Kaysen (1)

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THOUGHTS ON BERLIN

The crisis in Germany is rapidly developing to the point at which we must choose between talk now and fight now. It has been our tendency to put off the question, "When should we talk?"; now it is our temptation to put off the question, "What shall we say?" and concentrate instead on the more subtle but shallow issues of forum, timing, and initiative. In what follows, I attempt to look at the deeper problem, and, perhaps inevitably, in a rather crude way.

U.S. Aims In Germany

What do we want in Berlin? It is perhaps better to ask, "What have we wanted?" so that we can be prepared to ask, "What should we want?" I think that the terms in which we have tended to view our interest in Berlin can be examined under three main headings: as a strategic forward position in our struggle with the Soviet Union; as a very important item in our transactions with the Federal Republic of Germany; and as an area of Western freedom which we are specifically committed to defend. As an advanced position in the cold war struggle, Berlin has had a number of functions. Its less important ones have been to provide a physical base for overt and covert activities directed against East Germany in particular, and the Bloc in general. These have included everything from radio broadcasts to the movement of secret agents. Much more important has been the effect of our physical position in Berlin and our political position on Berlin in unsettling Eastern Germany. We have made it more difficult for the Communists to consolidate their hold on Eastern Germany. Our refusal to recognize the legitimacy of the regime, our support for the similar refusal of the Federal Republic, our underlying claim that only free elections in Eastern Germany can provide the basis for a legitimate regime have all tended to this end. So has our refusal to give our assent to the permanency of the present boundaries between East Germany and Berlin. This indeed has wider implications, and has in practice been the principal official expression of our refusal to recognize the legitimacy of the whole Communist settlement in Eastern Europe.

Our position on Berlin and East Germany has had a powerful effect in tying the Federal Republic of Germany to us. This tie goes not only to the government but, in the last few years, to the opposition as well, since both major parties now support the position that unification can only come about as a result of free elections, i.e., on West

German terms. Further, our position on Berlin and unification can be viewed as guarding the right flank of the present government by preventing the unification issue from being used as the basis for popular appeal by a neo-nationalist right wing (e.g., the Free German Party). Both the general support that we have offered to the German Government and the specifics of support on Berlin and unification stimulate German interest in and contribution to NATO. This in itself has been a very important reason for our steadfastness in holding to our present position.

Finally, we have a broader commitment to the freedom of West Berlin that transcends either 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, and there is no doubt that honoring that pledge is a test of our resolution and a gauge of the value of our support, especially in Europe, but also generally all over the world. Further, the significance to us of Berlin as a showcase of the economic and political achievements of the Western mode of organizing society also transcends the considerations examined under the first two sections. Finally, the history of Berlin as an escape hatch should also be mentioned. This of course has a strong connection with the first set of interests examined. There is no doubt that the continued flight of people, many of them from the professional and managerial groups, is one factor in the instability of the East Berlin regime and its difficulties in achieving satisfactory economic performance. Further, the escape hatch has significance in itself in respect to the maintenance of freedom for those within reach of it.

Soviet Aims in Germany

When we ask what the Soviet Union wants in Germany, we are, of course, in the realm of speculation. My own inclination is to be on the conservative side among the speculators, i.e., to pay more attention to specific Soviet statements and less, if any, to inferences from a presumed Soviet Grand Design. I think what the Russians want above all is a stabilization of the situation in Eastern Europe. This means recognition of the Oder-Neisse boundary by all the western powers, including the Federal Republic of Germany, recognition of the legitimacy of the GDR, and stability in East Germany.

It is a fair question to what extent political stability in East Germany is compatible with the existence of a free West Berlin, or even with the division of Germany in the absence of a free West Berlin. The extreme harshness of the Ulbricht government and the lack of even that element

of popular appeal which some, if not all, of the governments of the People's Democratic Republics possess is a product of the inevitable comparison that the 17 million East Germans must make between their lot and that of the 52 million West Germans. There is no doubt in my mind that even a "legitimate" government of the GDR, from whose concern the two million West Berliners had been lifted by a stroke of magic, would find this comparison a hard one to bear. It is further clear that the existence of free West Berlin exacerbates the situation considerably from the East German point of view. The immediacy of the comparison at the heart of East Germany, the escape hatch, the American, British and French troops, all contribute to rubbing the noses of both the people and the Communist Party functionaries inthe differences between East and West Germany.

Nonetheless, I think it is clear from the Soviet statements that the Soviets themselves do not now envisage the existence of a free West Berlin outside the control of the GDR as a fatal flaw in their plans for stabilizing the situation in Eastern Europe.

The most recent Soviet actions in cutting communication between East and West Berlin may show that the Soviet concept of a free West Berlin cannot include continued tolerance of the escape hatch. Nonetheless, if we take their statements at face value, the hope of the Soviets is to gain enough from the unilateral recognition of the GDR implied by the Bloc's signing a peace treaty to improve the situation in some measure. In fact, it can be doubted how much effect this measure will have in quieting the turmoil in East Germany.

The second goal of the Soviet Union in its German policy is to place some limitation onthe military power of West Germany. Here again we can say that, ideally, the Russians would like to see West Germany neutral and disarmed, as indeed they would like in some ideal sense to see every country not under their control neutral and disarmed. But more realistically, the Russians would find some gain in restrictions on German military power falling short of this. In particular, 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, where "must" has the force of both moral and natural law.

Conflicts Between Soviet and U.S. Aims

To what extent are our desires and those of the Soviet Union jointly achievable, to what extent irreconcilably conflicting? On our side, continued pursuit of the first two of the three sets of aims examined above--Berlin as a strategic position in the cold war and as an essential tie in U.S.-West German relations--is inconsistent with recognition of the East German regime and acceptance of the Oder-Neisse boundary. Together, these actions would go a long way toward complete acceptance of the legitimacy of Bloc control over Eastern Europe. Further, they would require a significant change in German foreign policy, no doubt at some political cost to the present government. The effectiveness with which we can pursue the first and second kinds of aims is diminished by increasing the tacit recognition we give to the Government of East Germany, even without formal acceptance. Within West Germany, the increase in informal dealings with the East Germans and the growth of trade across the boundary between the two Germanies has undercut considerably the strength of the official Western position on unification. Any steps we might make to accord an equal degree of practical recognition to the GDR regime would further this process.

On the other side, if the Soviets are successful in closing off West Berlin from East Berlin and East Germany, and push ahead in their determination to sign a peace treaty before the end of the year, while we maintain our present refusal to recognize the GDR, and our insistence on the illegality of the sealed border within Berlin, the Soviet desire for "normality" in East Germany will hardly be achieved. The resulting state of tension, both in East Germany and between East and West, if it is tolerable at all, will be such as to convert East Germany into a more complete garrison cum prison-camp than it is today. And, of course, the second Russian aim will also fail of achievement, since the NATO response to continued tension will insure a much higher level of armament in West Germany, both German and Allied. In fact, it is hard to believe that such a situation can remain stable for long.

In the past, we have pressed all three of our aims by upholding the status quo in Berlin, while calling for supervised free elections in all Germany, without restraints on the behavior of the resulting unified German state. The previous status quo has already been unilaterally modified by the Soviets and, in the absence of negotiation, further unilateral modification will almost certainly follow, at least to the extent of the Soviet peace treaty with the GDR.

It is clear, then, that if the Soviets pursue their aims, we cannot succeed in pursuing all of ours; and vice versa. Only if the Soviets prove willing to revert to the status quo ante, or if we can abandon the first and second of our past policy aims and concentrate on the third--the maintenance of freedom in West Berlin--is the area of conflict sufficiently small that negotiations might be successful.

Can We Expect the Soviets to be Satisfied with the Status Quo Ante?

Khrushchev's repeated contention that in the last few years there has been a shift in the balance of military power against the West is essentially correct, although he naturally exaggerates both its extent and its necessary consequences. This shift is more fundamental than the potentially transient weakness of Western conventional ground forces, in combination with the growing--though still inferior--Soviet strategic nuclear striking power. The growth in strategic power makes it possible for Khrushchev to be more daring in exploiting his familiar advantages in other directions in confronting the imperfectly united NATO powers in Germany. These include the greater flexibility and control an authoritarian government at home and a subservient set of Allies in the Warsaw Pact permit him in rushing toward and retreating from the edge of war, and the wide capacity for harassment short of providing a clear-cut casus belli provided by the geography of Berlin.

To these we must add the effects--although they are less clear-cut--of the suspected pressures on Khrushchev within the Soviet Union and from China toward a hard line in dealing with the West.

The result of this sum hardly points to a ready acceptance by the Soviets of the previous status quo in Germany. Rather it suggests that the Western demonstration of force required to achieve that acceptance will hardly be achievable short of war.

Should We Modify Our Aims?

If we persist in our aims, we can arrive, at best, in a position in which the Soviets can, at little cost to themselves, raise the whole set of problems again without any real change in our ability to respond. More likely, we will, sooner rather than later, find ourselves working toward a military resolution of the issues. Should we indeed be willing to fight for the whole of our past position? Or is there part of it that we can give up?

It is perhaps simplest to talk first about the possibility of giving up those of our past goals that involve the relation between our German policy and our political ties with the Federal Republic. There is no question that there will be some political cost to the Government of the Federal Republic of Germany in a change in these ties, and, in particular, that increased criticism from nationalist groups would result from any "retreat" from present positions on unification and the eastern boundaries. On the other side, Germany and Europe have both evolved greatly since our present position on these issues was formed within Germany. The Social Democrats have changed their positions on several issues so that they are much less sharply divided from the government than they once were. They have abandoned their previous espousal of some kind of neutralism and their skepticism of German membership in NATO. Further, they have abandoned the specifically Socialist character of their programs and thus have decisively widened the intellectual gap which separates them from the East: whatever appeal the notion of the unity of the Socialist parties has had is dead.

In Europe the rapid development of the EEC has so strongly tied the West German economy to that of its partners, that NATO is no longer the major political tie of Germany with Europe. To be sure, EEC has not directly tied Germany to the U.S. as do the political commitments we share with the present government on reunification, boundaries and Berlin, but it is not clear that a specific direct tie to the U.S. is more desirable than general ties to the Atlantic Community at large. This is not to say that this evolution has yet proceeded to the stage where we can view with indifference a change in Germany's relations with NATO at this moment. However, given the existence of the other ties, it is no longer the case that we run a great risk of undercutting German participation in NATO by changing our views on the German question. Finally, German attitudes themselves have changed. There has been a great growth of trade across the intra-German boundary and a variety of other contacts on the technical level between the Federal Republic and the non-existent GDR. The Germans have gone along in tacit acceptance of the fact of two Germanies. Indeed, they have gone further than we, and such a discrepancy would seem both curious, and not worth our effort to maintain.

Important as this is, it is far less so than the question of the relation of our past position on Berlin and Germany to our general strategy vis-a-vis the Soviet Union. What is involved here is nothing less than

the terms in which we view the struggle between the U.S. and the Sino-Soviet Bloc and the instruments we choose to carry it on. At the one extreme we can see ourselves as engaged in a war and indeed a religious war in which a military conception of the problem leads naturally to an emphasis on military modes of dealing with it. In these terms, we see everything as a gain or less for our side and a corresponding and equal loss or gain for the other side in a world sharply divided into friends and enemies; and we view neutralists with uneasy suspicion and an underlying belief that they must 'really' be neutral for us or against us because they certainly can't be 'really' neutral. At the other extreme we can see the struggle as a competition in good works and other displays of virtue in which a crowd of neutral onlookers from Africa, Asia and Latin America ultimately awards the palm to the side which has done most by direct action and example to make the world a better place to live in. Both of these views are false.

On the one hand, we are involved in a continuing hostile confrontation with the Sino-Soviet Bloc that in some degree affects and is affected by all our actions all over the world. The way in which we meet this confrontation will shape our own future and that of the rest of the world. On the other hand, we must increasingly deal with people to whom this confrontation is of secondary interest, and problems to which it is only indirectly relevant. It is only by giving primacy to the positive goals of our policy over the next decade that we can use the confrontation to serve our other foreign policy interests as well. Broadly, these positive aims are two-fold: to increase the strength and unity of the industrial nations of the Atlantic Community and Japan; to use that strength and unity to help the other half of the non-communist world to emerge from backwardness, isolation and colonialism in ways that favor uncoercive societies, free to choose their own paths of development and capable of doing so.

The instruments of such a policy must be chiefly political and economic; the focus of attention, chiefly on the parts of the world directly concerned: the free industrial nations on the one side, the less-developed countries on the other. This does not mean that either military measures or our direct relations with the Sino-Soviet Bloc are unimportant; but that, once these instruments are chiefly negative, and our direct relations are usually hostile, and at best cool, expected positive achievements cannot be looked for in these directions. And it is only by our positive achievements that we can confront the Sino-Soviet Bloc with the failure of their own expansionist aims and thus force them

to accommodate to a genuinely peaceful coexistence. We could view our immediate relations with the Bloc as the key to all our problems of foreign policy and warlike measures--in the military, economic, and propaganda spheres--as the prime modality of our relations, and thus take the classic cold war pose. This was in essence the position of the last administration. To a great extent, this position was inherited by that administration from its predecessor, which had been pushed into it by the Korean war. The Korean war led, not only to a sharp and permanent increase in the level of the defense budget, but also to a direct shift in the focus of the political and economic sides of our foreign policy in the narrower sense. In the one, alliances; in the other, military assistance programs, took the central position. The Eisenhower Administration continued this policy, but in a curious combination with an essentially weak military policy in terms of the size and composition of the armed forces and the grand strategy that informed their use. It may be that we were fortunate that an over-reliance on military means and a militarized view of our foreign policy was in fact combined with a weak, rather than a strong, military policy.

In addition to its primary shortcoming--its failure to contribute to the main positive goals of our foreign policy in the next decade--a cold war stance has some other significant defects. First is its rigidity; the recent past has demonstrated how hard it is to change. Further, its internal political consequences are highly undesirable: McCarthyism was not unconnected with the fact that we were literally at war with the Soviet Union in Korea. Both our history, and the great success in political and economic terms of our society make it appropriate for us to be much more conservative in moving away from simple Lockean concepts of property and liberty than are other societies, even the relatively successful and stable ones of Western Europe. A highly military stance abroad makes us increasingly intolerant of this difference, and a corresponding increase in the political weight of those radical right wing elements which see in the difference a threat to the American way of life. Further, when we take a strongly military stance, we face a dearth of suitable objects of action. This aggravates the internal political consequences of such a stance, and we seek enemies within when we cannot come to grips with the enemies without.

Negotiating Possibilities

The foregoing analysis convinces me that the only one of our past aims which we must continue to pursue is the freedom of West Berlin.

The rest, to the extent that they are not simply irrelevant to our present situation, have ceased to be worth the risks that their pursuit entails.

Two related questions immediately arise from this conclusion: (1) what is the essential "freedom" which we must defend, and (2) how much can abandonment of our previous aims be expected to help in negotiating a settlement that promises to maintain it.

The freedom of West Berlin involves several elements. First is continued internal freedom: the maintenance of orderly, responsible, and popular government. Second is freedom of access to West Germany for both people and goods. Third is some kind of continued symbolic association with West Germany that helps to support the will of Berliners to remain free. Last is a degree of security in the enjoyment of the other freedoms that permits their benefits to be realized.

The guarantee of these freedoms involves at least unrestricted access by land and air from West Germany to West Berlin, and something that speaks to the security of access over and above the Soviet's promise. In the past this has been the presence of the three power garrison, plus the membership of West Germany in NATO, plus the historical fact of the airlift. The current Soviet campaign against Berlin, especially the closing of the border between East and West, has diminished the sustaining power of history, and, by threatening the ties with West Germany and the maintenance of the garrison--assuming the absence of these to be the content of "neutralization"--threatens the other two supports of the security of Berlin's freedom.

In exchange for new or renewed supports, we should be prepared to offer:

(1) acceptance of the Oder-Neisse line as the final boundary of Germany as the part of the Federal Republic as well as the Western Allies;

(2) some form of recognition of the GDR as the government now in control of East Germany;

(3) agreement on the proposition that unification can come about only by discussion between the two German governments, and, accordingly,

initiation of such discussions; and

(4) discussion of mutual security guarantees for both Germanies by the Warsaw and NATO nations, including the creation of a nuclear-free zone in Germany.

In accepting the first three of these, we do no more than accord recognition to present facts. Such recognition is as much in our interests, including West German interests, as in that of the Soviets. The unworkability of the Ulbricht regime in East Germany is not the product of our refusal to treat with it as a legal government; but our refusal does give some plausibility to Krushchev's and Ulbricht's efforts to place part of the blame on West Germany and NATO. It is clearly a gain for us to force them to accept the complete responsibility for their failure. Further, the repressive function of Soviet troops in East Germany will be underlined by this change. Continuance of discussion between East and West German governments, and their elevation to an official level will make even more difficult the East German effort to seal completely the internal frontier. The attractive power of West German success in contrast with East German failure will make itself felt in all these contacts, and, accordingly, we should welcome, rather than fear them. In general, it is we who should be ready, and the Soviets unready, to assume the risks of promoting contact between East and West Germany.

Our formal acceptance of the Oder-Neisse line loosens the ties between Poland and Czechoslovakia, and the GDR, and stimulates them to a broader view of how their security interests can be served, changes which, again, we should welcome.

What in exchange must we ask with respect to Berlin? Our minimum conditions must include three provisions for access and security. We require guaranteed access from West Germany via specified land and air corridors, recognized by both the Soviet Union and the GDR, with complete freedom of travel through these corridors. We might be willing to make this travel subject to some form of inspection in respect to agreed prohibited categories of traffic: nuclear weapons, for example. On the security side, we might consider two alternatives: maintenance of the present garrisons, or incorporation of West Berlin into West Germany to parallel the incorporation of East Berlin in East Germany.

Both of these can be viewed in form as interim arrangements in the absence of unification. Soviet demands for the end of the occupation regime in Berlin suggest that incorporation of Berlin in the Federal Republic might prove the better path to choose.

These are minimum terms; our initial requests should be for much more. We should press for an all-Berlin solution, which unifies the city under conditions we can accept. These would be the same as those described for West Berlin: access and security guarantees.

A way to provide both, as well as to pose a challenge to Soviet propaganda, which the Soviets will find difficult to counter, is to propose that a unified, neutral, free and democratic Berlin become the headquarters of the United Nations. As such, it would need only an internal police force to ensure its security: since neither GDR or Soviets would be likely to take on themselves the odium of attacking the UN headquarters city or disturbing the political arrangements on which it rests. As the UN headquarters, the city would naturally have to be freely accessible to the whole world, and hindrances to access would involve the same high political costs as interference with its freedom. In the same way, it would be wise to make the city free to trade with the whole world.

We can sponsor such an arrangement only under suitable safeguards as to the right of Berliners to choose their own form of government; and with such safeguards, we could be confident of the result.

This proposal would most likely be unacceptable to the Soviets. In the first place, the loss of East Berlin would be a further serious blow to the GDR; it is doubtful whether it could survive such a blow. Secondly, the abandonment of a Communist dominated area to even a neutral status, with the right of self-determination is probably intolerable to the Soviets. Yet the dramatic nature of the proposal, its consonance with the propaganda campaign the Soviets have been carrying on against New York as the UN headquarters site, its symbolic appropriateness in dealing with the German problem, in view of the origin of the UN as the aftermath of the Second World War, would all make it difficult for the Russians to reject. This would be even more the case if the proposal can be put forward in a large forum, such as a peace conference.

Even the minimum position put forward above has a far wider propaganda appeal than would an attempt to stand on the present status quo, leaving aside our ability to do so. To the extent that we recognize

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that the situation in Germany has changed, and that we acknowledge the limits on our ability to undo these changes, we make more reasonable our request for guarantees on West Berlin. Further, if we propose that West Berlin have the same relation to West Germany as East Berlin does to East Germany, in the context of our formal acceptance of the situation in East Germany, we are responding in a way which is consistent with Khrushchev's public statements and his private conversations with Western official visitors.

Obstacles to These Proposals

These are the major obstacles to the whole approach to Berlin and Germany proposed above, both external and internal.

The chief external obstacle is the probable resistance of the German government to so drastic a change in our common attitude toward the GDR. We have argued above that, in some respects, the Germans are already more ready to make this change than we; but, nonetheless, some shock probably will be involved. It is thus important to begin discussions with them on this point as soon as possible. It may even be worth considering the value of an announcement by the United States, the United Kingdom, and France, made before the German elections, that we recognize the permanence of the present eastern border of Germany. This, while undoubtedly leading to temporary anger and agitation in Germany, would have the value of starting at once the process of re-thinking old positions, which must go on there as well as here and in Paris and London.

But the more important political obstacle is undoubtedly domestic. As the crisis grows tenser, the ability of the administration to espouse any policy which involves "concessions" to the Soviets diminishes, for fear that the opposition will attack it for appeasement. The whole argument of this essay is the error of such a view, and there is no way of dealing with it other than by meeting it head-on. The first step in so doing is to call now for negotiations: subsequent steps depend on the time, place and forum which evolve from that call.

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