

University of California, Berkeley

**Living in the Question?
The Berlin Nuclear Crisis
Critical Oral History**

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Institute of Slavic, East European, and Eurasian Studies
Working Paper

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Spring 2003

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Acknowledgements

The author wishes to thank Patricia MacMillen, Joseph Nye, Sean Lynn-Jones, Barbara Voytek, Varten Gregorian, Charles Weibel, and Jerry Lubenow for their helpful suggestions on earlier drafts and the support of Linda Blum at the Rosberg Library and Creative Office Services and Stella Bourgoin for copyediting.

Support for the publication of this working paper is provided by the Carnegie Foundation's Avoiding Nuclear War Fellowship.

Complete transcripts and manuscript are located in the Benina Berger Gould Collection, Box 1, Hoover Institution Archives, Stanford University, Stanford, California and John F. Kenedy Library, Columbia Point, Boston, Massachusetts.

Nikita Krushchev



Photo: David Conway

LIVING NUCLEAR CRISIS

“What we call the first nuclear era, which lasted from 1945-1991, has come to an end, and a second nuclear era has begun. Some thirty five thousand nuclear weapons remain in the world, today.”¹

“Everyone knew that India could make a bomb, and everyone knew that it could set one off—in fact, it had done so before, at the same place, in the same month, 24 years earlier. But few had cared to think about it. So the May, 1998 explosion reintroduced many people, especially Americans, to the world in which they already lived.

“This reintroduction marks the end of a decade-long hiatus during which commentators and politicians often acted as if nuclear weapons no longer defined our age...now the terrain itself feels changed. We are returning to an era like the cold war—where foreign policy debates are simultaneously nuclear debates.”²

Given the events of September 11, 2001 and the continued threat of biological and nuclear war, and the build up of missile defense, the examination of the minds of decision makers during crisis has become even more immediate and important.

“The mid 1980s was a time of...considerable worry about the risk of nuclear war. For those who took this risk seriously it was natural to turn toward the reexamination of previous superpower crises.”³

The purpose of this research is to bring together the formal and informal “historical voices” of the Berlin Wall Crisis of 1961 and to scrutinize the questions asked by significant politicians, scholars and students almost thirty years after the Wall was built. The formal history is in the form of taped meetings of the Berlin Wall Critical Oral History. It includes primary sources about the crisis either written by the participants themselves or about their participation in the decision making at the time of the Berlin Crisis. The informal history is drawn from memoirs, biographies, autobiographies, and the written memos and letters found in archival material. Anecdotal material drawn from the back channeling correspondence between Khrushchev and Kennedy and personality profiles mandated by the State Department and CIA are also included. It is important to familiarize the reader with back channel communication and the political profiles of leaders compiled for President Kennedy. These communications were as important in preventing war as more formal political diplomacy, military strategies, and policy decisions.

The transcripts are in their original form, edited only for repetitions or inaudible sounds of the tape-recorded sessions. Although it would have been easier to thematize the content for analysis in order to have a more orderly continuous text, or put the oral history into written prose for readability,⁴ I made the decision to represent the Cold War history voices in their own words.

NUCLEAR MEMORY AND EVENTS

“Beginning with the atomic bombing of Hiroshima, nuclear weapons have been targeted and used against human beings.”⁵

The study of memory as a form of scholarship emerged in the 1980s as part of the new cultural history.⁶ How we remember our nuclear history from generation to generation was a major theme of many university conferences during 1995, commemorating the 50th anniversary of the bombing of Hiroshima and Nagasaki.

The questions asked by the defense analysts, academics, and related people in proximity to the Berlin Wall Crisis became the foci of this research. *I started with the assumption that knowledge about something will teach us lessons, and that the memory of a traumatic incident remains with us always. I ended realizing that questions (those asked and those not asked) are the bridge between knowledge and memory. If we ask questions we chance to open our memories and also to add knowledge to an experience in the past that we hope will never happen again.*

By searching for the questions in the text of the oral histories, much was illuminated about the history of the Berlin Wall Crisis 1961, the communication channels, both formal and informal between Soviets and Americans, the differing perceptions people had of Khrushchev and his risk taking behavior, and the influences that other people in power, Ulbricht, Clay, R. Kennedy, Schelling, Hillenbrand, Nitze, Bundy, Acheson, Gromyko, etc. had on this event. The transcripts in this paper are representative of the discussions that took place in the Center for Science and International Affairs at the John F. Kennedy School of Government at Harvard with reference to the Berlin Wall Crisis of 1961. A series of meetings took place from September 1988 to January 1990 with top-level policy makers, historians, scholars, political psychologists, political scientists, and journalists.

How policymakers made decisions and responded to the central organizing theme of *whether or not nuclear war was probable* during the Berlin Crisis of 1961 was the pivotal question that the project organized by James Blight and Joseph Nye turned on. This research presents the Critical Oral History transcripts in a context-oriented manner that hopefully will bring the reader into the *mindsets* of the participants. It also represents the *groupthink* of a specialized community: the *thinktank* at an academic international security center.

When the Cold War began, many forgot the lingering threat of another Hiroshima and Nagasaki. How and if our knowledge of Hiroshima and the continued nuclear threat should be passed on to other generations is one of the most important conversations of our times. It is easy to forget Hiroshima and the international crises of the Berlin Wall and the nuclear threat of Cuba now that the Cold War is over. *The secrecy that clouds many of the most significant events in history also serves to distort our memory and support a belief system that we are powerless to do anything to direct the course of history.*

The Berlin Nuclear Crisis Project will give you an idea of the interaction of memory and history. “Oral narrators have within their culture certain aids to memory...stories are told over and over

or discussed with members of the community. Formalized narrative...helps to preserve a textual version of an event.”⁷

Memoirs and oral history interviews have become a way that major political leaders have used to recall and retain information that they see as meaningful for the next generation about significant events and people. Two Soviet leaders Anastas Mikoyan and Nikita Khrushchev see meaning in this transmission process:

Anastas Mikoyan: I have long observed that the older a man becomes the more compelling is his need to sum up his life in some way in order to transmit his knowledge and experience to succeeding generations. This is as it should be. It is especially true of people whose lives have intersected events of major social and political significance.⁸

Nikita Khrushchev: I believe that they will find my memoirs helpful because I was a contemporary and a close associate of Stalin’s. I know a lot about him. I was a witness to Stalin’s policies of treachery and banditry. I’m dictating my memoirs for theoreticians, for experts on politics and economics who will be able to draw the correct conclusions from what I’ve said. It’s not hard to draw the correct conclusions, for they’re right on the surface, but it takes courage.⁹

THE METHODOLOGY USED WAS CRITICAL ORAL HISTORY

Jim Blight: The goal of using the methodology of critical oral history is to “to reconstruct the psychological reality of decision makers.” The plan of research is organized ‘around the search for descriptions of the stream of thought.’ The familiar role of the psychologist shouting the clinical diagnosis of mental illness at the people who make nuclear policy is finally replaced by a more extensive method for understanding and deriving information from policy makers...Beginning in late 1986, working out of the Harvard’s Kennedy School of Government, we began recruiting *advisers* to Kennedy during the crisis, including so-call “hawks” and “doves,” and Sovietologists known for their acumen on Soviet motivation in the crisis.

Our colleagues at the National Security Archive in Washington, DC began to provide us with the latest and most important *declassified materials* on the crisis from the US government. In addition...an annotated chronology of events, derived from all sources, public and declassified, was developed. This has become absolutely essential to critical oral history. Finally, *scholars and journalists* whose knowledge of the “literature” of the missile crisis was exhaustive were invited to join the enterprise.¹⁰

It was precisely to avoid the difficulties arising from oral history that the conference organizers used scholars so extensively to *interrogate* policy makers’ recollections of events, thereby producing what they call critical oral history...we refer several times to evidence gleaned through oral history, but in each case we have sought to draw also upon corroborating evidence from other sources, rather than basing our arguments exclusively on individual memory. In our view critical oral history opens up potentially fruitful avenues of inquiry for historians; however,

we do not wish to underestimate the problem of relying on oral history, especially since on several occasions faulty memories have sent scholars on wild goose chases.

The end result has been a fascinating set of discussions which have not only produced important historical revelations but which have also given scholars ample opportunity to question participants in the crisis over their interpretations of each other's motives and interpretations.¹¹

TRANSCRIPT 1

US's and USSR's Differing Perceptions of Nuclear Crisis

“The setting was Checkpoint Charlie, the famed crossing point in the recently constructed Berlin Wall. The tanks were armed and had contingent instructions to fire. The world came closer than ever to a nuclear-age equivalent of the Wild West showdown at the OK Corral...

“The new sources reveal why the confrontation was even more dangerous than believed at the time and tell the undisclosed story of how it was peacefully resolved. Even as the Cold War fades, with the Wall and what it symbolized now gone, a proper understanding of this crisis will help us cope less perilously with new crisis in the future.”¹²

James Blight and Graham Allison brought together a group of experts and scholars to begin a critical oral history of the Berlin Wall Crisis. They had been working on the Cuban Missile Crisis, and had become interested during the Cambridge Conference in October 1987 in the motivations and actions of the Russians during the Berlin Wall international crisis. The guests were William Taubman, Raymond Gartoff, and Fyodor Burlatsky.

William Taubman is Professor of Political Science at Amherst College and author of many works on Soviet foreign policy. The questions he asked were:

- Why did Khrushchev provoke not one, but two Berlin crises, once in November, 1958 and then again in the summer of 1961?
- What was it about Khrushchev as a person, his unique personality and style, that helps explain what provoked him to do this?
- What was the decision-making and discussion process on issuing the ultimatums on Berlin either in 1958 or 1961?

Raymond Gartoff at the time was “a Senior Fellow, Foreign Policy Studies Program, at the Brookings Institute and during the crisis was special assistant for Soviet bloc Political/Military Affairs in the State Department during the Kennedy administration.”¹³

His questions related to four themes:

- What was the actual time period of the crisis?
- Were the Berlin ultimatums an offensive or defensive move on the part of the Soviets?
- What were the internal questions and struggles of the Soviet leadership or the Soviet Union in general during the time?
- Was Berlin thought of as a very dangerous crisis in the Soviet Union?

Fyodor Burlatsky was the Project's first Russian guest speaker. While working in the Party's central apparatus during the 1960s, he often accompanied N. S. Khrushchev on his trips abroad. The questions he was interested in were:

- How did the Berlin crisis compare to the Cuban Missile Crisis?
- What were the many reasons for Khrushchev to begin with this pressure to the West and the United States and with such risk?
- What was the decision-making process at the time between Khrushchev and Ulbricht concerning the wall? And what was Khrushchev's decision-making style?
- What do we know about John Kennedy and the American political, domestic, international, and psychological side?

September 27, 1988

James Blight: We are not mainly historians on the subject of nuclear crisis. We are interested in the behavior, and the process of decision making that goes into making strategic decisions under a certain amount of stress. During the various acute periods of the whole of the Berlin crisis between 1958 and 1961-63. In those periods, what was the sense of danger? How close were we to what kind of a war? Certainly the period between 1958 and 1963 was a period of intense preoccupation on all sides with the Berlin question and its embeddedness in the German question. Since even if it wasn't Khrushchev's crisis, as most agree it was, he certainly had a great deal to do with it...we thought it would be a good idea to invite three people to *discuss the question of West Berlin and what the German question meant to Nikita Khrushchev* between 1958 and 1961-62-63.

McGeorge Bundy currently has a book on the history of nuclear diplomacy in which the chapter "Berlin and the West" takes the position that this was Khrushchev's crisis. There was something about the man, something about his own particular interests and obsessions, something about the period that led him periodically to try to exert extreme pressure on the Western allies and led him at other times to seem relatively conciliatory. We leave the question open: *what was it that he wanted when he did pressure the West?*

William Taubman: I went back and looked at some of the literature and found that among the answers offered, particularly in the Western literature, there was *no consensus*. One possible scenario was that of a unified Soviet leadership with Khrushchev at the head with a set of coherent goals. These goals could have been: 1) to stabilize East German/to destabilize West Germany; 2) to deny nuclear weapons to West Germany; or 3) motives placing more or less emphasis on the larger German aspects as opposed to the narrower Berlin aspects of the crisis. Contrasted with these more specific goals, there is Ulam's proposition of a grand design of the communist leadership in trying to link Germans and Chinese. Another picture is one that emphasizes a divided Soviet leadership with Khrushchev the reformer opposed by the conservatives and, therefore, trying to be tough on Berlin in order to get support at home. Khrushchev's handling of the crisis was linked to his domestic situation. Finally we have the

explanation posed by Robert Slusser that nobody was in charge. All these comprise a long-standing, ongoing debate, and to help us in this matter we need Fyodor Burlatsky.

In regard to my second question, why look at a person? There are three criteria which allow us to say why we must pay attention to a particular individual and personality, and Khrushchev fits all three:

- He was *powerful* and had the ability to affect events.
- He was *unique and idiosyncratic*. He acted differently than other Soviets might have.
- If a leader *acts irrationally*, almost destructively, we need to try to understand, not on the surface of his personality, but a deeper probing.

The Soviet leader fulfills all these criteria in the case of the Berlin crisis. There was a *compulsiveness with which Khrushchev kept returning to the Berlin situation*.

Finally, we can look for answers under four headings:

- Structural considerations: the dilemma of a reformer attempting to change a deeply entrenched system. Was there a difference in the way Khrushchev was a reformer and the way he approached and dealt with the Berlin matter?
- Political considerations: Fyodor Burlatsky believes there were no serious differences in Moscow at the time. He denies that opposition could have provoked Khrushchev to act as he did. The question here is, wasn't Khrushchev at least aware that there was skepticism...doubts at home...and he, therefore, might have sought through foreign policy to strengthen his authority and policy, if not necessarily his power? Were his behavior and this crisis a reflection of the obstacles he was encountering at home?
- International dimension: it seems to me that Khrushchev provoked the first Berlin crisis to push the United States to focus the attention of the West on détente, which he had been pursuing for some time already in 1958, thus to force a summit with the West. To what extent was he pressured by Ulbricht and the East Germans?
- Finally, the personal element: how personal was this crisis? When he decided to issue the 1958 ultimatum, did he consult with someone or was he in personal control throughout? Was there advice or pressure involved? Which personal qualities were most important in shaping the way he dealt with the crisis?

Jim Blight: Next is Ray Garthoff. His most recent work is "Reflections on the Cuban Missile Crisis." I am going to ask him to talk about what the consensus was within the American intelligence community within which he operated at the time regarding the Soviets, the German question, and Berlin.

Ray Gartoff: In the beginning, when the crisis began, there was deep concern. This actual time of the crisis is in itself a question: at its broadest, it spanned the period from November 10, 1958 until the quadripartite agreement on Berlin in 1971. Or did it run from January 6, 1961 when

Khrushchev made it clear he would continue to press on the Berlin issue; or from the still more intense beginning on June 4, 1961 with John Kennedy in Vienna when Khrushchev presented the stiff memoir and oral presentation to the American president establishing a deadline of the end of the year; or until the intensity ended on October 13 when Khrushchev lifted the end of the year deadline during his speech to the 22nd Party Congress? Or did it continue actually until October 28th when the Soviet and American tanks faced each other at Checkpoint Charlie? One could even argue that the real crisis did not conclude until October 22, 1962 when the Cuban missile crisis not only intervened in a sense, but also the outcome of which precluded what could have been a renewed Berlin crisis in 1963. Therefore, the period upon which we must focus most sharply in our discussion is the summer/early fall of 1961; however, as far as the American government was concerned, there had been a crisis of varying intensity due to the repeated initiatives of Khrushchev in the entire period from 1958-1961 and this crisis was the source of significant concern.

The American and the general western views of Soviet objectives did differ substantially. There were several related hypotheses: Khrushchev was attempting to *undermine NATO* by undermining the credibility of the American commitment and guarantee, and that the Soviets wanted to undercut the Western alliance by neutralizing West Germany and that the Soviet objective was open-ended, i.e. Moscow was seeking *unlimited expansion* and would continue to do so unless otherwise constrained and this was a test of U.S. and Western will, whatever Khrushchev's specific aims may have been.

All of these are variations on the belief that this was an *offensive plea* on the part of Khrushchev and the Soviet leadership and reflect thinking in the highest levels of government as well.

In contrast to some of these more precise goals, another consideration to which some gave credence was that Khrushchev saw this not as his best chance to gain something in his push west, but rather as his only goal while he had the *psychological advantage of the missile gap*.

Still, others did recognize the possibility of a defensive motivation behind Khrushchev's moves. There were those in the intelligence and political analytic community as well as advisors, for example Tommy Thompson, that saw this as an effort on the part of Moscow to neutralize instability in East Germany and to protect Soviet hegemony in Eastern Europe...as a defensive motivation as well as an opportunistic approach.

The crisis was perhaps a combination of both the sets of objectives. Certainly everyone saw it as a crisis that stemmed from Soviet initiative. However, whatever the mix of motivations, I cannot remember that anyone thought in 1961 that Khrushchev had the intention of "clearing the decks" for *détente*.

Some Kremlinologists postulated as to whether Khrushchev's personality was behind all this or whether the exigencies of internal political maneuvering in Moscow prompted his moves. However, to the best of my recollection and knowledge, these were not strong considerations in the higher policy making circles of Washington. The dominant reason offered was that Khrushchev was *pushing for Communist expansion*.

As far as options for western response were concerned, *those stressing offensive Soviet motivations were not in favor of negotiation*. They were of the opinion that that would not help. There was not so much the need to demonstrate readiness to negotiate, but rather readiness to build up and use military power to prevent any incursion of this kind; i.e. to stand firm of course, some advocated standing firm and negotiating. Many people were consulted. This is why it took six weeks to reply to Vienna.

The nature of contingency responses was to focus on the danger of a new blockade. Would the Soviet Union sign a peace treaty with West Germany? Or more importantly, what would ensure that they would not do that? Would there be a need to resort to arms to probe Moscow's intentions? Much attention was given to whether there were Soviet troops and where they had preponderance. Should we, as a way of counterpoint to blockade, push for horizontal escalation such as an American counter blockade in Cuba or even a sea blockade of the Soviet Union itself? The committee in charge of blockades or counter measures by maritime means was chaired by Paul Nitze. A good deal of attention was paid to these ideas, as well as to considerations of European security and the potential of confidence building measures.

To wrap up, let me simply say that the general American and Western allied consensus (there were, of course, four power meetings and broader NATO meetings going on at the time) *with regard to contingency planning was an emphasis on a reinforced need to display firmness in both our diplomatic stance as well as any actions that might be required to prevent erosion of NATO cohesion and confidence within the Alliance. In confronting threats to West Berlin and access to this city, contingency planning in retrospect, for better or worse, was relatively weak and was not adequate to deal with what did finally occur when the wall went up on August 13. Our own planning countermeasures had not seriously addressed this potential problem, although the possibility had been mentioned.*

James Blight: Fyodor Burlatsky and his colleagues downplayed the Berlin crisis in contrasting it with the Cuban missile crisis. They expressed that it was hardly a "real" crisis. This was not the prevailing sentiment in Washington, and Washington officials certainly did not realize or comprehend what appears to have been the Soviet mindset in approaching the events of those years which were thought to be much more important to Moscow. I would like to again press Fyodor Burlatsky on this question as well as all the other questions Bill and I have posed: Was Berlin thought of as a very dangerous crisis in the Soviet Union? ¹⁴

Fyodor Burlatsky: During the Berlin crisis there was no danger of atomic war in Moscow. Maybe in the American point of view this was a frightening consideration, but for the Soviets there was not the danger of the Cuban missile crisis during the Berlin crisis. Of the two crises there were some common or shared measures in the styles of our relations from both sides. Maybe it was the *last time when both sides used the measures of the Cold War to pressure each other and to demonstrate political strength.*

By the way, I would like to ask you a question about the American side. There were two sides, and it may be important for us to know about John Kennedy and the American political,

domestic, international, and psychological side. Therefore this crisis was not so much Khrushchev's crisis, but it was the last crisis of the methods of the Cold War.

There were many reasons for Khrushchev to begin with this pressure to the West and the United States and with such risk. From my point of view, the main reason originated in his worries about Eastern Europe after Hungary in 1956. From both the international and domestic points of view, Khrushchev had a constant nagging problem in Eastern Europe. What happened in 1956 was blamed on his secret speech against Stalin at the 20th Party Congress. He worried very much about Eastern Europe after the Hungarian Revolution of 1956. He wanted to have "free hands" for his reform in the Soviet Union as well as for changes between the Soviet Union and the United States and East and West.

Therefore, he needed stability in Eastern Europe. From his point of view, this could come from western countries and especially if the United States would give diplomatic recognition to the G.D.R. if there were an agreement about West Berlin and if the West would agree on a new border between Germany and Poland and Czechoslovakia. This was the reason why, at Vienna in 1961, Khrushchev tried to explain his view in not so polite a style as is usual in the West. This is why Khrushchev was so disappointed after 1961. John Kennedy would not help with these matters.

I agree with Bill. Only Khrushchev would do such things as his secret speech, the Berlin Crisis, and the Caribbean Crisis. He was a very risky man: a "political pilot."¹⁵ No one after the revolution had the same political risky style, whether it be to put bases in or take bases away from Cuba. It was all part of the *game* of this "political pilot." Although he was a deep political thinker, Khrushchev was without political culture.

This explains his measures, not his aims—the same measure which he used during the Berlin crisis as later during the Cuban missile crisis.

Fyodor Burlatsky: I gave the main reason for Khrushchev's actions, but I think a second reason was that Khrushchev was pressed by Ulbricht and by policy of the Czechoslovakian leaders, and especially Ulbricht posed domestic and international difficulties.

Now, if you want to press me, I will only ask that I may do the same and ask some questions of you. First, I have the feeling that Khrushchev succeeded because he supported Ulbricht with his demands about the border and the West did nothing about this.¹⁶ My question to my American colleagues is this: in your opinion, do you have the feeling that maybe the Americans believed that diplomatic recognition of the G.D.R. could have made a compromise possible and opened up the way for *détente*? Why didn't J.F.K. support Khrushchev's idea about West Berlin?¹⁷ And especially, why were the Americans so late to understand the new strategic situation, the new balance of forces between the United States and the Soviet Union when the Soviet Union prepared a new intercontinental force?

Carl Kaysen: A one-word answer would be "Konrad Adenauer." Kennedy felt pressure and the responsibility as the leader of the NATO alliance. He felt strongly about the commitment made a

long time ago that the Federal Republic was the legitimate government and therefore the decision that we would not recognize East Germany was very important.

Ray Garthoff: As far as why we would not recognize the G.D.R., I agree with Carl. First, there was the time pressure and, second, this would have been highly disruptive of the Alliance and, above all, Germany under Adenauer. Third, Soviet supposed strategic superiority was used to pressure the United States under the gun. Then we found out that the United States was superior and that this superiority was growing. This led also to the conclusion that it was necessary to be very strong on this political issue and also to deflate that image. It was, therefore, not a coincidence that the Gilpatrick speech deflating the missile gap came on October 21st just at the time when the Berlin crisis was being resolved. Khrushchev's claim to a superiority he did not have and his attempt to use this to offset change we thought was unwise.

Ernest May: Was it your concern that something like Hungary might happen in East Germany where there was pressure from people like Ulbricht? From whom did Khrushchev seek advice, especially expertise with respect to building the wall? My third question is this: you startled myself and many others here when you said that the Cuban missile crisis involved the nuclear issue and Berlin did not. How could this have been the case given that most of the western forces which were opposite Eastern Europe were nuclear armed?

Fyodor Burlatsky: Khrushchev worried about the possibility of something like the events in Hungary in 1956. Such a crisis would stop, actually destroy his domestic reforms. Ulbricht was applying great pressure.¹⁸ You had Adenauer; we had Ulbricht. At least two or three times each month he would write, telephone, harass Khrushchev about his ability and willingness to support East Germany in its quest for recognition of the construction of the Berlin Wall. The wall was not our initiative. It was Ulbricht's.

In answer to your second question, I don't know who was advising Khrushchev in these matters, perhaps Smirnoff, Gromyko, Zorin, in international affairs. In 1961, Khrushchev was at the peak of his control and power. But he was weak in 1958. The first Berlin ultimatum was issued after the struggle in June 1957. When opposition from within his own government tired to put him away, he hung by a thread.¹⁹ Maybe we Soviets had a different feeling than the Americans about the nuclear questions. About 98-99 percent of the Soviets believed Americans would not use nuclear weapons to protect Berlin. Maybe we were wrong; maybe we were stupid.

Ray Garthoff: Yes, that's true. Exactly what concerned us in Washington was that the Soviet Union did not see how serious this could become.

Fyodor Burlatsky: Khrushchev did not believe there was danger of atomic war during the Berlin crisis, but he did during the Cuban missile crisis. That was the real thing for us. Perhaps we were wrong.

Peter Wyden: Mr. Burlatsky, I would like to return to Khrushchev's state of mind and what you call his risky style and his "game playing." Your description of the Soviet leader was very emotional and risky which suggest that he was a very impulsive man. I see that you agree.

However, when John Kennedy talked in Vienna about the risk of miscalculation in nuclear matter, Khrushchev did not want to discuss it. Given all this, how can it this be reconciled with the Russian feeling that there was no chance of nuclear war?

Fyodor Burlatsky: You are a representative of Western and American political culture. The usual mistake which Westerners make is that they think of the Russians as a very rational people, that we plan everything. Actually, the Russian—compared to Westerners—people are more emotional.²⁰ Khrushchev was not so typical for all of us, but he was the culmination. But at the same time, Khrushchev was a very clever boy; when he realized there was some risk, he took it back.

We have a patriarchal, authoritarian political culture where the leader is like the father in a big family.²¹ At the 20th Party Congress, Khrushchev gave a very emotional speech criticizing Stalinism. However, this was not a rational report analyzing the objectives of Stalinism. However, when Mao criticized the speech, Khrushchev said Stalin was a great Marxist-Leninist.

Graham Allison: We hear anecdotes that Khrushchev thought that Kennedy was “too intelligent” and so Khrushchev thought he was weak and would always be able to find a reason to back down. Did that mean that when someone was very intelligent, they were weak?

Fyodor Burlatsky: Maybe intellectuals were not so reliable. When he came from Vienna, Khrushchev said that it has been a good meeting with the American president. Kennedy, however, was perhaps too young and had no political experience. He was too intelligent in America decision-making.

I say this not because I researched the American political process but because Khrushchev represented a new generation of leaders: Bukharin, Trotsky, Zinoviev, etc. were all very intellectual and well read. They discussed and discovered so much. Then after Stalin’s style of “rotation,” we had the very simple style of a new generation of leaders. Very strong characters without real culture. They were not so well read, Khrushchev never wrote any articles or books.

Therefore, Khrushchev had the idea that a real decision-maker had to be strong, but not so intellectual. To him, Kennedy had more the look of an advisor, or a political decision-maker than a president. Maybe in a crisis, he would be an advisor but not even the most influential.

Fyodor Burlatsky: Khrushchev changed his opinion about Kennedy only after the Cuban missile crisis. He respected Kennedy then since Kennedy demonstrated the ability to find good compromise.

Carl Kaysen: If Khrushchev thought that there was no possibility that nuclear weapons would be used, and given his negative view of John Kennedy, what constrained him from simply seizing Berlin?²²

Fyodor Burlatsky: This was impossible after the war. The political process from Khrushchev’s point of view looked like a game, not chess but checkers. A more simple game in which you can

take just one piece to the other side and become a crown. Also, although he demanded very much, he was satisfied with what he received, counting on the fact that he might have received more in the process.

Peter Wyden: Again, I do not understand why Khrushchev did not view this as such a dangerous crisis.

Fyodor Burlatsky: It was dangerous, but we did not think that it would result in escalation to nuclear war.

Peter Wyden: What if the United States had sent unarmed troops to cut the wire when they first started building the Wall?

Fyodor Burlatsky: It is a very simple decision to reconstruct the wall until the other side is just too tired to destroy it.

Peter Wyden: The relationship between Ulbricht and the Soviet leaders was very complex. Ulbricht was arrogant, stiff, and very Prussian in his attitude toward the Soviets. He may have been respected, but he was not liked. So when he put forth these rather strong suggestions to do something about the situation, was this well received by Moscow?

Fyodor Burlatsky: In general, Ulbricht was laughed at and not always so respected. I don't know, however, exactly what the decision-making process at the time was concerning the wall.²³

Peter Wyden: We know that Khrushchev went to West Berlin incognito. Why did he do this?

Fyodor Burlatsky: I don't know, but at one point, I did the same. When Khrushchev did this, however, he then saw the difference between the Eastern and Western cultures, and also why so many people were emigrating.

Kerry Abelson: Was Khrushchev aware that Kennedy played perhaps chess rather than checkers, i.e. that it was a case of an intellectual versus a simpleton?

Fyodor Burlatsky: Not during the Berlin crisis, but I think during the Cuban missile crisis he understood this better.

Frank Zakaria: Do you know specifically whether the Soviets attempted to make predictions about how Americans would react during the Berlin crisis?²⁴ Did the Russians assume Americans to be less rational than they were?

Fyodor Burlatsky: We felt that we must deal with the Americans from a position of strength. Until after the Cuban missile crisis, then they understood. We thought the Americans did not understand our language, so we had no choice but to deal with the Americans from a position of strength. This is what Lenin said after the revolution: first you engage and then you will see. The

Americans were not prepared to *compromise* with the USSR. I repeat that this was a crisis of the measures of the Cold War.

Ray Garthoff: It was not that the United States was not prepared to compromise with the Soviets. Rather American decision-makers only saw Khrushchev brandishing his missiles (or what looked like missiles). If we had seen compromising about the East German question as a way to stabilize the problem in Eastern Europe, we would have negotiated. None of us were thinking we had to or should make concessions because the whole *style* of how Khrushchev raised this issue was aggressive and belligerent.

Fyodor Burlatsky: Using Orwell's terminology of big brother and small brother, we had the feeling that the Soviets were the "small brother" because the Americans had so much. Consequently, Khrushchev's style was not so polite. He had an inferiority complex²⁵ and was trying to catch up with the United States. This was the psychology of Moscow at this time, but I do not feel that John Kennedy understood this.

Peter Wyden: I would like to return to Khrushchev's emotionalism and impulsiveness. When he displayed these characteristics, such as when he took off his shoe and pounded it at the United Nations, was this impulsiveness or was it prepared.

Fyodor Burlatsky: You should look into his memoirs. Remember, though, Khrushchev came to New York and many journalists were waiting for him, and so he put on an act. It was his *style*. It may have been partially due to his impulsiveness, or it may have been planned. He liked political acting and role-playing, political theater.

Peter Wyden: Did you ever see him lose control, explode?

Fyodor Burlatsky: Many times, and he would say terrible things, especially in relations with China. There were two reasons for this: 1) he was a very emotional man; and 2) it was his *style* to pressure the other side.

Peter Wyden: But would he ever have pressed so much as to go to war?

Fyodor Burlatsky: No, he never would have gone to war²⁶ as a result of simply losing control. He had too much experience and was always able to control himself in the end. It was *more political game to press the other side*.

Michael Parker: In a crisis, is it an individual making the final decision or are there institutional or organizational constraints? Can you contrast the personal with the institutional aspects of the decision-making process in the event of an international confrontation? Also, what can we expect as far as continuity *between* governments is concerned in the case of a death?

Fyodor Burlatsky: Nobody can give an absolute answer to this question. The personal factor is basically unpredictable from our point of view.

Michael Parker: Yes, but could Khrushchev have done what he did alone, or did it require approval?

Fyodor Burlatsky: Of course, Khrushchev was subject to political constraints. He was influenced by the opinion of the majority of the Politburo and the Central Committee and especially by input of our alliance and the pressures of China. He heard the words of the intellectuals and the ideas of public opinion. He was particularly sensitive to the opinions of the intellectuals. When he decided, for example, to break up the Paris summit with Eisenhower, it was not the U-2 situation which compelled him to do this, but rather the Chinese factor.

William Taubman: Can you give us some idea as to the decision-making and discussion process on issuing the ultimatums on Berlin after 1958 or 1961?

Fyodor Burlatsky: Khrushchev was authoritarian. No one could ever completely disagree with him. At meetings, he always spoke first. He tried to further the process of greater autonomy in socialist countries, emphasizing this in 1956 with his declaration that other countries should seek greater independence of action. He pushed the “flexible process” in one direction. This actually led to more political constraints because Khrushchev then had to include the ideas of the Eastern Europeans.

William Taubman: You say Khrushchev always spoke first in the Politburo and in official meetings, that he didn’t like to be opposed and was sensitive to other ideas. He must have been aware of his opposition.

Fyodor Burlatsky: There was a time when a question about a novel by Solzhenitzyn came up and all of the members of the Presidium were silent. Nobody said yes or no to Khrushchev’s idea. Only Mikoyan responded to him. So Khrushchev said you must think more about my words, and maybe you will have more to say next time. At the next meeting, the majority agreed with him. There was a Byzantium style: everyone understood when no one said anything as well as when everyone said everything.

Kerry Abelson: I want to pick up on the idea of fear or perception of risk of nuclear war. You say that Khrushchev did not intend to threaten nuclear war, nor did he think that Kennedy would. Yet, in his speech for television on August 8, 1961, just five days before on the wall went up, Khrushchev said, “One of the Western leaders may act rashly under present-day conditions and push the world into a new war. This suicidal act will entail the death of millions upon millions of people. War will not come from us, but the forces of imperialism may be deciding to take an insane step at launching military adventure. The experience of history teaches us this, when an aggressor sees that he is not being rebuffed, he grows more insolent. When, on the contrary, he is rebuffed, he calms down. We must, in our actions, reckon with this historical experience.”

Fyodor Burlatsky: Who wrote this speech? Zhukov?²⁷ You know every political speech contains propaganda. The discussion of the imperialist threat of war was just propaganda. Khrushchev, of course, did not believe it.

TRANSCRIPT 2

The Soviet Union's Fear of West German Nuclear Weapons

“Every historian has in his or her own lifetime, a private perch from which to survey the world.”²⁸

“In the last two or three years it has become more and more obvious for us in the GDR that there is a really serious nuclear threat. We feel this more and more now.”²⁹

On October 18, 1988, the Nuclear Crisis Group met with guests of the Center for Science and International Affairs, Marc Trachtenberg and Carl Kaysen. Also attending the meeting was Stanley Hoffman, Professor of History at Harvard, and Carnegie Avoiding Nuclear War fellows at C.S.I.A., Kerry Abelson, Benina Gould, John Jenks, Steven Myers, and Elizabeth Pond. Jim Blight and Joe Nye, directors of the project conducted the questioning.

The paper Marc Trachtenberg wrote, “The Berlin Crises,” was circulated prior to the meeting and served as the basis for discussion by the group.³⁰

In this document Marc addresses three fundamentally important questions:

- Why did the Soviet Union fear the nuclearization of West Germany?
- What was the role of nuclear weapons in the Berlin Crisis and international politics?
- How did the nuclear strategic policy and nuclear political policy of Eisenhower and Kennedy differ?

In the 1950s, a series of problems relating both to nuclear weapons and the German question had been building up. With the Berlin crisis, these problems came to a head. The crisis might have led to war. If each side had dug in its heels and reacted to each hostile move by its adversary by toughening its own position, the crisis could easily have gotten out of hand.

Trachtenberg analyzed the events leading to the building of the wall on August 13, 1961 from the perspective of “*intermittent tension*” related to the *German question and the buildup of nuclear weapons in West Germany*. He wanted to know “*at what point would the threat of nuclear war stop both sides from pushing forward.*” The argument here is that the crisis was not the result of a Soviet decision to try to drive the western powers out of Berlin itself, but rather has to be seen in the context of Soviet fears about Germany as a whole, fears that were brought to life when it became clear to the Soviets in the late 1950s that West Germany was well on the way to acquiring nuclear forces under her own control. For Trachtenberg, “the depth and seriousness of the German nuclear weapons question in the late 1950s has never really been recognized in the scholarly literature.”³¹

Carl Kaysen was called to Washington by Kennedy. At the time of the crisis, Kaysen was the Lucius N. Littauer professor of political economy and associate dean of Harvard College, Graduate School of Public Administration.

On August 22, 1961, after the Wall was built, Carl Kaysen sent a memo to McGeorge Bundy, Arthur Schlesinger, Abram Chayes, Henry Kissinger, Henry Owen, Marc Raskin, and Bob Korner articulating his “instinctive reactions to the Berlin situation.” This document, “Thoughts on Berlin,”³² very much supports Marc Trachtenberg’s thinking and concern about Germany and the nuclear situation.

A goal of the Soviet Union in its German policy is to place some limitation on the military power of West Germany... The Russians would like to see West Germany neutral and disarmed, as in fact they would like to see every country not under their control neutral and disarmed. “The outcry that the Soviet Union has raised about nuclear weapons in West Germany in my own judgment reflects a genuine concern, one which is widely shared among the satellites, and which goes deeper than the level of Communist propaganda. These have been Soviet aims for some time. They are now being pressed vehemently because Khrushchev feels that the continuing shift in the world balance of military power in his favor must be registered on the European political scene...”

“Kaysen certainly thought that both the United States and the Soviet Union were concerned about a military buildup in West Germany. He believed that the United States ‘had a broader commitment to the freedom of West Berlin which transcends its relation to our ties with Germany or its significance as a forward post in the cold war. We have repeatedly pledged our word to the two million West Berliners that we would continue to defend their freedom.’”³³

October 18, 1988

Marc Trachtenberg: Now, the first thing I want to talk about is a kind of methodological problem. The argument of the paper is that *the Berlin crisis really turns on the nuclear issues*, especially the whole question of German nuclear weapons, and projected nuclearization of the Western sector.³⁴ The assumption here is that *countries do not take major steps which run a serious risk of something like general nuclear war without being deeply concerned about what is going on*. In this case, *the Soviets are deeply concerned about the structure of power in Europe, the whole question of the resurgence of West German power*,³⁵ the ability of the West Germans to develop enough power so that they would be able to draw their own allies into war, a threat to the stability of the system from the Soviet side. All right, it’s a theory.

There are various ways you can go about increasing your confidence in that theory. You consider alternative explanations of the crisis. The Soviets want to create a rift in the alliance. They want to drive a wedge between the United States and the West European allies. Now, a lot of these sorts of theories are testable, or at least you can make up your own mind about how much credence to put into them on the basis of careful study of empirical evidence. In this case, one of the things that struck me as I went through this material is the way the *Soviets seem to go out of their way to say that they like the division of Europe. They accepted the division of Europe*.³⁶

There are various things that are hard to explain, at least at first glance. If the Soviets were so concerned about the nuclearization of Germany, about the resurgence of German power, why

didn't they want to talk about it?³⁷ They didn't! I mean the Americans were kind of puzzled. The people in the American government, who saw things essentially the same way as I see things, like Ambassador Thompson. You know, they say, "Well, *the Soviets didn't want to talk about Germany.*" Well, once you buy into that interpretation, it's possible to rationalize things like that. You'd say, "Well, *that's typical Soviet bargaining strategy. That's their negotiating strategy. They don't like to show their own weakness.*"

First of all, we'd like to know a whole lot more about what Steve calls the American theory of the crisis. *How did people at the time understand Soviet motivation, what the Soviets were doing?*³⁸ Both in the Eisenhower administration and in the Kennedy administration.³⁹ *The problem of continuity and presidential transition is important.* A similar problem, I think, of interest to political scientists, is the difference between the Eisenhower and the Kennedy ways of approaching the crisis.⁴⁰

This is as close to a controlled experiment as you'll ever find in international crisis, both in terms of basic approach to foreign policy and military policy.

Another issue that I think really deserves to be explored is this whole question of a securities zone in central Europe.

People today when they think about arms control, it's always the strategic balance, you know, the testing question, the U.S.-Soviet aspects of it, and yet in the 1950s this whole business of a *zone of limited armaments or a zone of military inspection in Central Europe* was very important, and very little is known about it.⁴¹

Then the whole issue of *nuclear sharing*. Nuclear sharing is another one of these issues that was very important in the 1950s that people have simply forgotten about. The leading strategists—the Wohlstetter for example of 1959, not the Wohlstetter of 1961 or Henry Kissinger—and nuclear weapons and foreign policy, the leading strategies, and certainly Communist strategists were very much in favor of the sharing of nuclear weapons of the Allies. So was Eisenhower.⁴²

Marc Trachtenberg: We'd like to know how deliberate this sharing business was, how explicitly Eisenhower wanted to share not just with Allies like Britain and France, that were, you know, happy with capabilities, but even the Germans, whether *he was sensitive at all to the special meaning that German nuclear weapons carried, especially for the Soviets.*⁴³ On the military side, the whole question of whether actual forces were deployed pretty much exclusively to fighting nuclear war. The evidence on this issue points in more than one direction, especially whether the American tactical aircraft stationed in Europe had any significant conventional capabilities, what the sort of army was that the West Germans had created and how that was changing in the course of this period from the late 50s to the early 1960s.

There's theory again—Steve has a theory about the final arrangement that was reached where, in effect, the *Germans have a standby of capability*, that in the event, you know, in a crisis, different stages of alert, the authorization to order what they call the expenditure of nuclear weapons cascades down in one form or another. Was this in any way, before the fact or after the fact,

designed for deterrent purposes to provoke a Soviet crisis, that the Germans would get their finger on the nuclear trigger?

The whole question of the shift from the Eisenhower to the Kennedy years, from the late 50s to the early 1960s—here you had the *Germans, in effect, not getting nuclear force of their own, but on the other hand, America being committed on a more or less permanent basis to having a military presence in Europe. Is it conceivable at all that some sort of the tacit deal was struck? If, in fact, the Soviets were really concerned about the resurgence of German power linked to the question of the nuclearization, why on earth did they heat up the crisis in 1961 when the most obvious thing in the world, that American policy is moving dramatically in the opposite direction?* ⁴⁴ Also, this really amazing shift of Soviet policy in the very beginning of 1961, when they have all extremely warm overtures to President-elect Kennedy, but before the essences of American policy on all these issues can really be probed, the Soviets switch around 180 degrees and start in with this tough line in Berlin. It just doesn't make sense.

I don't think the Soviets had any really clear plan. I think in general international politics, as in other areas of life, people have a much clearer sense of what they don't like than what they do like.

*Did the Soviets ever, you know, try dealing seriously about the German issue with the United States?*⁴⁵

There's the whole issue of the link with the Cuban Missile Crisis. The Cuban Missile Crisis is not a separate crisis. It's very clearly a phase of the Berlin Wall Crisis.⁴⁶ How are these things related? One thing that I find striking is a document, October of 1961 from Kennedy to Adenauer, and he had this sentence: "The Soviets have been warned and appear to have taken cognizance of the warning that our present course of action is dangerous to them." In fact, looking at the crisis through Soviet eyes, the 61 crisis, it must have seemed very scary indeed, because I think the Soviets knew a whole lot more about American military strategy than the American public knew. And if that's the case, then the least Khrushchev had to do was just to redress the imbalance of strategic forces quickly.

But I think that the concern about Germany was very real and that was very clearly at the heart of this.

Stanley Hoffman: Was there ever at any time a tendency on the part of the administration actually to let the Allies, and particularly the Germans, have an unvetoable finger on the trigger? I don't think so.

Marc Trachtenberg: They had de facto control.

Stanley Hoffman: Well, I doubt that. And I remember the discussion in the late 60s. I don't think that anybody was terribly willing to go that far, Norstadt included.

Marc Trachtenberg: Just on this question that Joe raised on the difference between Eisenhower and Kennedy. *For Eisenhower it wasn't a crisis, for Kennedy it was.* The working definition of crisis is subjective and *estimates the probability that this thing would have ended in war.*...Eisenhower's attitude, very clearly, I think, is that deterrence will probably work. Very high probability that it will work, but you can't be sure.

Carl Kaysen: No, but you know, Stanley, I think you were on the minority, but on the narrow issue of terminology. But if you ask, I think it means launching a nuclear attack when you have reason to think that the other sides is cranking up to launch a nuclear attack. And why do you have reason to think that? Because you see it has to be a way that you stop their retaliatory capability. You have to think that you can do that. Nuclear preemption.

Marc Trachtenberg: I want to go back to this point that Joe raised. Eisenhower thought that there was a certain risk of nuclear war, a certain risk that "we would have to throw the book at them if we got involved in a war." Deterrence would probably work, very high probability it would work, certain chance that it wouldn't work, in which case we would have to do certain things. So in that sense, you know, you call it a crisis, do you not call it a crisis? What do you think changed under Kennedy? There was a sense, at the beginning of the Kennedy administration—I have that Bundy document—that we had tried a different strategy under Eisenhower, that the strategy we had tried with Eisenhower hadn't worked. In fact, it had given the Soviets the green light, had given them the signal they could pursue this sort of thing with impunity, and we needed something different.

There is a difference in military strategy. *The Eisenhower strategy is fairly relaxed. We have this strategic nuclear war fighting capability. We don't have to do all this stuff with conventional build-up. We don't have to resort to mobilization.* It's crazy to do that, from Eisenhower's standpoint. *Kennedy, they have a completely different military philosophy. It implied that the risk of war is salient, and you have to take dramatic measure, and also you have to get the juices flowing in the country as a whole, you know, to get them to support the build-up.* So I think there are all those elements which helped to cap that difference. It seems to me that we think *we need that issue of credibility, by which I mean willingness to use nuclear weapons. Thoughts of the adversary is less of a problem for Eisenhower than it was for Kennedy.*

Now, *the reasons why credibility wasn't an issue with Eisenhower was because Eisenhower was a victorious World War II general and he had just won in Korea. Kennedy, the administration began with the Bay of Pigs, and Laos was a negotiated solution, and later on it turned out to be a bad solution because the Communist dominated faction became very strong, but I just get the sense that credibility was a very big issue for Kennedy.*

You're talking about Soviet motivation, which was the fear of nuclear weapons, whether the warheads were controlled by U.S., NATO, or Germany. If nuclear war was going to come out of escalations from a conventional war, why push in the place where the West is conventionally the weakest? I wouldn't want to argue its fear of nuclear weapons in and of themselves. It's not the mechanisms that they're afraid of. What they're afraid of is that events are moving in a certain direction, which is going to threaten the political structure of Europe. The basic problem is the

*political problem of Germany, that it's rendered salient by the projected nuclearization of Germany. Germany becomes not just a latent problem, but something that might cause them very serious concern in the not so distant future because Germany is getting this power.*⁴⁷

So, it's back to this idea that *you gain political leverage from nuclear weapons*. West Germany is a cipher as long as she's denuclearized. Germany becomes an important player when she has nuclear forces under her own control.

Marc Trachtenberg: The Soviet line is the acceptance of the status quo in Europe, acceptance of the division of Europe, acceptance of the division of Germany, recognition of the GDR, recognition of the status quo. Right? That's the Soviet position. Even a lot of American officials, such as Murphy⁴⁸ and Thompson saw it this way. The effect of stirring up the Berlin Crisis was to bring about a certain movement in American policy in that direction. Very clearly, under both Eisenhower, especially under Kennedy.

Steve Myers: Namely, *what is the evolution of the kind of anti-Germanism in the American Congress*, the American press, and public that the policy makers have to take account of? *We people who didn't have that sort of visceral sense of 1945 look at these things in a different way*. And I didn't get that sense of *the decline of the anti-Germanism from the people*. And I wondered what it sounded in the documents, whether you think it's an issue with which policy makers have to reckon.

Marc Trachtenberg: My sense, though, is that the attitude of people in influential positions within the government, is that that sort of attitude died very quickly.

Steve Myers: Died when?

Marc Trachtenberg: Certainly by 1950 there is a very striking change. *The hatred of the Soviet Union ran so deep* that it wasn't simply a question of holding your nose and embracing the Germans. *The attitude towards the Germans shifted quite dramatically from the—post-war period, certainly to the early 1950s, which is not to say that certain misgivings about the Germans did not persist,*⁴⁹ because I think they did. But people were willing to identify themselves in a much more serious way with the *German national aspirations* in the American government than, say, the British or the French governments were.

Carl Kaysen: I certainly think that, as one of the Herbert Hoover generation, I think that anti-Germanism was not very strong in the United States, and I think it died quickly. And now my own experience, rather episodic, in talking to Soviets and so on, is that, indeed, the *Soviets certainly, right down to the Sixties, saw the Germans, the Federal Republic, as the same Germans that nearly destroyed their country. And you sort of added nuclear weapons to that.*⁵⁰

John Jenks : Another issue, that *you make very minor mention of is most importantly the 17th of October confrontation*. Now, there is some documentary evidence which seems to suggest that Clay had cleared the road to reassert U.S. right, residual rights in East Berlin, that he had cleared that with the White House.⁵¹

Marc Trachtenberg: They were just very obsessed by it. That's my sense. That it was a risk sending him over to England.

John Jenks: But *he trained for a month for this probe*.⁵² That's the striking thing. And that's pretty well documented.

Marc Trachtenberg: Yes, but that's not the same thing as saying that people in the White House knew what was going on.

John Jenks: But they gave him the resources to train. I think that's what they were in to.

Carl Kaysen: No, Norstadt would give them the resources.

John Jenks: Norstadt and Clark were after him for a full month before the confrontation. Clark had gone at the end of September and said, "You keep your hands off my troops in Berlin. They're under my and Norstadt's command." So the question is how did he (Clay) have access to guide these—to direct these troops, when you have a full month's history of Norstadt, Clark coming down on him.⁵³

Carl Kaysen: Somebody had to tell Clark and/or Norstadt to tell troops what to do. The wall was perceived as a political defeat very strongly by the public for the President. Although the President didn't see it as a diplomatic defeat, he did express himself as being irritated about it and *Clay saying why don't we knock it down* and all of that. On the other hand, it seems to me that if it were a last sort of gasp before saying, "OK, the hell with it," there's too much that goes on in the fall for that to be true, too much military noise. I forget the last time that was chaff in the air. That was going on into the spring. So you have to have a more complicated explanation than you've given.

Marc Trachtenberg: Well, let me just ask. Well, on this whole issue, again, here is a supposition basically on Khrushchev. Here's a guy who's not the most skilled practitioner. He's someone who skates on the surface of events for short-term gain. He's very concerned with appearances rather than deep realities to a certain degree. The correlation of forces, for Khrushchev, it was kind of a psychological correlation. Symbolism was very important. It didn't matter what the Soviets had. But I think he had enough political sense to know that you could only push that sort of thing so far, that once you started getting into the really deep water, then you had to have a look at what the real military balance was and what Soviet vulnerabilities really were. And so the notion is that there was this whole big gray area that you could sail into. You couldn't push it all that far, not to a point where you risked provoking the Americans and to the point where you got yourself in so deep that military confrontation was unavoidable, but there's this whole big space because the Americans are kind of soft and they're very reluctant to use their power, and they're constrained by their allies, and this and that, and this and that. And this is the space that he just wants to move into. So, yes, there is that whole element. But the question is this creates in his own mind a sense that he has instruments for influencing the course of events, he has power. But that's not sufficient to explain what he does because he has to put that power behind a policy. You don't just exercise it for its own sake. And, you know, someone like *Khrushchev*, who

understood about nuclear war, was enough of a statesman to know that you could only do that sort of thing for things that really mattered, things that really counted, and that's why the German issue was so important.

Laurence Chang: *Under Eisenhower you have him saying there should be no tax on nuclear weapons. And you have someone like Burlatsky who thought the Soviets thought that the U.S. would never really go all the way to nuclear war. However, under Kennedy you have flexible response in 61 developing, and they're war gaming at the Pentagon and they're developing strategies for limited use of nuclear weapons and so on.⁵⁴ Did that have, do you think, any effect on Soviet actions in regard to Germany and Berlin? And, secondly, did the U.S. think there were any political inputs into the formulation of flexible response and so forth, besides simply opening up additional options for how the Kennedy administration would act? Did they take into account how the Soviets would have reacted to new policies?*

Marc Trachtenberg: *My basic feeling is the Soviets were really scared by flexible response, that it meant the United States was taking a nuclear war fighting more seriously, they weren't simply putting chips on deterrence.*

TRANSCRIPT 3

Nuclear Phobia: The Psychological is Rational

“Games can captivate and stimulate; they make minds work faster.”⁵⁵

“The ‘rational life’ was the emblem of the RAND style. Before, Rand had confined itself to studying the technical aspects of the instruments of warfare. Now, some of the people at RAND would start to study the strategy of warfare, and try to impose the order of the rational life on the almost unimaginably vast and hideous maelstrom of nuclear war.”⁵⁶

“RAND had its origins in the military planning rooms of World War II. During World War II, America discovered that scientists were needed to win. That’s why RAND came into being, the first think tank and the model for all the rest.”⁵⁷ Game theory caught on in a very big way at Rand in the late 1940s. John Williams was particularly entranced with it and wrote many scenarios in which game theory could play a valuable role in guiding decision-makers.

“Williams realized that if game theory were to grow and have true relevance to economics problems or international conflict, and if RAND were to lead the way, then RAND would have to hire social scientists and economists who could study the ‘utility functions’ of consumers and the actual behavior and values of various nations....He believed fundamentally that there is something to this business of having some knowledge...and some analysis of problems as compared with living in a state of ignorance, superstition, and drifting into whatever may come.”⁵⁸

As head of the Mathematics Division at RAND, Williams had the idea to create a building that would increase the probability of chance personal meetings. Such meetings, he argued, would promote the interdisciplinary aspect of RAND and the use of mixed teams of analysts in addressing a problem.

In the late 1950s, specialists at the RAND Corporation and elsewhere argued, with increasing vigor and clarity, that the current U.S. strategic doctrine of Massive Retaliation was becoming outdated. “The work of Albert Wohlstetter and his colleagues at the RAND Corporation in the 1950s was a major catalyst in the many changes in US defense posture and national security policies that were undertaken by the new administration after January 1961.”⁵⁹ During this time, the evolution of American national security affairs took place, as the doctrine of Flexible Response was developed at Rand and by others as an alternative “doctrine” to massive retaliation emphasizing deterrence operation on different levels. “By the time Eisenhower left office, the Strategic Air Command had been preparing and training for nearly a decade not only for massive retaliation but for massive preemption.”⁶⁰

“The strategists of RAND rose to power in the 1960s. When President Kennedy was elected, his secretary of defense hired a handful of RAND analysts to be his top

aides and at least in the first few years adopted their ideas completely. In one sense, these strategists of the nuclear age engaged in a legitimate exercise in rational analysis (called ‘thinking about the unthinkable’), an honest attempt to impose rational order where others had envisioned chaos.”⁶¹

“The RAND strategists found a receptive audience in the incoming Kennedy Administration and especially in Secretary of Defense Robert McNamara. When McNamara was briefed on SIOP-62 (Single Integrated Operational Plan) on February 4, 1961, he was disturbed by the rigidity of the plan and the ‘fantastic’ fallout and destruction it would produce and the absence of a clear strategic rationale for the counterforce/urban-industrial target mix.... ‘He initiated an intensive reevaluation of U.S. strategic posture including a review of basic national security policy with regard to nuclear weapons.’”⁶²

Kennedy gladly followed the lead of the RAND strategists, with respect to the new policy of Flexible Response. A calculated, deliberate war strategy replaced Massive Retaliation, but this strategy demanded a much larger arsenal than Massive Retaliation’s quick holocaust. “Santa Monica’s message was that deterrence required credibility and therefore great superiority, and Kennedy and McNamara bought it all.”⁶³

Grappling with the nuclear component of the Berlin crises was RAND strategist Thomas Schelling.⁶⁴ Schelling shared the view, popular among Nitze’s staff (Schelling and Harry Rowen worked with Paul Nitze in the Defense Department), that a consistent show of resolve over Berlin might compel the Soviets to back down. In early July he wrote a paper, “Nuclear Strategy in the Berlin Crisis,” examining the role that nuclear weapons could play in demonstrating American will if the confrontation turned violent. The paper along with other documents was sent by McGeorge Bundy to the President. The issue of nuclear war, its flexibility (Schelling memo) was discussed at a high level meeting in Berlin on July 19, 1961.⁶⁵

The Schelling memo to Bundy “Nuclear Strategy in the Berlin Crisis” along with other articles and gaming materials⁶⁶ became the basis of discussion with Thomas Schelling and Allen Ferguson for the November 22, 1988 meeting of the Nuclear Crisis Project.

The questions Schelling and Ferguson addressed during the meeting of the Berlin Crisis Working Group were:

- What was the motivation by RAND for accepting Nitze’s offer to fund a series of simulated games related to the Berlin Crisis?
- How was the game played?
- Why were people so intensely involved in the games?
- What were the results of the games?
- What lessons did we learn about the Soviets? About Crisis?

- Why did the games “damp down?”
- Were there any contingency plans in the event of nuclear war?

November 22, 1988

Joe Nye: Today our guests will be Tom Schelling and Alan Ferguson, who will speak to us about nuclear war-gaming during the Berlin crisis. Alan, on the other hand, joins us today from Washington where he is president of AFE Corporation, a private consulting firm, where he is also an economist. Tom and Alan worked together at the RAND Corporation and their relationship goes back as far as graduate school. Today they will share some of their escapades in the changing relations with Berlin in the early 1960s.

Thomas Schelling: Let me begin with what motivated the games. I spent some time at the RAND Corporation where there was a very elaborate war-gaming facility. RAND was studying limited war. I was very interested in these games. However, the limits were always decided in advance (i.e., what weapons were within the limits, what weapons were without limits). There was no process of escalation, no process of feeling around for what the other side might accept or reject. I had always felt during the Korean War that one of the most interesting aspects of that war was the way the limitations were, you might say, discovered during the course of the war.

I thought we should try some games in which what was *permitted* was *wide open*, in which the *concept of restraint on behavior would arise within the game itself rather than being imposed from the outside*. I worked out red and blue teams at MIT and developed a format for a new kind of game.

This game would essentially be a game of *military* maneuver, a game in which most of the decisions and actions were *military*, but in which the *driving considerations would be profoundly diplomatic*.

We built such a game and tried it out in the Iranian context at MIT. By coincidence, Walt Rostow was present in that game. *I wanted no role-playing, but rather people deeply engaged in the decision-making process, in which they were taking full responsibility for their decisions*, not simply asking themselves “what would I say now if I were so-and-so.”

Therefore, the teams were essentially teams of homogeneous responsibility, with five to eight people and a captain or chairman. The main function of this leader was to facilitate reaching a consensus. With this exception, everyone was an equal participant.

The fourth of July 1961, one year later, I was on my way to the RAND Corporation with my family for the summer, and we went by way of Washington, DC to visit my parents-in-law. My wife and I went to the home of Charlie Hitch where he had Walt Rostow for dinner. For some reason, the conversation turned to the gaming in which Walt Rostow had participated, and he and Charlie Hitch got the idea that we should do the same type of exercise for the Berlin situation.

Arriving at RAND, I explained to the people what I wanted to do, and they were enthusiastic about the prospect. I said I needed a partner. They suggested Alan Ferguson. We spent the entire summer putting together the information that would be needed by the players in the game and developing a scenario which would be the take-off point for the game itself. *The scenario had to be something which provoked immediate dissent on both teams and demanded their attention.*

There were two teams, blue and red. We had to get things going in and around Berlin in a manner which was plausible to both sides and which put both sides in a kind of an emergency situation. In this case, something that the Soviets had done which would be feasible to the red side.

Each team took this scenario and made its decisions for the immediate future (i.e., the next few hours or days of game time). After about four hours of doing this, each team submitted its documents to the control team, and they, in effect, spliced these together, asking if the blue team did what it said it was going to do and the red team did what it said, where would they be 12, 24, 36, or 48 hours later? Secondly, they asked, what can we plausibly introduce, if necessary, such as accidents or acts of God, misunderstandings or miscommunications, or faulty observations or faulty exercises in command and control which will keep the crisis going rather than letting it fade out.

Typically, we would play the game for at least three, sometimes four or five, such stages. At each stage, the control team would splice these together along with the feedback of the two teams and the extension of the original scenario. Then, at some stage, either because time ran out at the end of the weekend or because the game had gone as far as it was going to go, we would declare termination, and we would hold a post mortem before which the red team got all the blue team documentation and the blue team got all the red team documentation. Each then could see what the other had been thinking, had been expecting. Each could see how the other would read itself (i.e., the blue team could see what the red team thought the blue team was trying to do and vice versa). Each could also see what impact its actions had on the perceptions of the other side.

The first time we did this was up at Camp David. We got some people from the White House (Carl Kaysen was one of them) and the State Department. At the first and second Berlin game,⁶⁷ we had people mostly on the deputy assistant secretary level.

People got very defensively involved in the games. I have never seen people in an artificial or imaginary situation quite so engaged. *These were games in which people got desperately involved. Perhaps this was because all of the participants were individuals who believed that they had good judgment on exactly what to do next and what not to do in a nuclear crisis.* They also felt their pride, their self-esteem, and sometimes even their local reputations were very much wrapped up in whether or not they brought off this emergency, this crisis satisfactorily. These people felt if we became engaged in a major war or used nuclear weapons, somebody backed down, lost ground, or lost something either diplomatically or militarily, they would feel very ugly about it for a long time. These were real-life crisis politics, and indeed, in that respect, I think these games far exceeded the dreams and expectations that Alan and I had.⁶⁸ People

virtually “lived” the games at Camp David from five o’clock Friday afternoon until five o’clock Sunday evening.

Alan and I have reflected on a few things about crises and especially the Berlin crisis that came out of the games. I think if you were to ask us what was the most impressive phenomenon of these games, we would say *how extraordinarily difficult it was to make the crisis continue*. The actions naturally seemed to “damp down.”

It took extreme ingenuity on the part of the control team to make people misread each other and over-react or to make “accidents” happen, to push the other side into some kind of an aggressive move. We had to arrange misunderstandings and miscommunications. Otherwise, we would have had to send everyone home at noon on Saturday thinking that they had not had much of a weekend.

First, we can identify some reasons why crises tend to damp down. Secondly, I think that some of the hypothesis about why this was so would survive translation into the real world and would be just as valid as they were with respect to the games. If any of you read the chapter I did for Ash Carter in the book on nuclear command and control,⁶⁹ I described what was the hypothesis as to why the interactions and the process tended to damp down.

Alan Ferguson: First, I want to comment on how different the world was then from what it is now. These scenarios were intended to be intensely realistic. The world was extremely *tense* at the time. I think this, in part, accounts for the intensity with which the game was played. There has been a huge transition from then and the 1960-61 period to now. *That sense that we are on the verge of nuclear holocaust, especially if decision-makers make a wrong decision, seems to me to be entirely gone.*

We were in a situation in which there was intense hostility on both sides. The United States had a clear-cut strategic arms superiority. Both sides had massive forces and the United States was still based, for the most part, on the highly vulnerable land based bombers.

With regard to the game results, the single most striking result was *our inability to get a fight started*. It was, despite the best contortions of control, *impossible to successfully provoke a really aggressive act*. Each took moves that, at the time, to control—and in retrospect, to both teams—*seemed very mild, despite the fact that each side had the impression that it was being very tough*. I felt that the *chief tactic* on either side was *simply not to give up*. *They just did not walk away*, and this always left the possibility for the other side, that if they did not stop, then it was not clear where the process was going to stop. It was my opinion then that the Cuban crisis was a subset of the Berlin crisis or of the confrontation in Europe. The Soviets were as aggressive in fact as I and many others believed, if they believed that the United States might not be deterred (from starting a nuclear war), then they would have a much freer hand in Europe. Consequently, places such as Berlin might be taken.

There was no subsequent crisis in Berlin, and it looked as if *deterrence had worked*. I came away from all this with the conclusion that *deterrence and very limited disarmament may indeed have done exactly that*. I think deterrence was indeed an effective force.

Ash Carter: My comment is directed at the fidelity of the games in general and your hypothesis, Tom, about why these games had the muted character they seemed to you to have at the time. You said that people had the sensation of *acting tough*. What they actually did at each step was make a variety of moves of differing toughness, and they averaged overall that toughness. In fact, their tougher moves were biased in such a way that they played out over a longer time. Milder moves were more immediately apparent. In other words, the participants had the sensation of throwing a “hard ball” and then a “soft ball” when, in fact, the latter arrived “faster” than the former.⁷⁰

Therefore, the opposing team had the impression that their opponent was being more conciliatory. Everyone is being very tough and having their ego satisfied and yet, in effect, being very conciliatory toward the other side. It does seem to me not at all to fit the atmosphere at the time. *Perhaps both teams were playing by this set of rules of never really standing up to the other and making the opponent fold*. This seems to me just the opposite of what you had been assuming about the Soviet Union at the time. Whether or not these assumptions were correct, there is always the problem of dealing with an opponent with whom you are not playing a game. In their worst possible light, they are Hitlerite—that is, they are putting their toughest moves earliest, and they need to have their bluff called. It seems to me that you all were playing Americans, and no one was assuming the posture that would normally be expected of the Soviet Union.

Thomas Schelling: I think you are wrong on one point. You said one would have to assume that in order to play like Soviets, one would have to play with one’s strength up front. People like Admiral Anderson or Paul Nitze, if they were playing the red team, were playing the way they thought a wise Soviet would play it, and they clearly demonstrated that *deep down in their hearts they did not believe that the Soviets would be so bold, so aggressive*. *This revealed the contrast between how senior people thought the Soviets might act in a real crisis versus what they might say about them in a speech*.

I am not conceding that the Soviets would or would not have played the game differently. *One could never know that for sure*. *The players did feel that if they were asked on behalf of the Soviet Union to avoid disaster in any direction, this is how the Soviets would have acted*. It is possible that the reason the blue team underestimated how tough the red team was because they were assuming they were seeing all there was to see.

Alan Ferguson: I do not think that the observation about taking weak or mild steps versus tough steps has anything to do with the assumption of how aggressive the Soviets were. I think *aggressiveness is a matter of objectives*. It was basically impossible to distinguish whether Soviet behavior was aggressive or defensive. *They were basically interested in changing the status quo*. There is no way of knowing *whether that was because they wanted to conquer the world or because they felt that Berlin was a link in their front line that could very well be*

exploited by Western aggression. The question of whether, given either of those objectives, they would take a Hitlerite move first or a move such as they did take in Berlin, is simply a matter of tactics.

Joe Nye: Since this is a nuclear crisis project and we are particularly interested in the role of nuclear weapons, can either of you remember any discussions that took place as to *how you would use nuclear weapons*? Were there times when contingency plans or possible uses were discussed?⁷¹

Thomas Schelling: We both remembered in looking over the documents that our primary motivation had been to use the Berlin crisis to study the behavior of the Strategic Air Command, in order to keep it ready for whatever need arose. In preparation for this, we got a few operations officers in Omaha and asked them how SAC would behave in a crisis. That is, what was their attitude toward launch-on-warning? One said *they would never launch on warning*.

We then asked if it would make sense to launch a fraction of the force if they got an alarm that was possibly false or possibly real. Maybe, for example, they said, “we could launch all the odd or all the even numbered planes.” The second group of planes or backup was like a clean-up force. *Maybe SAC was not ready to think advance.*

*As the games progressed, however, we got so wrapped up in moves in Europe that we never got close to using those bombers. We actually had almost forgotten the original motivation to study SAC crisis behavior.*⁷²

Emanuel Adler: Can you control for the nuclear factor? We know that there are certain expectations because of the presence of nuclear weapons. Is it possible to assess the *psychological effects* of nuclear weapons in this game as opposed to other games in which nuclear weapons were not involved?⁷³

Thomas Schelling: Everything in these games was, to an extent, was constrained. I think if nuclear weapons had been declared non-existent in our games, we probably would have had some conflagration, if not *a conventional war*. *The nuclear phobia* was pretty rampant in the Pentagon and in Washington in those days.

Joe Nye: Alan, *do you have any memories of the nuclear discussions per se*?

Alan Ferguson: I do not recall any discussion of “shall we do something with nuclear weapons now.” I think the whole game was pervaded by the fear that if we do something too tough, we will start a rapid escalation and we have no idea where it will end. I do think the blue (American) team was just as inhibited by American strategic superiority as the red (Soviet) team. There was no one who had a yen to destroy tens of millions of Russians. There was a real sense of human responsibility within these people.

Joe Nye: Ash, did you have something on this point?

Ash Carter: I did have two points which were nuclear related. There are certain aspects of crises that are of particular concern. One is the possibility of internal as well as external *miscommunication*, of wires crossed, to misunderstandings between the policy-making and the operating part of a team. I think this would be an excellent thing to build into a game.

Secondly, I think a game that involves the actual operators of the forces would be very helpful. Just as you described when you go out to SAC and they have all sorts of operational procedures that you would not have expected, it might be helpful to have their input in gaming exercises. There could be great value in mixing the senior decision-makers and the relatively junior operators.

Thomas Schelling: After I had quit, they did build some two-tiered games. However they never really worked since the senior people did not get seriously involved.

Joe Nye: How high can you go in seniority in these games? How high did you get the game played, and what intrinsically do you think are the limits on that?

Thomas Schelling: I do not think I would ever want the President to participate. I do not think he should ever be put in the position where people watch him and what he would do in a crisis. He would be the one player among them all that would be asking himself, “What does their President look like to them as I sit here and do this?” I think one could get a cabinet secretary successfully engaged, but not the President.

The highest level participant we ever had was relatively high. On Halloween 1963, we held an insurgency game—actually a series of four simultaneous games—in which, among others, players included the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, the Chief of Staff of the Army, the Attorney General, the Budget Director, and the Commander of the Marine Corps.

At that same time, I explained to him that Mac Bundy and Walt Rostow were interested in engaging his brother in a two-day exercise on crisis management, nuclear alert, etc. Robert Kennedy thought this was a good idea and said he would talk to his brother about it.⁷⁴ It even looked as if we would do that, but three weeks later, the President was shot. The point is that these games were conclusive enough experiences that someone such as Robert Kennedy viewed them as a useful tool.

William Jarosz: I am struck during these discussions by the discontinuity between the structure of the real world and the structure of the games themselves. As Mr. Ferguson noted, there was a *pervasive feeling in Washington of being convinced of Soviet aggressive intentions and with very good reason*. Yet, the structure of the game and the necessity to keep it going seems to introduce the problems in the chain of command, the problem of real world policy. The perception of world events seemed to imply a path to war that would be purposeful. The structure of the games, on the other hand, seemed to imply a path to war which would be *inadvertent*. They might have sensed that the *game seemed too abstract* to translate into the hostile and purposeful real world.

Alan Ferguson: I do not think that hypothesis is right. The game was not oriented toward accidental war. *It was oriented toward purposeful war in a sarcastic universe where neither side knew the effect of even its own actions or the impact of what was happening.*

Thomas Schelling: We did suffer some limitations if we wanted the scenario to be plausible to both teams. If you tell the red team that it is supposed to engage in deliberate military action or you commit to it by making that part of the scenario, you run into the problem that the red team is likely to say, *“The Soviets are not so stupid as to do that.” So unless you can get a red team really believing that it is engaged in purposeful military action, it spoils the game.*

Therefore, *rather than forcing accidental war*, we had to advance the *situation to the point where the red team felt it had no choice but to mobilize its forces or to take military action. We never got them to do that, however.*

David Blair: Could you have imposed a constraint on the Soviet side so they would have believed that *they were fighting for something that was worth a fight*? For instance, could you have told the Soviets that they would lose the game if they did not get the Americans out of Berlin.

Thomas Schelling: I would have liked to find a way to get the red team committed to something such as *“no matter what it costs, get the Americans out of Berlin.” I think it is hard to convince sensible people that they are engaged in sensible military activity if they are given what looks to them like a completely unreasonable scoring system, such as the chance that the whole Soviet Union should go up in embers in order to get the Americans out of Berlin.*

Alan Ferguson: I think the biggest historical question we must explore now is *why has there not been a war between the United States and the Soviet Union?* For a generation and a half, *we have had these tremendously powerful adversaries with some people at the top of both hierarchies being exceedingly hostile to the other.* The obvious hypothesis is that *deterrence has worked.* For all the limitations of the game and gaming in general, deterrence did seem to work very well in the Berlin game.

David Welch: The Soviets we have spoken to about the Berlin crisis actually use the word “game” in reference to what Khrushchev was up to. They systematically downplay the crisis, referring to Berlin as the “tail of imperialism” that Khrushchev thought he could yank periodically for marginal diplomatic points. *He never thought, however, that he was risking nuclear war. The American perception, it seems, was quite the contrary, this situation was perceived to be extremely serious, not just a political game.*

I am wondering whether or not the fact that you had Americans playing Soviets in the Berlin game did in fact remove the realm of the realistic, since the players on both sides were playing the same game, as opposed to the real world where players on both sides perceived the situation very differently?⁷⁵

Thomas Schelling: *The Soviets did not want things to get out of hand.* There was a broad strategic objective known as keeping pressure on Berlin, which may have been Khrushchev's "game," as you call it. Within that, there may have been difficult subjects which came up if something untoward happened, e.g., an East German uprising.

Kerry McNamara: My question revolves around what is learned in games of this sort. I think, for instance, *in the Berlin game, what was learned depended partly on your perception of the situation and your primary objectives, i.e., to gain something or simply to diffuse the situation.* This goes back to the central question of how you define a crisis.

Thomas Schelling: One thing a participant learns during such games is *what his attitude toward crisis is.* This came up at the Cuban missile crisis conference a year ago. *Most of us had no idea how scared people such as McNamara down in Washington were.* Even in retrospect, some of them are inclined to ask how they got into the crisis or what did they do wrong, *rather than to view the occurrence as a real opportunity to analyze what they did right.*

Stanley Hoffman: *Some of us here, including Kissinger, who was not such an important figure at the time, were very scared.*

Stanley Hoffman: Did the objectives which they assigned themselves vaguely correspond to what we now know the objectives probably were in real life?

Thomas Schelling: *If you put people in a situation where they must act within a few hours, there are many long-range objectives that you do not have time to think about.* You do not sit back and ask yourself, "Where do we want to be in the year 2000?"

The objectives would be, for example, to quiet things down if possible, not to give anything away to the Americans, to avoid getting into a big war, especially a nuclear war, to behave just tough enough so the Americans will back down, but no tougher than is required, not to back them into a corner. These are very local objectives and not much related to long-term planning.

Stanley Hoffman: I think you just persuaded me that we should not have Americans playing Soviets.

Thomas Schelling: There are two things you can learn from having Americans play Soviets. *One is how the situation would look to the Soviets if they thought about it the way the Americans do.*

The dramatic lessons that comes out of these games is the overconfidence of each team in the fidelity with which implicit messages would be received by the other side. Each team is obsessed with what it looks like to the other side. Each side meticulously works out the recipe for what it is going to do, not realizing that much of what it incorporates into its plan in order to have an impact on perceptions, is going to be missed completely. We found out, for instance, that *even with Americans "thinking for the Soviets," the red team still misinterpreted the blue team's signals, actions, and intentions.*

Kerry Abelson: I would like to return to the idea of the *nuclear environment* and the lessons on *managing nuclear risk*. I had an interview with Paul Nitze last month, and he said several interesting things. Among them was the fact that, despite all his speeches to the contrary, he felt there were in fact *no political gains to be gotten from nuclear weapons and that it was conventional build-up and conventional actions that deterred the Soviets*.⁷⁶ After your games, do you have a sense at all that it did not spill over into war because of conventional pressure, rather than because of nuclear deterrence?

Thomas Schelling: There is *no reason to believe they would have acted differently whether it was the nuclear culmination of a large conventional war or the conventional culmination of a large conventional war. They were afraid of casualties on the order of a million*. Whether they were also afraid of casualties on the order of twenty or thirty million does not change things.

John Jenke: Did either of you brief anyone on the lessons of the game?

Thomas Schelling: I presided over the post mortem of the game in which everybody shared ideas and tried to *talk about lessons learned*. I never briefed anybody beyond that. I think, however, the people who participated, like Martin Hillenbrand who also spoke to you, went back and perhaps briefed their own staffs or others higher up. I think many who played were close to McNamara and, undoubtedly, the games were reflected formally or informally in conversations with the Secretary of Defense.

I do remember that I wrote something on *risk-taking* in Europe. One document in particular was copied about a thousand times and distributed as something like a “McNamara Bible.”⁷⁷ McNamara read it as a very strong case against French acquisition of nuclear weapons. *It essentially had to do with how risky things could be if we were on the brink of nuclear war in Europe*. Much of this was voiced in McNamara’s own *Ann Arbor speech*, especially about the importance of *centralized command and control of nuclear weapons*.

In short, much of what came out of the games somehow reached the State Department and, I think, consequently, the White House.⁷⁸

Joe Nye: Our thanks to Tom Schelling and Alan Ferguson for their time and a fascinating session.

TRANSCRIPT 4

Politics of Transformation: Ideology Does Count

“Peaceful coexistence implies that countries with opposed ideologies must, nonetheless, live in peace with each other, live side by side, coexist. Hence the term ‘coexistence.’ If there were but one ideology in the world and the same social system prevailed in all countries, there would be no antagonistic system and the problem of coexistence would not arise at all. In that case, it would be simple existence and not coexistence.”⁷⁹

“It is not clear when Khrushchev grasped the awesome potential of nuclear weapons. Perhaps it was after the test of the first Soviet hydrogen bomb, in August 1953. In September he received a full report on nuclear weapons, saw a documentary about the test, and could not sleep for several days afterward.... The impact apparently transcended some kind of psychological barrier....

“The Bomb pushed Khrushchev to reappraise Stalin’s dogmatic view of international relations, revolution, and the road to socialism. In spite of his vigorous criticism of Malenkov’s thesis about the ‘end of civilization,’ Khrushchev embraced it tacitly before the Twentieth Party Congress, when he proclaimed ‘peaceful existence’ with imperialism.”⁸⁰

This transcript is foremost a conversation that Sergei Khrushchev, the son of Nikita Khrushchev, and Sergo Mikoyan, the son of Anastas Mikoyan, had with the Berlin Nuclear Crisis Group in February 1989. Hannes Adomeit, the only guest from West Germany provides much needed order to thinking about Soviet risk taking behavior during an international crisis. The book he has written, *Soviet Risk Taking and Crisis Behavior* (London: Allen and Unwin, 1982), is the basis of his discussion in this transcript.

Both sons grew up with the legacy of their father’s roles with Stalin. Many people in the former Soviet Union thought the sons should be punished for their father’s crimes, rather than be free to speak out against the atrocities.

Sergei stated, “Father was bolder than I. His were the memoirs of the first secretary of the Central Committee, he insisted, the *confessions* of one who had devoted his entire life to fighting for Soviet power, for a Communist society. The memoirs contained truth, words of warning, facts...”⁸¹

Stalinism for Sergo Mikoyan, born in 1929, was the “...natural environment of at least the first 24 years of my life. Hence, I could not but grow up with certain dysfunctions that prevented me from developing a more or less normal personality.... I lived not just in the heartland of Stalinism, but in the family of one of Stalin’s closest associates....

“(My father) Mikoyan survived the purges. Obedience to Stalin was absolutely obligatory at the time but cannot alone account for Mikoyan’s survival. I do not believe that Mikoyan was Stalin’s ‘satrap’ or that he felt it necessary to prove his faithfulness to Stalin by direct participation in the repression....” For Sergo Mikoyan there is also the acceptance of his father, because (Anastas) Mikoyan dared to argue⁸² with Stalin when he was alive and spoke out against him at the Twentieth Party Congress.⁸³

Both sons chose forgiveness rather than guilt, anger, or disloyalty to their fathers. They sensed that “redemption and repentance” guided their father’s outspokenness about the brutalities of the past. They also knew that their fathers, Nikita Khrushchev and Anastas Mikoyan, were not exempt from the past or completely converted from the old style of leadership in the Soviet Union. As Sergo Mikoyan states:

After Stalin’s death, only the degree of menace changed: “The voluntarism of the first man continued, intrigues did not disappear, and the habit of destroying political opponents and their clientele was simply usurped by Khrushchev. *The important difference was that no one was arrested or shot.* Decisions were often taken unilaterally. Those who flattered Khrushchev triumphed, while those who maintained their views in spite of his anger either lost,...moved to other jobs, or retired.”⁸⁴

Nikita Khrushchev and Anastas Mikoyan were influenced by their experiences in the war and by ideological parties as well as by the Russian leadership.

Nikita Khrushchev was twenty four when he joined the Bolshevik Party in 1918. Until then he had worked as a mechanic in the mining town of Yuzovka. Since he was in a reserved occupation, he was exempt from military service in World War I. He joined the Red Army in 1919 and played his part in the “Civil War” where he underwent many severe hardships in the ranks of the Red Army. “I served in the Ninth Rifle Division....When I returned from the Front to the Donbass at the beginning of 1922, hard times had set in....There was famine and my first wife, Galina, died during the famine of 1921. I was left with my son Leonid and my daughter Julia....”

Anastas Mikoyan volunteered as an Armenian during World War I and almost lost his life during this time. “I felt now that I had tested myself in adversity and had survived the test with dignity, which gave me a sense of real satisfaction.” He participated as political commissar of a Red Army brigade during the October Revolution in 1917.

Both Nikita Khrushchev and Anastas Mikoyan were in the Soviet Administration when war broke out in 1941. Khrushchev assumed a uniform and an imposing rank and became a lieutenant general and President of the Defense Committee for the Kiev Area. “Khrushchev was in the Kharkov offensive of May 1942 and at Stalingrad later in the year as a political advisor to Marshal Yeremenko, who was responsible for the defense of Stalingrad.”⁸⁵ Since Khrushchev was not a military strategist he was “not a member of Stalin’s inner war cabinet,” but instead acted as a morale booster for the Soviet troops. This work was especially important during the

siege of Stalingrad. Mikoyan was Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Trade of the USSR during the war and in charge of “grain resources” in Belorusse.⁸⁶

Khrushchev and Mikoyan lost their first-born sons during World War II in the battle of Stalingrad. Their sons were pilots shot down in war. Olga Narkiewicz concludes:

“Khrushchev was a changed man at the end of the war, it may have been not only because of the national tragedy, but also because of this personal loss of his son... War experience influenced and broadened him beyond Soviet issues, and he began to see wars and violence in their true light, and believed sincerely in the virtues of peace and cooperation.”⁸⁷

Both men had ambiguous and complex relationships with Stalinism, terrorism, party politics and war⁸⁸ due to historical as well as personal experiences. Nikita Khrushchev and Anastas Mikoyan had younger sons who partly spent their lives “trying to make sense” of their father’s past. Both were friends and grew up together in Moscow.

On February 13, 1989, the Berlin Study Group met for the last time at the Center for Science and International Affairs at the Kennedy School of Government, Harvard University.

The most important questions raised in this meeting were:

- How does one define the time frame for the Berlin Crisis?
- Why was Berlin a crisis?
- What was the perceived strength of Khrushchev’s military establishment, economic programs, and sociopolitical support in the Soviet Union and in the GDR?
- What was the interrelationship between Khrushchev and Ulbricht?
- What was Khrushchev’s motivation: German access to nuclear weapons, or to force the U.S. to follow the Potsdam Agreement and get out of Berlin?
- Was it Khrushchev’s crisis?
- Was he a risk prone gambler, and how aware was he of Risk?
- What was the decision-making influences in the Politburo?
- What do we know about decision making in the USSR?
- Was Berlin 1961 a success or failure?

February 13, 1989

Hannes Adomeit: I think it is useful to speak of two Berlin Crises that of 1948-1949 and that of the late 1950s and early 1960s.⁸⁹ Further, this latter crisis is subdivided into two major periods: the ultimatum of November 1958 to March 1959, and the second ultimatum from June 1961 to

October 1961. In my view, one could speak of protracted political conflict over Central Europe lasting from November 1958 to October 1962 with the end of the Cuban Missile Crisis, with the height of the crisis occurring from June 1961 to October 1961, with the sharpest point of the crisis occurring in August 1961 with the building of the wall.

One of the questions which arose at the September meeting was whether Berlin in this period could be defined as a crisis.⁹⁰ In my view it can, because the three most important factors in defining a crisis were present: vital interests of the actors were perceived to be at stake, the objective risk of a conflict was also present, and there were time constraints.⁹¹ According to this definition, in the post-war world there have only been three U.S. Soviet crisis — Berlin in 1948 and 1961, and Cuba in 1962.

In my view, in the initial period from 1958, the objectives were much more far-reaching than they were later. The primary forces driving Soviet behavior were perceptions of growing Soviet strength. As the Chinese put it at the time, the East wind was blowing more strongly than the West wind, and Khrushchev seemed to be under this very impression. The Soviets did possess conventional and intermediate range nuclear superiority in Europe. Additionally, they were beginning to nuclearize their theater forces. They had made important advances in the space race with Sputnik in 1957. Finally, there were Khrushchev's claims that the Soviet Union had a good number of operating intercontinental ballistic missiles. Thus, American perceptions of a "missile gap" played a large role in the launching of the crisis in November 1958. Two other trends also bolstered Soviet perceptions of strength. The rapid pace of decolonization led to a Soviet belief that imperialism was collapsing and that the competition between imperialism and socialism would be decided in favor of socialism. The high growth rate of the Soviet economy (about 10% per year) gave Khrushchev the impression that he would be able to shift the main focus of the competition between the two systems from the military to the economic realm, and that the socialist system would prove superior.

But, these factors changed considerably over time. First, the missile gap dissipated. In November 1960, satellite reconnaissance began to fill the gaps caused by the cessation of U-2 reconnaissance. As you may remember, the U-2 flights were discontinued in May 1960 after Francis Gary Powers was shot down. Very quickly it was possible to establish that it was not true that the Soviet Union was building up rapidly its ICBM force. In January 1961, Eisenhower claimed the missile gap to be a fiction.

Secondly, in the economic realm it turned out that the ambitious economic goals met by Khrushchev in the 7-year plan in 1959, and also confided in the 1961 party program, were highly unrealistic. In the 1961 program, the Soviet Union was aiming at overtaking the United States in industrial production by the year 1970 not, as is frequently asserted, 1980.

Third, most important and perhaps most surprising after looking at the transcript of the September meeting here at CSIA, was the developing social, economic, and political crisis in the German Democratic Republic. This in some detail. First, the most qualified people were leaving GDR in growing numbers. There was a rising expectation within the population that this mass exodus could not continue, that the leadership in the GDR would have to do something to close

the loophole, which allowed escape through Berlin. This expectation that soon escape would be impossible caused an increasing spiral of defections. In the spring and summer of 1961, the monthly rate grew to almost 30,000 people, the annual rate to 300,000 out of a population of only 17 million.

Thus, the entire position of the Soviet Union, from 1958 to 1961, had been turned topsy-turvy. Whereas in 1958 Khrushchev seemed to be acting from a position of strength, military and otherwise, in 1961 he was acting in what was an emergency situation in the Soviet bloc.

This then leads us back to questions which arose in the September meeting: “Was it Khrushchev’s crisis?” and “What was the interrelationship between Khrushchev and Ulbricht?” In my opinion, it was a crisis caused by *external, objective factors, not internal politics*. In this regard, there is also an incident I discuss in my book, when Kroll, the GDR ambassador to the Soviet Union reported a conversation with Khrushchev in September 1961, in which Khrushchev remarked that although Ulbricht had been pressing Khrushchev, “Ulbricht’s back is much too small for me to hide behind.”

I think that it is best to proceed from the point that there were a range of goals but that the primary motivation in the summer of 1961 was to tackle the emergency situation in East Germany.

In addition, we should consider the question whether Berlin was a success or failure. If one takes Khrushchev’s goals as stated, that he was pushing for a peace treaty, then of course he didn’t achieve those goals and the crises were a “failure.” But, when one looks at what he achieved, and what most likely his own realistic expectations were, and also when one considers that he was anxious about the dangers of military escalation, then Khrushchev did achieve a victory. It was not the resounding failure that it is often made out to be in Western analyses. Most analyses judge the outcome of the crisis by Khrushchev’s stated goals in 1958, to get the Western allies out of West Berlin and to secure the diplomatic recognition of the GDR.

I don’t think that Khrushchev ever believed he could realistically achieve these goals. What he hoped for was to change the status quo in this direction by political pressure and to stabilize the situation in the GDR in the summer of 1961. In Khrushchev’s memoirs he acknowledges that they did not achieve the same sort of moral victory which a peace treaty would have represented but that they did make material gains without a peace treaty.

My next question is whether Khrushchev was a risk-prone gambler? I would like to address the problem of Khrushchev’s emotional behavior, his unpredictability, etc. A well-placed British diplomat claims that during Khrushchev’s famous session in the United Nations in 1960, when Khrushchev banged on the table with his shoe, that Khrushchev had taken a third shoe along just for this purpose. I do not know if this story is true or not, but in my mind much of Khrushchev’s emotional behavior was purposely designed to scare his opponents. *This type of behavior is well known to students of crisis behavior. If, during a crisis, you are able to convey to your opponent that you are crazy, emotional, and impulsive, you will gain a substantial advantage. I think that much of the emotionalism Khrushchev displayed during the crises was for bargaining purposes.*

On the question of risk awareness,⁹² a larger question is involved. I don't think that in 1961 Khrushchev could have trusted any German, West or East. How could he? He knew that 30,000 people were leaving the GDR each month. He knew they did not accept the socioeconomic system in the GDR and knew they might be prepared to do all sorts of things if their only escape route to the West were closed. Hungary was only five years in the past and the workers' unrest in East Germany only eight years in the past. Of course we don't have direct testimony from Khrushchev on this point. There is some indirect confirmation of this view in the Penkovsky papers.⁹³ There is some testimony by the East German leadership that they feared they might not be able to control the situation. I've never been able to discover whether live ammunition had been handed out to the Peoples' Armed Forces, the Workers' Militia, or to the Border Guards.

To add one detail to the potential for conflict, on August 15 there was a large gathering in West Berlin which was addressed by the mayor of Berlin, Willy Brandt. Brandt's speech was very skillful. On the one hand he declared that from a moral point of view the events in East Berlin were totally reprehensible; and a declaration of the bankruptcy of the East German regime. But in practical terms, he suggested no course of action. But, just think for a moment what the potential was. Imagine someone in the crowd advocating that the hastily assembled barbed wire barriers be torn down. It could have easily turned into a riot. Certainly, there was a risk of something like this happening. On August 18, 1961, the East German newspaper *Nues Deutschland* issued perhaps the most telling headline I've ever seen. It read, "Fantastic How Everything Worked Out!" This was like a collective sign of relief by the East German Party officials.

There were also some objective indications of risk limitation. The whole Berlin problem had been brewing since November 1958. The first and only physical action taken by the Soviet Union came only in August 1961. If this is not an awareness of risk by Khrushchev of the dangers of moving unilaterally, I don't know what is. Further, I have no evidence that at any time a replay of the 1948-1949 blockade was reconsidered. Ironically, this the major contingency prepared for by the West. Additionally, Khrushchev clearly stayed with the "three essentials" declared by President Kennedy on July 26, 1961. This also shows Khrushchev's awareness of risk.

This brings up the question of *perceptions of an imminent nuclear war*. Burlatsky noted that there was a lesser sense of nuclear danger in Berlin in 1961 than in Cuba in 1962. But, on the other hand, there were repeated threats of nuclear war by Khrushchev. I think that given Khrushchev's personality this discrepancy disappears. The threats were a clear, deliberate attempt to dissuade the West from any action in response to the building of the wall. This of course was part of a tradition going back to the November 1956 Suez crisis.⁹⁴ Since these threats turned out to be a success in constraining the Western allies, in the Soviet perception this *use of threats became more or less systematic*. As Horelick and Rush have shown, these threats were very deliberately woven into the whole campaign on Berlin.⁹⁵ Further, the threats were calibrated to American perceptions of Soviet nuclear potential.

I would now like to look at the links between the Berlin crises and the Cuban missile crisis.⁹⁶ To me, there are clear links both in terms of substance and in terms of means. In his memoirs and in

the Penkovsky papers, there is the phrase that the West had to swallow a bitter pill in August 1961. Khrushchev might have thought that the West would swallow a few more if he just packaged them right. Part of the packaging was to build up Soviet power and conduct policies from a position of strength. I would suggest that *this perception—that one could somehow quickly transform military power into political power—played a large role in the calculations of both the United States and the Soviet Union* during this period. Thus, the substantive link between Berlin and Cuba is that by building up power vis-à-vis the United States—and to reconstruct, so to speak, the missile gap—the Soviet Union could then return to the problems of Central Europe.

The link in terms of means between the two crises has to do with perceptions of *fait accompli* as a tool of foreign policy in the nuclear age. Khrushchev, like all smart politicians, knew that it is much more difficult to reverse something which has already been accomplished than to stop something which has not yet begun. The Berlin wall seemed to demonstrate that the creation of a *fait accompli*, coupled with threats of the risk of nuclear war and a reputation for unpredictability, could be a successful means of foreign policy. This concludes my opening remarks.

Let us address one question which we keep returning to that is the question of the extent of nuclear danger during the Berlin crisis. As Burlatsky and Gromyko have both noted, they believed it was *not* a very dangerous period, but in the United States, it appears that a large part of the National Security apparatus was devoted to trying to deal with what it regarded as nuclear danger in Berlin.

Sergo Mikoyan: I agree with Burlatsky on this point. We thought that you overestimated the danger of the conflict in Berlin. We didn't think it was very dangerous. *I think that only in 1948 and again in 1958 was our side very decisive about Berlin with some expectations to win.* After that I think we only used the Berlin issue for other purposes, but not really to get the West out of Berlin.

Sergo Mikoyan: I think that in December 1958, it was understood in Moscow that in a way the game was lost, and so the Soviet Union should make Berlin less important in its relations with the United States. The strong U.S. reaction made Moscow understand that Ulbricht's wishes could not be fulfilled.

Sergei Khrushchev: I think that it might be worthwhile to pursue a bit further the most important topic we discussed in Moscow, the serious mutual misperceptions we had of each other that could have led to very serious consequences. *As a result of both the Berlin crisis and the Cuban crisis, there was a change in our views about the possibility to resolve policy questions with military means, rather than with political means.*

At that point in time, the leaders of both the Soviet Union and the United States, my father and President Eisenhower, had experienced war. President Kennedy also saw war with his own eyes. *As a result of this, there occurred an internal change within the governments on the use of force. This to me is the main aspect of these crises.*

Thus, I agree with Sergo that in 1948 and in 1958 there was a danger. There was still a supposition that this question could be resolved by force or the threat of force.⁹⁷ I think it is very important to understand this change in basic conceptions.

Up to the beginning of the 1950s, in the post-Stalin era, we had the firm conviction that Germany should be unified, and that a peace treaty was the proper means for this unification, also ending the problems over Berlin. But, after the formation of West Germany there gradually developed the view in the Soviet leadership that the conclusion of a peaceful treaty would not bring a resolution of the issue. With the emergence of the GDR the question of West Berlin arose for a second time.

Regarding the view that Khrushchev acted emotionally and adventurously, I would like to say that this is a mistake. It is a mistake linked to the fact that he spoke very emotionally. But talk is cheap. He took decisions with a cool head. I cannot agree that the events in Hungary had a particular influence on the decisions taken in 1958 and 1961. The events in Hungary caused a series of conclusions to be made in the leadership, and these conclusions, of course, influenced our whole policy. But there was no special link to our policy toward Berlin.

Thus, I would like to add that the recognition by Khrushchev, that there would be peaceful treaty to resolve these questions, in spite of all the pressure he had applied, was instrumental in the decision to form the GDR as a separate state. The impetus was only the fact that a portion of the population of the GDR had left for West Germany. There were also serious problems with the flow of goods in the GDR, caused by price differentials between the GDR and West Germany. And there were other analogous questions linked to the problem of sovereignty. Proceeding from these factors came the decision to erect the wall.

Hope Harrison: You spoke about Khrushchev's fears in 1961 that the crisis would become militarized, but my feeling is that Khrushchev himself was the one who structured the situation.

Hannes Adomeit: Well, I agree with you. Khrushchev did artificially create a crisis atmosphere. But, he did not believe that nuclear war was very probable. Rather he was trying to convince the West, and especially the Europeans, that they had better do everything they could to moderate American adventurism to the extent that it might exist. His risk awareness was primarily attached to the situation in Berlin itself.

Hope Harrison: One last point, I agree that there is a need to consider the various periods of the crisis. But, I think that Khrushchev's policy in 1958 was much more aggressive than you have portrayed it. His initial nuclear threats were not deterrent threats, but compellent threats.⁹⁸ He was trying to get the West to accede to his demands.

Hannes Adomeit: My view is that initially, following 1958, Khrushchev did think that nuclear weapons could be used for compellence. But he quickly found out that this was not the case. They could be used for deterrence combined with a fait accompli, but no compellence. Khrushchev discovered that nuclear weapons could be used successfully as instruments of deterrence, but not compellence.

Ernest May: What are your comments about Khrushchev's program of conventional reductions and then the reversal of this program in the middle of the crisis?

Hannes Adomeit: The troop reductions in 1960 were part of a larger process. Two previous reductions had been carried out without the opposition of the military. Khrushchev apparently believed that these reductions were necessary adjustments to the expanding Soviet nuclear capabilities. But as the crisis developed, both sides came to realize that you could not use nuclear weapons at the local level, and so there was a series of conventional moves and counter-moves.⁹⁹

Bill Jorosz: Your remarks, as well as those of Sergei Khrushchev, touch upon one of the main themes of the Berlin crisis, political leaders attempting to grapple with the question of the *political uses of nuclear weapons*.¹⁰⁰ The second point is that for a skilled psychological operator Khrushchev was remarkably ignorant in failing to see what the consequences using threats would be.

Hannes Adomeit: My major concern was to defeat this notion of Khrushchev as so emotional and adventurous that he had no grasp of risk.¹⁰¹ When you look back to the distribution of military power in the 1950s, you see the tremendous strategic weakness of the Soviet Union. Yet assertions about Soviet irrationality and the possibility of Soviet intervention were at their height, and subjective perceptions of Soviet power were almost an inverse of real Soviet strength.

On your second point, about the consequences of his actions, any political leader weighs the costs of particular policies. Apparently Khrushchev weighed the costs of his actions against their benefits and decided to go ahead.

Kerry Abelson: Even if we say that Khrushchev was not a gambler, he was making conscious decisions to manipulate risk. It seems to me that this is the behavior of an even greater gambler—not just to play “chicken,” but to play chicken well. I would like to ask Sergei to comment on his father as someone who was consciously taking risks, and I would like to ask him *how his father thought the United States could differentiate between seemingly irrational rhetoric and conscious statements*.

Sergei Khrushchev: He used nuclear forces to bring a certain pressure to bear upon other leaders. He drew a lesson from the Suez crisis that the threat of force could exert pressure.

But, I must add that he never considered using force.¹⁰² Objectively, both sides in the conflict had the situation under complete control. However, in both the Middle East or Asia, third parties could push the situation out of control.

Soviet leaders thought that in Berlin such a conflict couldn't be excluded. Further, those involved in the war learned the lesson that they should never let the military interfere in political decisions. The military often thinks differently on these matters than civilians.

Sergo Mikoyan: We can deny that Khrushchev was emotional. However, he often first spoke emotionally and then thought things over rationally.

Benina Gould: In our discussions, we often only address the question of Khrushchev's role in the decision to build the Berlin wall. To what figures or groups in the collective leadership of the Communist Party was he speaking. Where was the opposition? Who were they?

Sergei Khrushchev: But, you must realize that the decisions were ultimately his. Although he did, of course, consult with the Politburo, in the Politburo as in a collective leadership there is a leader, and at that time it was Khrushchev. Depending on the participants in the meetings, they would either put forth or not put forth their own opinions. In many cases there were people present who didn't necessarily participate in the discussions. As Sergo stated, Anastas Mikoyan would always voice his point of view, and when he didn't agree, he would of course object. And I can add that this did not relate only to Mikoyan. But decisions were not taken at a single stroke, there were several stages of consultation, especially with the leadership of the GDR. In the main this was their problem, not ours.

Sergo Mikoyan: Remember, in the Politburo, as compared to your cabinet, decisions are taken by majority vote, not in the end by the leader.

Hannes Adomeit: In the Western literature, it is argued that Frol Kozlov was a hard-liner on a variety of issues.¹⁰³ What was the extent of his power in 1961?

Sergei Khrushchev: With respect to Kozlov, he cannot be characterized as a member of the "right wing." He was to the right of Khrushchev, but he did not embody a real opposing force to Khrushchev. I cannot say that the decision to build the Wall in 1961 represented a change in Khrushchev's position in 1961 versus 1958. I do not think there were any big changes in 1961 from 1958. In fact, people objected to him less toward the end when there was talk of his removal. Therefore, in 1964, he had no feeling that there was any real opposition.¹⁰⁴ In 1956 to 1958, there were actually more differing points of view expressed.¹⁰⁵ This is kind of counter-intuitive.

Sergo Mikoyan: Kozlov pretended to be Khrushchev's follower in order to become his successor, and indeed Khrushchev himself said Kozlov would have been a good successor. In fact, Kozlov was much more conservative in both domestic and foreign affairs.

Kori Schake: Marc Trachtenberg subscribes to the idea that the issue of German access to nuclear weapons drove Soviet policy from 1958 to 1961. He bases his arguments on Gromyko's statements at the Foreign Ministers conference¹⁰⁶ and the various comments by Ambassador Thompson¹⁰⁷ and others who had contact with the Soviets. Do the Soviet sources confirm this?

Hannes Adomeit: *In 1961, crisis conditions in the GDR advanced the crisis, but the nuclear issue did not.* In the course of the Berlin Crisis, the problem of the control of nuclear weapons by West Germany was of course mentioned. It was the urgency of the situation in East Germany that drove the crisis. In looking at the negotiation record for 1959, I have found hardly any mention

of nuclear issues. Linkages to nuclear weapons are more explicitly tied to the earlier period. By 1961, this was receding in the background;¹⁰⁸ there the need to do something in response to the crisis conditions in the GDR had become unbearable. German access to nuclear weapons was clearly prohibited in the Paris treaties. All of this was already decided before the outbreak of the Berlin crisis.

Sergo Mikoyan: This issue for us was very important, and this is another case of misperception. It is now clear that the United States felt that Germany would not have nuclear arms, but our feelings were that this was imminent. For many years, perhaps until 1962, we were very afraid that the United States would give nuclear weapons to West Germany.¹⁰⁹

Hannes Adomeit: If there was a link to the problem of nuclear weapons, there would have to be a link in tactics as well. I do not see what the advantage was of putting pressure on the Western powers to leave Berlin. How was this supposed to keep them from giving nuclear weapons to Germany?

Sergo Mikoyan: This is an issue connected with the Potsdam agreement. That is why, when they began to discuss the Potsdam Agreement, it was decided that in view of the restrictions in the agreement on the Germans it was very important for the Soviet Union, and it would be better for the Soviet Union not to violate it.

Hannes Adomeit: Allies' presence was regulated in the European Advisory Commission Protocols of 1944 and in subsequent agreement of the four commanders, outside of Potsdam at the headquarters of Marshal Zhukov.¹¹⁰ It is not in the Potsdam agreement, there is nothing in the agreement about the control of access rights.

Sergo Mikoyan: I do not agree. First of all, the conviction was originated in the discussions by Anastas Mikoyan, and I think that he understood that the agreement of the four commanders could not be valid for the four states. The states could be bound only by the agreement of the leaders of the four states, so I cannot agree with you that the agreement of 1944 was enough.

Jim Blight: Was there any perception in the Soviet leadership at the time that first, *the West would not oppose the building of a wall,*¹¹¹ and secondly, that the reason for this was that was the American leadership was hoping that somehow the Soviets and East Germans would figure out a way to bring this situation under control.¹¹² Was there a feeling in the Soviet leadership that, despite the American rhetoric, that the Americans would actually welcome *something like the wall?*¹¹³

Sergei Khrushchev: After the formation of West Germany, everybody had to look at the fact that, in the near future, the unification of Germany was impossible, given the correlation of forces that had formed in the two Germanys. So the GDR was formed, following the formation of the FRG—sovereign states with legal jurisdiction over their own borders.¹¹⁴ Khrushchev thought there would be no serious opposition from the West, namely because two governments already existed. There was no radical change in fact, until 1961 when Khrushchev ordered the Soviet tanks up to stand against them. They did this a whole day opposite one another. Then

Khrushchev called and asked Konev, “What is happening?” He was told, “They are facing each other.” Then Khrushchev ordered the soldiers to move our tanks to the side streets since he knew the Americans would never move first. Then, two hours later, Khrushchev called Konev and was told that the Americans had backed off after the Soviets had moved.¹¹⁵

Sergo Mikoyan: I know that a friend who had come from Berlin told my father of the impossibility of the situation of so many people leaving the country and talked of some way of making it impossible for them to flee. I remember my father had no idea of the wall and thought there was no way out except raising the standard of living in the GDR. Yet, two months later, the wall went up.

Jim Blight: Thank you to Hannes Adomeit, Sergei Khrushchev, and Sergo Mikoyan for coming and speaking with us today.

AFTERWORD

“The political actor’s information about situations... is usually incomplete. Individuals must...simplify and structure the complexity of their world in order to cope with it.”¹¹⁶

Nuclearism like fascism is necessary to isolate as a major area of study in universities and governmental organizations. On an almost daily basis the politics of nuclear weapons changes in the world, and whether the organizational level of decision making about nuclear war can keep up with these changes is a necessary issue to address. Certainly during the Truman, Eisenhower, and Kennedy eras there were different nuclear policies and risk taking behaviors towards the Soviets. The organizational level of decision-making is less emphasized than the personal level in this working paper.

The emphasis on the personal level grew out of the transcripts and research. Bluffing, intimidation, and threats were the main political tactics used during the Cold War to threaten the Soviet Union and to scare the citizens in the United States into buying a policy of increased spending on defense. Kennedy was good at this and so was Khrushchev. Sergei Khrushchev in his recent memoir about his father writes that during the Berlin Crisis of 1961, Nikita Khrushchev believed that “both sides limited themselves to striking military poses and making loud statements and cautious threats.”

Intimidation was used more than any weapon during the Cold War, and the sheer number of nuclear weapons for each side supported this strategy. Time spent on the political level discussing contingency planning and strategies and plans for nuclear war was almost non-existent.

Although I believe that bluffing, threats, and intimidating gestures were a kind of “war on words”¹¹⁷ that made up policy on a political level, I also have increased understanding that on a military level in the United States there were plans for nuclear war, even if not made explicit, that could have been activated in times of crisis. The closest the transcripts came to portraying these strategic plans for nuclear war was during the Rand simulation games presented by Thomas Schelling and Alan Ferguson.

Many strategies were employed to keep the Berlin Crisis from exploding. Backchanneling communication both in the form of meetings and letters written by Kennedy to Khrushchev and Khrushchev to Kennedy and memos written by Hillenbrand at the German desk and Lewellyn Thompson in the USSR were important diplomatic moves during the Cold War.

The discussion of the Berlin Wall Crisis of 1961 that took place during meetings of the Nuclear Crisis Project from September 1988 to February 1989 was organized around five broad questions and related themes. These questions and themes developed during the critical oral histories:

- What was the German threat in the aftermath of Hitler and World War II for Khrushchev, and how did the threat relate to fear of a nuclear-armed West Germany?

- What was the role of nuclear weapons and contingency planning during the Berlin Wall Crisis of 1961? Did the Americans and Soviets fear a nuclear war during the Berlin Crisis?¹¹⁸
- In what ways did Khrushchev's personality inform his decision-making and political style, and what was Khrushchev's motivation in provoking two Berlin crises from a military, economic, and political perspective?
- What were differences between the Eisenhower and Kennedy administrations regarding decision-making, diplomatic policies, and organization of the White House during the Berlin Crisis?
- Did the Berlin Wall fit the definition of an international crisis, and what period of time are we talking about?

There are many questions left unanswered about the Berlin Wall Crisis, even with all that we know and have documented. Mark Trachtenberg raised a few of these during his interview:

- Did the Soviets try to deal seriously about the German issue with the United States?
- What was the relationship between China and the USSR, and how did this affect the Berlin Wall Crisis?
- What about the "role of unilateral planning as opposed to inter-ally planning by the Americans?"
- What was the link between the Berlin Wall Crisis and the Cuban Missile Crisis?
- What was the threat of de-stabilization in both East and West Germany, and how did this influence the USSR and the US?
- What inside information did the USSR have about the US and military strategy?

Hannes Adomeit was interested in questions about psychological motivations as well as conscious choices and suggested more information was needed about the values, and innate, spontaneous behavioral attributes and intuition of policy makers and the military that can cause misinterpretation and miscalculation in a crisis. Other participants were interested in the role of subordinates in exacerbating the situation of threats in the United States and the USSR. Newly released CIA and KGB documents after the Berlin Wall came down will lend credibility to some of these questions, but in 1988, this evidence was not available or not discussed in the transcripts for security purposes.

The participation of a scientist or nuclear physicist would have greatly enhanced this project, since the development of the bomb and any decision made about its utilization was at the center of the Cold War. The project did not concern itself with humanitarian issues, and what consideration was given to self-determination of the German people when the Wall divided the country?

Embedded in almost all of the discussions was the larger issue about differences between the Soviets and Americans and how belief systems about ideologies influenced policy. However, very little overt questioning took place about different ideologies during the Cold War, although these deep philosophical roots informed all political, economic, and military decisions. For Kennedy and others, there was the potent fear of the spread of Communism and loss of European security. For Khrushchev, a belief in Communism as the ultimate authority informed all of his thinking and decision-making. Whether either side would risk nuclear war over these differences is still in question.

Many questions were asked and much left unanswered, but perhaps the “loose cannon” was not Khrushchev or Kennedy, but the nuclear weapons themselves. Based on this project, I do not believe that nuclear war during the Berlin Crisis was a “real possibility” on the political level, but on the military level whether the threat of annihilation was ever a “real possibility” will remain unknown.¹¹⁹

In the end, a combination of *political threat and military deterrence* prevented the Berlin Crisis from erupting into a nuclear confrontation. Let us hope that this combination of deterrence will prevent the crises of today from erupting into another nuclear war and that “thinking about the unthinkable” will, in the end, stop leaders in their own tracks.

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Notes

¹ Jonathan Schell, *The Gift of Time: The Case for Abolishing Nuclear Weapons Now* (New York: Metropolitan Books, 1998), p. 7.

² Pat Beinart, *The New Republic*, August 3, 1998, p. 22.

³ James Blight and Janet Lang, "Burden of Nuclear Responsibility: Reflections on the Critical Oral History of the Cuban Missile Crisis," *Journal of Peace Psychology* 3 (Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, Inc.), pp. 225-264.

⁴ "There is no reason why sentences should make an orderly progression from beginning to end... If the speaker allows sentences to tail off, or remain incomplete, why should not the transcript reflect this? If his meaning emerge through digression, the transcript ought not to impose his own order on the speech of his informants... the collector of the spoken word of oral memory and archives." Robert Perks and Alistair Thompson, *The Oral History Reader* (London: Routledge, 1998), p. 391.

⁵ Joseph Gerson, *With Hiroshima Eyes, Atomic War, Nuclear Extortion, and Moral Imagination* (Philadelphia, Penn.: New Society Publishers, 1995), p. 5.

⁶ Michael Hogan, ed., *Hiroshima in History and Memory* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1996), p. 4.

⁷ Allesandro Portelli, "What makes oral history different," in Robert Perks and Alistair Thomson, eds., *The Oral History Reader* (New York: Routledge, 1998), p. 69.

⁸ Anastas Mikoyan, K. T. O'Connor, trans., Diane, L. Burgin, ed., *The Memoirs of Anastas Mikoyan: The Path of Struggle* (Madison, Conn.: Sphinx Press, 1988), pp. 1-2.

⁹ Nikita Khrushchev, Strobe Talbott, ed. and trans., *Khrushchev Remembers: The Last Testament* (Boston: Little, Brown, and Company, 1974), p. 7.

¹⁰ Blight and Lang, *Burden of Nuclear Responsibility*, pp. 227-30.

¹¹ L. Scott and S. Smith, "Lessons of October: Historians, Political Scientists, Policy Makers, and the Cuban Missile Crisis," *International Affairs* 1 (Jan. 1994): 660-667.

¹² Raymond L. Garthoff, "Berlin 1961: The Record Corrected," *Foreign Policy* 84 (Fall 1991): 142.

¹³ James G. Blight and David A. Welch, *On the Brink: American and Soviets Examine the Cuban Missile Crisis* (New York: Hill & Wang, 1989), p. 10.

¹⁴ Being a realist, Khrushchev never thought that the Berlin crisis was fraught with the danger of an armed conflict. He was convinced that the West would swallow the pill. He was not moved by the demonstrative actions of President Kennedy, nor by the fact that Kennedy dispatched additional troops to West Berlin or that Clay, a Second World War general, was appointed commander, or even by the fact that American tanks were moved right up to the wall itself and stood face to face with Soviet tanks for a while. Fyodor Burlatsky, Daphne Skillen, trans., *Khrushchev and the First Russian Spring: The Era of Khrushchev Through the Eyes of His Advisor* (New York: Charles Scribner & Sons, 1988), pp. 66-167.

¹⁵ "... Khrushchev and only Khrushchev, in my view, could have done this, so boldly and so emotionally, and in many respects, so rashly. To dare such a step, one had to have Khrushchev's nature, temerity to the point of adventurism, and one had to have passed through ordeals of suffering, fear, and timeserving." *Ibid.*, p. 2.

¹⁶ "The Soviet embassy in Berlin informed Moscow on a weekly basis about the human exodus to the GDR, and labor shortage in the GDR and in April 1961 calculated that during the 1950s the population of the GDR was reduced by 1.2 million. Ulbricht himself brought this naked truth to Khrushchev's attention. *Khrushchev was*

uneasy about Ulbricht's growing appetite. Khrushchev remained generous toward his East German 'friends' since their collapse would mean a Soviet defeat in the Cold War."

"I spent a great deal of time trying to think of a way out. How could we introduce incentives in the GDR to counteract the force behind the exodus of East German youth to West Germany? How could we create conditions in the GDR which would enable the state to regulate the steady attrition of its working force?" Nikita Khrushchev, *Khrushchev Remembers*, pp. 454-455.

¹⁷ For a good discussion of U.S. aims in Germany and why Kennedy didn't support Khrushchev's objectives, see Carl Kaysen, "Thoughts on Berlin" (8/22/61), NSF: Box 317, M & M Meeting with the President: 9/61-9/62.

¹⁸ Vladislav Zubok and Constantine Pleshakov, *Inside the Kremlin's Cold War* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1996), pp. 249-251.

¹⁹ Following the "June 1957" session representatives of the old "Stalin guard," by means of a so-called "arithmetic majority," tried to secure Khrushchev's expulsion. As a result of a vote in the Presidium of the CPSU Central Committee, a decision was adopted to remove him from the post of First Secretary. However, that decision was thwarted thanks to the efforts of Khrushchev's... supporters." Fyodor, Burlatsky, "Khrushchev, In Retrospect: Pluses, Minuses," *The Current Digest of the Soviet Press* XL:9 (1988): 5.

²⁰ John Lahr, "A Short History of Abdication. What Americans don't get about the excitable Russian temperament," *New Yorker Magazine* (Dec. 1, 1997): pp. 94-95.

²¹ For a more in depth study of his authoritarian style, see George Breslauer, *Khrushchev and Brezhnev as Leaders: Building Authority in Soviet Politics* (London; Boston: Allen & Unwin, 1982).

²² According to Marc Trachtenberg, "The Soviets were basically concerned with Germany as a whole, that they were not simply trying to drive the Western Powers out of Berlin, was from the outset taken for granted by American and other western statesman. Ambassador Thompson's initial reaction reflected a rough consensus among allied officials: the Soviet goal, he thought, was to force 'our recognition in some form of the East German regime.'" Thompson to Dulles, November 11, 1958. 762.00/11-1158/DSCF/USNA. in Marc Trachtenberg, *History and Strategy* (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1991), p. 172.

²³ "Our search of the SVR (Russian Foreign Intelligence Service) archives unearthed no reports formally disseminated by the KGB for the critical period of January-June 1961 on the Berlin crisis or plans under way in Moscow and East Berlin to resolve it. The reason appears to be the very personal, secretive manner in which Khrushchev conducted Berlin policy....Incredible as it seems, none of the US intelligence agencies had credible advance information of the forthcoming closure. Only some twenty trusted leaders knew what was about to happen. Even Penkovsky found out the details of the plan to build the Wall too late to convey the information to his Western contacts." David E. Murphy, Sergei A. Kondrashev, George Bailey, *Battleground Berlin, CIA vs. KGB in the Cold War* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1997), pp. 347-377.

The decision to build the Wall to separate the GDR from West Berlin was the benchmark of Khrushchev's statesmanship although something like it was expected, the decision was made spontaneously, coming as a surprise to friends and foes alike.... To the surprise of the Soviet Ambassador, the GDR chief immediately laid out a detailed plan of action. Ulbricht even had a code name for the operation: "Rose." Zubok and Pleshakov, *Inside the Kremlin's Cold War*, p. 251. Also see "Operation Chinese Wall," Hope Harrison, *Ulbricht and The Concrete Rose*, p. 35.

²⁴ First the wall was built of wire and when Kennedy didn't do anything after four or five days a more permanent cement wall was built. "On listening to the pleas from East German leader Walter Ulbricht, Khrushchev had secretly agreed to a three year old East German plan called 'Operation Chinese Wall' to put up barriers along the thirty seven-mile line separating East Berlin from West Berlin...But, *Khrushchev said, the barrier could only be barbed wire at first to see how the allies would react.* 'That much,' Khrushchev told Ulbricht, 'and not a millimeter more.'" Richard Reeves, *President Kennedy Profiles of Power* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1993), p. 207.

²⁵ “His convictions reflected his nation’s persisting range of *insecurity and inferiority*, and as a result of this, he was extremely sensitive to slights real or imagined, direct or inferred, to himself, his political faith, or his nation.” Background Paper, *Khrushchev: The Man, His Manner, His Outlook, and His View of the U.S.*, State Department PMK D/11 May 25, 1961. Declassified 2/15/74, p. 1.

²⁶ Khrushchev didn’t want war. Khrushchev stated in his memoirs: “I spent a great deal of time trying to think of a way out. How could we introduce incentives in the GDR to counteract the force behind the exodus of East German youth to West Germany? How could we create conditions in the GDR which would enable the state to regulate the steady attrition of its working force?” Khrushchev, *Khrushchev Remembers*, p. 454.

²⁷ Khrushchev secured the removal of G. K. Zhukov from his post as a member of the Presidium of the CPSU Central Committee and the USSR Minister of Defense when he did not support Khrushchev in 1957. Burlatsky, *Khrushchev In Retrospect*, p. 5.

²⁸ Eric Hobsbawn, *On History* (New York: The New Press, 1997), p. 229.

²⁹ Christa Wolf, *The Author’s Dimension Selected Essays* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1993), p. 275.

³⁰ Marc Trachtenberg, *The Berlin Crisis* (Center for International Studies, Massachusetts Institute of Technology presented at a Conference held at West Point, 1988).

³¹ Trachtenberg, *Berlin Crisis*, p. 2.

³² NSF: Box 317 M&M meetings with the President (9/61-1/62), Aug. 22, 1961.

³³ NSF: Box 317 M&M meetings with the President (9/61-1/62), pp. 2-3.

³⁴ “The drive to station American nuclear weapons on German soil began even before the ratification of the Paris Treaties and stretched over a period of nearly four years...” Andrei S. Markovits and Philip S. Gorski, *The German Left: Red, Green, and Beyond* (Cambridge, U.K.: Polity Press, 1993), pp. 41-42.

“In many ways the FRG is truly a creation of the nuclear age. In the mid 1960s, the FRG was host to thousands of theater nuclear weapons....Although the nuclear warheads themselves were controlled by the US, the size of the NATO arsenal in West Germany...made the FRG the world’s third largest nuclear power, with forces even greater than those of Britain and France....When this is combined with the more than 1 million NATO troops and 4,000 military installations on West Germany soil,...Germany has the greatest imposed defense burden of any nation.” Quoted in William Arkin and Richard Fieldhouse, *Nuclear Battlefield: Global Links in the Arms Race* (Cambridge, Mass.: Ballinger, 1985), p.101. Excellent sources of the history of the nuclearization of the Western sector can be found in Wolfgang Kotter and Harald Muller, *Germany and the Bomb Nuclear Policies in the Two German States, and the United Germany’s Nonproliferation Commitment*, Peace Research Institute Frankfurt Reports 14 (September, 1990).

³⁵ The Cold War that started out only political was now nuclear. “Whenever the German question is discussed, the security requirements of the Soviet Union are always stressed as a factor of particular importance. I cannot try to determine here to what extent Soviet concern for security against Germany is genuine and to what extent it is being exploited as a political weapon.” Franz-Josef Strauss, “Soviet Aims and German Unity,” *Foreign Affairs* 37:3 (April 1959): 371.

³⁶ “Evidence suggests that after Joseph Stalin’s death in March 1953, there was considerable disharmony in the Soviet government regarding foreign policy and the potential reunification of Germany.” James Richter, “Reexamining Soviet Policy Towards Germany in 1953,” *Europe Asia Studies* 45:4 (July, 1993): 671-692.

“Although the desire of a unified Germany under Soviet control was the immediate concern of the USSR after WWII, by 1955 they were willing to accept the division, but feared the nuclearization of the FRG... *For as long as there was common agreement about the demands of European security—i.e., the defeat of Germany, then the*

actual disposition of the defeated territories was of secondary importance.” Robert Hunter, *Security in Europe* (Bloomington, Ind.: Indiana University Press, 1969), p. 19.

³⁷ Some Soviets and Eastern Europeans did talk about Germany at an International Conference in Prague in 1961. A. A. Rumanian (USSR), “European Security and the Atomic Arming of the German Federal Republic,” in *European Security and the Menace of West German Militarism, Proceedings of the International Conference Held in Prague From May 23 to 27, 1961* (Czechoslovakia: International Institute for International Politics and Economics, 1961), pp. 17-19.

³⁸ How Americans viewed the crisis and understood Soviet motivation is a pivotal question. Of special significance were “two official documents of great historic value from the point of view of their influence both on the onset of the Cold War and on the shaping of the United States (US) grand strategy in the post war era: the ‘Long Telegram’ written by George Keenan, in Moscow, in February 22, 1946, and the National Security Memorandum No. 68 (NSC-68) on ‘United States Objectives and Programs for National Security’ written by a Joint State Defense Department Committee, under the supervision of Paul Nitze, Director of the Policy Planning Staff, on April 14, 1950.” Efstathios T. Fakiolas, “Kennan’s Long Telegram and NSC-68: A Comparative Theoretical Analysis,” *East European Quarterly* XXXI: 4 (January 1998): 415-432.

Information sources that the United States had available at the time were either from media articles that appeared in the Economist, Observer, NY Times, Pravda, etc.; from sources such as Lewellyn Thompson, Ambassador to the Soviet Union from July 1957- July, 1962; from Nixon who had visited the USSR in 1959; from political documents, which included fact finding and theorizing by American Ex Com policy people, such as Carl Kaysen in “Thoughts on Berlin”; and from CIA and military planning. U.S. thinking about the Soviet’s military planning was initiated by the Rand Corporation, and Bernard Brodie’s “Changing Capabilities and War Objectives,” pp. 10-11, 18-19, Bernard Brodie Papers, Box 12, UCLA Library. This is a text of a lecture given to the Air War College on April 17, 1952 and classified “top secret.” Also important were the writings and communication with Franz-Josef Strauss, “Soviet Aims and German Unity,” *Foreign Affairs* 37:3 (April 1959).

³⁹ The personal experiences of Eisenhower and Kennedy also influenced their interpretations of Soviet motivations. See Jeff Broadwater, *Eisenhower and the Anti-Communist Crusade* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press), pp. 17-21: “Eisenhower was probably more impressed by what he had seen of the *cost to Russia of the German invasion, a cost that surely heightened the Soviets’ sense of vulnerability*. He vividly recollected his flight back to Berlin after his August 1945 visit with Stalin in Moscow. These *scenes of destruction, combined with his image of the Soviets and the inferences he drew from ‘Marxist-Leninist-Stalinist doctrine,’* convinced Eisenhower that Stalin and his subordinates would not resort to war to achieve expansionist objectives....Eisenhower rejected the NSC 68 (inherited from the Truman legacy) concept of a ‘year of maximum danger.’ He was convinced that the Soviets could be deterred indefinitely from launching a nuclear attack or risking general war. This conviction was based on his view of Soviet priorities and the consequences of such a war, views he had held consistently, since the 1940s. He considered the Soviet leaders to be opportunistic but prudent in their actions....Thus the Kremlin leadership, if considering aggression, would *weigh not merely relative military strength but also the potential consequences for the stability of the regime of the stresses and strains of such a war and of strategic retaliation.*”

In Robert Bowie and R. Immerman, *Waging Peace: How Eisenhower Shaped an Enduring Cold War Strategy* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1998), pp. 46-48, 245-247, is a good discussion of Eisenhower and how he understood Soviet motivation.

“*Jack Kennedy came to see Soviet motivation less through war and more through the lens of his father’s belief system and his desire to please his father...*” Thomas C. Reeves, *A Question of Character* (Rocklin, CA: Prima, 1997), pp. 34-124.

⁴⁰ “To Ike, the Cold War was not first and foremost ‘cold,’ it was first and foremost ‘war,’ through a kind of war requiring special means and...a ‘peace’ that was neither peace nor war, but something in between.... The goal was to outlast the opponent....strategic use of rhetoric became the primary means by which Eisenhower sought to influence the beliefs, attitudes, and actions of audiences, both foreign and domestic.” Martin J. Medhurst, ed.,

Eisenhower's War of Words, Rhetoric, and Leadership (East Lansing, Mich.: Michigan State University, 1994), p.2.

“Jackson (President Eisenhower’s special assistant for psychological warfare, called the ‘chief of the cold war’ by the Communists) was constantly pushing for a more dynamic U.S. foreign policy aimed at the ‘liberation’ of Eastern Europe, including East Germany. At the same time, Eisenhower sought to balance a more aggressive posture vis-à-vis the Soviet Union with defensive actions that corresponded to the containment doctrine of the Truman administration.” Valur Ingimundarson, “Containing the Offensive: The ‘Chief of the Cold War’ and the Eisenhower Administration’s German Policy,” *Presidential Studies Quarterly* 27:3 (Summer 1997): 480-495. Another article by Martin J. Medhurst, “Eisenhower and the Crusade for Freedom: The Rhetorical Origins of a Cold War Campaign,” *Presidential Studies Quarterly* 27:4 (Fall 1997): 646-661, is also excellent and examines the “rhetorical origins of the Crusade for Freedom...which represents some of the essential features of the (Eisenhower) Cold War discourse.”

“Eisenhower’s policy during the Berlin crisis seems to be that he was thinking in long-range terms. By 1957, the *U.S. in deploying IRBMs in Europe, might give the allies control not just of the delivery systems, but also of the warheads themselves.*” Trachtenberg, *The Berlin Crisis*, p. 26.

“...Eisenhower himself...on reflection came to take a moderate line...he thought it necessary ‘to avoid over-reacting.’ He did not want a military buildup in Europe, which...would in any case be ‘useless’ in the event of war...the administration preferred to *engage the Soviets in negotiation*. Maybe a conference would be a good idea. The point of this policy, according to Dulles, was to help the Soviets climb out of the hole they had dug. ...‘Anything we can do,’ the President said, that opens up a real avenue between these two sides of Germany sets up tremendous attraction; they are all the same people and they don’t want to be apart; we should do everything we can to let nature take its course.”

“Christian Herter, by June, Dulles’s successor as Secretary of State,...reflected what was by then the conventional wisdom within the US government: sooner or later, ‘the Germans themselves will have to find the answer to their own reunification.’ This would include ‘no interference with authorized traffic to and from Berlin.” Trachtenberg, *History and Strategy*, pp. 195-197.

A conflicting view on Eisenhower’s willingness to negotiate was made by C. Pach, Jr. and E. Richardson, *The Presidency of Dwight D. Eisenhower* (Lawrence, Kan.: University of Kansas, 1991), pp. 201-203.

To back up these positions, Eisenhower quietly authorized military preparations. The president ordered these measures to proceed without fanfare...Eisenhower also insisted that the United States would not acquiesce in any transfer to the East Germans of responsibility for monitoring allied traffic in and out of Berlin. Such actions would be strong enough to warn Khrushchev that the United States would defend its position in Berlin but not so provocative as to prevent the Soviet leader from moderating his position for fear of humiliation.

To critics who thought he should build up even further American forces in NATO, he soberly responded, “We are certainly not going to fight a ground war in Europe.” When asked if nuclear weapons could be used to liberate Berlin, he mused, “Well, I don’t know how you could free anything with nuclear weapons.”

Eisenhower also had to rein in his own military advisors and repeatedly told Congress that there was no need for emergency military spending to meet the challenge in Berlin.

For Kennedy’s position vis-à-vis the Berlin Crisis, 1961, see Arthur Schlesinger, Jr., *A Thousand Days: John F. Kennedy in the White House* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Co., 1965), pp. 390-394. “He’s imprisoned by Berlin...Only ‘fools,’ Kennedy said, could cling to the idea of victory in a nuclear war. A once and for all peace seemed equally unlikely. But he still hoped to arrive at a point where both the Soviet Union and the United States would accept the premise that the only alternatives were authentic negotiation or mutual annihilation. What worried him was that Khrushchev might interpret his reluctance to wage nuclear war as a symptom of an American loss of nerve. Someday, he said, the time might come when he would have to run the supreme risk to convince Khrushchev that conciliation did not mean humiliation...*he rejected the program of national mobilization and sought the beginnings of careful negotiation.*” Schlesinger, *A Thousand Days*, pp. 390-394.

“The Acheson committee’s report on NATO (with the help of Paul Nitze and William Bundy, as well as Secretary of Defense Robert McNamara and his “whiz kids” came up with possible responses to Khrushchev’s new threats)... It contained the essence of what the administration would christen its ‘Grand Design,’ the idea of a united Europe within an Atlantic partnership with the United States and Canada.

“Once again Acheson urged a significant buildup of NATO conventional forces in Europe. It was not that he believed the American nuclear deterrent was a hollow threat—on the contrary. But he thought that the ability of the West to resist a Soviet attack by using non-nuclear forces would give the Russian time to fully understand the risks they were running that a conventional war could escalate into a nuclear one.” (Acheson showed no desire for the United States to share its nuclear arsenals with any West European country, not even with Great Britain.) Dean Acheson, “A Review of North Atlantic Problems for the Future,” March 1961, Acheson Papers, Post-Administration Files, State Department and White House Advisor, April-June, 1961, Truman Library, Box 85.

“On April 21, Kennedy adopted the Acheson Report as a basis for official policy toward NATO and the Atlantic nations. Later, Kennedy increased defense spending on both nuclear and conventional weapons—reflecting the need for a *flexible response* to any Soviet attack in Central Europe.” James Chace, *Acheson: The Secretary of State Who Created the American World* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1998), pp. 381-386.

⁴¹ “For their part the Western powers sought through extensive and complicated treaty arrangements to keep the expansion of West German military power under control, until the 1950s. The Potsdam Agreement, Paris Treaties, and Rapacki Place for a Nuclear Free Zone tried to keep West Germany from acquiring nuclear weapons....” Montague J. Lowry, *The Forge of West German Rearmament, Theodor Blank and the Amt Blank* (Frankfurt: Peter Lang, 1990), pp. 74-94.

“The Bundeswehr was established in November of 1955, in Bonn, FRG...and marked the beginning of a German military establishment, whose goal, to be reached by 1960, was a strength of five hundred thousand men,...an air force of 1326 planes, and a twenty thousand man navy. Under the terms of contracts with the Western Allies, the FRG would provide these forces as a contribution to the NATO defense force.” *Ibid.*, p. 1.

“NATO decided to deliberately rely for its security guarantee on U.S. nuclear forces and in 1954 decided to deploy tactical nuclear weapons in West Germany. These weapons are ultimately controlled not by NATO, but by the American ‘national command authorities,’ that is the president or his deputy, in accordance with the general principles governing the use of nuclear weapons. Department of Defense, also known as the National Command Authority is made up of the President and the Secretary of Defense or their duly deputized alternates or successors. This department monitored control of German armaments. *The allies could control the delivery systems, but the warheads themselves would be in American custody.*” Trachtenberg, *Berlin Crisis*, pp. 20-21.

⁴² 1945-1953: During the first part of this period, the focus of U.S. Policy was on international control of atomic energy. Later, the U.S. maintained its western monopoly through strict secrecy, *refusing to share the technology even with its closest allies.*

1954-1974: *Eisenhower’s basic interest in withdrawing American forces...generated pressure on the Europeans to develop their own nuclear forces...* the nuclearization of the European armies was by no means an unintended by product of the Eisenhower strategy. In the 1955 NSC meeting where he spoke about creating a “third great power bloc” in western Europe, he argued *for sharing nuclear weapons with the NATO allies.*

This interest in withdrawing American forces, in addition to his response to the “arming of the FRG” generated pressure on the Europeans to develop their own nuclear forces. “... there was in fact something absurd about denying to allies, weapons that the Soviets were already deploying against them, weapons which they were bound to want and able to build, but with resources which might otherwise go toward building up the overall strength of the alliance. It was because there could be “no monopoly” on the possession of nuclear weapons within NATO that the President (as he said in February 1960) had “*always favored the sharing of our weapons.*” Trachtenberg, *Berlin Crisis*, p. 25.

⁴³ "...Eisenhower (and Dulles) strongly opposed West German membership in NATO. German rearmament was necessary, they believed, but *German ambitions were still to be feared*, especially if Germany regained a military establishment of its own not under European control.... Adenauer... shared this view...." John Lewis Gaddis, *We Now Know: Rethinking Cold War History* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1997), p. 133.

Rearmament would provoke the Russians. See Stephen Ambrose, *Americans at War* (New York: Berkley Books, 1997), p. 221.

⁴⁴ In a Personality Profile prepared by a panel of experts of CIA information for Kennedy before Vienna, a most important finding was that "Khrushchev's fear of Germany is deadly and dangerous....the Soviet Union lost 20 million people to Hitler, 10 percent of her population." Wedge, *Khrushchev at a Distance: A Study of Public Personality*, p. 27.

Mr. Khrushchev's views of West Germany are ambivalent. A) On the one hand Mr. Khrushchev told Mr. Macmillan in 1959, "*Russia is far stronger than West Germany and does not really fear the Germans*"; while B) on the other hand, "*the apprehensions aroused by the German occupation of Western Russia are deep seated....Mr. Khrushchev is said to feel that West Germany is fast reaching the point where it will be given atomic weapons.* At this stage, as the Russians see it, the West Germans really will become as 'revanchist' as Soviet Propaganda has long said they were. It is therefore in Russia's interest to reach an agreement with them on the division of Germany and on Germany's eastern borders, *before that stage is reached.*"

⁴⁵ "In early January 1959, Anastas Mikoyan, deputy chairman of the Soviet council of ministers, toured the US on a goodwill visit, to Adenauer's irritation. Mikoyan presented an aide-memoir on Berlin, which repeated the Soviet position, but in less strident terms, and...hinted that a deadline might be extended. A few days later, the USSR sent a note replying to the West's notes...which included a draft peace treaty, effectively partitioning Germany....the Soviet note of January 10 had convinced Macmillan that the Russians wanted to negotiate and he suggested to Washington that a way should be found....the US cautioned, 'We should not forget that from the Russian side the operation is a blackmail....'" Gerson, *Harold Macmillan and the Berlin Wall Crisis*, p. 47.

⁴⁶ According to Trachtenberg, "When the President saw Gromyko on October 17, the day after he had been informed that missiles had been discovered in Cuba, the Soviet foreign minister took a "very belligerent" line on Berlin....Although the linkages are unclear, it seems in fact that the Cuban missile affair should be interpreted as the final phase of the Berlin Crisis....it was only after that Berlin appears to have faded away as an issue." Trachtenberg, *History and Strategy*, pp. 230-231.

⁴⁷ See "Soviet Aide Memoir of June 4," handed to President Kennedy by Premier Khrushchev during their meeting in Vienna, *Department of State Bulletin* 45:1154 (7 August 1961); see also Nikita Khrushchev, "The Soviet Stand on Germany, 1961," in Vladimir Wozniuk, ed., *Understanding Soviet Foreign Policy Readings and Documents*, (New York: McGraw Hill, 1990), pp. 149-152.

⁴⁸ "There was a two-track approach to the division of Germany in 1950, for Acheson and Murphy. This was called Plan A. The aim of the policy was the removal of the division of Germany. Plan A consisted of withdrawing occupation forces of both the Western allies and the Soviets and the establishment of a German government after election under international supervision in all four zones. Provision was also made for the complete demilitarization of Germany....According to the plan, the Western allies should nonetheless proceed with their intention to establish a separate West German state..."

"...Even before Acheson came into office, Plan A met with much opposition from General Lucius D. Clay, the American commander in Germany, and from his political adviser, the senior State Department official Robert Murphy....they were skeptical of the troop withdrawal of Plan A and believed that it was the presence of the U.S. Army in Germany that was keeping Europe stable....and they wanted to keep the larger part of Germany under Western control." Chace, *Acheson*, p. 206.

In April 1959, Acting Secretary of State Robert Murphy stated, "one might take the view, and the Soviets possibly do so—that the recent Soviet moves in Germany have been an attempt to maintain the status quo in the

face of Western attempts to change it.” Murphy to McElroy, April 17, 1959, 762A.00/4-1759, DSCF/USNA in Trachtenberg, *History & Strategy*, p. 192.

⁴⁹ Attitudes towards the Germans shifted from 1945 to 1955 mainly because of the founding of the two German states in 1949, the Berlin Blockade, and the Korean War in 1950. These incidents created a shared “threat” for the West Germans and the United States from the USSR and strategy shifted to deterrence and crisis management and “...the West’s need for Germany’s help in the containment of Communism.” Hans W. Gatzke, *Germany and the United States, “A Special Relationship?”* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1980), p. 179.

“A further reason for the growing identity of views between Washington and Bonn was that neither of the two governments saw any prospect of useful negotiation with the Soviet Union...Dulles and Adenauer...were committed to changing the map of Europe to the advantage of the West.” Burdick, *Contemporary Germany*, pp. 180-181.

“The most dramatic change in American-German relations after 1945 took place during the first ten years, when West Germany changed from adversary to ally, from pariah to partner. The most important factor in bringing about this change was the Allies’ need for German help *against the rising threat of Communism...*” A second factor in bringing about close relations “between nations, identity of basic values and ideas, was slower to assert itself, for concern over the survival or revival of Nazism continued to cast a shadow over West Germany’s rapid recovery.” The positive relations between Acheson and later Dulles, with Konrad Adenauer, allowed this fear to abate. “Even so, there remained some doubts about the sincerity of West Germany’s conversion to democracy.” *Ibid.*, p. 179.

According to Martin Hillenbrand, “Soviet aspirations came across as aggressive, obstructive, and ultimately absorptive with respect to Berlin and Germany as a whole. But Allied action to move toward the gradual economic union of their zones of occupation was not purely a response to Soviet obstruction of all German economic cooperation. A rapidly *decaying economic situation in the Western zones, ...required urgent action.*” Martin J. Hillenbrand, “The United States and Germany,” in Wolfram F. Hanrieder, ed., *West German Foreign Policy 1949 - 1979* (Boulder, Colo.: Westview Press, 1980), p. 75.

To complicate the situation further, there was concern that “some American officials in...the State Department were connected with German industrialists and financiers, among them former Nazis.” Herbert Feis, *From Trust to Terror The Onset of the Cold War, 1945-1950* (New York: W.W. Norton & Co., 1970), p. 120.

Besides the need to have West Germany as an ally against the Soviet Union, and the necessity of helping it economically so it would not fall into a depressed state again vulnerable to a Hitler, the US had a special relationship with West Germany as regards nuclear weapons and as a stronghold in NATO.

Whereas the US has needed Germany to help with the “containment of Communism,” Germany has needed “the United States in the security of the German state against political threat and military attack.” Catherine McArdle Kelleher, “Germany and NATO,” in Hanrieder, *West German Foreign Policy*, p. 45.

⁵⁰ “When Walter Lippmann interviewed Khrushchev in Moscow on October 24 [1958], he was struck to find the Soviet leader in a cocoon of pre-1941 fears....He bitterly complained that the United States encouraged West German remilitarization, warning that ‘Americans seem not to realize the dangers which their present politics may well bring them.’” Working Paper No. 6 (Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars, 1993), p. 8.

⁵¹ “Despite advice to the contrary, President Kennedy decided to send General Clay to Berlin as his special representative....General Clay’s policy for dealing with the Soviets tended to be much more aggressive than that of the president.” Ausland, *Kennedy, Khrushchev, and the Berlin Cuba Crisis*, p. 35.

⁵² “Soon after Clay returned to Berlin on September 19, he secretly ordered the U.S. military commandant in West Berlin, Major General Albert Watson, to have combat engineers replicate a section of the Berlin Wall in a secluded, forested area of greater West Berlin....After construction of the model barrier, tanks with bulldozer

attachments experimented with assault techniques to break it down...General Bruce Clarke, learned of this action...He angrily countermanded Clay's order... 'As soon as I learned of it, I stopped it and got rid of what had been done.' Clarke bawled Clay out, but did not report the incident to Washington." Raymond L. Garthoff, "Berlin 1961: The Record Corrected," *Foreign Policy* 84 (Fall, 1991): 148.

⁵³ There were "differing views between his Washington advisers and opposition from some of his allies, and his representatives in Berlin, particularly General Clay. Whereas *Kennedy believed in a dialogue backed by power, Clay believed in action backed by power.* Clay minimized the importance of coordination with the other allies and maintained that if the United States led, the allies would have to follow.

"...On October 22, Allan Lightner...head of the State Department Mission planned to go to East Berlin to see the opera...refused to show identification to an East German guard...started to drive his car forward, but a guard stood solidly in his path. After speaking to Clay and Watson by telephone, Lightner got back into the car and drove slowly toward East Berlin, when East German guards again refused to let him proceed without identification...The following day Ulbricht issued a decree stating 'all allied civilians would have to identify themselves before going into East Berlin.'

"...Clay asked Watson to place US forces in West Berlin on alert and deploy tanks near Checkpoint Charlie. Konev, Soviet Commander in East Germany lent Ulbricht a hand. "Soviet troops moved into East Berlin. All this activity caused some concern in Washington. A State Department spokesman said publicly, "We regard this as a serious development and are taking it up...with the governments concerned. Clay moved some tanks into Friedrichstrasse..."

After learning of Clay's moves, Kennedy and Khrushchev proceeded thereafter with even more caution regarding Berlin. A series of backchannel letters are background to this event. Backchannel letters can be found in "Kennedy Khrushchev Exchanges," *Foreign Relations of the United States, 1961-1963*, Vol. VI (Washington: Department of State, 1996).

"The correspondence between these two leaders was unique...It gave rise to the first informal written exchange between Cold War leaders. Its existence as a reliable, direct, and quick channel of communications was instrumental in avoiding international catastrophe..." Seymour M. Hersh, *The Dark Side of Camelot* (Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1997), p. 261.

⁵⁴ Flexible Response: From Massive Retaliation to Flexible Response, some history. Robert McNamara, "The Military Role of Nuclear Weapons: Perceptions and Misperceptions" *Foreign Affairs* 62: 1 (Council on Foreign Relations, Inc., Fall 1983), pp. 61-65. See also, Stephen Ambrose, *Eisenhower: Soldier and President* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1991), p. 225; and Jane Stromseth, *The Origins of Flexible Response, NATO's Debate over Strategy in the 1960s* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1988), pp. 12-178.

⁵⁵ Thomas Schelling, "Role of War Games and Exercises" in Ashton Carter et al., *Managing Nuclear Operation* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1987), p. 436.

⁵⁶ Fred Kaplan, "Scientists at War: The Birth of the Rand Corporation," *American Heritage* 34:4 (June/July 1983): 57.

For a more complete discussion of the rational actor model see Graham T. Allison, *Essence of Decision* (Boston: Little, Brown & Co., 1971), pp. 10-36. A psychologist who researched nuclear learning with George Breslauer at the University of California, Berkeley, questions the role of the rational actor model in: Philip Tetlock, "Policy Makers' Images of International Conflict," *Journal of Social Issues* 39:1 (1983): 67-68. Also see "Understanding Decisionmaking, U.S. Foreign Policy, and the Cuban Missile Crisis," *International Security* 25:1 (Summer 2000): 164.

⁵⁷ Kaplan, "Scientists at War," p. 49.

⁵⁸ Ibid.

⁵⁹ “Throughout most of the 1950s, it was generally believed that nuclear war could take only a single form: a cataclysmic final catastrophe, which was unlikely because of its very enormity... The most important new studies in the 1950s demonstrated that there existed a wide range of possible nuclear attacks and that various ‘thresholds’ determined whether a country’s nuclear power produced deterrence or constituted an invitation to aggression. In particular, attention was called to the questions of the ‘vulnerability’ of one’s strategic nuclear forces. This recognition was first achieved systematically at the RAND Corporation, by Albert J. Wohlstetter and several colleagues, in one of RAND’s most significant studies: the strategic bases study (RAND Report R-266).” A. J. Wohlstetter, F. S. Hoffman, R.J. Lutz and H. S. Rowen, “Selection and Use of Strategic Air Bases,” RAND Corp., R-266, declassified 1962. In Desmond Ball, *Politics and Force Levels the Strategic Missile Program of the Kennedy Administration* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1980), pp. 39-40.

⁶⁰ David Alan Rosenberg, “The Origins of Overkill Nuclear Weapons and American Strategy, 1945-1960,” *International Security* 7:4 (Spring 1983): 66.

⁶¹ Kaplan, “Scientists at War,” p. 64.

⁶² Rosenberg, “Origins of Overkill,” p. 67.

⁶³ David Schwartzman, *Games of Chicken: Four Decades of U.S. Nuclear Policy* (New York: Praeger, 1988), pp. 14-15.

⁶⁴ Schelling was interested in the games because at the time RAND was only studying limited war and he thought they should try some games that were wide open. Thomas Schelling, “Who Will Have the Bomb?” *International Security* 1:1 (Summer 1976): 81.

⁶⁵ Thomas Schelling, “Nuclear Strategy in the Berlin Crisis” Bundy, JFK’s Berlin Agenda, National Security Files, Box 81, Germany-Berlin-General 7/19/61-7/22/61, J.F.K Library, in Mark Trachtenberg, ed., *The Development of American Strategic Thought: Writings on Strategy, 1961-1969, and Retrospectives* (New York: Garland Series, 1988).

In 1962, Schelling’s paper—published as “Nuclear Strategy in Europe,” in *World Politics* XIV:3 (April 1962): 421-438—was widely circulated within the government in 1961 during the Berlin Crisis. “The thesis is that the *role of nuclears* in Europe should be not to win a grand nuclear campaign, but *to pose a higher level of risk to the enemy*... Nuclears should be used, if they are used at all in Europe—not mainly to destroy tactical targets but to influence the Soviet command.” Bundy, JFK’s Berlin Agenda, National Security Files, Box 81, Germany-Berlin-General 7/19/61-7/22/61, J.F.K Library, p. 9.

⁶⁶ Other articles handed out prior to the meeting included: Thomas Schelling, “The Threat that Leaves Something to Chance,” in *The Strategy of Conflict* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1963), pp. 187-203; Thomas Schelling, “The Manipulation of Risk,” in *Arms and Influence* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1966), pp. 92-125; and Fred Kaplan, *The Wizards of Armageddon* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1983), pp. 291-306.

Gaming materials included a recruitment memo from Paul Nitze, the roster of players, the organization into red, blue, and control teams and the playing out of one of the scenarios by the scholars and fellows prior to this meeting on November 22, 1988.

⁶⁷ “Two games were played over the weekend of September 8-11 and September 29-October 1, 1961. Both games started with a series of threats and counterthreats between Blue and Red over Berlin. Initially, neither side wanted to escalate the conflict. Schelling turned up the heat, creating provocative scenarios.

“**Schelling:** Blue starts flying East German refugees, out of Berlin; Red tells Blue to stop; Blue persists; Red shoots down some Blue airplanes, killing dozens; riots erupt in East Berlin, etc. etc.” Kaplan, *The Wizards of Armageddon*, p. 302.

⁶⁸ “Games have one quality that separates them qualitatively from straightforward analysis and permits them to generate insights that *could not be acquired through analysis, reflection, and discussion*. During ordinary analysis *one thing a person cannot do is to draw up a list of the things that would never occur to him or to think of all the ways a statement he has carefully composed could be misinterpreted under pressure.*” Schelling, “Role of War Games and Exercises,” p. 436.

⁶⁹ Ibid., pp. 426-444.

⁷⁰ “Most teams in a potential nuclear crisis contain a spectrum of players, from *bold to meek, hawkish to dovish*, and some members may be *hawkish in some ways and dovish in others*. In their response to a current situation, the *mix of decisions they take is always a compromise among members of the team*. The team expects the image it projects to the adversary to reflect that compromise.

“In projecting this image onto the adversary, the team usually neglects two important dimensions of that mix of decisions. Besides the dimensions of hardness vs. softness, there are the dimensions of immediate or delayed and contingent or unconditional.

“... One sees that hard decisions tend to be delayed or contingent, while the softer decisions tend to be immediate and unconditional. This happens apparently just because a common mode of compromise between those who insist on taking a harsh step and those who prefer not to is to agree that they’ll do it the next time.

“What the analysis leads to is a hypothesis: that in a real crisis in which military actions are taken, the two sides will *project images that underestimate the hardness of each other’s line, feel accordingly less challenged and less in need of bold demonstration*, except the conflict to be resolvable, and behave accordingly in the interaction of their self-confirming beliefs.” Schelling, “The Role of War Games and Exercises,” pp. 441-442.

⁷¹ This is a central question throughout the transcripts. There does not seem to be evidence that when faced with an actual discussion of using nuclear weapons high-level diplomats would participate. Thomas Schelling calls this the *nuclear phobia*.

In the early fall of 1961, Paul Nitze, his Berlin aide, Colonel Dewitt Armstrong, Harry Rowen, Seymour Weiss, and Bill Kaufmann started to meet with military representatives from the allied countries (U.K., France, and Germany) to try to agree on a set of responses to Soviet provocation in Berlin. Phase four of the plan that was developed involved using nuclear weapons. *But nobody wanted to talk about phase four to discuss the matter of using nuclear weapons. In their own moment of thermonuclear truth, the European allies were refusing to make any sort of commitment or assent on the first use of nuclear weapons under any circumstances.* See Kaplan, *The Wizards of Armageddon*, p. 303.

⁷² “Since the end of World War II, the bombers of Strategic Air Command had been the main means of delivering America’s growing arsenal.” Peter Pringle and William Arkin, *SIOP: The Secret US Plan for Nuclear War* (New York: Norton, 1983), p. 91. In the early 1960s the SAC command post was buried in a hollowed-out granite mountain (Cheyenne Mountain) in the Rockies. It was considered bombproof. The new nuclear commanders received their instant, computerized information in their underground bunkers at NORAD and at the SAC command post at *Offutt Air Force Base*, near Omaha.

⁷³ Rand was aware that psychological factors played into their rational actor model designed by scientists and economists who invented new techniques of systems analysis, linear and dynamic programming and game theory. As the economist Charles J. Hitch put it after leaving Rand for McNamara’s Pentagon, “there will always be considerations which bear on the very fundamentals of national defense which are *simply not subject to any sort of rigorous, quantitative analysis*... The fact that we cannot quantify such things... does not mean that they have no effect on the outcome of a military endeavor... it simply means that our analytical techniques cannot answer every question.” Schlesinger, *A Thousand Days*, p. 314.

⁷⁴ “J. F. Kennedy was influenced by Rand, and he collected all kinds of information. “Rand (Research and Development Corporation), established by the Air Force in California after the war, provided the model of the new military-intellectual establishment.” Schlesinger, *A Thousand Days*, p. 313.

⁷⁵ “Here again somebody might propose that Soviet specialists play Soviet roles on this team, but it is better that they do not at this stage... Soviet specialists can critique all the activity afterwards, but the Americans on the Soviet team should be doing their best, using their American imagination, to protect Soviet interests. In a real game, competent people should incorporate the Soviet Leadership’s decision, into an operational plan.” Schelling, “The Role of War Games and Exercises,” pp. 438-443.

⁷⁶ Paul Nitze was at the forefront of every decision regarding arms control. He was a chief architect of NSC 68. In 1956, Nitze supported an action policy of “graduated deterrence” and stated that: “if atomic war becomes unavoidable, it is in the interest of the West that the means employed in warfare and the area of engagement be restricted to the minimum level which still permits us to achieve our objectives....At the time he also supported a declaratory policy (statements of policy which we make for political effect) which was aggressive to the Soviet Union.” Paul Nitze, “Atoms, Strategy and Policy,” *Foreign Affairs* 34:2 (January 1956): 187-188.

Nitze also believed in 1956 that we “should attempt to build non-atomic elements of strength and to encourage our allies to do likewise so that the residual reliance...placed on atomic weapons for our common security is reduced as far as may be feasible.” Nitze states that “no one could win a third world war and the destruction in an all-out nuclear war would be so great that nothing would remain...” However, he concludes that “when all is said and done, we probably must continue to rely in part on our nuclear attack-defense superiority.” *Ibid.*, pp. 191-198.

Operating on two levels of thinking is not uncommon, according to political psychologist Stephen Kull. He studied “how American defense policymakers rationalize certain defense policies that seem inconsistent with nuclear reality.” Stephen Kull, *Minds at War Nuclear Reality and the Inner Conflicts of Defense Policymakers* (New York: Basic Books, Inc., 1988), p. 30.

Kull found that for both Americans and Soviets, “two clearly distinguishable streams of defense thinking conflict in visible ways: an adaptive stream that firmly recognizes not only the existence of a condition of mutual vulnerability derived from nuclear weapons, and...this condition radically alters the utility of military force; and a more traditional stream that questions the reality of mutual vulnerability or plays down its significance and asserts that pre-nuclear concepts about the role of military force are still valid.” *Ibid.* p. 248.

Marc Trachtenberg discusses the general arguments about the “uselessness” or “usefulness” of nuclear and conventional weapons for political gains in an excellent article: Marc Trachtenberg, “The Influence of Nuclear Weapons in the Cuban Missile Crisis,” *International Security* 10:1 (Summer 1985): 137-163.

⁷⁷ Schelling, “Nuclear Strategy in Europe,” pp. 421-438.

⁷⁸ Thomas Schelling believed that “the most important role of games and exercises in understanding command and control for nuclear operations is to examine the requirements for a presidential command to introduce nuclear weapons.” Schelling, “Role of War Games and Exercises,” p. 430.

⁷⁹ Nikita S. Khrushchev, “Disarmament for Durable Peace and Friendship from the Report Delivered at the Fourth Session of the Supreme Soviet of the U.S.S.R., January 14, 1960,” in *On Peaceful Co-Existence, A Collection* (Moscow: Foreign Languages Publishing House, 1961), pp. 175-176.

Robert Tucker best describes the Khrushchev version of “peaceful coexistence” from the perspective of a “psychological revolution”: “It was only the shift in motivation, the subsiding of the drive for total control consequent upon Stalin’s death, which made it possible for ‘détente’ to become an operative as distinguished from merely a declared aim of Soviet foreign policy. *No longer harnessed to the obsession with absolute control*, (Stalin’s cold war which lasted from the end of World War II to his death in 1953 was to get control of territory and people and to absolutize that control...the principal one being police terror and to dichotomize the globe into two ‘worlds,’ the Soviet camp and the American camp), *the new, policy expressed an expansionism of Soviet*

influence.” Robert C. Tucker, *The Soviet Political Mind Stalinism and Post-Stalin Change* (New York: W.W. Norton & Co., Inc., 1971), p. 237.

⁸⁰ Vladislav Zubok and Constantine Pleshakov, *Inside the Kremlin’s Cold War From Stalin to Khrushchev* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1996), pp. 188-189.

⁸¹ *Ibid.*, p. 249.

⁸² “On October 16th, 1952, the day after the Nineteenth Party Congress ended, Stalin gave a long and harsh speech to a plenary session of the new Central Committee.... In stressing the dangers of retreat, fright, and capitulation, Stalin pointed to Lenin’s fearlessness in the face of difficulties.... to drive home his point he made a furious attack on Molotov and Mikoyan... for their lack of firmness, their cowardice and capitulationism. Molotov and Mikoyan... responded to his attack: ‘they tried to explain to Stalin their actions and deeds... they spoke like condemned men... and in fact during the Doctor’s Plot of 1953, Mikoyan... whom Stalin suspected of being a British agent was a likely victim.’” Holloway, *The Soviet Union and the Arms Race*, pp. 291-92.

⁸³ Anastas Mikoyan declared at the Twentieth Party Congress: “Striking are the successes of Soviet foreign policy, especially in the past year. Here, too, the directing collective of the Party has injected a fresh new current, pursuing a high-principled, active, and flexible foreign policy, set forth in calm tones without invective.... *Certain ossified forms have been cast aside in the work of our diplomacy.... Let those swaggering Americans who boast of their wealth today, of their ‘American way of life,’ join a contest with us in this field, and they will see where more is done for the good of the people, and whose way of life proves better....*” The new Soviet foreign policy that Mikoyan spoke of so proudly in early 1956 was, in a distinctly un-Stalinist sense, a diplomacy of persuasion. Tucker, *The Soviet Political Mind*, pp. 226-7.

⁸⁴ Sergo Mikoyan, *Stalinism As I Saw It*, p. 43.

⁸⁵ Olga A. Narkiewicz, *Soviet Leaders From the Cult of Personality to Collective Rule* (Great Britain: Wheatsheaf, 1986), p. 57.

⁸⁶ “During World War II it was Mikoyan who held the Politburo responsible for supplying the Red Army with arms and every other need and for seeing that the civilian populations did not freeze or starve. ... Mikoyan and his deputies had the difficult and almost impossible assignment of trying to bring food to blockaded Leningrad, but it was not Mikoyan’s fault that more than a million people died there.” Sergo Mikoyan, ed., *Memoir of Anastas Mikoyan, Vol. 1, The Path of Struggle* (Madison, Conn.: Sphinx Press, Inc., 1988), p. xiii.

⁸⁷ Narkiewicz, *Soviet Leaders From the Cult of Personality to Collective Rule*, p. 58.

⁸⁸ Sergei sums up his father’s relationship with Stalin when he states: “Father himself wavered back and forth on Stalin.” Khrushchev, *Khrushchev on Khrushchev*, p. 10, n. 3.

Sergo discusses his father’s subordination to Stalin and whether there was any room for disagreement, questions, or discussion with Stalin in his paper *Stalinism as I Saw It*, pp. 1-50.

⁸⁹ According to Adomeit: “No doubt one of the reasons why there is such a range of differing interpretations of Soviet policy in the Berlin crisis is concerned with the selection of time intervals of analysis.” He refers to what he calls the “fifth phase” (February to June 1961) as characterized by an increased sense of urgency about Berlin and the German problem conveyed by Khrushchev. Adomeit, *Soviet Risk Taking*, pp. 197-204.

⁹⁰ Viktor Kremeniuk, “The Soviet View” (Unpublished Copy), later published in a shorter form in Graham T. Allison and William L. Ury, eds., *Windows of Opportunity from Cold War to Peaceful Competition in U.S.-Soviet Relations* (Cambridge, Mass.: Ballinger, 1989), pp. 97-98.

⁹¹ “Verbal and nonverbal communications, ambiguous by nature, are subject to even more misinterpretation and miscalculation. The reduced time available for calculations will also tend to intensify the reliance on innate, spontaneous behavioral attributes and intuition.” Adomeit, *Soviet Risk Taking*, p. 39.

⁹² *Risk Awareness*: “The official version of Soviet risk awareness was given as early as November 1958. The note sent to the United States at that time deplored the fact that Berlin had become a ‘dangerous center of contradictions between the Great Powers’...and may, in an atmosphere of heated passions, suspicion, and mutual apprehensions (that is, in a crisis), cause a conflagration which will be difficult to extinguish.

“Three main threats existed from the Soviet and (East German) point of view that could turn the August 13 measures into military conflict:

1. Anger, frustration, and panic of East German population which could result in a...uprising
2. An anti-Russian and anti-communist populace could arise in West Berlin and take over.
3. The three Western powers in Berlin,...could take the risk of removing the obstacles...placed in the way of freedom of movement within Berlin.” Adomeit, *Soviet Risk Taking*, pp. 285-286.

⁹³ “We couldn’t count on the sympathies of the East German people in the way we would have liked.” Khrushchev, *The Last Testament*, p.192.

“There is talk in senior military circles, especially among Kupin’s group and others stationed in East Germany, that in case of a Berlin crisis or a war we would have to kill both West and East Germans. The entire East German Army is only at eighty percent of full strength. The East German officers are unreliable and about fifty percent of the soldiers are against us.” Oleg Penkovsky, *The Penkovsky Papers*, (Great Britain: Wheatsheaf Books, Ltd., 1988), pp. 256-258.

⁹⁴ “It first occurred to Khrushchev that nuclear bluff was a good thing in November 1956, during the Anglo-Franco-Israeli-Arab War. In the United Nations, John F. Dulles (whom Khrushchev thought was bluffing about ‘massive retaliation’) condemned the United States’ closest allies. Khrushchev immediately came up with a bold scheme: he persuaded the Presidium to send official letters to the aggressors, threatening them with Soviet military retaliation. Under the circumstances, retaliation could only mean a nuclear strike. *Simultaneously*, against the doubts of the baffled Molotov, Khrushchev made the Presidium approve a decision to suggest to the United States that they send a joint peace-keeping mission to the Middle East....To his last days Khrushchev believed that this ultimatum was a gem of his diplomacy, a first triumph over American diplomacy in the Cold War.” Zubok, *Inside The Kremlin’s Cold War*, pp. 190-191.

⁹⁵ “... ‘strategic threats’ is used...as a broad term for the expression by one government, verbally or by other means, of an intention to employ its strategic forces against another in certain circumstances....The employment of Soviet strategic power was threatened as *the possible ultimate consequence*, not as the *certain and immediate consequence, of an opponents failure to satisfy a Soviet demand*....All these threats, warnings, and menaces emanating from the Soviet leaders have had one thing in common: they have invoked the image of thermonuclear war in support of Soviet political interest....the Soviet leaders have artificially raised international tension in order to advance their political interests. They have relied on the *restraint, responsibility, and forbearance of the West, particularly the United States to prevent the arms race from getting out of control*.” Arnold L. Horelick and Myron Rush, *Strategic Power and Soviet Foreign Policy* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1966), pp. 10-12.

⁹⁶ There were many differing views about the relationship of Berlin and Cuba. For example on the Soviet side, “When, during the dark week of the Cuban missile Crisis, Gromyko’s deputy Vassily Kuznetsov suggested that the Soviets might do something against West Berlin to call the American bluff in Cuba, Khrushchev sharply rejected his idea. Contrary to the view of the distinguished historian Adam Ulam, Khrushchev did not unleash the crisis in Cuba to reach his goal in Berlin. *The goal had been reached with the construction of the Wall and meant the recognition of what Kennedy offered and Khrushchev rejected during the Vienna summit—a continuation of the status quo*.” Vladislav Zubok, “Khrushchev and the Berlin Crisis 1958-1962,” *Cold War International History Project Working Paper*, No. 6. (Washington, DC: Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars, May 1993), pp. 21-22.

And from the American perspective at the Hawk’s Cay Conference:

William Taubman: “And yet, perfect 20/20 hindsight shows that Khrushchev had many reasons to put missiles in Cuba.... Look at the range of foreign policy objectives Khrushchev could have been pursuing—adjusting the nuclear balance, forcing a satisfactory solution to the Berlin problem.... He was in search of foreign policy victories, though not only for the domestic political reason of needing to shore up his position—he also felt the ideological pressure of the historical march of socialism, the need for an expansion of Soviet influence, and the importance of making the world milieu safe for his domestic program.

“Europe in general and Berlin in particular were the places he sought his foreign policy victories.” James Blight and David Welch, *On the Brink*, (New York: Hill & Wang, 1989), p. 35.

McGeorge Bundy: “...it is interesting to note that the missile crisis did not spread to any of the areas we expected it to. We had a respectable, but, as it turns out, wrong fear of a third Berlin crisis. It doesn’t seem that the Soviets were thinking in terms of escalating the crisis to Berlin...” Ibid., p. 98.

Thomas Schelling: “...the Cuban missile crisis was the best thing to happen to us since the Second World War. It helped us avoid further confrontation with the Soviets, it resolved the Berlin issue, and it established new basic understandings about U.S.-Soviet interaction. Sometimes the gambles you take pay off.” Ibid., p. 104.

Marc Trachtenberg: “If the missiles in Cuba were attacked, the Soviets would very much want to take some kind of counteraction, in Berlin most probably or against Turkey, or maybe even in Iran or Korea, and the United States had to take ‘a whole series of precautionary measures.” Marc Trachtenberg, “The Cuban Missile Crisis,” *International Security* 10:1 (Summer 1985): 142-143.

Graham Allison: “As Kennedy and his advisors expected, the Soviets did consider a countermove against Berlin. Note the reference to this idea in Dobrynin’s cable from Washington. A deputy foreign minister also advanced the idea of countering the blockade with pressure against West Berlin. Khrushchev, however, appeared to realize he was already in very deep water. One of those present recalls that the idea of a Berlin countermove ‘provoked a sharp, and I would say violent, reaction by Khrushchev that he could do without such advice.’... We had no intention to add fuel to the conflict.” Graham Allison and Philip Zelikow, *Essence of Decision; Explaining The Cuban Missile Crisis* (New York: Longman, 1999), p. 123.

“For Kennedy, at least, a more plausible answer dawned on him shortly afterward. It must be Berlin. Khrushchev would use the missiles to solve the Berlin problem—on his own terms. At the first meeting, Rusk had voiced the suspicion that ‘Berlin is very much involved in this. For the first time, I’m beginning to wonder whether maybe Mr. Khrushchev is entirely rational about Berlin. We’ve already talked about his obsession with it...’

“In August 1962, Thompson flew back to Washington carrying a personal message from Khrushchev to Kennedy: would the American president like the Berlin crisis brought to a head before or after our Congressional elections in November?” Ibid., p. 100.

⁹⁷ In a paper assigned to the group, Pytor Abrasimov, First Secretary of the Area Party in Smolensk in 1962, states: “The transformation of West Berlin into a center of militarism and revanchism became an ever growing threat to peace. There were over 50 militaristic organizations in West Berlin. In 1959 over 20,000 former civil servants under Hitler had administrative jobs in West Berlin, while in the various legal departments of the city, over half the employees had either been judges or lawyers during the Nazi period or been member of the SS men or members of the Nazi Party. All these men were out to ensure that West Berlin fulfilled its role as a ‘front line city’ and that a corresponding ‘front line spirit’ should prevail. Time and again the leaders of the Senate declared that it was West Berlin’s mission to disrupt the stabilizations of the situation in the GDR as much as possible. In 1958 the Senate called upon the city to adopt the role of troublemaker.

“Interference in the internal affairs of the socialist countries, notably the GDR, contrary to the United Nations Charter and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, persistent acts of military and political provocation, abuse of the GDR’s line of communication, such things became commonplace and led to periodical conflicts and crises which seriously threatened the preservation of peace.” Rytov Abrasimov, *West Berlin Yesterday*, pp. 28-30.

⁹⁸ See Michael Kanzelberger, *American Nuclear Strategy: A Selective Analytic Survey of Threat Concepts for Deterrence and Compellence* (Santa Monica, Rand Note prepared for the USAF, September, 1979), pp. 3, 70.

“Compellence differs from deterrence,” according to Thomas Schelling, “in that the former tries to coerce an adversary to move in a way beneficial to us, while the latter attempts to prevent him from moving in ways inimical to our interests.” Schelling, *Arms and Influence*, p. 53.

⁹⁹ May, Steinbrunner, and Wolfe found that Soviet decisions on ground force levels were reactive, following trends in the West. Thus, when in 1952—it became evident that NATO could not manage its ground force targets, the Soviets began to cut forces. William Burr, “Soviet Cold War Military Strategy: Using Declassified History,” in *Cold War International History Project 4* (Fall 1994): 10-11.

“Soviet defense policy during the early 1960s was closely interwoven with the status of the Berlin question...Khrushchev continued to support unilateral reductions in conventional forces *despite the opposition of the military*, despite the failure of the Paris summit, despite even the failure of the SS-6 missiles that were supposed to compensate for the reduced troop levels...yet by the time of Kennedy’s inauguration, Khrushchev had retreated somewhat from his original position.” Richter, *Khrushchev’s Double Bind International Pressures and Domestic Coalition Politics*, p. 144.

¹⁰⁰ From the Soviet perspective: “The dependence of military strategy on politics, its subordinate position in relation to politics, is underscored in the Marxist-Leninist definition of war as the continuation of the politics of a state, or of classes, by other, that is, violent means.” N. A. Lomov, “Scientific-Technical Progress and the Revolution in Military Affairs,” in V. D. Sokolovskiy, *Soviet Military Strategy* (New York: Crane, Russak, and Company, Inc., 1968), p. xvii.

“It is important that *military strategy not be confused with military doctrine*...In the Soviet system of military thought, strategy is the part of military art which studies the fundamentals of preparing for waging war as a whole and its campaigns. In practice, it represents the direct instrument of politics. *In relationship to strategy, politics plays the leading and directing role*.” S. N. Kozlov, “The Officer’s Handbook,” in *Soviet Military Strategy*, p. xvii.

“...contemporary Soviet military doctrine is the political course of the Communist Party and the Soviet State in the military sphere.” *Ibid.*, p. xviii. The U.S. perspective is discussed in Section 11, by Paul Nitze.

¹⁰¹ Dobrynin gives as an example Khrushchev’s “grasp of risk”: “At Vienna Khrushchev was obviously bluffing, whether consciously or because of his emotional makeup is still hard to say. But, I must repeat that *Khrushchev feared a new war* and never considered a possibility of one waged over Germany or other international disputes. This check on Khrushchev’s temper was never fully understood in the West.” Dobrynin, *In Confidence*, p. 45.

¹⁰² “Khrushchev combined menacing and expansionist policies with a search for a détente with the United States. The most characteristic expression of this ambivalence came at the Twenty-second Party Congress, held in 1961 after the most extensive Soviet nuclear tests so far. Dire threats were uttered against the US by the First Secretary himself and by his defense minister, Malinovsky, yet from the same rostrum Foreign Minister Gromyko uttered what sounded very like a plea for an outright alliance between the two super powers. Predicament embodied the tragic dilemma of the Soviet rulers...”

“And the whole complex of fears aroused by nuclear weapons could, needless to say be exploited much more fully by a totalitarian foreign power than a democratic one. The latter can seldom threaten a foreign power without scaring its own citizens. In contrast, the Soviet government could hector, cajole, and threaten foreign powers while at the same time piously denying any attempt to use the frightful weapons that it kept repeating it had in such abundance.” Ullam, *Expansion and Co-Existence*, pp. 607-609.

¹⁰³ Western Kremlinologists, including Carl Linden and Michel Tatu, William Hyland, and Robert Slusser, have speculated that Kozlov became Khrushchev’s main conservative rival, perhaps even leading an open opposition that outvoted Khrushchev. Michel Tatu, *Power in the Kremlin from Khrushchev to Kosygin* (New York: Virgin Press, 1969), p. 131.

“Kozlov and Suslov emerged as the principle beneficiaries of the changes (of the mid-1960s) and Kosygin...also gained considerable ground. Kozlov gave the plenum report (July 1960) of Khrushchev’s activities....Although Khrushchev regained the political limelight after July 1960, the signs of Kozlov’s and Suslov’s influence persisted. Two episodes in the summer of 1960 indicated that something less than harmony existed between Khrushchev and his two ranking secretaries....” Linden, *Khrushchev and the Soviet Leadership, 1957-1964*, pp. 99-105.

¹⁰⁴ There are conflicting reports as to whether or not Khrushchev was aware of his opposition in 1964.

“Today it may seem hard to believe, *but in the last years before October 1964, I had no premonition of what was to come*. On the contrary, it seemed to me that...everything was proceeding along the path mapped out by the party.” S. Khrushchev, *Khrushchev on Khrushchev*, p. 5.

In the four-part series serialized in *Ogonyok* (October 1988), Sergei Khrushchev gives a conflicting testimony of his discovery of the plot to oust Khrushchev. Vasily Kvanovich Golyuko reveals to Sergei (and an unknown caller to his sister Rada) the conspirators involved and suspicions that the leader’s life was in danger.

“Gradually, the ground beneath his feet began to shake. One after another, his supporters were dislodged...” S. Khrushchev, *Khrushchev on Khrushchev*, p. 175.

¹⁰⁵ “In the 1957 crisis Khrushchev was kept in power by the Central Committee overriding the majority of Presidium members who had joined forces against him....It would be both unnecessary and hazardous to attempt a political analysis of its [the Central Committee’s] make up. It is true, of course that while the preceding analysis of the Central Committee had saved Khrushchev in 1957, this new one (1961) was to oust him three years later.

“It would be risky to assert that the new Central Committee (1961) was either more or less pro-Khrushchev than the 1956 one. True, the new one was formed at a time when Khrushchev was far stronger, when many of his personal enemies [Bulganin, Pervukhin, Saburov, and Voroshilov] were quitting the scene, as well as other old regional committee secretaries....On the other hand, a few Stalinist dignitaries known to be at odds with the First Secretary were confirmed in their seats despite a marked downgrading of their functions. In addition, several officials closely associated with Khrushchev were eliminated for good.” Tatu, *In the Kremlin*, pp. 189-190.

¹⁰⁶ According to Gromyko, a real threat to the peace was taking shape: “I have in mind above measures for the remilitarization of Western Germany, for the equipment of the Bundeweher with atomic and rocket weapons, and the establishment of a network of rocket-weapons on West German soil.” Foreign Minister’s Meeting, May-August 1959. (Geneva: U.S. Department of State International Organization and Conference Series, No. 8 Washington, 1959) in Marc Trachtenberg, *The Berlin Crisis* (Boston: Center for International Studies, Massachusetts Institute of Technology, 1988).

¹⁰⁷ Ambassador Thompson cabled Washington on November 18, 1958: Khrushchev “is a man in a hurry and considers that *time is against him on this issue, particularly in relation to atomic arming of West German*. Therefore believe Western Powers should prepare for major showdown within coming months.” Thompson to Dulles, November 18, 1958, 762.00/11-1858/DSCF (Department of State Central Files, Diplomatic Branch) USNA, in Trachtenberg, *Berlin Crisis*, p. 31.

“Some American officials—Ambassador Thompson in Moscow and Ambassador Bruce in Bonn—had understood all along that *the question of German military power, and especially German nuclear forces, was of fundamental importance to the Soviets*. But it does not seem that the U.S. was ready to offer anything of substance in this area. This issue in fact evidently did not receive much attention at the highest levels of the government, it was never treated by Eisenhower and Dulles—or for that matter by Kennedy and his associates—as the most central issue, the real heart of the problem.” *Ibid.*, p. 50.

“Thompson cabled in 1961 to Dean Rusk: ‘Soviet Union interested in stabilizing their western frontier and Communist regimes in Eastern Europe, particularly East Germany which probably most vulnerable. *Soviets also deeply concerned with German military potential*.’ To manage the Berlin imbroglio, he urged Eisenhower and

Kennedy to adopt a firm line of negotiation but never to abandon hope of a diplomatic settlement. Thompson's contribution to this settlement during a number of desultory talks with Gromyko was minor. But his ongoing assessment of Soviet motives was astute..." David Mayers, *The Ambassadors and America's Soviet Policy* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1995), pp. 202-207.

¹⁰⁸ In March 1961, Kennedy asked Acheson to take part in the discussion of Berlin. "Skipping over possibilities of diplomatic or economic response, Acheson crisply offered a formidable catalogue of military countermeasures, concluding tentatively in favor of sending a division down the Autobahn.

"The state department was divided about the Acheson program. Many agreed with Thompson that we should prepare negotiating as well as military alternatives. According to Acheson, Khrushchev had only dared precipitate the crisis (after Vienna, the second Berlin Crisis) because his fear of nuclear war had declined. Our problem was to convince him that this complacency was misplaced and that we would, in fact, go to nuclear war rather than abandon the status quo.

"But others in the government, especially some who knew the Soviet Union best like Ambassadors Thompson and Harriman, believed that on the contrary (to the Acheson case of no negotiations, only a military showdown) Khrushchev's objectives might well be limited.

"Thompson argued after Vienna that the predominant Soviet motive was the desire to improve the Communist position in Eastern Europe rather than to achieve the worldwide political domination of the United States. As evidence, he cited the 'free city proposal,' which he said Khrushchev really intended as a means of accompanying his local aims and at the same time saving face for the allies. While Thompson favored the policy of quiet military build-up, he also argued that the west must begin a diplomatic offensive soon after the West German elections, scheduled for September 17. If this were done, then Moscow and not Washington would be in the position of saying no to a plan which might avert nuclear war." Schlesinger, *A Thousand Days*, pp. 380—385.

¹⁰⁹"Fears of nuclearization of the West German Bundeswehr were part of the general concern. In instructions to a Soviet ambassador in Bonn on 17 December 1955 the Presidium (Politburo) listed as the number one priority the monitoring of West German rearmament.... In the spring of 1957, Adenauer and his state-secretary for foreign affairs, Heinrich von Brentanok told Soviet Ambassador A. A. Smirnov that they were on the verge of adopting a program of nuclear armament. Khrushchev replied with a harsh diplomatic note and cut off a confidential channel to Adenauer. During the summer of 1958, the apprehension over the Bundeswehr's nuclear rearmament subsided somewhat, after the new president of France, Charles De Gaulle, canceled a joint French-West German nuclear project. But, it did not disappear.

"The menacing rise of West Germany coincided with an aggravation of the economic situation in the GDR.... On 24 October 1958 when Walter Lippmann interviewed Khrushchev, in Moscow, he was struck to find the Soviet leader in a cocoon of pre-1941 fears. The first Secretary compared Adenauer to Paul von Hindenburg, the president of Weimar Republic who elevated Hitler to power in 1933." Zubok, *Inside The Kremlin Walls*, pp. 2-8.

¹¹⁰ "The only agreement on access rights is oral and informal. It dates back to a meeting held between, among others, General Clay, Lieutenant General Sir Ronald Weeks, and Marshal Zhukov at Zhukov's military headquarters on 29 June 1945. According to the only authoritative record of the proceedings, a memorandum taken by a member of the American delegation, the participants concurred that the British and American forces, the French to be included later, should have the right to use one road (the Hanover-Braunschweig-Magdeburg-Berlin autobahn)." Adomeit, *Soviet Risk Taking*, p. 85. Also see book by Lucius D. Clay, *Decision in Germany* (Garden City: Doubleday, 1950), pp. 24-27.

¹¹¹ A report, based perhaps on informants in the SED hierarchy, provides... information concerning the proceeding at the Warsaw Pact member countries meeting in August. "Ulbricht and Khrushchev were the main exponents of effective measures in Berlin on the first day of the meeting (August 3). Khrushchev suggested delaying the construction of solid structures *until clarity could be gained about how the West would react*. On the

last day of the meeting (August 5)... Marshal Konev was put in charge of military operations, in the event of Western counteraction.” Adomeit, *Soviet Risk Taking*, p. 207.

¹¹² There are only hints to the fact that the US was hoping for an end to the matter. A contributing factor was Kennedy’s growing fear of nuclear war.

“It was at the time of the Vienna Summit on June 2 and 3, 1961 that Kennedy began to fully grasp the possibility of a nuclear war between the US and the USSR. In part, he was pressured by the hard-liners in the administration to act more aggressively towards the Russians and in meeting Khrushchev for the first time the ‘President was overwhelmed by the ruthlessness and barbarity of the Russian Chairman...’”

His first question to Charlie Bartlett his friend when air racing back in America on June 6th after the summit was “How many Americans would die in an all-out nuclear exchange, with the Soviet Union? The answer came back from the Pentagon: 70 million dead, about half the nation. ‘He’s shaken,’ was the conclusion of the Majority Leader, Mike Mansfield.... *The American leader was brooding over the unthinkable*, he might be the man who had to push the button and destroy the world. Nobody seemed to understand that. Because no one else was President.... I question whether it is really right to bring children into the world now.” Reeves, *President Kennedy Profiles of Power*, pp. 174-177.

¹¹³ “Privately, the Kennedy White House breathed a sigh of relief over each brick Khrushchev put into the wall,” Schlesinger, “Thousand Days,” in Timothy Maga, *John F. Kennedy and New Frontier Diplomacy, 1961-1963* (Malabar, Flor.: Krieger Publishing Company, 1994), p. 99. The Soviet premier accepted the reality of an East and West Berlin. There would be no war or opposition.

“In the United States the predominant response was that of surprise, uncertainty, and hesitation but also relief.” Adomeit, *Soviet Risk Taking*, p. 210. “Foremost in the Western mind remained the fear of a new blockade. This was evident not only before 13 August but also afterward. It is shown in the sighs of relief of President Kennedy about the limited nature of the measures on 13 August, in the United States Ambassador to the Soviet Union, Llewellyn Thomson’s, reaction to the measures that it ‘could have been worse,’ and in Kennedy’s most anxious moment during the prolonged Berlin crisis which was not on 13 August, but on August 20th.” Ibid., p. 291.

“The sigh of relief which ultimately was to lead to ‘overwhelming self confidence’ was clearly, almost pathetically, expressed in the headline of the *Neues Deutschland* editorial of 15 August: ‘Fantastic, how everything worked out!’ No doubt the Soviet government must have been equally nervous about the possibility of countermeasures from West Berlin or the Western allies, and equally relieved when it failed to materialize.” Ibid., p. 287.

¹¹⁴ “Thus the West had tested our nerve by prodding us with the barrels of their cannons and found us ready to accept their challenge. They learned that they couldn’t frighten us. I think it was a great victory for us, and it was won without firing a single shot.” Nikita Khrushchev, *Khrushchev Remembers*, 1970, p. 460.

¹¹⁵ For a complete description of the confrontation at the Checkpoint Charlie and the withdrawal of the Soviet troops as a result of the Kennedy-Khrushchev secret exchange see the following sources: Adomeit, *Soviet Risk Taking*, p. 291; Raymond L. Garroff, “Berlin 1961: The Record Corrected,” *Foreign Policy* 84 (Fall 1991): 152; Nikita Khrushchev, *Khrushchev Remembers*, 1974, p. 507; A. Adzhubey, “Those Ten Years,” in *Nikita Khrushchev Life and Destiny* (Moscow: Novosti Press Agency Publishing House, 1989), p. 26.

¹¹⁶ Alexander L. George, “The Operational Code: A Neglected Approach to the Study of Political Leaders and Decision-Making,” in Erik Hoffmann and Frederic Fleron, Jr., eds., *The Conduct of Soviet Foreign Policy* (New York: Aldine Publishing Company: 1980), pp. 171-173.

¹¹⁷ Many believed that the real war was the “war of words” that occurred between the United States and the Soviet Union. It is largely by verbal means that the intentions, will, and resolution of the adversaries, as well as something of their capabilities are communicated to one another and to third parties. Warnings, threats, counterthreats, intimidations and ultimatums were the characteristic language of the Cold War.

¹¹⁸ Soviets and Americans differed on their view of the danger of nuclear war over Berlin. The Soviets “did not experience the threat of nuclear war during the summer of 1961.” As Khrushchev said, “I am profoundly convinced that the Berlin Crisis cannot be considered a real crisis. It should instead be called a sophisticated imitation of a crisis.” Sergei N. Khrushchev, Shirley Benson, trans., *Nikita Khrushchev and the Creation of a Superpower* (University Park: Pennsylvania State University, 2000), p. 345.

¹¹⁹ “New data released states that although the possibility of U.S. aggression in nuclear conflict is seldom considered...beginning in 1957 the U.S. military did prepare plans for a preemptive nuclear strike against the former Soviet Union....The Berlin crisis of 1961 may be the forgotten crisis in the annals of superpower confrontation....Kaysen...sent General Taylor a...memo...which included a very detailed description of the existing U.S. nuclear war plan, SIOP 62....” Fred Kaplan, “JFK’s First-Strike Plan,” *Atlantic Monthly* 3 (October 2001): 81-86. Also see Captain Mark D. Mariska, “Single Integrated Operational Plan,” *Military Review* 3 (March 1972): 32-40.