

79. Memorandum for the Record

Washington, July 19, 1962.

SUBJECT

Meeting with the President on Berlin Planning, 1000 hours, 19 July 1962

1. At 1000 hours, July 19, 1962, the President met with representatives of State-Defense-JCS-the White House staff, in order to consider approval of a US position on BERCON/MARCON contingency planning concerning Berlin, specifically BQD-M-27 dated 12 July 1962 and its enclosure.¹ What follows is the result of an informal debriefing by General Taylor. Among others who attended were Secretaries Rusk and McNamara, Assistant Secretaries Kohler and Nitze, Generals Lemnitzer and Gray, and Messrs. Bundy and Klein.

2. The discussion did not proceed in a particularly orderly manner and it was only with some difficulty that Mr. Nitze was eventually able to direct the attention of the meeting to its constituted purpose of discussing and approving the BERCON/MARCON planning positions embodied in BQD-M-27. He was eventually, however, able to do this and the President has given his approval to the paper.

3. In general, the apparent impression conveyed to the President by the extensive discussion was that months would be required before any substantial operative plans came into existence, that not very much had been accomplished with our Allies—especially at NATO level since last year, and that a great deal of time seemed to have been expended on

Source: National Defense University, Taylor Papers, Box 38, 506 Bercon/Marcon. Secret. Drafted by Legere. Klein's notes on this meeting are in the Kennedy Library, National Security Files, Germany, Berlin.

¹ On July 16 Rusk and McNamara had sent the President a joint memorandum outlining the status of Berlin contingency (BERCON) and maritime contingency (MARCON) planning and the steps needed to coordinate this planning with NATO. Attached to this memorandum was BQD-M-27, "Report to Washington Ambassadorial Group on Politico-Military Consultation on Bercon/Marcon Plans." In describing the Western aims in a Berlin crisis this paper stated:

"(1) There is a compelling necessity for the Allies to succeed in protecting their vital interests relating to Berlin and to ensure that this success is recognized in the Free World.

"(2) The purpose of Allied operation, however, should not be to overpower the Soviet Union or to disintegrate the Satellite area, but to make the Soviet Government change their policy on Berlin. Therefore, the Allies should give the Soviet Union opportunity to draw back and even (without creating the appearance of failure on our part) help them to cover up this retreat." (Ibid., President's Office Files, NATO General)

On July 24 Bundy sent Rusk and McNamara a memorandum in which he stated that the President approved the general position taken in their joint memorandum and the specific recommendation that U.S. contingency plans for Berlin be discussed with NATO. (Department of State, Central Files, 762.00/7-2462)

planning for unlikely contingencies. Although the meeting was not supposed to address the subject of a separate peace treaty until after the consideration of BERCONs/MARCONs, the President's early questions apparently brought this subject into the arena right away. Secretary Rusk reported the fact of many agreed papers, draft notes and announcements, etc. He also said that when in Europe later this week he would propose to the other Quadripartite Foreign Ministers the advisability of reviewing their contingency plans for a separate peace treaty in the light of developments during the past several months; he also thought that it might now be appropriate to encourage the French to return actively into the Berlin planning forum. The President's questions brought out the fact that there did not exist any genuine counterproposal for action in the event of a separate peace treaty, but rather only plans for using selected mechanics designed to accommodate to the separate treaty. The President strongly felt that the Western reaction to a separate peace treaty should not be such as to imply great concern over the treaty (this, of course, is in fact the sense of the agreed Allied position).

4. After the above early discussion, Mr. Nitze proceeded to outline briefly and generally the place of the BERCONs/MARCONs in over-all Berlin planning. General Lemnitzer then followed, as planned, with a useful explanation of the specific BERCONs and MARCONs proposed for approval, but the President kept intervening with questions. In answer to one of them, General Gray said that on his recent trip to Europe he had discovered the BERCON planning activity had not yet even descended to the level of Armies, and that therefore some months would undoubtedly be required before fully prepared operational plans would be available up and down the entire line.

5. At one point in the discussion the briefers mentioned that the Allies, including the United States, would enter into some mobilization activity. The President thereupon asked what the US plan was for mobilizing whom on what time schedule, but no ready answer was forthcoming from the group.

6. *Comment.* It would seem that the President never clearly understood the exact place occupied by the BERCON/MARCON plans in the over-all picture of Berlin contingency planning which may be said to begin with certain unilateral plans, proceed through tripartite and quadripartite agreed plans or catalogues of plans, and feed at some point into the full context of NATO plans and catalogues of plans. The one basic Berlin planning "Bible" with which the President is, or at least was at one time, reasonably familiar is the so-called "Poodle Blanket"² with its

² For text of NSAM No. 109 (U.S. Policy on Military Actions in a Berlin Crisis, "Poodle Blanket"), October 23, 1961, see vol. XIV, Document 185.

four preferred phases or sequences. A review of this Poodle Blanket, highlighted by a demonstration of how, where and when the BERCONs and MARCONs fit into it, would almost surely have led to greater understanding by the President and therefore a more orderly consideration of the paper which formed the subject of the meeting.

LJL

80. Memorandum From the President's Special Assistant for National Security Affairs (Bundy) to President Kennedy

Washington, July 20, 1962.

SUBJECT

NATO Contingency Planning for Berlin (BERCON/MARCON Plans) and the Conceptual Framework of Poodle Blanket

During yesterday's discussions of Berlin contingency planning (BERCON/MARCON Plans), General Gray (JCS) made a statement to the effect that the State Department considered it necessary to have a pause—about 60 days—before the West would respond militarily to Soviet interference with Western access to Berlin. Unfortunately, General Gray did not make clear the context in which he was speaking, nor did he define precisely what he meant by the pause or the reasons for it.

The fact is that the period between Soviet/GDR blockage of access to Berlin and the outbreak of hostilities—Phase II in the conceptual framework spelled out in NSAM 109 ("Poodle Blanket")¹—is not a pause at all. It is a time during which most intensive diplomatic efforts—backstopped by appropriate military and economic measures—will be made to avoid the outbreak of hostilities and reach a political rather than a military solution to the Berlin problem. It is the period during which the West will bring into play a progressive series of moves, designed to impress the Kremlin with its determination to protect its position, but

Source: Kennedy Library, National Security Files, Germany, Berlin. Secret. The source text bears the handwritten note: "Taken from Pres Week-end reading dtd 7/20/62."

¹ See footnote 2, Document 79.

yet providing the Soviet leadership with the opportunity to modify its behavior in time to avert a clash beyond the level of no return. This may take 60 days; it may take several months. At this juncture it is clearly impossible to estimate the period with any kind of precision. However, the consensus is that unless the Soviets either by miscalculation or deliberate decision resort to force to impose their solution on Berlin, the odds are in favor of a longer rather than a shorter Phase II. And as Secretary McNamara indicated, there is no difference of view on this score between the Departments of State and Defense.

"Poodle Blanket", you will remember, divides Berlin planning into four phases:

(a) Phase I—the period in which there is Soviet and GDR interference with access to Berlin, but this interference falls short of definitive blockage;

(b) Phase II—when there is significant blockage of one or more means of access to Berlin and the Allies take a variety of noncombatant measures to protect their vital interests—the basic right of access to and the Western presence in Berlin;

(c) Phase III—the beginning of non-nuclear military action to deal with the problem; and

(d) Phase IV—the onset of nuclear military action.

In essence, then, Phases I and II are noncombatant, while Phases III and IV are combatant periods, so that the critical point in the Allied effort to end Soviet/GDR interference with the exercise of basic Allied rights in Berlin is just prior to Phase III.

The underlying assumption in all this is that the Soviets, as we, wish to avoid general war. This of course will not stop the Soviets from pressing on for their objectives in Berlin. Nor does it mean that we will not have to face up to periodic increase in tensions, with varying degrees of heat. But unless there is a radical shift in Soviet policy, or miscalculation by the Soviet leadership, the critical point in the Berlin exercise will be reached just short of Phase III.

For all practical purposes, we are now in Phase I. Intermittently, since the end of the 1948-1949 blockade, both German and Allied access, in the air and on the ground, have been subjected to Communist harassment of one sort or other. Over the years, however, we and the Soviets have found methods for dealing with these harassments sometimes by facing each other down as during the air corridor harassments of last spring; more often by patient and protracted negotiations, such as the efforts which finally produced the existing Autobahn identification procedures.

The Soviet tacticians at some time may consider it necessary for the Kremlin to strike a more threatening and aggressive pose in Berlin and interrupt Allied and/or German traffic to Berlin, all or in part. This in effect is Phase II. And present planning for this Phase envisages intensi-

fied diplomatic efforts and maneuvers, backstopped by a NATO military build-up and the imposition of economic countermeasures ranging from limited restrictions up to and including a total embargo on trade with the Soviet Union and its Satellites.

The most difficult and critical problem in the exercise is communicating our position and intentions to the Soviet leadership to induce, persuade, or compel it to agree or acquiesce, and to provide it with the means to do either gracefully.

By the same token, the Soviet response to our move will be determined largely by what they believe our purposes to be, our ability to achieve these purposes, and our resolve and capability to assume the risks in raising the threshold. This in fact is the rationale for the graduated increases in commitments of force—to demonstrate clearly our readiness to assume the necessary risks of war.

This brings us back to the time requirement affecting the duration of Phase II. Time is needed for the NATO military build-up—which is intended to bring pressure to bear on the Soviets as well as prepare NATO for a possible Phase III. The build-up itself is likely to have a deterrent effect, and time is needed to measure its impact on Kremlin thinking. And clearly, as tension mounts or the possibility of war increases, both we and the Soviets will be under increasing pressures from all sides to attempt to find a peaceful solution to the problem. This will take a variety of forms, including possibly a UN involvement, and can go on for some time. At this juncture, two months would appear to be a most conservative estimate. The probability is that this exercise will be of much longer duration. Phase II is really intended to induce the Soviets to agree to an acceptable *modus vivendi*; it is not merely preparation time for Phase III when the NATO contingency plans—the BERCON/MARCON Plans—came into play, although this is always a possible eventuality.

What is involved then is not a 60-day pause before active military operations are undertaken, but rather a period in which major efforts will be made backed by all possible means to achieve a political solution to the Berlin problem. And as long as both sides seek to avoid a military solution, Phase II need not be accelerated. Moreover, in so far as Berlin itself is concerned, we can cope with an extended Phase II for the stockpile and airlift capacities give us a cushion which permits us to withstand substantial Soviet pressure.

McG. Bundy

81. Telegram From the Embassy in the Soviet Union to the Department of State

Moscow, July 20, 1962, 6 p.m.

187. Re Schnippenkoetter's statement to Ambassadorial Group meeting that Khrushchev's threat to Austrians to cut Allied military access to Berlin was new, wish point out Khrushchev on previous occasions has made clear this Soviet intention, although perhaps not so explicitly.¹

I agree that serious crisis over Berlin unlikely before late fall although gradual buildup of tension probable. Timing may be related to next round Soviet atomic tests as they may hope soften up Western position by exploding large bomb. I have not changed my views on probable course of developments Berlin question, namely: increased tension; at some stage serious attempt negotiate with US which probably unsuccessful; direct approach to West Germans, also unsuccessful; signature of peace treaty but with some steps to avoid or at least reduce danger of military conflict. At some stage along way, consider play for summit conference or bilateral meeting with President Kennedy likely. I find difficult to assess reasons for Khrushchev's publicly emphasizing issue of troop withdrawal. He must surely know our position is firm and while possible he is building this up for bargaining purposes it does not seem reasonable that he would wish further to commit his personal prestige which already deeply engaged. I am more inclined to think he considers successful negotiations impossible and is building up his position for signature of treaty.

Am inclined think Soviet position on test ban may have changed in recent months in manner to make possibility agreement more likely. Believe possible Soviets may have concluded that in view strain on their resources continuation of competition in this field more likely to result in breakthrough by us than by them. They would in any event insist upon further Soviet round of tests before agreement became effective.

Thompson

Source: Department of State, Conference Files: Lot 65 D 533, CF 2135. Secret; Limit Distribution.

¹ A memorandum of the conversation of the Ambassadorial Group on July 11, during which Counselor Schnippenkoetter made this statement, is *ibid.*, Central Files, 762.00/7-1162.