

CHAPTER III

THE GERMAN QUESTION (FROM 1945 TO THE 1980s.)"The testing place of Western courage and will" (Kennedy 1961).

I. Factors.

1. It was the most serious and long-lasting Cold War problem, taking the world to the brink of war on two occasions. On both occasions, the Russians challenged the West, and though both sides showed restraint, general war could easily have resulted.

2. The German problem has taken five main aspects, all inter-related: East-West disagreement over a peace treaty, over borders, over Berlin, over reunification, over security and disarmament. (Austria until 1955 was a sixth and minor problem.)

3. The German question was apparently more or less settled by 1975, although Martin Walker could still write in the Guardian in March 1987 that "it is hard to overestimate the degree to which Germany still dominates Soviet thinking about Europe", especially as, by 1999, the West German economy was expected to be stronger than the Soviet one.

Then in 1989, the German Question unexpectedly re-emerged as East Germany suddenly ended Communist domination and 1990 moved towards reunification with West Germany. The prospect of a reunited Germany, even stronger economically as a result and in the Western camp into the bargain, was naturally very alarming to the Russians and Eastern Europeans. There were also fears that a reunited Germany might not honour earlier commitments about its eastern borders. The prospect of a reunited Germany also rang alarm bells in the West about German economic domination and whether the Germans could be trusted not to bring on another war.

II. Background.

1. In January 1943 Roosevelt, after the Casablanca Conference with Churchill, announced the principle of unconditional surrender.

2. At the February 1945 Yalta (or Crimea) Conference of Roosevelt, Stalin and Churchill:

i. Roosevelt and Churchill resisted Stalin's demand for the partition of Germany, which it was agreed should be divided into temporary occupation zones until a peace treaty settled matters. The French were to be given a zone carved out of the US and British ones; Churchill wanted French support in view of FDR's (Roosevelt's) promise that US forces would have left Europe within 18 months of the end of the war. The Soviet zone was to embrace 40% German territory, 36% of the population, and 33% German productive resources; this generosity was partly because of Western manpower shortages, and partly an attempt to win over the Russians. An Allied Control Council was to co-ordinate the 4 zones until the peace treaty had been arranged.

ii. Berlin, 110 miles inside the Soviet zone, was also to be divided temporarily. Co-ordination of the zones was to be through a 4 Power Kommandatura, under the Allied Control Council. No access guarantees to Berlin were sought by the Western powers or arranged, as there was to be joint control and the occupation was only temporary.

iii. Russia was granted the former German areas of Kûnigsberg and NE Prussia. Poland was to be given German territory in the West in compensation for the loss of the land to the Curzon Line which was to be surrendered to the USSR. Whether the Western Neisse (as the Russians wanted) or the Eastern Neisse should be Poland's western border was left to the final peace conference, because no agreement could be reached.

iv. Germany was to be denazified and made democratic, and was to "make compensation", although no agreement was reached on the nature of the compensation. The Russians wanted reparations in order to rebuild Russia, and discourage German recovery, while the West considered reparations after 1918 as a lesson, and wanted Germany to rebuild itself (otherwise, Germany would have to be subsidized, and Western Europe might never recover economically as Germany was the economic power-house of the

3. 2 May 1945, Berlin surrendered to Russian troops under Zhukov. 7 May 1945, Jodl capitulated to Eisenhower in Rheims, and 8th May 1945, Keitel capitulated to Zhukov near Berlin. By the time the Western troops were admitted to Berlin, in July 1945, the Russians had set up a communist-dominated system.

4. At the Potsdam Conference, July-August 1945, Truman, Stalin and Attlee:-

- i. Confirmed the Yalta arrangements.
- ii. Arranged that the foreign ministers of the US, USSR, France and Britain would draw up a peace treaty with Germany "when a government adequate for the purpose is established".
- iii. Disagreed still over reparations. The result was the compromise that each power could exact reparations if it wished from its own zone; in addition, the West agreed to hand over 15% of "unnecessary" industrial assets from their zones, in return for food, and 10% for nothing.

III. East-West disagreement over the fate of Germany was one of the reasons for the start of the Cold War. (see Chapter I, section C. II.3.)

The Foreign Ministers of the 4 Powers (Britain, France, US, USSR) met three times in 1946, and twice in 1947 (March-April, November-December), but were unable to agree on a treaty for Germany. By this time, both East and West had turned against their earlier intention of dismembering Germany. Both East and West wanted and expected to dominate a reunited Germany, for economic, political (expansion of communism/capitalism) and security reasons (militarily and ideologically). However, they were unable to agree on how to reunite Germany, the main problem being that the West insisted on elections before reunification, while the Russians insisted on reunification before elections. Apart from the unsuccessful meeting in Paris May-June 1949 following the Berlin Blockade 1948-9 (see IV below), the Foreign Ministers did not meet again until 1954.

IV. The first German Crisis, the Berlin Crisis, culminating in the Berlin Blockade, 1948-49.

1. Events leading up to the blockade.

- i. Earlier unsuccessful Soviet attempts to take over in Berlin.

Before the US, British and French occupying forces entered Berlin in July 1945, the Soviet Commander Sokolovsky had established a communist-dominated system (for example, a communist-run trade union organization, the FDGB; a communist-led Magistrat, the name for the initial government; the police with the communist Paul Markgraf, as Polizeipräsident).

November 1945-March 1946, surprisingly with the support of the Berlin SPD (German Socialist Party) chairman, Otto Grotewohl, the

Russians tried to arrange the merger of the SPD and the KPD (Communist Party) into the SED (the Socialist Unity Party). When in March 1946, an SPD ballot in West Berlin (the ballot was not allowed by the Russians in East Berlin) overwhelmingly rejected the merger by 19,000 to 5,000 votes, the Russians could do no more than limit the merger to their zone.

However, anticipating the merger, the Russians had arranged with the West for the election of a legislative City Assembly (whose measures had to be approved by the Kommandatura) and a new executive Magistrat, on the assumption that a Communist dominated SED would win the elections. The elections for the City Assembly on 20 October 1946 gave the SPD 63 seats, the CDU (Christian Democratic Union) 29, the SED 26, and the LPD (German Liberal Party) 12, despite increased Soviet food supplies to Berlin, and reduction in electricity cuts, in an attempt to show the Berliners who dominated. In December 1946, the City Assembly elected a new Magistrat, in which 3/17 were SED; Otto Ostrowski of the SPD became the Oberbürgermeister (Lord Mayor).

April 1947 saw the Bürgermeister Crisis, when Ostrowski resigned, following a vote of no confidence that had been brought on by his tendency to give in to Soviet pressure. Kotikov, the Soviet Berlin commander, and Sokolovsky, the Soviet representative on the Allied Control Council, refused to accept the resignation, or the election in June 1947 as mayor of Ernst Reuter, also of the SPD.

(Reuter in 1921 had left the KPD, of which he was at the time Secretary General, having concluded that the Russians were only interested in power. He had joined the SPD, and in 1935, gone to Turkey for safety from the Nazis. Reuter and the Berlin SPD in general were far less ready than the SPD in the Western zones, led by Kurt Schumacher, to compromise with the Russians for the cause of German reunification.)

The West (weakly?) accepted the Soviet veto on Reuter's election; the first deputy-mayor, Ferdinand Friedensburg, was CDU, and so stood aside to let deputy-mayor Louise Schroeder of the SPD serve as the acting mayor.

1947 saw increased Soviet activity against opposition. US sources estimated that by March 1948, 1,600 Germans, especially students and officials, had been kidnapped and had disappeared because they opposed the SED and the Soviet authorities.

ii. Western steps to the economic and political integration of their zones, probably the immediate cause of the Blockade:-

a. 3 May 1946, the US Zonal Commander and Governor, General Lucius Clay (who had previously favoured good relations with the

Russians) stopped reparations payments to the Russians, who had not delivered the promised supplies of food.

b. July 1946, the US Secretary of State, James Byrnes, proposed the economic merging of the three Western zones, repeating the proposal in his Stuttgart speech in September 1946 when he also made it clear that US forces would not be leaving Europe. By January 1947, arrangements had been made for the creation of an Anglo-US economic Bizone. The Bizone authorities created a German Economic Council of 54, selected by the L^önder (meaning state or county) parliaments (1946-47 11 L^önder were established in the West and 5 in the East, and 1947, L^önder elections were held). Such steps were widely regarded as the first move to political union.

The French, fearing German revival, only agreed to merge their zone in 1949, permitting the formation of the West German state in September 1949.

c. On 20th March 1948, the Soviet Commander Vassily Sokolovsky and his delegation walked out of the Allied Control Council, when the Western powers refused Soviet demands to be informed about agreements reached at their London conference of February-March 1948. At the same time, the Berlin Kommandatura also ceased to meet.

d. On 2nd June 1948, the US, Britain, France and the Benelux countries agreed to full German representation in the European Recovery Programme, and to the drafting of a federal constitution for Germany.

e. On 18th June 1948, the Bizone and the French authorities announced the introduction of currency reform (as arranged in the London Conference, February-March 1948), effective from 20th June but not applicable to Berlin; the new Deutsche Mark was deemed essential to halt inflation, caused by Soviet overprinting (and in spite of US efforts to bolster the "occupation mark").

f. Already, from 1st April 1948, the Russians had interfered with Western traffic to Berlin. Then, on the evening of 18th June 1948, all passenger trains and road traffic between the Western zones and Berlin were stopped. On 23 June, the Russians stopped all rail traffic and introduced a new currency, the Ostmark, applying it to Berlin as well as to their zone; the West therefore introduced the new Deutsche Mark to West Berlin (but until March 1949, while the US continued to negotiate with the Russians, West Berlin accepted the Eastern currency). The West had accepted the Soviet demand that there be one currency for all Berlin, but the Russians had rejected the Western proviso that there must be 4 power control. By 24th June 1948, it was clear that the Russians were blockading Berlin, rather than just interfering.

2. Stalin's probable reasons for the Blockade.

i. The minimum gain was likely to be the expulsion of the West from Berlin. This would not increase communist security or power in the East, but would tidy up an anomaly, stop the flood of refugees to the West via Berlin and make it more difficult for East Germans to see (because of the free movement within Berlin) the greater prosperity and freedom in the West. The building of the Iron Curtain between the Soviet and the Western zones had begun in 1945 but Germans had continued to "vote with their feet" (that is, move to the West) via Berlin which remained undivided until the erection of the Berlin Wall in 1961.

ii. The Blockade might also intimidate the West into not uniting their zones.

iii. However, further gains were likely. "Whoever holds Berlin holds Germany. Whoever holds Germany holds Europe" (attributed to Lenin); "When Berlin falls, Germany will be next" (Clay). The expulsion of the West from Berlin would shatter world confidence in the West, and make countries readier to come to terms with the USSR. Above all, the Germans in the Western zones, especially the Western SPD led by Kurt Schumacher, would be more ready to compromise with Russia, in order to achieve reunification, with Berlin as the capital. For Germans generally, Berlin had to be the capital. This was why in 1949 the West Germans made their capital not Frankfurt-am-Main, the economic centre and the coronation city of the Holy Roman Emperors, but the obscure provincial town of Bonn, which could never be considered as a real capital.

iv. After September 1948, when (to general surprise) the airlift appeared to be succeeding, Stalin clearly changed his policy from one of expelling the West from Berlin, to one of getting the West to accept the division of the city (and possibly of Germany, although the Russians did not give up hope of a reunified Germany until 1955).

3. Stalin was doubtless influenced by:

i. There being a very good chance of success. West Berlin, 186 sq. miles, with 2 million people, 110 miles inside the Soviet zone, was an easy point to put pressure on the West. The West was unlikely to act, as Berlin was not strategically important, and Russia had 175 divisions and 20,000 planes, to the West's 14 divisions and 1,800 planes. Even so, Stalin acted carefully to avoid fighting (presumably partly because the US had the A bomb and he did not). It was not thought possible, by either side, that an airlift could supply Berlin.

ii. The fact that, after 1947, there was no more need for caution. Stalin had apparently intended the gradual communist take-over of Europe, but by 1947 this no longer seemed possible. The US had come up with the Truman Doctrine and Marshall Aid and the communists had met with electoral defeat in France and Italy; moreover the US would not be leaving

Europe as had been expected and Tito in Yugoslavia was declining to be a puppet. Consequently, Stalin began to tighten his control over what he held, and to accelerate the takeover in Eastern Europe, before it was too late. Thus, for example: November 1947, Bulgaria gained a new constitution; February 1948, the Czech Coup was carried out, and Tito summoned to Moscow (but wisely refused to go, and June 1948, Yugoslavia was expelled from Cominform); September 1948, Gomulka was replaced as PZPR (Polish Workers' Party) Secretary by Boleslav Bierut.

iii. The obvious Western reluctance to act, even though the US had the A bomb, and the Russians did not until 1949. In particular, the US failure to react over the Prague coup of February 1948 encouraged Stalin.

iv. Awareness that it was possible to interfere with the airlift (once it was succeeding) only by bringing war, for which he was not prepared.

4. The Western response. (nb. There were only about 6,000 Western troops in Berlin, to 18,000 Soviet troops, not to mention others in East Germany.) A second Munich?

Some (for example, Clay, and Aneurin Bevan, British Minister of Health) favoured driving a convoy through to Berlin, although this risked bringing on a 3rd World War. However, the proposal of the British military commander (Sir Brian Robertson) for an airlift was taken up. The goal for the airlift initially was not to supply Berlin for any length of time (as this was not thought possible) but to gain time for negotiations on Berlin and the whole German question.

5. Events of the Blockade.

i. The first period, April-June 1948: interference with Western access.

ii. The second period, June-September 1948: full blockade, the danger of a communist attempt to take over as in Prague in February 1948, the discovery that Berlin could be supplied by air, and the communist failure to take over West Berlin.

a. In August 1948, the strain broke the health of acting-mayor Louise Schroeder, and Ferdinand Friedensburg took over; should he have given up for any reason, the next in line was an SED man.

b. Friedensburg and the Magistrat, with the Assembly, led by its SPD President, Otto Suhr, stood up to the Russians and, in August, in an attempt to forestall an SED coup, tried to dismiss communist officials, especially Police President, Paul Markgraf. Kotikov refused to agree, and the Magistrat - this time supported by the West - established a separate police in West Berlin. Soviet obstruction and intimidation brought the setting up of separate West Berlin bodies, such as a separate Food and Finance Department; already, in

February 1948, a separate West Berlin trade union organization, UGO, had been established. The obvious division of the city was a hard decision for the West Berlin leaders to take.

c. On 26th August 1948, the City Assembly was prevented from meeting in City Hall in the Soviet zone by an organized mob, which demanded a new government. Requests for police protection were contemptuously dismissed by Kotikov, and fears of a Prague-style coup increased. However, Reuter organized the hard core of the SPD, about 50,000 strong, and made it clear that any attempt to take over would be resisted.

d. On 6th September 1948, after a number of attempts since August to meet in City Hall, the City Assembly met in an extraordinary session, in the Technical University in the British zone, to register a protest to the Soviets. In the meantime, the SED had taken over the City Hall, and Berlin had two governments. The Russians and the SED accused the West Berliners (SPD, CDU, LPD) of causing the split.

e. In late September, 350,000 West Berliners demonstrated, tearing down and burning the Soviet flag at the Brandenburg Gate. Russian soldiers opened fire, killing 1 and wounding others. The situation, which could have become very serious, was saved by a British force intervening between the two sides.

iii. The third period, October 1948-May 1949.

Acting-mayor Friedensburg tried without success to work in City Hall until 1st December 1948, when he was barred from the Hall by East German police. On 30 November 1948, the Russians had created a new Greater Berlin government, headed by Mayor Friedrich Ebert.

On 5th December 1948, elections, boycotted by the SED, were held in West Berlin. 86% of the population voted, giving the SPD an increased majority, as defenders against the Russians, even at the expense of the division of the city. Reuter officially became mayor, with Friedensburg deputy, and Suhr president of the assembly.

By January 1949, when it was clear that the airlift was successfully coping, even with the winter supplies of coal and oil, and that the West Berliners and the West would not be intimidated into surrender, negotiations got under way. The Western blocking of trade with the East (especially of Ruhr coal and steel, and machine parts) had also had their effect. The end of the blockade came, on 12 May 1949, following an agreement for a conference of foreign ministers, who met May-June in Paris, and, as expected, failed to reach any agreement. By this time, the Western (mainly US) airlift, under Major-General William Tunner (who, in the Second World War, had commanded the airlift over the Himalayas, to keep China supplied and in the war) had flown in about 2 1/3 million tons of supplies.

6. Results.

i. A defeat for Stalin. The anomaly of West Berlin had not been removed, and there seemed little chance of communist control of a united Germany. The USSR appeared either incapable of maintaining a communications system, or as deliberately starving women and children. The West had also acted with restraint when confronted and had averted war.

ii. Not only had the West had shown unexpected resolve, but Western determination had been strengthened. In particular, in April 1949, 12 nations signed the Washington Treaty establishing NATO. The crisis had clearly meant the end of the US debate over whether to commit itself to the defence of Europe, and now the US, through NATO, was fully committed to a role in defending Europe. 1950 saw the start of talks about a European Defence Community (the EDC), including a rearmed Western Germany. The Blockade also helped bring about the establishment in 1952 of the European Coal and Steel Community, which was intended as a first step to the integration of Western Europe.

iii. Reduced hopes of reunification. The Blockade was one reason for the establishment May-September 1949 of the Bundes Republik Deutschland (BRD, or West Germany), with Bonn as capital. In October 1949, the Deutsche Demokratische Republik (DDR, or East Germany), capital East Berlin, was set up. The Blockade helped bring electoral victory in August 1949 to Konrad Adenauer and the CDU in West Germany, beating the favourites, Schumacher's SPD, who were opposed to anything that made reunification more difficult. Adenauer and the Christian Democrats dominated West Germany 1949-63, and bound the BRD firmly to the West. The Blockade thus reconciled the old enemies of Germany and the West, whose occupation was ended 1952.

iv. Admittedly, the Blockade was not an unqualified success for the West. The Blockade meant that the Western goal of a united Germany was not likely to be achieved. Moreover, the Western response to the Blockade had apparently only discouraged Stalin from adventures in Europe, and Truman took the view that the relative Western weakness over Berlin, following that over the Czech coup, had encouraged Stalin to try his luck outside Europe, for example, in Korea (if one accepts, as Truman did, that Stalin was behind the North Korean invasion of South Korea in 1950).

v. Stalin had not given up all hope of a united Germany within the Russian sphere of interest. For example, in 1952, he proposed the neutralization of Germany (that is, withdrawal of foreign troops, and no German rearmament or membership of alliances).

vi. US policy makers assumed that atomic weapons had discouraged, if not prevented, Soviet military intervention over Berlin.

Consequently, the Blockade ended the US debate on basic defence policy; the US government rejected UMT (Universal Military Training) and a conventional build-up of forces, relying instead on the use of atomic weapons to halt any Soviet advance. 1948 also saw the end of US attempts at international control of, and the outlawing of, atomic weapons.

V. 1950-55: the West German rearmament crisis, and the last chance for German reunification. (nb. March 1953 death of Stalin.)

1. After the Berlin Blockade and the start of the Korean War, the West, despite the Potsdam agreement for the permanent disarmament of Germany, was clearly on the point of rearming West Germany, a sign of full rehabilitation with the West (cf. 1925-1926, the Locarno Conference and League membership, which had reconciled Germany to the West after the Great War). At this time, East Germany had in effect created an army in the form of the 50,000 strong heavily armed People's Police.

2. In 1950, Konrad Adenauer, the West German Chancellor, and the US government both proposed German rearmament, which prompted great debate in the West (especially France) on how best to rearm West Germany without running the risk of Germans causing a war for revenge or for reunification.

In October 1950, the French Prime Minister René Pleven proposed the European Defence Community (EDC), in which there would be supranational, not national, control. By March 1954, the EDC had been ratified by all 6 ECSC (European Coal and Steel Community) states, except France, whose Prime Minister, Pierre Mendès France, in August 1954 refused to ratify, whereupon the scheme collapsed. (The EDC was only part of the movement toward European unity, which included the ECSC in 1952 and the European Economic Community in 1957, and which alarmed the USSR, especially by the prospect of German leadership of an integrated Europe.)

The British Foreign Minister, Anthony Eden, salvaged the situation by arranging the setting up of the Western European Union, WEU, by the Paris Agreement of October 1954; the BRD (the Federal Republic of Germany) would rearm and join NATO, but with safeguards, including a British guarantee to keep troops on the Continent, BRD renunciation of ABC (atomic, biological and chemical) weapons, and a maximum size of 500,000 for BRD forces.

Proposals for West German rearmament brought great Soviet opposition, and attempts to prevent rearmament.

3. Soviet policy was also influenced by events in East Germany, where the risings of 17th June 1953 in Berlin and other towns had shown the strength of anti-Russian feeling. The risings had begun as responses to the imposition of higher work-norms (that is, higher productivity). There was also the danger of West Berliners crossing into East Berlin to demonstrate with the East Berliners and being shot by the Volkspolizei (People's Police).

At the same time, the Russians feared that Dulles, US Secretary of State, would make good his earlier promises of "rolling back" communism.

Consequently, the Russians apparently concluded that the Soviet presence in East Germany was not just a cause for Western rearmament of West Germany, but a cause for instability in East Germany, and furthermore that East Berlin and East Germany were liabilities, in as far as they were sources of instability.

As a result, Soviet policy makers, especially from 1952, came to see the establishment of a reunified neutralized Germany as the solution to their problems - preventing the rearmament of the BRD, and removing East Berlin and Germany as sources of instability and conflict - and perhaps even making possible a communist-dominated Germany eventually.

4. Thus, 1952-53, Stalin proposed talks on a German peace treaty, on the basis of a neutralized, reunified Germany. However, the West continued to demand unifying elections first, and insisted that a united Germany should be independent, not neutral (that is, free to choose its own alliances).

5. Eventually, January-February 1954, the Berlin Conference of Foreign Ministers (Dulles, Molotov, Bidault, Eden) met for the first talks on the German question since 1947 (apart from the abortive Paris meeting 1949 after the Blockade). Molotov, who was aware of French reluctance to see German rearmament, argued that as West German rearmament and East Germany were sources of instability, and as the Soviet presence in East Germany was one reason for rearmament and instability, Russia and Europe would be more secure if Germany were neutralized (as eventually in 1955 Austria was - see the next chapter on "The Thaw", II.4.); the only alternative was recognition of the division of Germany into East and West Germany. Molotov agreed to elections, if the three other powers would agree to neutrality, but the West refused, insisting on an independent, not a neutral, Germany, on the assumption that an independent Germany would adhere to the Western side.

6. January 1955, the setting up of the WEU (arranged October 1954 in Paris- see 2 above) was ratified, despite Molotov's warnings that it would mean the division of Germany, and his proposals in December 1954 for a

European Security Treaty, based on a divided Germany. Such a treaty according to Molotov would remove the danger presented to both sides by a neutral united Germany, and so make possible arms agreements, including the non-rearmament of Germany; it might eventually make possible German reunification. Then, in May 1955, West Germany regained full sovereignty and became a member of NATO.

7. June 1955, Molotov, in San Francisco, again proposed a European Security Pact, with the involvement of both Germanys (which might be reunited in due course), and including the abolition of NATO and the Warsaw Pact (the Pact having been set up in May 1955, following German membership of NATO) and provision for defence against aggression.

8. At the July 1955 Geneva Summit Conference of the US, USSR, France and Britain, on German disarmament and European security - proposed May 1955 by the West - Bulganin, the Soviet Premier (1955-58) proposed that the alliances (NATO, WEU, and Warsaw Pact) should form the basis of a security pact, which would of course have meant Western recognition of the division of Germany, and Soviet domination of Eastern Europe. This was "the last time when German reunification was possible, even if remotely" (P. Windsor, in "City on Leave"). However, the West insisted that security meant German reunification, and the Russians insisted that reunification could come only after US forces had left Europe.

9. In October 1955. at the (second) Geneva Summit Conference on Germany, disarmament and European security, the Foreign Ministers were even more inflexible. By this time, the USSR, in September 1955, had recognized the sovereign status of East Germany, and established diplomatic relations with West Germany; Adenauer's agreement to the establishment of diplomatic relations caused much surprise, as it could be considered as acceptance of the division of Germany, but Adenauer maintained that recognition would help him pursue the goal of unity.

10. Thus 1955 saw the end of talks about reunification. Critics of Western policy argued that a neutral Germany (on the lines agreed May 1955 for Austria) posed no threat to the West, as the West Germans would not succumb as had the Czechs and others 1945-8, and as Soviet attempts to subvert Germany would result inevitably in general war; moreover, a rearmed German Federal Republic was dangerous as it might pursue revanchist policies leading to war.

From 1955 (to the European Security Conference of 1972-75), the Russians consistently pursued a policy of securing Western recognition of the

division of Germany, and of German borders. Thus the Russians transferred to the DDR functions which had been reserved to the USSR in 1945 in an attempt to force the West to recognize the existence of the DDR and the division of Germany. For example, in 1955, East Germans were to control German civilians and goods crossing to East Berlin; later in 1955, East German visas were needed; then in 1956, East Germans were to control non-German civilians crossing to Berlin. However, Western policy continued, until 1972-75, to be reunification, in line with the Paris Agreement of October 1954, establishing the WEU and admitting the BRD to NATO, in which signatories pledged themselves "to work for reunification by all diplomatic means".

11. After 1955, a deal on Berlin was tied to talks on Germany, in turn tied to talks on arms.

VI. The Second Berlin/German Crisis, 1958-63 (Willy Brandt Mayor of Berlin 1957-66).

1. Reasons for Khrushchev reopening the question.

i. The October 1956 Polish and Hungarian revolts. These underlined the dislike in Eastern Europe of Soviet domination, and made Khrushchev anxious to strengthen the Soviet position generally in Eastern Europe, and not least in Germany. Events in Hungary had raised the danger of a West Berlin mob invading East Berlin and being shot down; in fact, such a disaster seemed to have been avoided only by the speeches and leadership of Willy Brandt, president of the Berlin Assembly and SPD Vice-Chairman. At the same time, Dulles's failure to seize the chance to try to "roll back" communism encouraged Khrushchev.

ii. The launch in 1957 of a Soviet ICBM (Inter-continental Ballistic Missile) and satellite (both a year before the US equivalent) apparently gave the USSR a lead over the US in military technology, which might be used to advantage.

iii. Khrushchev also wanted a political victory, especially to counter the Chinese challenge to his leadership of communism.

iv. Berlin was "a bone in the throat" (Khrushchev). It revealed Western affluence, and made flight to the West easier: by 1961, 4 million, mainly the skilled, out of a population of 17 million, had fled to the West. Berlin was an easy point to put pressure on the West. However, unlike 1948-9, the goal was not so much to gain control of West Berlin, perhaps as a first step to the

reunification of Germany, but to use Berlin as a lever to secure Western recognition of the division of Germany.

v. January 1958, Khrushchev proposed a summit conference on atomic tests, disarmament, and Germany, but his proposals were rejected. Then March 1958, Khrushchev proposed a Foreign Ministers' Conference, to prepare the way for a summit, and later proposed a visit to the US. Then, suddenly in November 1958, the Berlin Crisis erupted. Was Khrushchev annoyed at Western rejection of his overtures? Was his position weakened by the presence, in July 1958, of US troops in Lebanon and British troops in Jordan, and by his failure to aid China over the shelling in August of the islands of Quemoy and Matsu, so that he needed a success?

2. Khrushchev's goals.

i. Khrushchev clearly hoped to use West Berlin to gain Western acceptance of the division of Germany and Soviet domination of Eastern Europe. An eventual and not too distant take-over of West Berlin was also a possibility. (nb. The Western position, as before, was that Germany should be reunited and independent.)

ii. Possibly, he hoped that a settlement of the German Question would facilitate better East-West relations.

iii. The complete separation of East and West Berlin, and the construction of the Berlin Wall (1961), were not originally planned but were subsequently deemed necessary in view of the deteriorating economic situation, which was in part the result of the accelerating "brain-drain" to the West brought on by the crisis.

3. Events.

i. In November 1958, in speeches and in a series of notes to the West, Khrushchev demanded a Berlin settlement, on the basis of Berlin being a free, demilitarized city "for the time being", with access negotiated with the DDR; such negotiations would of course mean de facto recognition of East Germany (the DDR, or German Democratic Republic), and therefore of the division of Germany. He threatened that, if there was no agreement within 6 months, he would make a separate peace with the DDR, which would then be in charge of access to Berlin. The West would then have to negotiate with the DDR over access to West Berlin, thereby tacitly recognizing the existence of East Germany and therefore of the division of Germany. Khrushchev made it clear that the USSR would aid the DDR militarily to prevent any Western effort to cross to Berlin that had not been negotiated with the DDR; NATO at the time had 32 divisions, to the Warsaw Pact's 175. Admittedly, on 28th November, Khrushchev

gave himself an escape route by indicating that he would not act if the Western powers agreed to begin negotiations.

ii. The Western reaction was a conciliatory, time-winning proposal for a general conference (which they had previously rejected!), admittedly on reunification and a peace treaty and not on the division of Germany, although President Eisenhower said that nuclear war was not "a complete impossibility". At a Kremlin press conference on 19th March 1959, Khrushchev insisted that the talks should be about a treaty with the two German states, which might be linked in a confederation. The Foreign Ministers met, May-August 1959, in Geneva, to discuss disarmament, European security, and Germany, as a preliminary to a summit. Although the conference arranged nothing, the 6 month time-limit had passed. Even so, the rhythm of tension and relaxation continued, and at Geneva, the West had made concessions (for example, that the DDR might control access as Soviet agents, and that the status of Berlin might be transitional).

iii. In August 1959, to general surprise, it was announced that Khrushchev had accepted an invitation to visit the US in September. Khrushchev had apparently given up hope of gaining anything from the Foreign Ministers Conference, and was therefore turning to President Eisenhower. Khrushchev made a hit with the American people, had talks with Eisenhower at Camp David (these were cordial, hence "the spirit of Camp David", which alarmed the Chinese), and went to the UN, where he repeated proposals for disarmament, and the disengagement of US and Soviet forces from Europe. Khrushchev dropped his time-limit, and Eisenhower admitted that the Berlin situation was abnormal.

iv. September 1959, the four Powers announced a 10 Power Disarmament Conference, which met March-June 1960 in Geneva without result. In December 1959, the Western Powers reluctantly (especially France and the BRD, where de Gaulle and Adenauer feared an Anglo-US sell-out to the Russians) agreed to a Paris Summit in April 1960. This summit Khrushchev at once broke up, ostensibly because of the US spy plane, shot down 1st May over Sverdlovsk. Probably the real reason was Khrushchev's awareness that the summit would bring no gain, since March-April 1960, the US had ended its conciliatory line and reverted to the position held before November 1958 (for example, March 1960, Under-Secretary George Dillon announced that the West would not abandon Berlin, that German reunification was the only solution, and that the purpose of the Paris summit was to reduce the risk of war through miscalculation; if Khrushchev wanted to reduce tension, he should withdraw Russian troops from Eastern Europe and grant self-determination.) Once again, Khrushchev threatened a separate peace with East Germany, while proposing a conference "in 6 to 8 months' time". Khrushchev presumably hoped that, if he kept up the

pressure, as he easily could, he might eventually force the West into an agreement, especially with a new President in the US.

v. In September 1960, Adenauer gave in to Khrushchev's threats that the Bundestag should not as usual hold its opening ceremony in West Berlin. Also in September 1960, the DDR prohibited all visits from West Germans for 5 days (during a congress on the Oder-Neisse Line), after which the DDR refused to recognize West Berlin passports, and banned West Germans from visiting West Berlin without special passes. Possibly Walter Ulbricht, the East German communist leader, was trying to separate Berlin from the overall German question, and to force Khrushchev's hand. Certainly, when in November 1960, the DDR began to interfere with Western traffic to Berlin, and demanded an agreement between the West and the DDR, Khrushchev calmed the situation. This tension increased the number of refugees to the West, in effect, a "brain-drain"; already, the number of refugees to the West had increased markedly, when apparently anticipating a peace treaty and confederation of the two Germanys, Ulbricht had imposed a more rigorously socialist system, especially the rapid collectivization of agriculture, January-March 1960.

vi. In February 1961, Khrushchev reopened the crisis, again threatening a separate peace treaty with East Germany.

Possibly Khrushchev miscalculated about Kennedy and thought he could browbeat the young and inexperienced US President, especially after the failure of the Bay of Pigs April 1961 (see the chapter on "The Freeze", IV. 2.) and the US withdrawal from Laos April-May 1961.

Reluctantly, Kennedy agreed to meet Khrushchev in Vienna in June 1961. Just before the meeting, Khrushchev reiterated his threat, including the six-month time-limit: "the conclusion of a peace treaty in Europe must be attained this year", or he would make a separate peace.

After the abortive meeting, the crisis became more serious, as Khrushchev repeated his threats, and, in addition began a series of atomic tests, and increased defence spending by 1/3. Kennedy sent General Clay as his special representative to Germany, and increased his military commitment to Europe. Both sides made military contingency preparations; Khrushchev told the British ambassador how many nuclear bombs were needed to destroy Britain.

Many Germans took what might be the last chance to escape to the West from East Germany; in the first 6 months of 1961, 100,000 East Germans "voted with their feet". Ulbricht, possibly trying to force the situation, but probably just trying to stop the loss of skilled personnel, in July 1961, stopped workers crossing from East Berlin to their jobs in West Berlin. Then at 02.30 on Sunday, 13th August 1961, East German police closed off the frontier between East and West Berlin, and began the construction of the wall.

The wall signified the absorption of East Berlin into East Germany. Western failure to act amounted to de facto recognition of the absorption, and ran the risk of demoralizing the West Berliners and Germans (who might accept a disarmed, neutralized, reunified Germany).

The check-points into East Berlin were reduced to one, at Check-Point Charlie; blinding lights were shone onto Tempelhof Airport (always a difficult field to land on); and in October 1961, US and Soviet tanks confronted each other at the wall, which might easily have brought general fighting. However, earlier in October, Khrushchev had withdrawn his threat to sign a separate peace, seeing no chance of success at that time.

vii. Negotiations and "soundings", as well as tension, continued, and it was clear that Khrushchev would reopen the crisis when it suited him. The Western victory was only partial and temporary. In December 1961, Khrushchev tried to tempt the West Germans (and frighten the West) with talks (cf. the treaty of Rapallo 1922 when the Russians and Germans had made a deal for co-operation), but the West Germans under Adenauer were adamant about not recognizing the DDR.

Yet by June 1963 (when Kennedy and Khrushchev both visited Berlin and Kennedy made his "Ich bin ein Berliner"="I am a Berliner" speech), it was clear to Khrushchev that the US would not be forced into any settlement that favoured the USSR. In particular, the Cuban Missile Crisis of October 1962 had made Khrushchev have second thoughts about challenging the West over Berlin. Thus by 1963, the Second Berlin crisis was over. (However, many Germans were disappointed by the Western stand, and alarmed at the failure to settle the German question; Willy Brandt became convinced that any real solution to the problem would have to be begun by the BRD, hence his Ostpolitik or Eastern Policy, from 1966.)

VII. The apparent end of the German Question, 1970-75.

1. While Willy Brandt (Foreign Minister 1966-69, and then Chancellor 1969-74) pursued his Ostpolitik for a settlement of the German question, President Nixon (1969-74) adopted detente. In May 1971, Walter Ulbricht was replaced as DDR Party Secretary by Erich Honecker; this was probably at Soviet behest and intended to facilitate improved relations with the West. Admittedly, the Russians gained what they had been after since 1955, namely recognition of the division of Germany and of Soviet domination of Eastern Europe.

2. By the Treaty of Moscow, August 1970 (ratified May 1972), the USSR and West Germany pledged themselves to respect European frontiers (that is, the BRD accepted the Oder-Neisse line).

3. By the Treaty of Warsaw, December 1970 (ratified May 1972), Bonn gave up claim to 40,000 sq. miles of territory east of the Oder-Neisse line. This was followed by the establishment of full diplomatic relations between Poland and West Germany.

Both treaties recognized that "ties between the Western sectors of Berlin and the Federal Republic will be maintained and developed."

4. August 1971, the Quadripartite (Four Power- Britain, France, US, USSR) Treaty on Berlin, after talks from March 1970, was signed. Signatories renounced the use of force; guaranteed unchanged joint rights in Berlin and unimpeded access; a Soviet Consul Generalship was to be established in West Berlin; the West German government was to hold no official ceremonies or functions in West Berlin; formalities in crossing were reduced.

However: the Berlin Question had not been settled but merely put on ice. (Even so, Berlin, no longer regarded as the outpost of freedom, began a rapid decline, with an ageing population as the young left for the West, and increased difficulty in attracting businesses to the city.)

: the Treaty dealt only with West Berlin, and not East Berlin at all, and so it implied Western acceptance of Soviet control of East Berlin; in exchange, the West had only gained a reduction in its disabilities. (For example, December 1971, East Germany allowed West Berliners to cross into East Berlin for the first time since 1966.)

: relations were uneasy at times; for example, August 1974, following the decision to put the Federal German Environment Office in West Berlin, the DDR for a time imposed restrictive measures on the transit routes to Berlin.

5. May 1973, the Soviet leader Leonid Brezhnev, on a visit to Bonn, agreed that, in return for West German economic and technical co-operation, Bonn should represent West Berlin.

6. The Grundvertrag (Basic Treaty) between East and West Germany, November-December 1972 (ratified 1973). Both agreed to normalize relations, with permanent representatives (not ambassadors) and to co-operate on economic and other matters. Bonn maintained that there were two states, but one nation (that is, did not preclude eventual unity; there were no ambassadors;

and all East Germans could automatically become West German citizens). This paved the way for other countries to recognize East Germany.

7. The European Security Conference, 1972-75, in Helsinki and Geneva (see the chapter on "Detente 1969-79", VI 7.). Among other things, the 35 signatories of the Helsinki Accord formally accepted the existing frontiers (that is, the division of Germany and its borders and Soviet domination of Eastern Europe).

VIII. The sudden and unexpected reopening of the German Question 1989, with the ending of the communist system in the DDR and steps to reunification, 1989 and 1990. (For the continuation, see notes on the Cold War after 1985, Chapter X).lement that favoured the USSR. In particular, the Cuban Missile Crisis of October 1962 had made