The Berlin Blockade

A STUDY

IN COLD WAR POLITICS

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CHAPTER IV

JULY–SEPTEMBER: NEGOTIATION UNDER PRESSURE

ALTHOUGH Berlin did not fall, plumlike, into Soviet hands during the first few weeks of the blockade, this did not necessarily mean that communist plans had gone awry. The Soviet note of July 14 had made Moscow's position clear: the Berlin question was a part of the German question. Therefore, if the Western powers wished to discuss Berlin, they would also have to talk about arrangements for Germany as a whole. They would now have to decide whether to proceed with their plans for a West German state or to retain their position in Berlin. It was the communist contention that they could not do both.

In order to hasten a Western decision, the Soviets intensified their three-pronged pressure on Berlin. They subjected the growing airlift to harassing tactics of an increasingly annoying nature, thereby playing on fear of war in the West; they continued measures to intimidate and disrupt the Berlin city government; and they brought new psychological pressures, in the form of threats and promises, to bear on the West Berlin population. Like waves beating on a dam, the Communists sought to find the point of weakness in the Western defenses.

The State of Western Policy in July

The Western powers initially responded to Soviet pressure much in the way that Moscow must have expected, and entered into negotiations at the end of July. Western negotiators did not feel their position to be a very strong one. There were differences of opinion among France, Great Britain, and the United States. Washington itself was sharply divided on the proper course to follow, and confidence in the ability of the airlift to satisfy Berlin's long-term needs was as yet shared by only a minority. Nevertheless, the uneasy consensus was that the Western powers should exhaust every diplomatic recourse to attain lifting of the blockade, and in the meantime improve their bargaining position as much as possible by expanding the airlift and building up Western air strength in Europe.

Differences among the three Western powers were appreciable but not insuperable. France leaned toward withdrawal from Berlin,

if a suitable formula could be worked out.[1] The United States tended to take the position that the democracies were in Berlin by right, and that right was not subject to negotiation. The British, their initial determination having weakened somewhat, inclined toward a point of view in between.[2] Reconciliation of the three views required repeated and time-consuming consultations among representatives of the three powers, which prevented the democracies from acting rapidly.[3]

Among American policymakers in both Berlin and Washington there was one group, gloomy and hesitant, composed of those who believed that the Western powers were in a weak position and would have to make concessions. A State Department official recalled that a senior diplomat, returning from Germany in July, had told his colleagues that the United States could hold out in Berlin for only about six more weeks, and that a solution would have to be found before then. Another senior official opposed taking any further economic reprisals against the Soviets for fear of "broadening the conflict." A news dispatch from Washington in July reported the State Department view as being that food could be supplied to West Berlin for a maximum of two more months.[4] Influential writers, such as Walter Lippmann and Sumner Welles, supported the position of this group.

Another American group was in favor of using military or economic force to break the blockade. According to persistent rumors, the plan of sending a three-power armored convoy up the road from West Germany to Berlin was under active consideration.[5] Secretary Forrestal recalls a dinner conversation at which General Clay told him that he still was confident that a convoy could break through without creating a crisis, although the chances would grow slimmer as time went on. The General also stressed his belief that the German people were unequivocally on the side of the West and would do everything in their power to help.[6] In mid-July, Major General William Donovan, at that time not a government official, called for the imposition of world-wide economic sanctions against the Soviets as a reply to the blockade, "even if it means war." General Donovan's statement, though completely unofficial, was broadcast immediately by radio stations in the U.S. and British sectors of Berlin.[7]

One point, however, on which nearly all of official Washington soon came to agree was that the blockade had political implications of the gravest nature. In a meeting with President Truman and

high administration officials, Secretary of State Marshall stated grimly that the United States had the alternative of following a firm policy in Berlin or accepting the consequences of failure of the rest of its European policy.[8] General Clay told the President and the National Security Council that departure from Berlin would be a serious, if not disastrous, blow to the maintenance of freedom in Europe.[9]

Nevertheless, Air Force officials still had reservations about the advisability of concentrating the bulk of U.S. air transport capacity in Germany. General Vandenberg pointed out that a maximum airlift would require planes which were intended for emergency use elsewhere. In the event of hostilities, many of these might be destroyed, and the ability of the United States to wage strategic warfare reduced, since it would then be difficult to supply forces at distant bases.[10]

Out of all this discussion there emerged the two decisions that were to govern Western policy during the next few months: to make every effort toward a negotiated settlement with the Soviets while remaining in Berlin; and to strengthen the bargaining power of the Western allies as much as possible short of resorting to measures that might provoke the Soviets to take a stronger stand. On July 19 President Truman, in Forrestal's paraphrase, said that U.S. policy would be to "stay in Berlin until all diplomatic means had been exhausted in order to come to some kind of an accommodation to avoid war. . . ."[11] A similar position emerged from a discussion in the National Security Council three days later, where it was decided to drop the idea of an armed convoy and, instead, to concentrate on expanding the airlift, since the latter course was less likely to provoke war.[12] General Clay, returning to Berlin in late July, told the press that he had been promised a considerable increase in Skymaster aircraft, and that with their help the airlift could be built up to 4,000 tons a day. He added that the expanded airlift would give the Western powers time to approach the problem through all diplomatic methods.[13]

Though the Soviets continued their threats to limit flying in the corridors or to close them entirely, these threats clearly failed in their purpose. When the *Tägliche Rundschau* announced that new measures to regulate the problems of the air corridors were impending, a British spokesman replied that he could not conceive of any changes in the flight regulations unless they were forced by military action.[14] A "responsible officer" said that United States fliers would

ignore any Soviet declaration barring flights in the corridors, and added: "The only way they can stop us is to shoot us down."[15] The only effect of the Soviets' threats and minor harassing actions in the corridors was to demonstrate to all concerned that the Western allies were determined to fly in supplies regardless, a determination which tended to cancel out some of the unfavorable impressions created by Western indecision in other areas.

Simultaneously, Western air strength in Europe was augmented. On July 17 sixty U.S. B-29 Superfortresses arrived in Britain.[16] Additional U.S. jet aircraft were dispatched to Germany, and started making familiarization flights over the countryside.[17] The arrival of at least thirty additional Superforts in the British Isles was reported during August.[18]

Finally, in a modest move to tighten the counterblockade, British and American authorities stopped rail traffic across the bizonal area between the Soviet zone and non-German countries. A U.S. spokesman stated sarcastically that this stoppage was due to "technical difficulties."[19] But the political implications of the move were clear.

U.S. policy calculations during this period were strongly affected by two military factors: America's almost desperate weakness in conventional forces, and her monopoly of the atom bomb. Secretary of Defense Forrestal had, on several occasions, pointed out that the nation's total ground reserves amounted to slightly over two divisions, and that only one division could be committed with any speed.[20] With this in mind, an effort to break the blockade with ground forces would look very much like a bluff. And General Clay had stressed that we could not afford to bluff. Consequently, any realistic military gesture would have to be backed by the atomic bomb, but it had not been decided how to turn this gigantic military weapon into diplomatic bargaining power. The bomb was the only real power the United States had, but no one knew under which circumstances it could be used, or indeed whether it could be used at all. Forrestal discussed this problem with a group of high governmental officers at lunch on July 28:

> . . . I said in view of the tensions in the European situation that I felt it was difficult for me to carry out my responsibilities without resolution of the question whether or not we are to use the A-bomb in war. I observed also that it seemed to me that the Secretary of State had a deep interest in this, because, if there were any questions as to the use of this weapon, he was

automatically denied one of the most potent cards in his pack in negotiation.[21]

Forrestal also had several apparently inconclusive conferences with the President on this question during July and August.

This indecision about how atomic energy could be converted into diplomatic potential affected the significance of dispatching the B-29's to England. The B-29's were known as atomic bombers. But did U.S. policy envisage using the bomb if the Berlin crisis became more acute? If the United States were to drop an atomic bomb on Moscow, Soviet troops, in the opinion of many military experts, would immediately push forward to the English channel. General Clay did not believe that "we would have to assume the *immediate* overrunning of France.*" However, he was regarded as optimistic on this score.[22] As has been pointed out above, the U.S. Government found sufficient reason to send the bombers to Britain even without clarifying the question about using atomic weapons.†

Although discussions of atomic policy in Washington were conducted in strictest secrecy, the Soviets must have felt that they could deduce Western policy with considerable accuracy from public statements and with the aid of their intelligence network. They knew that London and especially Paris favored a cautious policy, which would tend to restrain the United States from any adventures that might break up the Western alliance. They also knew that an armored column was being discussed, but that this plan clearly was not about to be put into effect. Consequently, as long as the Western powers shied away from such lesser military undertakings, it was difficult to believe that they would resort to using atom bombs against major Soviet population centers. Finally, Soviet confidence in the superiority of their own ground forces was such as to make them fairly certain that in the event of hostilities they could overrun Europe at least to the Pyrenees. If the United States were to use its atom bomb against a major Soviet center, this would constitute an invitation for the Soviets to take over most of Western Europe. This view, which had been expressed in so many words by the Soviet historian Tarlé the year before,[23] was shared by many Western military authorities. Indeed, the U.S. Secretary of State had already objected to Defense Department statements that emphasized American military weakness in conventional arms. He had pointed out

* Italics added.
† See Chapter III, p. 130.

that repetition of such statements tended to add to the difficulties of our negotiations with Russia and might even delude the Soviets into hasty action.[24]

While the atom bomb was unlikely to be used to break the Berlin blockade, the move of the B-29's to Europe may still have had a very significant meaning to the Soviets. For it represented an increase in the immediate retaliatory power of the West, which the Soviets would have to take into account if they contemplated any new and bolder move. Furthermore, Moscow must have noted that the arrival of the bombers reversed the policy of withdrawing American armed forces from Europe, which the United States had followed since 1945. Since the Soviets definitely did not want war, the presence of the B-29's in England thus may have tended to limit Moscow to measures similar to those which had already been tried and found to be safe. If the Soviets were to make any move designed to give them control of Western Europe, the United States would be in a far stronger position to bomb Moscow. And it would then no longer feel restrained by the fear of seeing Western Europe overrun by the Red Army, for Western Europe would have been lost already. In short, while the location of the B-29 bombers in England probably did not exert any very appreciable influence on the Soviets to change their blockade policy, it may well have helped to set a limit beyond which they felt they could not go without running new and serious risks.

By the end of July, policy-makers in Washington had recognized the serious implications of the Soviet threat to Berlin, but did not feel that an attempt to break the blockade by force was advisable. The airlift was still seen as a device to gain additional time for negotiations. Dispatch of the B-29 bombers to Great Britain was regarded as improving the long-term strategic situation of the Western powers, but not as a solution to the blockade problem. Indeed, Forrestal's summary of the reasons for the move does not mention Berlin at all.[25]

The official American position, as formulated by President Truman, was that the United States would stay in Berlin until all diplomatic means had been exhausted. This was not necessarily a strong stand. Diplomatic means would be exhausted if the Soviets simply said "no" consistently over a period of time. Western counterblockade measures were as yet incomplete. and it was not known whether they added significantly to the bargaining power of the democracies. Various Western statesmen had indicated that they expected public

opinion to have a constraining effect on the Soviets, but just how this effect was to be exercised was not made clear. The West thus entered the Moscow negotiations in what appeared to be a weak position. As it later turned out, this position was stronger than originally believed.

*Progress of the Moscow Negotiations**

On July 30, approximately two weeks after receipt of the Soviet note that rejected the original Western protests about the blockade, representatives of the United States, Great Britain, and France in Moscow requested an appointment with Premier Stalin and Foreign Minister Molotov to discuss the Berlin situation. The initial Soviet response made it clear that Moscow was in no hurry to settle the crisis. A spokesman at the Soviet foreign office announced that Mr. Molotov had just started his vacation, and suggested that the Western representatives present the problem to Deputy Foreign Minister Zorin. The delegates persisted however, and after preliminary meetings with Zorin and Molotov on July 30 and 31, they were able to see both Stalin and Molotov on the evening of August 2.[26]

U.S. Ambassador Walter Bedell Smith, as the senior representative of the Western powers in Moscow, acted as spokesman for the democracies. He reported later that the Soviet premier appeared to be in an excellent humor and that, from the Soviet point of view, this good humor was justified; it looked "as if he [Stalin] had confronted us with the flat alternative of getting out of Berlin in ignominious defeat or of staying on under sufferance and abandoning our announced plan of setting up a separate government for Western Germany."[27] At that time, Smith himself had "serious doubts" that it would be possible to feed and supply Berlin by air during the winter months, and he also wondered whether the morale of the German people would stand the strain. He was encouraged, however, by his confidence in General Clay's logistical ability and by the fact that, up to that point, the morale of the blockaded Berliners had remained high. He mentioned in particular the almost daily mass meetings at which they cheered the airlift and defied communism.[28]

As the discussion of August 2 progressed, it seemed to the Western

* A full summary of the Allied-Soviet negotiations during the early stages of the blockade is found in C. H. Pegg, "Die Verhandlungen zwischen Ost und West über die Berliner Blockade von Mai bis September 1948," *Europa Archiv*, January 5, 1957.

negotiators that it might yield results. At first, Stalin and Molotov attempted to obtain concessions in West Germany: they sought to secure a voice in policies governing Ruhr industry and asked that implementation of the London Recommendations be held up. They also asserted that the Western powers no longer had a legal right to retain representation in Berlin. When Smith and his British and French colleagues refused Stalin's demands and insisted on the continued right of their countries to share in the occupation of Berlin, the Soviet dictator moderated his demands and proposed the following formula for ending the blockade: (1) the Soviet zone mark should be introduced throughout Berlin in place of the west mark, and simultaneously all transport restrictions should be removed; (2) the Soviets would no longer ask deferment of the London decisions as a condition for settling the crisis, but this should be recorded as the insistent wish of their government.[29]

Western hopes for a speedy solution on the basis of these general principles were soon dashed. When it came to drawing up a formal written agreement, Molotov proved to be a hard bargainer. He tried on several occasions to make the postponement of a Western German government a precondition for ending the blockade, in spite of Stalin's apparent assurance that this would not be necessary; he interpreted the removal of "all transport restrictions" to mean only those imposed after June 18; and he continued to challenge the right of the Western powers to be in Berlin at all, except on Soviet sufferance. The interpretation on which Molotov insisted was one which, in the opinion of Ambassador Smith, would have enabled the Soviets to control the life of Berlin whether Western troops remained there or not; it would have delayed the establishment of a West German government; and it would have enabled the Soviets to reimpose the blockade at their discretion. To exchange these concessions for a partial lifting of the blockade seemed to the Western representatives too high a price to pay.[30]

Having reached a stalemate with Molotov, Ambassador Smith and his colleagues requested another meeting with Stalin, and this was arranged for August 23. Stalin again seemed in excellent humor and appeared willing to concede a number of points. He agreed verbally that all restrictions of any consequence on Berlin's traffic would be removed, even if they had been imposed before June 18, and also that the east marks used in Berlin would be under the ultimate control of a four-power financial commission. On the other hand, he

repeatedly brought up the question of the London Recommendations and expressed his continued desire that the establishment of a West German state be delayed. When Ambassador Smith mentioned the necessity of managing currency matters in Berlin in a way that would give all powers equal control, and when he insisted that the juridical position of the Western powers in the city be respected, Stalin's answer implied that the status of Berlin depended on the abandonment of plans for a West German state:

> Stalin replied that, if German unity were restored by confirming the decisions of previous Four Power conferences, Berlin would remain the capital of Germany and then there would be no objection to the forces and authority of the three Western powers remaining in Berlin and sharing the control of the German government in Berlin with the Soviet Union. If this did not happen, then Berlin would lose its standing as the capital of Germany.[31]

And again, when the question of issuing a four-power communiqué about the discussion came up, Stalin suggested that the following paragraph be included:

> The question of the London decision was also discussed, including the formation of a Western German government. The discussion took place in an atmosphere of mutual understanding.[32]

When the Western representatives refused to accept this paragraph because of its implication of some secret arrangement to abandon plans for West Germany, Ambassador Smith received the impression that Stalin lost interest in the negotiations. Indeed, he left Moscow for a vacation shortly thereafter.[33]

Drafting meetings with Molotov, however, were continued. Although they frequently were acrimonious, agreement was finally reached on the wording of a communiqué and a directive to the four military governors in Berlin. The communiqué announced that traffic restrictions would be lifted, that the east mark would constitute the sole currency in Berlin, and that a four-power meeting would be held in the near future to discuss any outstanding questions regarding Berlin as well as any problems affecting Germany as a whole. The directive to the military governors amounted to a statement of principles, the implementation of which was to be worked out by the four commanders in Berlin. Since this di-

rective became the subject of protracted international negotiations, its most important provisions are here reproduced in full:

> The Governments of France, the United Kingdom, the United States, and the USSR have decided that, subject to agreement being reached among the four military governors in Berlin for their practical implementation, the following steps shall be taken simultaneously:
>
> (A) Restrictions on communications, transport and commerce between Berlin and the Western zones and to and from the Soviet zone of Germany which have recently been imposed shall be lifted;
>
> (B) The German mark of the Soviet zone shall be introduced as the sole currency for Berlin, and the Western mark "B" shall be withdrawn from circulation in Berlin.
>
> In connection with the above you are instructed to consult together with your colleagues so as to make, in the shortest time possible, the detailed arrangements necessary for the implementation of these decisions, and to inform your government not later than September 7 of the results of your discussions, including the exact date on which the measures under (A) and (B) above can be brought into effect. . . .
>
> The regulation of currency circulation in Berlin is to be undertaken by the German Bank of Emission of the Soviet zone through the medium of the credit establishments operating at present in Berlin.
>
> A financial commission of representatives of the four military governors shall be set up to control the practical implementation of the financial arrangements indicated above, involved in the introduction and continued circulation of a single currency in Berlin.[34]

The directive also provided that west marks should be exchanged for east marks at a rate of one for one, that all sectors should have equal treatment as to currency and credit facilities, and that a satisfactory basis for trade between Berlin and the West should be worked out.

Western authorities recognized that this directive left much to be desired. Ambassador Smith reports that he and his associates were eager to produce the document even though it left many questions open, because they felt that only by the acid test of a conference in Berlin could the sincerity of Soviet intentions be determined.[35] His

statement implies that the Western negotiators in Moscow felt that they were making certain concessions for the sake of reaching even an unsatisfactory agreement. The State Department in Washington was concerned because the agreement contained no statement about the basic juridical right of the Western powers to be in Berlin.[36] General Clay was dissatisfied for several reasons. He had hoped that the whole process of negotiation could be completed in Moscow, but the directive merely transferred the problem to the four military governors, and he did not see how they could succeed in reaching agreement where they had failed before. Also, he found the wording of the directive ambiguous as to four-power control of Berlin's currency. Despite Stalin's verbal promise of August 23 that the German Bank of Emission of the east zone would be under four-power control in its Berlin activities, the directive gave no assurance of this. General Clay's feeling was "that our acceptance of ambiguous wording just to obtain an agreed directive would lead nowhere."[37] A leading London newspaper commented that the amount of actual agreement reached was very small: All the directive did was to "open a road which may lead to a modus vivendi, provided that everybody wants to use it." But whether the Soviets really wanted to follow this road was very doubtful.[38]

Those who had doubts about the Soviets' good faith found their suspicions confirmed by the events of the summer. Intensified communist pressure on Berliners and on the city government led to new riots at the city hall during the latter part of August and early September.

Communist Pressures on the West Berlin Populace

Before and during the Moscow discussions, the Soviets attempted by threats and cajolery to alienate Berliners from the Western powers and from their own democratic government, and in general to encourage attitudes and behavior that would facilitate communist seizure of power. In this effort they were energetically assisted by the SED.

Berliners were given to understand that their safety depended on their cooperating with the Soviets. *Tägliche Rundschau* proclaimed on August 1 that, since the United States, Great Britain, and France had lost their right to take part in the four-power administration of Berlin, any orders issued by military authorities in the western sectors were invalid. The statement added ominously that all persons or institutions carrying out these illegal orders did so "at their own risk." In commenting on this threat, the London *Times* noted that

the former Nazi concentration camps at Sachsenhausen and Buchenwald were being emptied of their inmates, presumably in preparation for a new group of victims. The *Times* added: "The apprehension that what was endured under the Nazis may have to be relived under the Communists weighs heavily on the minds of many. It is an apprehension which the Western democracies cannot ignore."[39]

Threats were supplemented by overt actions. Kidnapings by both communist police and Soviet military personnel were reported frequently. On August 20, for example, a number of Soviet soldiers entered the American sector, kidnaped five policemen, and confiscated their police car. That same day, the chief of the Magistrat's central coal office was taken from his office by east sector police.[40] The following day, Soviet military police entered the American sector and seized two German policemen. When they protested and tried to resist the arrest, they were stabbed and man-handled, and finally dragged into the Russian sector.[41] Nearly every day communist police would stop passers-by at the sector borders and search them for west marks. It seemed that nothing could be done to protect Berliners from these kidnapings, searches, and confiscations.

At the same time, communist propaganda was predicting that the protecting forces of the Western powers would soon be removed. Stories to the effect that General Clay was being recalled appeared in the east sector press. One of these cited as proof the fact that Clay's policies had been attacked by former Under Secretary of State Sumner Welles and also by the well-known columnist Walter Lippmann.[42] A headline in *Neues Deutschland* for August 19 stated baldly: OMGUS IS LEAVING BERLIN. And a few days later, a "reliable source" told the same newspaper that twenty houses near Frankfurt were being prepared for use by the families of leading West Berlin politicians, who were shortly to be evacuated. Soon thereafter, the SED organ alleged that three leading Social Democrats had already taken refuge in West Germany.[43] An interviewer for a public opinion research organization in Berlin recalled that all these reports were reinforced by much more blatant word-of-mouth propaganda, according to which all Berlin would soon be under Soviet control.

The Communists also predicted the failure of the airlift. When, in mid-July, SED Co-chairman Wilhelm Pieck was asked by a correspondent of the *Chicago Tribune* what he thought of the airlift, Pieck replied angrily that it was a propaganda instrument, that it could not supply the west sectors with food, fuel, or raw materials,

and that, under the pretext of saving Berlin, an anti-Soviet campaign was being carried on, whose only purpose was to divert attention from the serious damage that was being done by splitting Germany and building up a separate West German state. Pieck added that the cost of the airlift would be loaded on the German people just as occupation costs had been, and that the whole operation would soon fail.[44]

In August, the communist press became more specific about the alleged failure of the airlift. Even General Clay and City Councilman Klingelhöfer, the Magistrat's economic chief, were reported to have admitted a shortage of food and coal. According to one story, grain reserves in the west sectors had shrunk from 30,000 to 8,000 tons, and British Military Government had admitted that only one-third as much food and fuel had come into the west sectors as had arrived in the same period the year before. The West Berlin press publishes figures that show the success of the airlift, continued the article, but these figures cannot be checked. However, the planes that fly back to West Germany are known to be taking raw materials, capital goods, and machinery. At the same time, the city's debt is growing, and Berlin taxpayers will soon discover the other side of the airlift. On August 13 a headline read: "AIRLIFT FIASCO CONFIRMED."[45]

Furthermore, said the Communists, the airlift was senseless because the Western powers, rather than the Soviets, were blockading Berlin. Marshal Sokolovsky had stated that the Russians would not allow the city to starve; it was the West that had cut its sectors off from the east zone. By introducing a new currency, the Western powers had forced Russia to take measures to protect her own zone from economic dislocation. In addition, they had ordered restrictions of their own: they were impeding trade between East and West Berlin, they refused to supply electric current for west sector plants working on Soviet orders, and they prevented necessary materials from coming into the Soviet zone from the west.

Why had the Western powers imposed a blockade? *Neues Deutschland* sought to answer this question in a long article on July 27 under the headline: "IT IS TIME TO MAKE AN END TO THE ANGLO-AMERICAN BLOCKADE OF WEST BERLIN." According to the SED newspaper, the Western powers were attempting: (1) to eliminate the power of West Berlin industry to compete with Anglo-American monopolies; (2) to interfere with the two-year plan in the Soviet

zone; and (3) to create in Central Europe a center of unrest where capitalist conspirators could pursue their nefarious aims.

In addition to frightening West Berliners by threats and dire predictions, the Soviets made an attempt to gain their allegiance by promising them food and work. On July 19 the Council of Ministers of the USSR issued a decree that Berlin was to be furnished with sufficient food to meet the existing rations of every citizen.[46] The fact that this food offer was made in the name of such a high Soviet agency, and that it came five days after the Soviets had officially denied the right of the Western powers to remain in Berlin, would tend to indicate that Moscow considered it a major move.

This Soviet move immediately became the basis for a concerted propaganda campaign by the East Berlin press. On July 20 the front-page headline in *Neues Deutschland* ran: "AIRLIFT HAS NO PURPOSE—IN THE FUTURE ALL BERLINERS CAN BUY THEIR RATIONS IN THE EAST SECTOR." The official announcement from the Soviet Military Administration which followed, stated that additional food would be provided from the Soviet Union and that more would be purchased in Poland, Czechoslovakia, and other countries for shipment to Berlin. West Berliners would be able to obtain this food only in east sector stores.

On the following day, the east sector press reported that the workers had greeted the Soviet food offer with wild enthusiasm, while the lazy exploiters had been seized with impotent rage. Interviews with a number of individual west sector citizens provided artistic verisimilitude. But only on July 25 were practical details of the Soviet offer announced. The inhabitants of each west sector borough were instructed to register for food in a designated east sector borough. For example, residents of Reinickendorf, in the French sector, were to register in Soviet-occupied Pankow. On August 1, those registered could start buying food in the Soviet sector.

Throughout August, the communist press emphasized the quality and quantity of these supplies. On August 11 *Neues Deutschland* announced that sufficient provisions had arrived to supply the whole city for forty days. On August 12 a report stated that so much coal had been shipped to East Berlin that there was scarcely enough room to store it all. It was also pointed out that the east sector rations were higher than those in the west, and that the fresh foods being offered were far better for the health than the dried and tinned products that came over the airlift.

The Soviet food offer was supplemented, a few weeks later, by promises of work for unemployed West Berliners, and hints that idle factories in the west sectors could obtain Soviet orders if they made proper application. The work offer was accepted by only a handful of West Berliners and never became the subject of a major propaganda campaign. A few west sector enterprises did accept orders from the Soviets, but both management and labor opposed this practice, and it was later stopped almost entirely by the Western counterblockade.[47]

Public Morale

West Berliners appeared to be relatively little influenced by Soviet threats or promises. One of the major communist goals was to destroy confidence in the west mark. If West Berliners had been persuaded that their future lay with the east zone, it is likely that the value of the west mark would have gone down. Yet, instead of going down, the value of the west mark in relation to the east mark mounted steadily.* At the beginning of August it took 2 east marks to buy 1 west mark in currency exchange offices. By the end of the month it took 3.2.[48]

An even better index of the Berliners' resistance to cajolery or intimidation tactics was their reaction to the Soviet food offer. Both Allied and German leaders in West Berlin were worried by this offer. If a sufficient number of individuals registered in the east, not only would this destroy the solidarity upon which the survival of the democratic island depended, but it would place one of the city's most important administrative functions under Soviet domination and open the door to further inroads. British General Herbert denounced the Soviet move as just another effort to gain control of the west sectors.[49] The noncommunist press cited evidence that the food stocks offered by the Communists were actually coming from East Germany, not from Soviet Russia and the satellite countries, and contrasted the miserable conditions in East Berlin and East Germany with the glowing promises held out to West Berliners.[50] Leaders of all the democratic parties advised people to reject the offer.

As it turned out, instead of drawing a substantial proportion of

* Rates of exchange are available in the official city statistics only from August 2 on. In addition to the licensed exchange offices there were also black-market money changers. Ordinarily, west marks were more expensive on the black-market than in the exchange offices.

the West Berlin population into the sphere of communist authority, the Soviet food offer gave West Berliners an opportunity to demonstrate an impressive degree of solidarity. In spite of all communist efforts to make the offer attractive, only a handful of West Berliners responded. The democratic press reported this with obvious satisfaction. There was little possibility that Berliners would be taken in by such a crude device, wrote the *Tagesspiegel* on July 28, but still it was surprising how few people had registered. At the ration office in Treptow, the report continued, 20 persons from the west sectors have registered, as opposed to the 285,000 who had been invited to do so. In Prenzlauer Berg, there were only 16 registrations, in Pankow 19, and in several offices in Mitte nobody at all had showed up the preceding afternoon. "Apparently even the Communists from West Berlin don't want to register in the eastern paradise," the story concluded, "or else there are so few of them left." Three days later, a borough mayor from East Berlin reported that less than 1 percent of West Berliners had registered for food in East Berlin, and called this response a "secret referendum."[51] By August 4 only 19,000 out of the more than two million persons in the west sectors were on the east sector rolls.[52] The number rose sharply to 56,000 (or 2.2 per cent) during September, but then began to level off.[53] According to the Magistrat, the registrants totaled 85,000 by the end of the year, but it was believed that some persons had registered twice.[54]

The British *Notes on the Blockade of Berlin* attempt to analyze the composition of the east sector registrants. According to this source, the number who registered never exceeded approximately 86,000, or about 4 per cent of the population. Some 11,000 of these lived in areas, on the edge of West Berlin, which Soviet authorities had arbitrarily incorporated into their administrative sphere. Another 15,000 were persons who lived in the west sectors, but who worked in the east sector and continued to buy their rations there, as they had always done, for reasons of convenience. This left a hard core of only 60,000, many of whom had been "persuaded" on political grounds.[55]

In the face of Soviet divisive tactics, the West Berliners' identification with the West continued to mount. Mass meetings sponsored by the city's democratic leaders were well attended; more and more workers started paying their dues to the independent unions; confidence in the west mark increased steadily.

Two incidents help to illustrate the temper of the times. One occurred at a rally sponsored by the Berlin publisher Lothar

Blanvalet and was designed to mobilize the intellectuals to play an active part in the defense of the city's freedom. On July 18 "tens of thousands" responded to this call, and the large square in front of the Schöneberg borough hall could scarcely hold them all.[56] They were addressed by Professor Edwin Redslob and a group of ten writers and artists. Almost at the end of the meeting, sharp-eyed chairman Blanvalet spied Berlin's acting mayor, Louise Schroeder, standing in the crowd. She was on her way from one appointment to another and had stopped for a moment to listen. Seizing the opportunity Blanvalet invited Frau Schroeder to come up to the speaker's platform and say a few words. The crowd parted in the center, and the little gray-haired lady passed through to the rostrum amid almost hysterical applause. An American newspaperman who attended the meeting has called it one of the most impressive displays of emotion and enthusiasm he ever witnessed.

The other event had consequences that were even more moving. On the night of July 24-25, a C-47 aircraft crashed in the Friedenau section of Berlin just prior to landing at Tempelhof airfield. Both members of the two-man crew were killed. Two houses were damaged and set on fire, but none of the residents was fatally injured. German and American rescue workers soon put out the fire and recovered the bodies of the airmen.

The death of the two officers seemed to break down part of the barrier which still existed between Berliners and American occupation forces, and through the breach poured a flood of sympathy, appreciation, and deeds of kindness. The mayors of the six boroughs in the U.S. sector called on Colonel Howley to express their condolences. Berlin's democratic parties sent notes of sympathy to General Clay, and Acting Mayor Louise Schroeder visited American Military Government on the same errand. Dr. Suhr honored the fliers at the next meeting of the City Assembly. A *Tagesspiegel* editorial read:

> An airman who crashes in the course of supplying Berlin is for us more than a transport pilot who has died in an accident: he is a man who has given his life for a free world, for the same world which we choose every day when we put up with discomfort, chicanery, threats, and worse.

The editorial also pointed out that both the officers who were killed had small children. One reader had already sent in 20 marks and had promised to collect 100 more if the newspaper would conduct

a campaign to raise funds to support the dependents of the two fliers.[57] A nameless Berliner put a simple plaque at the place of the crash, which read:

> Two American fliers became victims of the Berlin blockade here. You gave your lives for us! The Berliners of the west sectors will never forget you! We stand deeply moved on this spot which has been dedicated by your death. Once we were enemies, and yet you gave your lives for us. We are now doubly obligated to you.[58]

Other unknown Berliners kept the plaque decorated with fresh flowers.

For weeks, contributions and expressions of sympathy continued to pour in from all quarters of West Berlin, and even from East Berlin. An editor of the *Tagesspiegel* said later that the incident had inspired more letters to the editor than any other aspect of the airlift.

In short, during July and August, Soviet efforts to alienate the West Berlin populace from its democratic leaders and from the Western powers were outweighed by influences working in the other direction, and resistance morale improved rather than deteriorated.

Pressure on West Berlin's Leaders

Meanwhile, the Soviets continued their efforts to dominate the central Berlin government or, failing this, to disorganize it completely and drive it out of the east sector. These pressure tactics had started prior to the four-power negotiations in Moscow, and continued with ever-increasing tempo while the negotiations were going on.

A favorite Soviet technique was to subject city officials to endless conferences and interrogations, often late at night. A high official reported later that approximately once a week during this period he was summoned to Soviet headquarters, where he was harangued for hours on end by a succession of Soviet officers about the necessity for cooperating with the SED. During these sessions he was treated "correctly," but was allowed nothing to eat, drink, or smoke. On one occasion, he was detained eleven hours, and his wife concluded that he had been kidnaped.

It was also common practice for Soviet personnel to visit the offices of high city officials and to remain for hours, asking questions and demanding to see documents. This tactic not only prevented the

officials from performing their work, but it was quite unnerving to them. Sometimes, as in the case of the food office and the public education office, the Soviets moved their own desks into the working quarters of German officials. Several city administrators were driven close to a nervous breakdown by the constant strain of having Soviet personnel look over their shoulders.

City administrators were in a poor position to counter these tactics. They could not legitimately refuse to confer with representatives of an occupying power. Also their offices were located in the Soviet sector, where they were subject to the authority of the communist German police and the Russian military police. The Western powers were, however, able to offer at least a small measure of protection. When a Soviet officer appeared in one of the city departments, the German authorities would sometimes ask a Western officer to be present as well. Nevertheless, the strain on the leading city officials was very great, and it is remarkable that none of them gave in to the Soviet demands.

Colonel Howley reports that similar tactics were employed in an apparent attempt to unnerve him. He often received strange telephone calls late at night. Sometimes a threatening voice would advise him to get out of Berlin, but more often there was only silence when he picked up the receiver. His doorbell also rang at all hours, but there was no one there when the door was opened. The Soviet-controlled radio kept the air so full of accounts of Colonel Howley's alleged misdeeds that he remarked: "I sometimes wonder how I managed to keep any friends at all in Berlin." Communist media also announced periodically that Mrs. Howley had become panic-stricken and was leaving the city. But she and their four children stayed on.[59]

One victim of Soviet harassment may have been Acting Mayor Louise Schroeder. Toward the end of August she became seriously ill and was flown to a hospital in West Germany. Her health had been poor for some time, and the heavy responsibilities that she carried so stoutly would by themselves have been enough to exhaust the most vigorous executive. In her absence, Dr. Friedensburg (CDU) became acting mayor. He remarked later that he simply "could not afford to get sick," because next in line for the mayor's office was Third Deputy Mayor Acker, a member of the SED. Had the communists been able to break Dr. Friedensburg's health, they would thus have captured the mayor's office, at least temporarily. Fortunately, Dr. Friedensburg proved to have a strong constitution.

Pressure on Departments of the City Government

The police department, which was largely controlled by the Communists already, was the first city department to be split as the result of Soviet efforts to dominate the municipal government. During the spring and early summer of 1948 the Magistrat had made repeated attempts to assert its authority over the police. These were vigorously opposed by the communist police administration, which, in return, made every effort to reduce democratic influence still further. All principal police offices, which had been located in the west sectors, were moved to East Berlin, and Police President Markgraf was reported to have told his subordinates to take orders only from Soviet authorities, and not from the Western powers.[60] The process of weeding out non-communists from higher positions in the department was accelerated, and between July 12 and 25, 590 higher police officials were summarily discharged.[61]

City officials, who had been gravely dissatisfied with the functioning of the police and their apparent complicity in Soviet kidnapings, attempted to take counteraction. Second Deputy Mayor Dr. Friedensburg was the Magistrat member in charge of supervising the police. Although he could not remove Markgraf without four-power approval, he was able to suspend him from office under the provisional Berlin constitution. He did so with the approval of the City Assembly on July 26, and appointed Assistant Police President Dr. Johannes Stumm to take over Markgraf's duties on an acting basis.

The dispute now became the direct concern of the occupying powers. Soviet General Kotikov countered by issuing an order confirming Markgraf in office, reprimanding Dr. Friedensburg, and instructing Acting Mayor Louise Schroeder to dismiss Dr. Stumm. The order was signed "Military Commandant of the City of Berlin," a title that implied, none too subtly, that the authority of the Western powers in the city was no longer recognized.[62] British Military Government, speaking for all the Western powers, replied that Kotikov's order was unilateral and hence had no validity.

In practice, Markgraf retained his authority in the east sector, while Stumm exercised police power in the west sectors. Because the central police headquarters were in the east sector, however, Dr. Stumm was at a disadvantage, especially since Markgraf threatened with reprisals any official who obeyed Stumm's orders. The latter therefore was forced to establish new police headquarters in the west sectors.

Each of the two police headquarters claimed to represent the sole legal authority, and it was up to the individual policeman to decide whom to obey. The results of this "informal referendum" among the guardians of the law were overwhelmingly in favor of Dr. Stumm. Far more than half the personnel from the Soviet sector headquarters moved over to the new building, even many of those whose homes were in the east sector, and in the end Markgraf was left only with SED adherents and a few whose family considerations prevented a shift to the west sectors.[63]

One of the *Abend* essayists, describing the individual attitudes and expectations about the future that played a role in the split of the police headquarters, has illustrated some of the principal trends in West Berlin public opinion at that time:

> In 1948 the political tensions in Berlin reached their highest point. All of us anxiously asked one question: "What will happen to Berlin?" As everywhere, this question was being discussed in our office on the Dircksenstrasse near Alexanderplatz [in the Soviet sector]. Would Berlin be split? Even from external appearances the force could be divided into three groups, which, if one had some experience in judging people, could be distinguished by the facial expression. A happy, expectant face was the mark of a member of the SED or a supporter of the eastern system. By their stern and serious faces the people could be recognized who supported the free world and were willing to lose their jobs rather than bow to the eastern system. Anxious and absent-minded expressions indicated people who were undecided and were asking themselves the fateful question: "What's the best thing for me to do?"
>
> Once again a violent discussion is in progress. An SED member says with a manner of superiority: "In two months at the most Berlin will be ours. The borders are closed and hunger will be painful. Hunger was always the best means of making people obedient and with this instrument the Russians will succeed in Berlin too. One cannot rely on America. The Americans would never start a war over Berlin."—We were all agreed on this last point. Nobody in our broad circle of acquaintance thought there would be a war. The situation looked threatening, but in spite of this those who stood firm put their trust in a miracle.—One day I had a discussion with my chief, Herr X. His expression said clearly that he belonged to the third group.

He described the existing situation as unbearable and expressed the opinion that it was much worse than the situation in 1945 [when Nazi power was overthrown and the Russians entered Berlin]. At that time it had been clear how things would turn out, and so at the right moment he had taken the wise precaution of reporting himself sick and staying away from work. The future had shown how correct this action had been. "After the occupation of Berlin I came out again at the right time," were his words. But what is going to happen now?—On the next morning my chief was absent. His wife notified us that he had been taken seriously ill.

Shortly after this came the appeal of the Police President [for members of the force to follow him to the new headquarters in West Berlin]. Group two and a few undecided men moved into the new headquarters near the airfield. This was a large building with terribly empty rooms. It took considerable courage to start work here. In one room a few abandoned garden chairs and tables were found, and a real fight over these developed. This was our first office equipment. In the air the aircraft engines thundered. Would they be able to supply us with even the most necessary foodstuffs? Days go by; our work proceeds, and the noise of the aircraft becomes louder and louder. In spite of the fact that we had very little bread, dried potatoes, and some tomatoes we had grown ourselves, our mood became more confident every day. The accomplishments of the fliers were witnessed with amazement. It is unbelievable at what short intervals the planes land and take off. . . . After several weeks my chief appears. His first words were: "Where am I working, and which is my office?" He is very confident and hopes to take up his work again in a few days.

The summer goes by and confidence grows, only to fall again as the cold season of the year arrives. My chief, Herr X, finds it uncomfortable in his office and goes home earlier every afternoon. One day he remarked that it was fortunate that he had kept his home in the east sector; there at least one had some fuel to heat with. "And one doesn't need to eat dried potatoes either," someone added ironically.

Now the blockade has been long forgotten. Herr X was one of the first to move into the west sectors. One day I overheard a conversation which he was having with a man who apparently was a former colleague from the east sector. "Yes, my dear fel-

> low," I heard him say, "if we had not been so steadfast at that time and hadn't accepted so many privations, what would have happened to West Berlin?"

As this account suggests, the split in Berlin's police force had the effect of weeding out most communist sympathizers and some undecided persons. What the department lost in experienced personnel it made up by retaining a group of employees who were loyal to the West Berlin administration.

But the existence of dual headquarters did not end the struggle between the rival organizations. When police from the west sectors were sent to the east sector on business, they were often arrested by the communist police for "illegal exercise of authority."[64] Soviet authorities ordered that all messages posted in East Berlin or East Germany, and addressed to the west sector police headquarters, should be intercepted and sent to a special bureau in an east sector post office.[65] As late as November, a comic-opera situation developed when Markgraf refused to allow the new Berlin telephone directory to be distributed in the Soviet sector because it listed Dr. Stumm's office under "Police Headquarters."[66]

Even before the definitive split in the ranks of the police, Soviet Military Government took steps to gain control of the Magistrat's food office, or else force it out of the east sector. When the Soviets made their food offer and arranged for West Berliners to register in East Berlin, they also ordered a new unit of the food office to be set up to administer the program. A certain Paul Letsch was to head this unit and was to take orders directly from the east sector military authorities.[67]

The Magistrat did not contest this arrangement, probably because it did not want to appear as in any way preventing Berliners from taking advantage of the food offer. But the Soviet demands placed the Magistrat's food chief, city councilman Füllsack, in an impossible position. Although nominally responsible for administering the food supply for all Berlin, he actually had no control over Letsch. A week after the new unit had been set up, Füllsack announced stoutly that he would continue the central administration of the city's food supplies,[68] but it soon became clear that the Communists had no intention of permitting this. His office, like most of the Magistrat, was located in the east sector. It had assigned to it a Soviet liaison officer and his staff, who, in collaboration with Letsch, gradually undermined what little authority Füllsack had

left. First, Letsch attempted to persuade the majority of food office employees to work directly for his new unit. When this move failed, he requisitioned by name two-thirds of all the personnel of the food office, including nearly all the professionals. His subordinates then proceeded to make decisions regarding the personnel and facilities of the office without consulting Füllsack. Thus, on August 11, they ruled that persons who did not work for Letsch's unit would not be permitted to enter the building. When Füllsack's deputy, Schöpke, attempted to report for work, he was dragged downstairs and thrown out by east sector police. The *Tagesspiegel* commented caustically: "The 'democratic spirit' in East Berlin is not unknown to Schöpke, since he was one of the democratic assemblymen who were manhandled by 'demonstrating workers' following the meeting of the City Assembly on June 23."[69]

As Letsch moved to secure control of Berlin's food office, the German Economic Commission (of the Soviet zone) started to issue orders with respect to the city's rationing system. Deputy Mayor Friedensburg protested this practice in a politely-phrased letter to Chairman Rau of the Economic Commission on August 24, in which he pointed out that no part of the Berlin city government could take orders from an east zone authority.

The reply was a polemical letter in which Rau gave succinct expression to the communist propaganda line. The East Zone Economic Commission, said Rau, was issuing these orders because it had become necessary to rescue the population from the "chaotic and dangerous conditions into which it had been systematically maneuvered by the policies of the present Berlin Magistrat." The commission would have entrusted the Magistrat with carrying out these orders, were it not that the Magistrat did not have the interests of the population at heart and was serving foreign masters instead. "You personally were responsible," Rau continued, "for finally destroying the unity of the Berlin police and thereby bringing about a situation in which the west sector police are protective troops for the black market." The Economic Commission would, therefore, continue to issue orders with respect to Berlin's food supply.

At this, Dr. Friedensburg lost his patience and replied acidly that living conditions in Berlin were actually superior to those in the east zone, as demonstrated by the east zone's own statistics. If the communists really had the public interest at heart, he concluded,

they should support elections in Berlin rather than trying to block them.[70]

In spite of communist maneuvers, Füllsack continued to fight a stubborn rear-guard action in his campaign to hold on to the central food administration for Berlin. He opened an office in the British sector, where employees who had been locked out of the east sector building could resume their work, but he kept his own office in the old building. When Letsch and the Soviet liaison personnel continued to contest his authority and made his work all but impossible, he moved to a room in the city hall, still in the east sector. But the Soviet liaison officer followed him to the city hall and persisted in obstructing his activities there. On August 23 Füllsack bowed to the inevitable and officially established his headquarters in the British sector. Another department of the city government had been split.[71]

A third area of the city government over which the Soviets attempted to establish their authority was that of finance. They succeeded in causing serious dislocation not only in the whole city government but in private enterprise as well. On July 30 the Soviet Military Administration instructed the city's central bank, which had its headquarters in East Berlin, to block the accounts of the Magistrat and of all enterprises and organizations in the west sectors.[72] It offered no explanation for this action.[73] As a result, it was impossible at the end of the month to pay the wages of almost 750,000 west sector workers, including firemen, policemen, and transit workers. An American newspaperman called it the "greatest internal economic crisis" West Berlin had faced yet.[74] The London *Times* reported that the Magistrat was frankly anxious lest its activities as an independent administration be brought to a standstill for lack of funds.[75] On August 5, after several days of negotiation with the Magistrat, the Soviets agreed to unblock both private and public accounts. The following day, however, they went back on this agreement and announced that only a limited sum, for specific expenditures, would be available to the Magistrat, and that west sector firms and organizations could have their accounts unblocked only if they promised to carry on all future transactions in Soviet zone currency.[76]

As the economic life of the west sectors staggered under the impact of this blow, the Western powers moved to provide assistance. They offered, first, to meet the payrolls of all industry and commerce in West Berlin.[77] Second, they ordered the Berlin government to stop moving the holdings of west sector branch banks to the central

bank, and also to establish a new city treasury in West Berlin.[78] As if to test these orders, the Soviet-controlled central bank shortly thereafter presented a check for over three million marks to its branch in the British sector, saying that the funds were required to pay employees in the Soviet sector. British Military Government refused to allow payment, however, pointing out that the Magistrat's accounts in the east sector were still blocked.[79]

The Soviet authorities made particularly inhumane use of the power of the purse toward the end of the month, when they blocked the accounts of the Berlin Insurance Company, a semipublic agency. This company, on which thousands of elderly or disabled pensioners relied for support, was located in the Soviet sector and had no bank accounts whatsoever in West Berlin. The Soviets agreed to unblock the accounts only if the Western powers made available a portion of the total funds required for pension payments.[80]

Although the Soviet authorities gradually unblocked most of the accounts in question, either partially or entirely, their control of the central bank continued to cause difficulties to the city government. Magistrat funds were released in installments, and only after repeated representations.[81]

Efforts to Undermine the Government as a Whole

Having forced a split in two departments of the city government and caused serious disorganization in others, the Soviets and German Communists moved against the government as a whole. Toward the end of August, just as a purported four-power agreement was being hammered out in Moscow, the communist campaign against the democratic majority in the Magistrat and Assembly was redoubled.

This new assault was preceded by extensive propaganda. A story in *Neues Deutschland* for August 14 was headed "CHAOS IN THE WEST SECTORS IMPERILS ALL BERLIN," and claimed that the "airlift policies" of the Magistrat had led to a new record of more than 100,000 unemployed in the west sectors. The following day, another headline in the same paper trumpeted: "NOT ONE MORE DAY IN OFFICE FOR THIS GOVERNMENT." On the 25th the official SED organ alleged that a "reactionary clique" of Social Democrats was preparing a *Putsch*, with the aim of declaring an emergency, suspending the constitution, and expelling the SED members from the Magistrat. The London *Times* commented that the process of undermining the authority and independence of the popularly-elected city government

had already gone dangerously far and might yet go farther, and that it was not unusual for the Communists to accuse their opponent of contemplating the very action they themselves were preparing.[82]

The forebodings of the *Times* were well founded. Already on August 24, at 11 o'clock at night, Dr. Friedensburg had been summoned to the city hall, where a Soviet liaison officer handed him a communication from General Kotikov. In it, Kotikov bitterly assailed the Magistrat for causing "disorganization and division" in the Berlin police force by suspending Markgraf, and also declared all recent decisions of the Magistrat null and void, since they had not been confirmed by the Soviet occupation authorities. City officials who tried to carry out these illegal decisions would be guilty of disturbing public order and injuring the occupation regime.[83] Dr. Friedensburg responded by requesting that he be permitted to comment on this order to General Kotikov personally. The liaison officer said he would forward this request.

The Acting Mayor's comments, in the form of a letter, were couched in diplomatic language, but made it abundantly clear that he had no intention of recognizing the Soviet order. According to Article 26 of Berlin's provisional constitution, he pointed out, only Magistrat decisions of a general or fundamental character required the approval of the occupying powers. It was highly undesirable that regulations which were in force at the time that the four-power Berlin Kommandatura was meeting regularly should now be set aside. Whoever was serious about helping the people of Berlin should endeavor to widen, rather than limit, the power of the city authorities to act. As for Markgraf, Dr. Friedensburg added, he had been suspended only because he had systematically interfered with the constitutional functioning of the Berlin administration. "Disorganization and division" had arisen when the legal regulations of the Magistrat were prevented from coming into force in one sector. By restoring the legal order in the east sector, General Kotikov could end all appearances of division and disorganization in the ranks of the police.[84]

Colonel Howley backed up Dr. Friedensburg in a statement to the press.[85] "Decisions of the representatives who were elected by a majority of the Berlin population will remain in force in the American sector," he said, adding that General Kotikov had no more and no less authority in Berlin than the commandants of the west sectors. The British and French commandants likewise refused to recognize

Kotikov's authority to limit the power of the Magistrat in their sectors.

Next, the Soviets attempted to throttle the City Assembly. The regular eightieth meeting of this body had been scheduled for 2:00 P.M. on August 26. More than an hour before the meeting was to begin, crowds of SED supporters appeared in front of the city hall. As on June 23, they carried banners and placards, some of which urged: "PUT AN END TO THE BANKRUPT MAGISTRAT." Large numbers of demonstrators arrived in Soviet trucks; others marched up to the building in columns. By two o'clock several thousand people were in front of the city hall. A few hundred forced their way into the meeting chamber, where Assemblyman Geschke (SED) told them that the scheduled session would not take place. The chairman of the SED fraction then harangued the crowd, saying that the time for action had come. He also read them a motion he had intended to introduce in the Assembly, which demanded that a special committee, composed of nine assemblymen and nine "citizens," should take over the "chief functions" of the Magistrat. His proposal was obviously designed to shift the authority of the legal Magistrat to a body more sympathetic to the Communists.

While the crowd of demonstrators seethed outside the city hall, Dr. Friedensburg received in his office a ten-man communist delegation, including Berlin's SED Chairman, Karl Maron. After this meeting Maron addressed the crowd from a loudspeaker car outside, saying that his conversation with Dr. Friedensburg had convinced him that the Magistrat was "incapable of working and unwilling to work." "In the next few days," he went on, "decisive things must and will occur in Berlin." And he exhorted his audience to demand the resignation of the Magistrat even more loudly.

As the demonstrators began to disperse, Dr. Friedensburg held a press conference. He explained that the Assembly's Council of Elders had decided to call off the meeting because they feared a repetition of the riot scenes of June 23. An appeal for protection to the east sector police had remained unanswered. Dr. Friedensburg added, however, that the Magistrat was determined to continue its work in the city hall.[86]

According to the SED version, the crowd in front of the city hall on August 26 was composed of 50,000 workers,* who had gathered

* The *Tagesspiegel* (August 28) pointed out with some amusement that the size of the crowd in front of the city hall was reported by east sector newspapers variously as from 10,000 to 55,000: "And so we really need no further proof that

to protest the "sabotage policies" of the Magistrat, and to express their support of the SED program for a unified administration, a uniform food supply, and a single currency. In addition, a total of 250,000 more Berliners were said to have demonstrated against the Magistrat in various districts of the city.[87]

Both the Western powers and Berlin's democrats were quick to react to the demonstration. General Clay made headlines with the statement that no "action committees" would be permitted in Berlin's west sectors. He was supported by statements from official sources in both London and Washington condemning the SED tactics. And only a few hours after the city hall disturbances, 30,000 Berliners attended a protest meeting, sponsored by the three democratic political parties, on the square before the old Reichstag. Ernst Reuter told the crowd: "We Berliners have said 'no' to communism, and we will fight it with all our might as long as there is breath in us. . . . The Magistrat and the City Assembly, together with the freedom-loving Berlin population, will build a dam against which the red tide will beat in vain."[88]

Berlin's assemblymen once again proved a hardy breed. Although the SED demonstration had prevented them from meeting on the 26th, they scheduled another meeting for 10:00 A.M. the next day. In an effort to maintain order, employees of the Magistrat locked the doors of the city hall after the assemblymen had entered, but a crowd of about two thousand persons soon assembled, broke down the iron gate in front of the main door, and tried to force open the door itself. A Soviet liaison officer, who was inside, assisted the mob by demanding that the door be opened for him to go out. Magistrat personnel tried to persuade him to use the back door and, when he refused, told him that the front door key had been lost. He was not satisfied with this explanation, however, and eventually the door was opened. As the Soviet officer went out, a number of the demonstrators pushed their way in.

Meanwhile, an SED assemblyman and a number of east sector police had forced open the back door, and the demonstrators poured in with red banners and placards. Dr. Suhr, the iron-nerved Speaker, had just officially opened the eightieth regular meeting of the Assembly in the chamber. Recognizing that there was no means of preserving order, however, he adjourned it again five minutes later.[89]

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our numbering system did not originate in Arabia, but in the 'home of all workers.' "

Dr. Suhr then sent a message to General Kotikov, asking whether the Soviet commandant could guarantee the safety of the Assembly members. At midnight on the 27th, two Soviet liaison officers handed him General Kotikov's written answer. "We do not understand clearly what the Assembly Speaker wishes from the Soviet authorities," wrote the General. Did Dr. Suhr want the occupation powers to forbid meetings and demonstrations by the people of Berlin who were opposed to the present policies of the Magistrat? And should this prohibition apply to all Berlin, to the Soviet sector, or only to the central *Bezirk* where the Magistrat building was located? Did Dr. Suhr want the Soviet authorities to interfere with the relations between the Magistrat and the Berlin workers who were not in agreement with the present policies of the Magistrat? Why didn't Dr. Suhr request protection from the German police in the borough where the city hall was located? From what areas of the city should Berlin workers be excluded when they wished to petition members of the City Assembly? "I would like to have answers to these questions as soon as possible," concluded the Soviet commandant, "so that I may take such measures as are within my competence and which reflect the customary democratic practice as it is known in democratic European states."[90]

Although the sarcastic tone of General Kotikov's reply was not encouraging, Dr. Suhr responded to it and again requested the Soviet commandant to provide protection. The east sector press thereupon reported that workers were coming directly from their workbenches to General Kotikov to let him know that they opposed Dr. Suhr's request, and to state also that they were not in favor of new elections in Berlin. When Dr. Suhr and the Assembly's Council of Elders announced that the Assembly would meet on September 3 in the city hall if General Kotikov would assure protection, the *Tagesspiegel* commented bitterly that the Soviet-owned firms in East Berlin still employed a sufficient number of "people's democrats" to see that no meeting would be held.[91]

While Dr. Suhr was vainly requesting General Kotikov to assure protection for the Assembly, the British member of the Western team of negotiators in Moscow, Frank Roberts, was also protesting the disorders in Berlin. On August 27 he called Molotov's attention to the disturbances in the German capital, and suggested that Marshal Sokolovsky be instructed to take measures to preserve a calm atmosphere for the coming deliberations of the military governors. Molotov replied gruffly that Marshal Sokolovsky already had

his instructions, and declined to discuss the matter further.[92] There can be little doubt that Soviet policy-makers at the highest level were well aware of the mob scenes at the Berlin city hall, and that these scenes were indeed an integral part of Soviet policy.

Berliners Worry about a Possible Compromise

Soviet pressure on individual German officials, on departments of the city government, and on the government as a whole did not soften the determination of Berlin's leaders to resist the communist assault. Indeed, they seemed to become more defiant as time went on.

There was, however, serious concern about the resolution of the Western powers. If the democracies should abandon their position in Berlin, or even make any appreciable concessions, the Berlin democrats were convinced that they were doomed. Speaking at a mass meeting on July 25, a member of the City Assembly appealed to the Western powers under no circumstances to repeat their Munich policies. In struggles with a dictatorship, he said, democracies must be warlike, if they want to assure world peace and world freedom.[93] At a Party Day Rally of the Berlin SPD on July 31, Erich Ollenhauer expressed similar concern: "We place our entire confidence in the statesmen of the Western powers and trust that they will not enter into four-power negotiations under pressure of the blockade."[94] A few days later, Ernst Reuter warned the Allies against a "rotten compromise," which would vitiate the firm resistance of the Berliners.[95] Similar worried comments could be heard all the time the Moscow negotiations were in progress.

As was pointed out earlier, the fears of the democratic leaders were not wholly imaginary. Among themselves and within themselves the Western powers were divided, and rumors of division reached Berlin. There was always the danger that the forces favoring compromise might gain the upper hand. Furthermore, the reluctance of the Western powers to introduce the west mark as the sole medium of exchange was taken by some German leaders as an indication that such a compromise was in the offing. The very fact that the west marks in Berlin were stamped with a "B" led Berliners to suspect that the Western powers were differentiating the Berlin marks from the West German currency in order to make them easier to withdraw. Colonel Howley remarked in his memoirs that city finances were in a desperate state, but that the Western powers hesitated to take any positive steps to correct the fiscal situation.[96]

Other disturbing rumors concerned evacuation plans. As late as September 7, the Secretary of the Army in Washington said that plans had been drawn up to evacuate actively pro-Western Germans from Berlin in order of priority after the U.S. dependents. He also reported plans for protective measures which would, if possible, be nonprovocative.[97] Measures designed to be nonprovocative often looked like appeasement to the Berliners.

Announcement of the Moscow agreement, on August 31, was greeted with enthusiasm in the German communist press. The West Berlin press was restrained in its response; it clearly viewed with alarm the prospect that west marks were to be withdrawn from circulation. The *Tagesspiegel* expressed editorial concern about the results of a compromise on the currency question, and SPD Chairman Franz Neumann told a mass meeting that, if the Western powers at Moscow had really agreed to the introduction of the east mark, Berliners would regard this as a station on the road to capitulation.[98]

Technical Discussions in Berlin

Under the Moscow agreement, the four military governors in Berlin were to make the necessary technical arrangements for introducing the east mark and removing traffic restrictions, and were to report back to their governments not later than September 7. Accordingly, the four commanders met on August 31 to consider ways of carrying out this directive.

Prospects of agreement on the necessary technical arrangements did not look favorable. For one thing, the communist campaign against the city government and the disturbances at the city hall did not provide an atmosphere conducive to agreement. The disturbances were revived on September 3, and continued until the conclusion of the discussions. It looked as if the Soviets wished to confront the Western military governors with a *fait accompli.*

Secondly, the attitude of the Western military authorities in Berlin was becoming increasingly firm. The view that the airlift could supply the city through the winter, while not yet universal, had gained the upper hand during August. Also the stout resistance of the German leaders and the Berlin populace had made more and more Western officials feel that any compromise would amount to betrayal. Some U.S. Military Government officials were horrified at the written directive from Moscow, which failed to include Stalin's verbal assurances about four-power control of currency, and whose