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CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY
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OFFICE OF THE DIRECTOR

August 22, 1961

MEMORANDUM FOR THE PRESIDENT

FROM: Allen W. Dulles
Director of Central Intelligence

SUBJECT: Meeting on August 20, 1961, with General Eisenhower

PRESENT: General Eisenhower
Lt. Col. John Eisenhower
Allen W. Dulles, Director, CIA
Major General David W. Gray, Joint Chiefs of Staff
Mr. Richard H. Davis, Deputy Assistant Secretary for
European Affairs, Dept. of State

1. We had a relaxed conversation of over an hour and a half with General Eisenhower on Sunday morning. During the briefing we covered the points outlined below. General Eisenhower asked many questions and commented in some detail as the briefing proceeded. The General's comments are grouped together in the second part of this memorandum.

(a) I reported on the events of the last week, the sudden closing of the Berlin sector boundary on August 13, to halt the refugee

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as a result of this review.

flow, the shock of the West Berliners which exceeded our expectation, in view of the fact that the possibility of a sector closing had been often discussed, and the sudden drop in morale of the West Berliners as they saw the tanks and barbed wire across the exit points and along the sector boundary. I reported that there was a sudden fear among the West Berliners that there would be a military coup against them, and they were frustrated at their inability to do anything and quick in their resentment against the Western occupying Allies, particularly the United States, when no immediate action was taken. I said that this situation of sinking morale motivated the Johnson-Clay visit and the deployment to Berlin of a battle group.

(b) Mr. Davis followed with an account of the Foreign Ministers Conference in Paris on Berlin, described the work of the working groups, both inter-Allied and inter-departmental, on the Berlin situation. He mentioned that these discussions had led to decisions not to exacerbate the explosive situation in East Germany. He mentioned that at the inter-Allied level no agreement was reached on the timing of any Western initiative for negotiations with the Soviet, de Gaulle being adamantly against a Western initiative and the British

generally favoring it.

The contingency planning also included inter-Allied agreement for significant economic countermeasures amounting to total economic embargo against the Soviet Bloc if access to West Berlin should be cut off.

(c) General Gray covered the military planning, both at the Washington level and at the Foreign Ministers Paris Conference. He described the action taken by the United States to build up its own forces since the date of General Eisenhower's last briefing by Secretary McNamara and General Lemnitzer on July 15, including the readying of six divisions which would be able to go overseas by about the year end if required. General Cray also discussed the action taken with regard to sending the battle group to Berlin which, at the time of our briefing, actually was under way.

General Eisenhower's comments and queries on the briefing follow:

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(a) General Eisenhower commented that he was more favorable to General de Gaulle's views on negotiations, remarking that it is hard to negotiate with a man who is coming across your lawn armed with a club and ready to take possession of your house. After all, Khrushchev was asking for a change in the present status, we were not. It would seem to be the stronger position for us not to take the initiative in making proposals. He asked whether Khrushchev had asked for a conference to which we replied that he had hinted at the need for discussion in his speeches but that there was no formal proposal from Khrushchev. The General observed that the problems seemed to be about the same as they were before and that it was necessary to coordinate our actions as closely as possible with our Allies.

(c) He thought Khrushchev would merely chuckle over our reinforcement of the Berlin garrison but he later remarked that if, in our judgment, this was necessary for the morale of the people in Berlin and West Germany, he agreed entirely with the action taken. He too thought that Khrushchev was more than ever determined to get some sort of a settlement this year of the German and Berlin problem, and he raised the question of what do we do if Khrushchev cuts off our access and attacks our Berlin forces.

In reply to the view we expressed that a physical attack on our Berlin forces would probably mean war, but that Khrushchev was unlikely to force this, General Eisenhower commented that if access were cut off, we would have to go to the UN and undertake our probe, since it was vital to maintain the three points of primary interest to us, i. e., Allied rights in West Berlin, Allied access to West Berlin, and the viability of West Berlin.

(d) In connection with General Gray's briefing on the military aspects of the Foreign Ministers Conference, and the actions taken by the United States in the build-up of its forces for possible overseas use, General Eisenhower remarked that it looked to him as if people think we can fight a conventional war in Europe without using

nuclear weapons. General Gray explained that one of our objectives was a limited action in the preliminary phases of an acute crisis which could enforce a position allowing maximum opportunity for diplomatic moves.

General Eisenhower doubted whether the measures we were taking would in any way affect Khrushchev's intentions but they would be of tremendous importance in impressing our Allies of our resolve. General Eisenhower believed that our build-up would cause Khrushchev to initiate a larger build-up of ground forces in order to stay ahead of us. He further explained that since 1951 he had preached and still believed that the European nations should contribute the major part of the ground forces and that the United States contribution should be in the form of the more sophisticated elements such as airborne troops, air forces and missiles. The Europeans have not been willing to do this and so now the United States is faced with shouldering a larger part of the ground forces burden than they should have to. General Eisenhower also recognized the difficulties from a cost standpoint of a large increase in our military structure which will cause a progressively larger increase in the annual defense budget.

He then reminisced in some detail about the background of our having sent troops to Europe. As he had conceived this, it had

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been a temporary measure and it had never been intended that they should stay there on a permanent basis. However, there was no use crying over spilt milk. Because we have had our troops there, the Europeans have not done their share. They won't make the necessary sacrifices to provide the soldiers for their own defense. He said that every time he had tried to do something about bringing our troops back, Secretaries Dulles and Herter had pled with him with tears in their eyes not to talk about any withdrawal of American forces from Europe. At this stage he really had no suggestions to make and understood the actions taken by our Government so far. He recalled that at one time he had had the idea of making Berlin a "fief" of the UN; possibly make it the seat of the UN, but the State Department wouldn't go along with this.

General Eisenhower added that he did not think we were going to get into a war but the question we must ask ourselves is how long we can continue to spend ever greater sums of money which mean more taxes and would prevent the civilian sector of the economy from expanding. The Federal Government lives on the profits of business and of the individual and any squeeze on the civilian economy with ever-growing Government control could finally lead to a managed economy with everything centralized and controlled by the Government.

(e) In reply to General Gray's reference to the various contingency plans which the Pentagon had prepared, General Eisenhower recalled that long ago he had learned that plans are worthless but planning is everything. You could not make plans covering every contingency and hope to pull them out of the pigeon-hole and make them fit the existing situation. But planning was necessary in order to train people to think about the problems so that they would be ready to act with good judgment in the face of the actual situation.

General Eisenhower agreed that in this situation our major problem was the development of an effective method for quick decision-making from the political to the military level in NATO.

(g) General Eisenhower expressed appreciation for the briefing, saying he had no concrete suggestions but "shooting from the hip" he thought the most important things were the speed of our reaction to any moves by the Soviets and necessity for Allied unity. He observed that the probe would have to be done and "NATO will be with you."

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At the conclusion of the meeting, I briefly described to General Eisenhower the present situation with regard to the nuclear test ban conference, the reason for Arthur Dean's return to Geneva for a last try, and the situation with regard to the moratorium on nuclear testing. The General commented that he had long ago been fed up with the Soviets on this particular issue, and remarked that in his opinion we might be losing ground.

Mr. Davis left with General Eisenhower an up-to-date version of the Berlin kit containing the texts of all official communications exchanged on Berlin since June 4 as well as speeches by the President, Khrushchev, Ulbricht, etc. Davis also left with him a chronology of Soviet unilateral actions since 1948 in dividing Berlin and the people of Berlin. General Eisenhower seemed genuinely pleased to have this material and the briefing and thanked us for coming.

This memorandum profits from contributions furnished me by General Gray and Mr. Davis who have seen and concurred in it.

A handwritten signature in cursive script, possibly reading "A. J. ...", is written over a horizontal line.