massenorganisationen, “1. Bericht über die Lage in Berlin - Ausgabe von Lebensmittelpaketen in den Westsektoren,” 29 July 1953, SAPMO-BArch, IV 2/5/561.

the distribution points.¹¹¹⁹ Pointing out that trains to Berlin had been occupied at 180-200 percent of normal ridership, the massive number of arriving and departing package recipients at one railway station, according to one official observer, “gave the impression of a demonstration.”¹¹²⁰ A report from the Cottbus party district noted “vigorous discussions” of the U.S. food program in factories and in the entire district. Many workers, according to these reports, went so far as to demand that food packages should be claimed for the entire factory by factory representatives.¹¹²¹ On July 31, 150 employees of a industrial plant in Wittenberg were reported to have organized a joint trip to West Berlin. But not only workers deserted the party line again. Among the food recipients, the SED central committee learned, were growing numbers of train personnel in uniform (taking advantage of their free train tickets), and mail and administrative personnel.

Most disconcerting to the SED, numerous party members also made the trip to Berlin. Five hundred and seventy party members, sent to West Berlin to agitate against the food distribution, returned with only 150 packages, a remarkably small number which was attributed to the fact that most of them had kept their packages for themselves.¹¹²² In a party meeting in Fürstenwalde, Berlin was informed, only eight of 48 SED members were consistently resisting the temptation.¹¹²³ The fact that “even members and functionaries of the [SED] party were succumbing to the provocation and hence were becoming party enemies” was exemplified by the events in the town of Werder, where the

¹¹¹⁹ Abteilung Leitende Organe der Partei, “1. Bericht über die Lage in Berlin - Ausgabe von Lebensmittelpaketen in den Westsektoren,” 29 July 1953, SAPMO-BArch, IV 2/5/561; “2. Bericht über die Ausgabe von Lebensmittelpaketen in den Westsektoren” [Second Report on the Distribution of Food Packages in the Western Sectors], 29 July 1953, *ibid.*

¹¹²⁰ Abteilung Leitende Organe der Partei und Massenorganisationen, “5. Bericht über die Ausgabe der USA-Lebensmittelpakete in Westberlin” [Fifth Report on the Distribution of Food Packages in the Western Sectors], 2 August 1953, SAPMO-BArch, IV 2/5/564.

¹¹²¹ Abteilung Leitende Organe der Partei, “1. Bericht über die Lage in Berlin Ausgabe von Lebensmittelpaketen in den Westsektoren,” 29 July 1953, SAPMO-BArch, IV 2/5/561; “2. Bericht über die Ausgabe von Lebensmittelpaketen in den Westsektoren,” 29 July 1953, *ibid.*

¹¹²² Abteilung Leitende Organe der Partei, “1. Bericht über die Lage in Berlin - Ausgabe von Lebensmittelpaketen in den Westsektoren,” 29 July 1953, SAPMO-BArch, IV 2/5/561.

¹¹²³ Abteilung Leitende Organe der Partei, “IV. Bericht über die Ausgabe von Lebensmittelpaketen in den Westsektoren,” 31 July 1953, SAPMO-BArch, IV 2/5/561.

local party secretary and his deputy as well as the chairman of the farmers' association and local production cooperative, and following them a member of the mayor's household, went to Berlin to receive their packages. "Following this bad example all other residents one by one went to get the *Amipakete*."¹¹²⁴

Furthermore, many people were carrying several identity cards which were required for the pick-up in order to make the trip worthwhile. In one incident, a farm employee was found to be carrying 15 food packages.¹¹²⁵ Indeed, even the number of people registering their children for ID cards jumped up. The police in the small town of Fürstenwalde reported to Berlin that on one of the first days of the food program alone, 80 people had requested registration, a startling number considering that, despite encouragement on the part of the authorities, not a single registration had been requested since 1949!¹¹²⁶

It was clear that East Berlin had--as during the initial phase of the uprising--underestimated the response it would elicit among the population. In its 1 August meeting, the SED Politburo decided on a "shame" campaign against the food package program. To counter the "provocative acts of the American and British warmongers," the Politburo also suspended the sale of train tickets to Berlin and declared it illegal to carry more than one's own personal identification papers. Security measures were to be taken at railway stations in order to prevent "enemy provocations." In addition, all freight and bus traffic to Berlin was halted. Party, unions and other mass organizations were mobilized to carry out political mass agitation against the "imperialist" aid program. "It is necessary," the Politburo informed the local party organizations, "to take measures to ensure, in accordance with local conditions, the vigorous carrying out of the New Course. In doing

¹¹²⁴ Abteilung Leitende Organe der Partei und der Massenorganisationen, Informationsbericht, 12 September 1953, SAPMO-BArch, IV 2/5/563.

¹¹²⁵ Ibid.

¹¹²⁶ Abteilung Leitende Organe der Partei, "2. Bericht über die Ausgabe von Lebensmittelpaketen in den Westsektoren," 29 July 1953, SAPMO-BArch, IV 2/5/561.

so, the fight against agents of the American and West German warmongers should be the focus of our struggle for the workers' and peasants' power in the German Democratic Republic."¹¹²⁷ In addition to propagandistic threats against those easterners who "succumbed" to the "Ami bait," food package recipients were registered, their names publicized and, in increasing numbers, their personal identification papers and food parcels confiscated. Going further, the GDR State Security Service mailed out forged invitations to West Berlin unemployed to receive packages under the program. While heavily publicized in the GDR press, this effort never reached the dimensions of its counterpart.¹¹²⁸ Several thousands of agitators were sent to West Berlin to incite unrest among those waiting in line for their food packages under often miserable conditions.¹¹²⁹ In the midst of the crisis, in what Eisenhower administration officials called a "stunt," the GDR offered to purchase food from the funds (more than \$1.6 million) of the GDR Central Bank (*Deutsche Notenbank*) blocked since 1952 in the United States. When, however, Washington indicated that it would be willing to sell such food to the East German regime, the proposal was "dropped like a hot potato."¹¹³⁰

While the crackdown considerably reduced their number, East Germans continued to reach the distribution centers in West Berlin by the thousands. The food program continued to remain a focus of popular attention, thus preventing the SED from internal stabilization and keeping the regime on "a peevish defensive."¹¹³¹ Internal SED reports

¹¹²⁷Minutes of the Politburo Meeting, 1 August 1953, SAPMO-BArch, DY 30, IV 2/2/311; R. Chwalek, Railways Ministry, to Grotewohl, 2 August 1953, SAPMO-BArch, NY4090/437.

¹¹²⁸Abteilung Leitende Organe der Partei und Massenorganisationen, "Informationsnotiz 301," 4 August 1953, SAPMO-BArch, IV 2/5/564; HICOG Berlin to Secretary of State, 10 August 1953, NA, RG 59, 862B.49/8-1053.

¹¹²⁹Abteilung Leitende Organe der Partei und Massenorganisationen, "Informationsnotiz 302," 4 August 1953, SAPMO-BArch, IV 2/5/564. See HICOG Berlin to Secretary of State, 4 August 1953, NARA, RG 59, 862B.49/8-453.

¹¹³⁰Memo, Richard Strauss to Stevens, 23 September 1953, NARA, RG 59, 862B.03/9-2353 (FOIA to author); "Kurzer Bericht über die Blockierung der Konten der Deutschen Notenbank in US-\$ bei us-amerikanischen Banken" [Short Report on the Blocking of Deutsche Notenbank dollar accounts with US Banks], 25 July 1953, SAPMO-BArch, NY 90/490.

¹¹³¹Coburn Kidd to Geoffrey W. Lewis, 29 July 1953, NARA, RG 59, 862B.49/7-2953.

still indicated that “the enemy was increasingly succeeding in winning over large portions of the population, in particular retirees and housewives, but also workers.”¹¹³² Leipzig reported “intense discussions over the food program in the plants.”¹¹³³ While the politburo-ordered ticket sale suspension was taking effect, the transportation ministry reported, “many [of its] employees were still carrying out their jobs without offensively exposing to the passengers the true character of the ‘American aid.’”¹¹³⁴ Others noted that the attitude of the railway officials “still varied a lot.”¹¹³⁵ Indeed, in some cases the Railways Ministry orders had been relayed only with considerable delay, enabling many East Germans still to acquire tickets.¹¹³⁶

Furthermore, as the Americans foresaw, the imposition of restrictive measures served to heighten tensions in an already explosive situation. Party officials recorded incidents of travelers to Berlin arguing “very aggressively” that “[t]hose in West Berlin are behind us. If we get in trouble, we just have to say so, then the matter will go before the UN.”¹¹³⁷ In discussions of the stoppage of all ticket sales to Berlin, some commented, “This must be the freedom of the East Zone.”¹¹³⁸ Noting the “negative discussion” among those who were now precluded from going to Berlin—“This way the government cannot win the confidence of the people!”—reports stated that “[o]ne can detect a general annoyance [with the measures].”¹¹³⁹ In some instances, disappointed East Germans

¹¹³² Abteilung Leitende Organe der Partei und Massenorganisationen, Zusammenfassung [Summary], 1 August 1953, SAPMO-BArch, IV 2/5/563.

¹¹³³ Abteilung Leitende Organe der Partei und Massenorganisationen, Zusammenfassung, 1 August 1953, SAPMO-BArch, IV 2/5/563.

¹¹³⁴ Ministerium für Eisenbahnwesen, Politische Verwaltung, “Situationsbericht,” 2 August 1953, SAPMO-BArch, NY 90/437.

¹¹³⁵ Ministerium für Eisenbahnwesen, Politische Verwaltung, “Situationsbericht,” 3 August 1953, SAPMO-BArch, IV 2/5/542.

¹¹³⁶ Ministerium für Eisenbahnwesen, Politische Verwaltung, “Situationsbericht,” 2 August 1953, SAPMO-BArch, IV 2/5/542; Ministerium für Eisenbahnwesen, Politische Verwaltung, Situationsbericht, 3 August 1953, SAPMO-BArch, IV 2/5/542.

¹¹³⁷ SED/Abteilung Agitation to Grotewohl, 29 July 1953, SAPMO-BArch, NY 4090/437.

¹¹³⁸ Ministerium für Eisenbahnwesen, Politische Verwaltung, “Situationsbericht,” 3 August 1953, SAPMO-BArch, IV 2/5/542.

¹¹³⁹ Ministerium für Eisenbahnwesen, Politische Verwaltung, “Situationsbericht,” 2 August 1953, SAPMO-BArch, NL 90/437.

resorted to what was labeled “provocative” action, coercing the authorities to allow train rides to Berlin or simply going by car. In Groß-Schönebeck (Berlin), about 150 women forced the departure of a train by initially blocking the tracks.¹¹⁴⁰ In Angermünde, 2,000 people awaiting returnees from West Berlin assumed what local SED officials perceived to be a “threatening attitude against the VP [People’s Police].” When the VP called in fire fighters to turn hoses on the people, riots broke out, and it took three hours for order to be restored.¹¹⁴¹ Others tried to circumvent the regime’s measures by buying train tickets for destinations close to Berlin, completing the travel by other means.¹¹⁴² In other parts of the country, workers went on strike to protest the regime’s measures. Repeatedly, district SED officials reported threats of an imminent general strike and a “second 17 June” to Berlin.¹¹⁴³

RIAS continued to play an important role in the implementation of U.S. policy. Its broadcasts, to the agony of the SED, served as effective means for propagandizing the food distribution deep into the Soviet zone.¹¹⁴⁴ More importantly, many East Germans now openly listened to the American-sponsored radio program to show their defiance of the regime. Thus, in the small town of Germershausen, “the entire population was listening to RIAS or the NWDR,” apparently turning their radios to such volume “that it could be heard in the streets.”¹¹⁴⁵

The food program sharply exacerbated tensions within the GDR and made it more difficult for the SED to regain the political offensive through the reassertion of New

¹¹⁴⁰ Ministerium für Eisenbahnwesen, Politische Verwaltung, “Situationsbericht,” 2 August 1953, SAPMO-BArch, NL 90/437.

¹¹⁴¹ Ministerium für Eisenbahnwesen, Politische Verwaltung, “Situationsbericht,” 3 August 1953, SAPMO-BArch, DY 30, IV 2/5/542.

¹¹⁴² Ibid.

¹¹⁴³ Abteilung Leitende Organe der Partei und Massenorganisationen, “Zusammenfassung der Berichte der Bezirksleitungen vom 5. 8. 53,” 6 August 1953, SAPMO-BArch, DY 30, IV 2/5/563. See also HICOG Berlin to Secretary of State, 6 August 1953, NARA, RG 59, 862B.00/8-653.

¹¹⁴⁴ Ministerium für Eisenbahnwesen, Anlage zur Zusammenfassung der Berichte vom 8.8.53 von den Bezirksleitungen, 7 August 1953, SAPMO-BArch, IV 2/5/563.

¹¹⁴⁵ Abteilung Leitende Organe der Partei und Massenorganisationen, “Informationsbericht Nr. 2,” 9 September 1953, SAPMO-BArch, IV 2/5/563.

Course policies at the 15th SED CC Plenum. To their chagrin, internal party reports indicated that not only the population at large but party members at meetings were distracted by the ongoing Western aid deliveries. By the end of August, Moscow felt constrained to stage a highly publicized meeting with a top-level GDR government delegation and to provide promises of aid and an end to reparations in an obvious effort to boost the SED regime's standing which the food program had clearly undermined.¹¹⁴⁶ "The main issue in the discussions today," an internal party report of August 3 stated, "was again the food package program. On the other hand, any discussion of the proposals of our People's Chamber and the decision of the Fifteenth Plenum fell into the background." The party organizations were "still not able to influence the discussion in any decisive manner."¹¹⁴⁷ During the next days reports reached Berlin that "the population is hardly discussing the [...] decisions of the Fifteenth Plenum." The reason for this, it was pointed out, was that the party's propaganda drive was "almost exclusively concerned with the package program [...]."¹¹⁴⁸ Faced with train passengers outraged by the suspension of almost all traffic to Berlin, party officials were "still reacting defensively."¹¹⁴⁹ The "fight for the enlightenment of the masses on the background of the food aid" was still not taken on effectively by the local party leadership.¹¹⁵⁰ In one representative instance, a SED-sponsored effort to bring about a factory-wide "vote of

¹¹⁴⁶ During a visit by a high-level GDR delegation to Moscow on 20-22 August 1953, the SED was granted substantial economic aid, the transformation of both countries' diplomatic missions to embassies. Semyonov was named Soviet Ambassador to the GDR.

¹¹⁴⁷ Abteilung Leitende Organe der Partei und Massenorganisationen, "Zusammenfassung," 3 August 1953, SAPMO-BArch, IV 2/5/563.

¹¹⁴⁸ Abteilung Leitende Organe der Partei und Massenorganisationen, "Zusammenfassung der Bericht der Bezirksleitungen vom 4. 8. 53 über die Auswertung des 15. Plenums und die Stimmung der Bevölkerung" [Summary of the Reports of the District Headquarters of 4 August 53 on the Appraisal of the 15th Plenum and Public Opinion], 4 August 1953, SAPMO-BArch, IV 2/5/563.

¹¹⁴⁹ Abteilung Leitende Organe der Partei und Massenorganisationen, "Zusammenfassung," 3 August 1953, SAPMO-BArch, IV 2/5/563.

¹¹⁵⁰ Abteilung Leitende Organe der Partei und Massenorganisationen, "1. Bericht über die Lage in Berlin - Ausgabe von Lebensmittelpaketen in den Westsektoren," 29 July 1953, SAPMO-BArch, IV 2/5/561.

condemnation” of the “Western package provocation” resulted in 60 out of 74 workers abstaining from the vote.¹¹⁵¹

Despite substantial economic Soviet support for their beleaguered client regime, many East Germans questioned the “point of those food deliveries from the Soviet Union. Prices are too high—and you can’t buy the merchandise. We would rather go to West Berlin to get our packages.”¹¹⁵² The “bad Americans distribute free packages and the good friend makes us pay for them,” East Germans mocked at the news of Russian credits and aid.¹¹⁵³ Noting that the great majority of the population had still not recognized the “political and provocative background” of the package program, most people showed themselves “continually uninterested” in the Soviet aid program.¹¹⁵⁴ When at one Berlin SED party meeting it was suggested that the Soviets’ suspension of the reparations was in accordance with German interests whereas Adenauer was said to desire a 50-year occupation of Germany, “the largest part of the participants broke into laughter.”¹¹⁵⁵ As late as mid-September, party officials acknowledged the “lasting influence of the enemy,” the *Versöhnlichkeit* (conciliatory attitude) of local authorities towards food recipients, and the intensifying “discussions and demands at railway stations to reopen the ticket sales.”¹¹⁵⁶

¹¹⁵¹ Abteilung Leitende Organe der Partei und Massenorganisationen, “Zusammenfassung der Berichte der Bezirksleitungen vom 5. 8. 53,” 6 August 1953, SAPMO-BArch, IV 2/5/563.

¹¹⁵² SED/Abteilung Agitation to Grotewohl, 29 July 1953, SAPMO-BArch, NL 90/437.

¹¹⁵³ Abteilung Leitende Organe der Partei und Massenorganisationen, “Zusammenfassung,” 3 August 1953, SAPMO-BArch, IV 2/5/563.

¹¹⁵⁴ Abteilung Leitende Organe der Partei und Massenorganisationen, “Zusammenfassung der Berichte der Bezirksleitungen vom 7.8. 53,” 8 August 1953, SAPMO-BArch, IV 2/5/563; for an especially illuminating assessment of anti-Soviet feelings among the East German population see Dralle, “Das DSF-Archiv,” 842-44.

¹¹⁵⁵ Abteilung Leitende Organe der Partei und Massenorganisationen, Stimmung und Argumente zum sowjetisch-deutschen Kommuniqué über die Verhandlungen in Moskau” [Opinions and Arguments on the Soviet-German Communiqué], 28 August 1953, SAPMO-BArch, IV 2/5/563.

¹¹⁵⁶ Abteilung Leitende Organe der Partei und Massenorganisationen, “Informationsbericht”, 12 September 1953, SAPMO-BArch, IV 2/5/563. See also Abteilung Leitende Organe der Partei und Massenorganisationen, Informationsbericht zur Stimmung der Bevölkerung über das Sowjetisch-Deutschen Kommuniqué, die Paket-Provokation und die Leipziger Messe,” 5 September 1953, SAPMO-BArch, IV 2/5/563.

As an internal SED public opinion survey stated ominously, the relationship of party and government to the population “has worsened recently.”¹¹⁵⁷

At first, the aid action was hailed in Washington, Bonn, and West Berlin as a “highly successful operation” fitting into a larger “overall psychological strategy.”¹¹⁵⁸ Berlin’s Lord Mayor Ernst Reuter emphasized how worried the program had made the Eastern authorities: It had been “like an artillery attack.”¹¹⁵⁹ Indeed, the program’s far-reaching effects seemed to be nothing less than “a continuation of 17 June by other means.”¹¹⁶⁰ It had provided a substantial amount of food to undernourished East Berliners and East Germans and highlighted the shortages in the GDR, forcing the Soviets and SED to increase rations for the population and further redirect industrial policy. More importantly, the operation had given the East German population an opportunity to demonstrate their defiance of the Communist regime--to “vote with their feet”--and once again showed the limits of the SED apparatus. Furthermore, as Conant judged, the aid had “given East Germans contact with the West and ... made it once more a vital force in their lives. They know that the West exists, thinks about them and hopes some day that the east will be free.”¹¹⁶¹ In doing so, it had squarely placed the Soviets and the SED on the defensive and undercut their unity propaganda. It also contributed to Adenauer’s decisive victory at the polls on 6 September, thereby assuring the continuation of his policy of integration with the West.¹¹⁶² “This important project has already bettered our position in the cold war,” one American observer enthusiastically informed Washington.¹¹⁶³

¹¹⁵⁷ Abteilung Leitende Organe der Partei und Massenorganisationen, “Zusammenfassung der Bericht der Bezirksleitungen vom 4. 8. 53 über die Auswertung des 15. Plenums und die Stimmung der Bevölkerung,” 4 August 1953, SAPMO-BArch, IV 2/5/563.

¹¹⁵⁸ Conant to Secretary of State, 31 July 1953, NA, RG 59, 862B.49/7-3153.

¹¹⁵⁹ HICOG Berlin to Secretary of State, 4 August 1953, NARA, RG 59, 862B.49/8-453.

¹¹⁶⁰ Prowe, *Weltstadt in Krisenzeiten*, p. 122.

¹¹⁶¹ FRUS 1952-1954, VII, p. 1635.

¹¹⁶² On Adenauer’s policy, see Hans-Joachim Schröder, “Kanzler der Alliierten? Die Bedeutung der USA für die Aussenpolitik Adenauers,” *Adenauer und die deutsche Frage*, ed. Josef Foschepoth, 2nd. Ed. (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck, 1990), pp. 118-145.

¹¹⁶³ Harris to Stassen, 2 August 1953, DDEL, C.D. Jackson Records, Box 1.

To the “cold warriors” within the administration the program demonstrated that there were means short of war to advance the liberation of Europe. Eisenhower ordered the PSB on 11 July--“while matters [were] still hot”--to develop food programs for all the other satellites. Inspired by their success, U.S. officials also contemplated various other schemes, such as deliveries of medical supplies and other commodities in great popular demand, a clothing drive for the East, hospitality programs and the distribution of printed materials. On 13 July, the CIA-funded National Committee for a Free Europe launched a massive balloon propaganda program for Czechoslovakia (“Operation Prospero”). All in all, 6,512 balloons dropped some twelve million propaganda leaflets across the country, many of which cited slogans of the East German protests or showed pictures of burning SED posters. Through its “Voice of Free Czechoslovakia” broadcasts, CIA-sponsored Radio Free Europe accompanied the leaflet dropping.¹¹⁶⁴ In August, the Western High Commissioners proposed putting the Soviets and the Ulbricht regime in a “tight squeeze” diplomatically by abolishing the Allied interzonal passes and restoring free movement between the Western and Soviet Zones -- a measure intended to achieve “a sort of democratic infection”¹¹⁶⁵ of the East German population.¹¹⁶⁶

However, while the aid program caused headaches for East Berlin and Moscow, it exacerbated British and French resentment of American “cold war” tactics. Instead of a new cold war offensive after the uprising, the British government favored “get[ting] things back to normal as fast as possible perhaps by “letting the Russians save face in East

¹¹⁶⁴Allan A. Michie, *Voices through the Iron Curtain: The Radio Free Europe Story* (New York: Dodd/Mead, 1969), p. 139.

¹¹⁶⁵Memorandum of Conversation between E. Williams (State Department) and M. Ruffin (French Embassy), 5 August 1953, NA, RG 59, 762A.00/8-553. Within the administration and among the Western allies there were, however, concerns that the measure would allow a massive infiltration of propagandists from the East before the upcoming federal elections. Thus, Conant reported on September 4 that some 8,000 to 10,000 FDJ and SED functionaries were expected to infiltrate into West Germany before the September 6 elections. Conant to Secretary of State, 4 September 1953, NARA, RG 59, 762A.00/9-453.

¹¹⁶⁶The allies finally abandoned their requirement for interzonal travel passes on 14 November 1953, forcing the Soviets to do likewise on 25 November. See HICOG Berlin to Secretary of State, 23 November 1953, NARA, RG 59, 762.0221/11-2353.

Germany.”¹¹⁶⁷ The food program obviously ran counter to this idea by keeping up the crisis atmosphere in Berlin. In addition, British officials worried that the program would endanger West Berlin’s security. Faced with a unilateral American *fait accompli*, the British High Commissioner expressed his concern that the “present plan might result in [the] city being cut and even Berlin communications with [the] West being cut off.” Moreover, he argued that the project had been “untidily and hastily handled.”¹¹⁶⁸ As Conant told Dulles, British Commandant Kirkpatrick (along with his French counterpart) had objected to the operation, showing himself to be “cautious,” “apprehensive” and “prone to delay.” For his part, the French Commandant asked sarcastically, if the food aid were to result “in cutting the city would this be serving [the] best interests of [the] West Berliners[?]”¹¹⁶⁹

In the face of Communist demonstrations staged at the food centers in August, British officials again argued that “security considerations call for [the] termination of [the] distribution operation.”¹¹⁷⁰ Like the French, they favored an early end to the operation and strongly opposed the establishment of a permanent organization which they considered “too blatant a type of political warfare against the East Zone regime and the Soviet occupation authorities.”¹¹⁷¹ British opposition to what had become a unilateral U.S. policy left the British, as a Foreign Office official termed it, “in quite bad odour with the Americans on cold war matters.”¹¹⁷²

¹¹⁶⁷Kirkpatrick to FO, 6 July 1953, PRO, FO/371/103843, CS 1016/158.

¹¹⁶⁸HICOG Berlin to Secretary of State, 24 July 1953, NARA, RG 59, 862B.49/7-2453.

¹¹⁶⁹HICOG Berlin to Secretary of State, 23 July 1953, NARA, RG 59, 862B.49/7-2353.

¹¹⁷⁰ HICOG Berlin to Secretary of State, 4 August 1953, NARA, RG 59, 862B.49/8-453; Conant to Secretary of State, 11 August 1953, NA, RG 59, 862B.49/8-1153.

¹¹⁷¹ Memo by W. Dowling, 22 September 1953, NARA, RG 59, 862b.49/9-2253; HICOG Berlin to SecState, 4 August 1953, NA, RG 59, 862B.49/8-453; Steere to Secretary of State, 24 September 1953, NA, RG 59, 862B.49/9-2453 (FOIA to author).

¹¹⁷² Jebb to FO, 9 September 1953, PRO, FO 371/103846, CS1016/237.

Significantly, this “sharp disagreement with the British”¹¹⁷³ was recognized on the Soviet and East German side and thus diminished the impact of the food program. As early as July 7, the GDR Foreign Ministry supplied Grotewohl with a report concerning the “Dissension within the Camp of the Western Powers over the Question of Four-Power Talks” which emphasized the efforts of British and French “imperialists” to withstand U.S. pressure for a more aggressive policy, to retain a “last bit of political independence and not to close the door on four-power negotiations.”¹¹⁷⁴ Similarly, a July 20 note to the Western High Commissioners by Semyonov revealed that Soviets were “also aware of [a] certain lack of unanimity re handling of the project,” hoping, as American observers noted, “to drive a wedge between the allies through release of [a] note at this time.”¹¹⁷⁵ Even in West Germany, where the food program had initially garnered widespread public support, signs of apprehension began to appear more frequently.¹¹⁷⁶ The U.S. note to the Soviets of 10 July had already caused some “adverse reaction” among the press along the lines of: “food yes, propaganda no.”¹¹⁷⁷ Arguing against increased “drum beating,” Conant had warned early on that “East and West Germans would react against obvious propaganda to which they are hyper-sensitive.”¹¹⁷⁸ Wary of the possibility that the “smoldering fire [of] East German resistance may be prematurely fanned up and stamped out,” Conant now pleaded for restraint. FRG officials, too, grew more and more concerned about the pressures on food recipients, and in particular about the GDR’s interference with the normal travel of East-zoners to Berlin. West German charitable

¹¹⁷³ Conant to Eisenhower, 19 October 1953, DDEL, DDEP, Administrative Series, Box 10.

¹¹⁷⁴ “Nach den faschistischen Provokationen in Berlin und in der DDR: Auseinandersetzungen im Lager der Westmächte über Viermächteverhandlungen,” 6 July 1953, enclosed in Busse/MfAA to Eisermann/Regierungskanzlei, 8 July 1953, SAPMO-BArch, NY 90/463.

¹¹⁷⁵ HICOG Berlin to Secretary of State, 22 July 1953, NARA, RG 59, 862B.49/7-2253.

¹¹⁷⁶ Adenauer’s had early on complained about the negative reaction of the West German press. Günter Buchstab (ed.), Adenauer: “Es mußte alles neu gemacht werden.” Die Protokolle des CDU-Bundesvorstandes 1950-1953, (Stuttgart: Klett-Cotta, 1986), p. 585.

¹¹⁷⁷ Conant to Secretary of State, 18 July 1953, NARA, RG 59, 862B.49-7-1853.

¹¹⁷⁸ Ibid.; FRUS 1952-1954, VII, pp. 1632-1633.

organizations, which had displayed a “highly negative”¹¹⁷⁹ attitude all along toward involvement in the program, feared that the American action was jeopardizing their regular aid channels. If further action caused the Soviets to cut off the current flow of private parcels from West to East, this might have “serious repercussions for Adenauer,” the High Commissioner cautioned from Bonn. In addition, Mayor Reuter, among the most enthusiastic supporters of the program, became concerned about the negative impression made by denying food to West Berlin’s unemployed and poor. Press reports with headlines such as “Don’t Gamble with Hunger” reflected the increasingly critical reaction in West Germany.¹¹⁸⁰ By the end of September, the Federal Government, which had only belatedly been consulted in the implementation of the program, was urging for a “visible stop” of the food distribution.¹¹⁸¹ Confronted with U.S. efforts to continue aid to the Soviet Zone in one way or another later that year, Franz Thedieck, state secretary in the Ministry for All-German Affairs, warned Washington of the adverse impact of such programs on the eve of the Berlin Four-Power foreign ministers’ conference scheduled for early 1954. Due to mounting counter-arguments, Conant decided to “watch for [an] opening after [the] Four-Power conference.”¹¹⁸²

Moreover, while the United States was still carrying out the food deliveries, the entire concept of psychological warfare as codified in PSB D-45 began to face heavy criticism from within the Eisenhower administration, in particular from American diplomats in Europe. One gathering of senior American envoys in Luxembourg in September 1953, declared that psychological warfare “should never be allowed to run

¹¹⁷⁹Conant to Secretary of State, 17 July 1953, NARA, RG 59, 862B.49/7-1753 (FOIA to author).

¹¹⁸⁰Steere to Secretary of State, 24 September 1953, NARA, RG 59, 862B.49/9-2453 (FOIA to author).

¹¹⁸¹Steere to Secretary of State, 24 September 1953, NA, RG 59, 862B.49/9-2453 (FOIA to author). The State Department had specifically recommended against “detailed consultation” with the Federal Government in the initial stages of the program. See Riddleberger to General Smith, 6 July 1953, NARA, RG 59, 862B.49/7-653. As late as July 24, Secretary of State Walter Hallstein “indicated that the chancellor had not been consulted.” HICOG Berlin to Secretary of State, 24 July 1953, NARA, RG 59, 862B.49/7-2453.

¹¹⁸²Conant to Bonn, 9 December 1953, NARA, RG 59, 862B.49/12-953; Department of State to HICOG Bonn, 9 December 1953, NA, RG 59, 862B.49/12-953.

ahead of carefully considered political objectives” because of the “danger” it might “start to make policy rather than serve it.” One basic long-term objective of American policy, however, was the “withdrawal of the Soviet Army from the eastern zone of Germany and from the Eastern European satellites . . . stirring up resistance or incitements of revolts-- ‘keeping the pot virtually at a boiling point’--might have the long-range effect of retarding a Soviet military withdrawal.”¹¹⁸³ Rather than proposing intensified psychological warfare, U.S. diplomats argued for what was described in one document as an “honorable and defensible compromise with the Soviets, with the aim of achieving the gradual liberation of the oppressed people through an evolutionary rather than revolutionary process.”¹¹⁸⁴ From HICOG Berlin came the warning that “aggressive US follow-up actions on food could conceivably produce another June 17.” If the food action and repressive SED measures were to lead to uprisings on the same scale, Berlin officials believed that “[the] Soviets with KVP in forefront will put down such uprisings ruthlessly. End result could be severe blow to workers’ morale, since there was little likelihood [that] such repression this time would be accompanied by economic concessions.”¹¹⁸⁵ High Commissioner Conant warned that “we don’t want to do anything that will cause any more bloodshed.”¹¹⁸⁶ The objective of American policy with regard to the Soviet zone, he wrote to Secretary of State Dulles, at least insofar as he understood it, was “to keep the pot simmering but not to bring it to a boil.”¹¹⁸⁷

Keeping the pot simmering, however, could not be achieved by psychological warfare alone: “Without under-emphasizing the significance of [the] food program [or] similar efforts,” HICOG Berlin warned, “a basic requirement for maintaining [the] current

¹¹⁸³ Memorandum Prepared in the Department of State, 1 October 1953, *FRUS* 1952-1954, VIII, p. 85.

¹¹⁸⁴ Working Paper Prepared in the Eastern Affairs Division, Berlin Element, HICOG, 25 June 1953, *FRUS*, 1952-1954, VII, 1598.

¹¹⁸⁵ HICOG Berlin to Secretary of State, 6 August 1953, NA, RG 59, 762B.00/8-653.

¹¹⁸⁶ Record of 6th CINCSAEUR-HICOG Commanders Conference, 29 June 1953, *FRUS*, 1952-1954, VII, 1605. On Conant’s role see James G. Hershberg, *Conant*, pp. 660-63.

¹¹⁸⁷ Conant to Dulles, 8 August 1953, *FRUS*, 1952-1954, VII, 1640.

degree [of] anti-regime attitude and for weakening GDR and Soviet position would appear to be clear cut US and/or allied political pressure on Soviets, exerted on high level and in simple terms, in order that East Germans can continue to believe there is real purpose in maintaining pressure on GDR Government and SED.”¹¹⁸⁸ Emphasizing the need for a more “positive policy,” U.S. officials in Berlin thought that negotiations on an all-German Commission as proposed by the Soviets “would be a greater blow to their equilibrium than if we succeed in getting the entire Soviet Zone population into West Berlin for a turkey dinner.”¹¹⁸⁹

Adding weight to this view, the administration’s secret “Operation Solarium” policy reassessment of summer-fall 1953, while endorsing intensified reliance on covert action, concluded that rollback in Eastern Europe was not immediately feasible.¹¹⁹⁰ At the end of September, the State Department outlined the U.S. position on unrest in the Soviet Zone, reminding missions abroad that “it is possible to maintain a psychological climate of resistance” but that attempts to “reduce Soviet power in the GDR should always be examined for their impact on our efforts to integrate the Federal Republic with the West.” Furthermore, the policy guideline warned that “we do not want to risk precipitating prematurely a mass, open rebellion” or “incur the blame for its consequences.”

¹¹⁸⁸ HICOG Berlin to Secretary of State, 17 August 1953, NARA, RG 59, 762B/8-1753.

¹¹⁸⁹ Memo, Sutterlin to Creel, 20 August 1953, NRC, RG 466, HICOG papers. There was also a growing criticism of U.S. support for anti-Communist, CIA-controlled organizations in West Berlin: “It is felt that the number of these organizations, type of activities they engage in and type of individual some of them may attract as co-workers, has created situation fraught with both opportunity and risk. While we do not wish to exaggerate possibility of serious trouble here, very setting of West Berlin makes it vulnerable to mass action; and organizations mentioned have certain possibilities, difficult to calculate, of stirring up such action. It is felt that most careful consideration should be given to just what ends the activities in question are designed to achieve, and what methods should be prescribed to reach these ends. [...] I feel that recent developments in East Germany call for some degree of reappraisal.” HICOG Berlin to HICOG Bonn, 15 August 1953, NA, RG 59, 762A.0221/8-1553 (FOIA to author).

¹¹⁹⁰ See John Lewis Gaddis, *Strategies of Containment. A Critical Appraisal of Postwar American National Security Policy* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1982), 145f.; Martin Beglinger, “Containment” im Wandel. Die amerikanische Außen- und Sicherheitspolitik im Übergang von Truman zu Eisenhower (Stuttgart: Steiner, 1988), pp. 144-164; H.W. Brands, “The Age of Vulnerability. Eisenhower and the National Insecurity State,” in: *American Historical Review* 94 (1989), pp. 963-69; Marc Trachtenberg, *History and Strategy* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1991), pp. 132-141; Marchio, *Rhetoric and Reality*, pp. 176-169; Hershberg, “Explosion in the Offing,” p. 527; Felken, *Dulles und Deutschland*, pp. 110-117.

Specifically the Department cautioned that American missions should not advise the East Germans “to engage in strikes and mass demonstrations,” and that continued propaganda “should not be used to encourage a repetition of the events of June 17, 1953.”¹¹⁹¹ Even C.D. Jackson eventually had to admit that the United States did not have the power to eject the Soviets from East Germany through coercion: “I am all for complete, total, and crushing defeat if we really have the leverage to bring it about,” he wrote Dulles. “But we haven’t, and they know it, therefore all they have to do is to lay their ears back, and no real progress will have been made except raising hatred of Russia a notch or two in German minds.”¹¹⁹²

This realization stemmed to some degree from the experience of the uprising and the food program itself. Indeed, because U.S. policy throughout the program retained limited objectives and did not intend to tip off a second “Day X,” it could not prevent--and might ultimately and inadvertently have aided--the consolidation of the Ulbricht regime. The initial announcement of the program, on July 10, had taken place at the very height of the struggle within the SED leadership, when Ulbricht’s position was being challenged by politburo member Rudolf Herrnstadt, State Security chief Wilhelm Zaisser, and others. Only after Grotewohl returned from a brief visit to Moscow (July 8-9 1953) was Ulbricht able to overcome the rebellion within the leadership, as manifested in the accusations against both Herrnstadt and Zaisser before the Central Committee in mid-July. The U.S. initiative might well have added to the Soviets’ sense that Ulbricht’s demotion would be seen as a sign of weakness inviting further Western actions. Certainly the announcement of what Molotov called a “propaganda maneuver” provided Ulbricht with a powerful

¹¹⁹¹Department of State Circular Airgram “U.S. Policy on Unrest in Soviet occupied Germany,” 30 September 1953, NARA, RG 59, 762B.00/9-3053 [FOIA to author]. See also NSC 174 “U.S. Policy Towards the Soviet Satellites in Eastern Europe.” An excellent analysis of NSC 174 is contained in Marchio, *Rhetoric and Reality*, pp. 179-190.

¹¹⁹²Jackson to Dulles, 8 August 1953, FRUS, 1952-54, VII, pp. 611-14.

argument to assure his survival.¹¹⁹³ By mid-September, U.S. observers had to admit that the operation “may in fact have increased somewhat the strength of the regime by furnishing it with an opportunity to prove for the first time after 17 June that it could still without the active intervention of Soviet troops maintain a degree of control over a hostile population.”¹¹⁹⁴

The development of the food program itself reflected its diminishing returns as an anti-regime measure. American observers noted that the stream of food recipients was slackening off during September, as East Zone residents reported widespread confiscation of food parcels and “increased Communist harassment.”¹¹⁹⁵ The East Zoners’ early inclination to “thumb their noses” at their communist rulers was thus decreasing; plebiscite-type demonstrations could not be maintained at a steady pitch over a protracted period of time. There were signs that East Germans, even within the Protestant Church (one of the strongest centers of resistance within the GDR), were getting wary of being used as tools of American propaganda.¹¹⁹⁶ Diminishing in scope and becoming a minor sideshow in the Cold War, U.S. officials knew the food program “would lose its news value, its psychological effect and thereby no longer give any opportunity for encouraging manifestation of dissatisfaction or defiance among the East Zone population.”¹¹⁹⁷

More importantly, the alleviation of some of the economic grievances that had triggered the June uprising and the implementation of the New Course helped lessen the

¹¹⁹³Schenk, *Im Vorzimmer der Diktatur*, pp. 226-231.

¹¹⁹⁴HICOG Berlin to Department of State, 17 September 1953, NARA, RG 59, 862B.49/9-1753.

¹¹⁹⁵HICOG Berlin to Secretary of State, 28 August 1953, NA, RG 59, 862B.49/2853.

¹¹⁹⁶Probst D.H. Grüber (1891-1975), Plenipotentiary of the Council of the Protestant Church of Germany (EKD), had as early as 21 July 1953 indicated his opposition to the food program as a form of “psychological warfare.” He publicly denounced the food program in a sermon on 26 July 1953 as “spiritual poison war.” Church associates of Bischof Dibelius, the leading figure within the (East) German Church, however, approved of the food scheme. Grüber to Beyling, 21 July 1953; Report by Grötschel on a conversation with Grüber, 22 July 1953, SAPMO-BArch, NY 90/456. U.S. officials remarked that “it cannot be said with any definitiveness to what extent his ideas on this subject are shared.” HICOG Berlin to Department of State, 11 August 1953, NA, RG 59, 862B.49/8-1153. For Adenauer’s concern with Probst Grüber’s criticism, see Otto Lenz, *Im Zentrum der Macht. Das Tagebuch von Staatssekretär Lenz 1951-1953* [Inside the Center of Power. The Diary of State Secretary Lenz 1951-1953], ed. by Klaus Gotto, Hans-Otto Kleinmann and Reinhard Schreiner (Düsseldorf: Droste, 1989), p. 677.

¹¹⁹⁷Reinstein to General Smith, 25 August 1953, NARA, RG 59, 762.0221/8-2553.

program's effect. So did the heavy Soviet economic aid, which, U.S. observers estimated, "could result in [a] significant rise in living standard even by the end of this year."¹¹⁹⁸

Despite the food program, Americans came to realize that the "regime [was] keeping [the] situation in hand without overtly greatly increasing police control."¹¹⁹⁹ Commenting on the Communist reaction to the food program, HICOG pointed out that "two things stood out": GDR authorities neither closed off the sector border, thus keeping the East Berliners from getting packages, nor inflicted severe punishments on food recipients whom they apprehended.¹²⁰⁰

The latter point proved to be a misperception. As the Ulbricht regime reestablished its grip on party and population, its repressive measures became more severe. In the wake of the unrest, the SED reinforced its efforts to expand its repressive and disciplinary apparatus, resulting in a massive expansion of the state security system and barracked People's Police. The growing SED assertiveness reflected rising success in mobilizing party activists, especially in the resistant large plants, and in improving the discipline of police and state security to the degree where the latter were able without Soviet help to break up small-scale gatherings before they got out of hand.¹²⁰¹ Due to the liquidation of potential resistance and opposition, U.S. officials on the scene in Berlin predicted in November 1953 that a "June 17 repetition" was "at present unlikely."¹²⁰²

Later that fall, in a number of political trials in the GDR, numerous people were found guilty of "nefarious activities" as "Western agents." Indeed, the American sponsorship of the food program facilitated the regime's efforts to establish more persuasively the theory that the June 17 uprising did not reflect genuine popular

¹¹⁹⁸ HICOG Berlin to Secretary of State, 29 July 1953, NARA, RG 59, 762B.00/7-2953.

¹¹⁹⁹ HICOG Berlin to Secretary of State, 29 August 1953, NARA, RG 59, 862B.00/8-2953.

¹²⁰⁰ HICOG Berlin to Department of State, 17 September 1953, NARA, RG 59, 862B.49/9-1753.

¹²⁰¹ Indeed, HICOG Berlin reported on 6 August 1953 that the use of Soviet troops against unrest in the GDR caused by SED countermeasures had been "very limited." HICOG Berlin to Secretary of State, 6 August 1953, NARA, RG 59, 862B.00/8-653.

¹²⁰² HICOG Berlin to Secretary of State, 18 November 1953, NA, RG 59, 762B.00/11-1853.

dissatisfaction but had been a Western plot as well, thus blurring the distinction between the two events and implicitly legitimizing harsh countermeasures.¹²⁰³ By arresting workers for legal transgressions connected with the food packages, the GDR's rulers used the food program to expand the scope of action against those active in the June 17 uprising. Moreover, on August 26, the SED politburo decided to make an all-out effort in the "fight against the reactionary broadcasts of RIAS" with the objective of effectively reducing the reception of the station throughout the GDR.¹²⁰⁴ As the Ulbricht regime was "surviving [the] first post-June 17 test of strength caused by the US food offer"¹²⁰⁵ and enlisting Soviet support, U.S. observers speculated that "the program may in fact have increased somewhat the strength of the regime by furnishing it with an opportunity to prove for the first time after June 17 that it could still without the active intervention of Soviet troops maintain a degree of control over a hostile population."¹²⁰⁶

Reflecting reassertion of its offensive in Germany, by August Moscow was reviewing its initiative on the German question. Internal deliberations called for a Warsaw Pact conference on the German question in Moscow or Berlin (similar to the Prague conference of October 1950 which had launched the Soviet campaign for East-West German talks). In early August, and again in mid-month, Moscow sent diplomatic notes to the Western powers proposing the convocation of a peace conference, the formation of an all-German provisional government and an easing of Germany's financial-economic

¹²⁰³ Minutes, Politburo meeting 58/53, 4 August 1953, SAPMO-BArch, IV 2/2/312. The State Department had obtained information to the effect that the Soviets were planning to build a powerful transmitter of approximately 300 kw power to be used in Berlin presumably to compete with RIAS. By 1953, there was a clear realization within the Eisenhower Administration that "present RIAS coverage can be drastically reduced with the possible exception of Berlin alone" by Soviet/GDR interference and jamming. Indeed, administration officials admitted that "there is no complete long run solution to the RIAS problem short of a political arrangement or stoppage of the radio war by the Soviet Union." Memo re RIAS radio station, T.H.E. Nesbitt to C.D. Jackson, n.d., C.D. Jackson Records, DDEL, Box 5.

¹²⁰⁴ Minutes, Politburo meeting 65/53, 26 August 1953, SAPMO-BArch, IV 2/2/319; "Top Secret," SAPMO-BArch, NY 90/437; HICOG Berlin to Secretary of State, 6 August 1953, NARA, RG 59, 762B.00/8-653.

¹²⁰⁵ HICOG Berlin to Secretary of State, 6 August 1953, NARA, RG 59, 762B.00/8-653.

¹²⁰⁶ HICOG Berlin to Department of State, 17 September 1953, NARA, RG 59, 862B.49/9-1753.

burdens. At the same time, the Kremlin committed itself to supporting the weakened but unreconstructed Ulbricht regime as the “bulwark of the struggle of the German people for a united, peace-loving and democratic Germany.” However much an all-German appeal Moscow hoped such proposals would have in the West, its focus was on strengthening “the further development of the national economy” of the GDR in the aftermath of the disastrous uprising. At their 20-22 August meetings with Ulbricht, Grotewohl, and other GDR leaders, the Soviets promised much of what had been discussed internally for months: the transfer of Soviet joint-stock companies, a sharp reduction in occupation expenses and an end to reparations payments by year’s end, as well as substantial economic and financial aid--notwithstanding the lateness of the act, which a State Department cable characterized as “a literal example of locking [the] barn door after [the] horse [has been] stolen by Soviets.”¹²⁰⁷ The Kremlin leadership also agreed to free additional prisoners of war and raise the status of its mission in Berlin to that of an embassy. Moscow’s moves were seen in Washington as a “serious effort to bolster the shaky GDR regime,” which, all in all, might “have considerable appeal to [the] public.”¹²⁰⁸

4. Conclusion

The impact of the East German uprising on U.S. policy towards Eastern Europe was most prominently reflected in National Security Council Report No. 174 of December 1953.¹²⁰⁹ Previous policy directives, respectively, held out hopes for further Titoist, national-communist regimes in the wake of the Soviet-Yugoslav split, and in effect advocated actively exploiting the potential for “roll-back.” NSC 174 conceded that the “detachment of any major European satellite from the Soviet bloc does not now appear

¹²⁰⁷ State to HICOG Bonn, 17 August 1953, DDE Papers, Ann Whitman File, International Series, Box 14.

¹²⁰⁸ Ibid.

¹²⁰⁹ CIA Records (FOIA release to author.)

feasible except by Soviet acquiescence or by war.”¹²¹⁰ While the uprising had demonstrated that the Soviets failed fully to “subjugate” the Eastern Europeans or to destroy their desire for freedom, and had proved the unreliability of the satellite armed forces, the USSR’s ability to “exercise effective control” over Eastern Europe had “not been appreciably reduced.” East Germany posed “special and more difficult problems of control” than the other East European regimes, and hence could serve as a “focal point and example of disaffection for the rest of the Soviet satellites.” But the aggressiveness of any U.S. policy towards East Germany had to be tempered by the Washington’s interest in integrating the Federal Republic with the West and ensuring continued access to West Berlin.

The U.S. approach to Eastern Europe, as reflected in NSC 174, would continue to rely on a host of political, economic and other measures, including covert operations, despite growing recognition of the mounting difficulties of conducting such operations. NSC 174 prescribed giving encouragement and assistance to the “satellite peoples” in “resistance to their Soviet-dominated regimes,” but also warned against incitement to “premature action,” which would only bring further terror and reprisals. In sum, U.S. policymakers needed to walk a “fine line, which is not stationary, between exhortations to keep up morale and to maintain passive resistance, and invitations to suicide.” That tightrope would be difficult to tread for U.S. policymakers and operatives dealing with Eastern Europe; it would be even harder for the peoples of Eastern Europe to recognize, given the extent to which their geography, passions and misperceptions influenced how they viewed the role of the United States.

¹²¹⁰ However, the administration did not fully accept this lesson and integrate it into its policy and rhetoric, nor did the White House publicly acknowledge it, until after the Soviet invasion of Hungary in October-November 1956.

VI

Conclusion

The Cold War over Germany was central to the history of the Cold War—its beginnings, its prolongation, and its end. One of the central elements in America's success in fighting the Cold War was its approach towards Germany: the creation of an economically prosperous, politically stable democracy in Western Germany that was closely integrated with the West. To the Americans involved, the success of this project was far less certain as it may seem in hindsight: West Germany's economic prosperity and political stability had humble beginnings. The Soviet threat exerted pressure that aggravated and distorted the problems of developing a viable democracy. Most importantly, the division of the country and of the former capital Berlin meant that the forces of German nationalism, while temporarily tamed, created an undercurrent of unease and unrest, a latent threat to the very foundations of the Federal Republic and the European settlement.

Division, in fact, was not what neither Americans and Soviets had in mind towards the end of World War II when they envisioned Germany's postwar configuration. When visualizing Germany's role in the postwar period, both Americans and Soviets fretted over the reemergence of a powerful Germany and even more so, over its being allied with the other side in any confrontation. Yet the exigencies of military strategy at war's end, conflicting decisions on both sides about Germany's economic role and political orientation, the breakdown of quadripartite agreement and the centrifugal dynamics of occupation policies led to the establishment of two German governments that satisfied neither side fully. On both sides, maximalists who favored maintaining influence throughout all of Germany, through inter-allied cooperation, had wrestled with

minimalists, eager to preserve exclusive control over and integrate their occupation zones—and lost.

New evidence from the Russian and German archives shows how Soviet actions in the Soviet Zone undercut the Soviet position in eastern Germany that that of the German communists. What has been less understood is how developments in the Soviet zone affected American policies. To be sure, initially the Americans were hesitant to attach too much weight to the mass of reports of rapes, looting and chaos emanating from the SBZ. U.S. officials were resistant to draw conclusions from a wide array of disparate information and downplayed German complaints about the violence and exploitation of Soviet occupation. Americans were willing to accept a certain amount of vengeance for German warfare in Russia, and the feeling was widespread that the Germans had it coming. Even Soviet economic exploitation and transformation of their zone in 1945-46 came hardly as a shock to Americans. Agreements on reparations pointed the Soviets to their zone first, and key economic policies, above all the land reform, were in line with the economic postulates of the Potsdam accords. But what increasingly worried U.S. officials was the strains an economically devastated Soviet zone would put on the resuscitation of western zones' economy perceived as critical for the economic rehabilitation of western Europe.

While Soviet directives on political activities, in particular the establishment of political parties and the support given to the German communists early on, were well ahead of those in the Western occupation zones, Americans occupation officials watched suspiciously but without much alarm. After all, as U.S. officials in Berlin realized, Soviet support for the communists cut both ways, and it had little effect on the Western zones. This changed, however, in early 1946 when the merger Communist Party and the Social Democratic Party in the Soviet zone intersected with debate within the Truman

administration over how to understand the “conduct of Soviet foreign policy” and the beginning reformulation of U.S. occupation policy in Germany. To many in Washington, the forced KPD-SPD merger seemed to fit into a broader pattern discernible throughout East-Central Europe, irreversibly putting the Soviet zone on track towards becoming a Soviet-controlled one-party state. The socio-economic “revolution” in the Soviet zone seemed to preclude the feasibility of working out quadripartite, all-German solutions. Eastern Germany, in this view, had to be written off.

Clay, Murphy and many others within OMGUS, aware of the complexities that characterized Soviet rule in Eastern Germany, were far less impressed by the success and significance of the merger—and the irreversibility of the “revolution” in the SBZ generally. Hence Clay eagerly pursued quadripartite arrangements—especially on reparations and central agencies, which he saw first steps in the direction of a central German government structures that would have the potential to yield influence in eastern Germany. By integrating the Soviets into a joint occupation system, Clay hoped he could ensure – that is, compel – the expansion of American influence right into the Soviet occupation zone. Evidence from the Russian and former East German archives shows that Stalin, Soviet occupation officials and his German communist allies seemed to have recognized the dangers inherent in this strategy.

Even after the establishment of the Federal Republic, American policy in Germany could never be exclusively focused on the construction and integration of West Germany. While political and economic integration of “America’s Germany” became the primary preoccupation of U.S. officials in the early 1950s, fending off the specter of German nationalism and its exploitation by its self-proclaimed champion to the East became a critical part of American strategy. Fearful that the Soviet-SED’s championing of German unity would eventually derail the West German project, the Truman administration sought

to complement its integration policy in the west with political, psychological and economic warfare program designed to keep the Ulbricht regime off balance. By undermining Soviet-SED control and fostering resistance in East Germany, by “keeping the pot simmering,” the U.S. sought to weaken the ability of the SED to exert influence in Western Germany. In their intention to counter Soviet-SED control and turn East Germany into a strategic liability for Moscow that would lead the USSR to negotiate its reunification with Western Germany, these efforts can be seen in lineage to Clay’s efforts to project American influence in the eastern zone.

Clay and Murphy had recognized the crucial role (West) Berlin played in projecting Western influence into the Russian zone, and after 1949 the city continued to be an important battleground for the Cold War in Germany. Not only did the Truman administration perceive the city in the heart of the GDR as a point of extreme vulnerability, as became evident in the May/June 1950 near-crisis over the *Deutschlandtreffen* and in the 1951 interzonal trade debacle. For the administration, the city also provided a base for the operation of its “counteroffensive,” its psychological and economic warfare efforts vis-à-vis East Germany. As the GDR increasingly shut off its ties to the West in 1951-1952, the city also emerged a strategic opportunity to maintain contact with the East Germans. U.S. efforts to exploit this potential in 1950-1951 (as it would in 1953) might well have inspired Ulbricht to attempt – unsuccessfully -- to isolate the western city sectors in 1952/53.

In fighting the Cold War in Germany, however, Americans faced serious difficulties. Neither British nor French officials favored actively championing German unification, if only as a propaganda strategy. They also objected to heightening Cold War

tensions which, in their view, could only endanger the precarious Western position in Berlin and Western Germany and disturb their incipient trade relationships with the Soviet bloc. Many West Germans in turn were similarly skeptical in rallying to the American call for stepping up efforts vis-à-vis the GDR, eager not to become a pawn in the U.S.-Soviet confrontation and keen to preserve, particularly with regard to interzonal trade, the only remaining ties with the East—as well as lucrative resources and markets. U.S. integration policy in Germany hence placed severe limits on how far the U.S. could pursue the destabilizing of the GDR, and a number of the most ambitious projects fail to be implemented.

The potential and contradictions of U.S. efforts to “keep the pot simmering” in East Germany culminated in the June 1953 uprising. Triggered by the half-hearted “New Course” liberalization program which the post-Stalin leadership forced Ulbricht to adopt, the mass unrest throughout the GDR in the days following initial protests on June 16 offered the new Eisenhower administration the opportunity to derail a dreaded new Soviet-East German “unification initiative” that would complicate the final ratification of the Contractuals, seize the initiative on the unity issue in the “hearts and minds” of West and East Germans alike, strengthen the Adenauer government and extend the destabilization of the Ulbricht regime following its most profound crisis. But Eisenhower and Dulles quickly made clear that a roll-back of Soviet power in Germany by *military* means was not a practical option, despite the liberation rhetoric of the preceding election campaign and the widespread expectations this had generated in East Germany (and other East European countries) and despite serious intentions by Cold War “hot heads” within the administration. The massive popular reaction by the East Germans to the U.S.-sponsored food program in Berlin, in itself a far cry from the ambitious rollback rhetoric, nonetheless

demonstrated how easily playing with fire could bring the pot to a boil. British and French officials quickly grew concerned about West Berlin security as the city coped with the mass influx of aid-seeking East Germans, and West German officials, delighted at first by the ostensive support the action led to Adenauer's reelection bid in the September polls, quickly soured over potential backlash of what became increasingly depicted as a propaganda ploy. Most significantly, U.S. actions might have actually helped Ulbricht to regain Moscow's support and eliminate his domestic opponents after nearly being toppled in the early days of the crisis. The legacy of America's first experience in the Cold War with a spontaneous anti-communist revolt in Europe which had the potential for a "rollback" of Soviet power—presaging crises in Poland (1956, 1970, 1980-81), Hungary (1956), and Czechoslovakia (1968)—is thus an ambivalent one. The experience with rollback policies in the 1950s in general, and the East German uprising in particular, would—after the Cold War hardened with the formation of the military blocs in 1954-1955 and the integration of the two German states—point American policymakers to alternative strategies, such as increasing East-West German contacts and selectively increased trade, strategies that formed the seeds of *Ostpolitik* in the 1960s and 1970s.

VII

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