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June 28, 1961

*Item 2*

BRIEFING PAPER FOR NSC DISCUSSION ON BERLIN

29 June 1961

A paper prepared by Mr. Acheson analyzing the Berlin situation and recommending main lines of US action is expected to be the focus of discussion.

The Acheson paper has been rapidly produced, with little opportunity for revision. NSC participants will have had the benefit of only brief study and relatively little staffing. The JCS will not have time to establish a formal position. Much of the subject matter has had close examination, however, and there are JCS positions on many features of the problem. Set out in outline form below for some key issues are elements of Mr. Acheson's approach, of the JCS approach, and of a suggested Defense position.

I. Nuclear Weapons and the Berlin Problem

A. Acheson

1. Credibility of our nuclear deterrent must be restored, by actions.
2. Use of SAC transcends and cannot solve the Berlin problem.
3. General nuclear war might grow from initially non-nuclear conflict.
4. US must face this risk, and make it convincing to Soviets.
5. US must be prepared to use whatever force is necessary.
6. US should raise nuclear threshold.
7. Tighter policy control over warhead use is now essential.

B. JCS

1. US determination is the main issue.
2. Clear political decision to "go all the way" needed beforehand.
3. Past pattern of manifesting nuclear threat is sound and should be intensified.
4. Visible intent to use large non-nuclear force may cast doubt on our determination.
5. Viable alternatives to general nuclear war being desirable, initial nuclear use should perhaps be restricted to a handful of purely military targets.

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C. Suggested Defense Position

1. Support Acheson approach.

II. Size of Non-Nuclear Force to be Used

A. Acheson

1. Start modestly, with a division or two, prepared to expand.
2. Larger force gains more time for deterrent to operate.
3. Larger force more convincing evidence of both determination and possibility of escalation to general nuclear war.
4. Must preclude any possibility of US looking ludicrous, as by GDR alone stopping a ground operation.
5. Strong troop reinforcement beforehand is necessary, US and Allied.
6. No upper limit of force should be set beyond which US goes nuclear.

B. JCS

1. Allies cannot "win" in non-nuclear ground conflict (implicit assumption that any Bloc resistance means total Soviet resistance).
2. Any conflict with Soviets in Europe almost inevitably becomes general nuclear war.
3. Allied divisions used toward Berlin would be chewed up.
4. Mal-deployment for general war results from use of much force.

C. Suggested Defense Position

1. Object of ground operation is to change Soviet decision, not destroy forces.
2. Prior reinforcement based on still earlier mobilization can raise capability and avoid ill-effects of changed deployment.
3. Using stronger ground forces improves chances of success short of general nuclear war.

III. Military Preparations

A. Acheson

1. Twofold object: forestall crisis, and prepare to meet it.

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2. Measures should be businesslike, realistic, and not ballyhooed.
3. From a moderate start, tempo should rise.
4. US should avoid scaring Allies and blocking Soviet way out.
5. Main preparations for non-nuclear ground action in Europe.
6. Phased parallel preparations: nuclear, civil defense, world-wide.
7. No MRBM development, nuclear aid to France, Cuba, or Laos.

B. JCS

1. Preparations should emphasize strategic nuclear strength.
2. Early partial mobilization needed.
3. Allies probably unwilling to make non-nuclear preparations.
4. US should develop land-based MRBM, give France nuclear aid, and intervene in Cuba and Laos.

C. Suggested Defense Position

1. Time is required to mobilize and deploy; risky to be too gradual.
2. To use non-nuclear ground force in Europe, we must begin mobilizing some months beforehand.
3. Allies apt to follow US lead.
4. Support Acheson.

IV. Nuclear Aspects of Preparations

A. Acheson

1. Some strengthening and readying of nuclear forces should accompany conventional force improvement.
2. By creating crisis Khrushchev shows existing pattern of nuclear deterrence not convincing; more of same helps little.
3. Absence of nuclear measures could increase Khrushchev doubts and US vulnerability.
4. Whatever its size, danger of Soviet pre-emption grows, so some SAC air alert is in order
5. Political control of US nukes needs tightening.

B. JCS

1. US preparations should emphasize nuclear measures.
2. US should improve nuclear readiness of Allies.

C. Suggested Defense Position

1. Must closely watch balance, so control does not injure capability, nor hair-trigger be set too fine.
2. Support Acheson on parallel though modest nuclear preparations.

V. Airlifts

A. Acheson

1. Garrison airlift should be first response to blocked Allied access.
2. Full airlift should be response to blocked civilian access.
3. Allies would insist on these before ground conflict.

B. JCS

1. Airlifts are last resort measures.
2. Evidence of airlift preparations weakens deterrent credibility.
3. Some mal-deployment of airlift can result.
4. Soviet interference capability much greater than in 1948.

C. Suggested Defense Position

1. Reserve.

VI. Substance of Negotiations

A. Acheson

1. "Optical changes" in Berlin status are quite acceptable.
2. US should concede a self-imposed limitation on garrison strength.
3. US should concede on permanence of Oder-Neisse.

B. JCS - Not known.

C. Suggested Defense Position

1. The concessions to be granted the USSR are not all acceptable. At the general level, the concept that "an optical change" in the Berlin situation in favor of the Soviets is not hurtful to the US could hardly be more wrong. Besides the real

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aspects of Berlin, the symbolic aspects are profoundly important, as the early portions of the paper so powerfully affirm. The world's eyes are on Berlin; governments and publics alike are watching, in allied, and neutral, and unfriendly states. Not only sophisticated statesmen watch, who can perceive the reality behind the appearance of a Soviet gain. There are others, too, whose illusions come easier. To them the appearance of Soviet gain is the reality of US loss in a place where we have said we will not lose. The consequence, in terms of our national influence abroad vis-a-vis the Soviets', is no different whether our loss be real or only apparent.

2. More specifically, we must for psychological as well as military reasons be most cautious about arrangements touching on Allied garrisons and intelligence activities in Berlin. To accept limitations on garrison strength is to imply a tacit ceiling on the protection offered the West Berliners. It is to suggest some Soviet control over the degree of US and NATO commitment to defend them. Psychologically it would disturb those two and a third million people whose whole pattern of confident industriousness stems from implicit, unexamined faith in the unlimited nature of Allied protection. Militarily a strength limitation could inhibit somewhat our ability to deal with the possibility of disorders and violence by infiltrated goon-squads, and it could make matters awkward as the periodic improvements in organization and equipment necessitate unit reorganization.

3. The impact of US acquiescence in the permanence of the Oder-Neisse is dealt with rather lightly. West Germany, which now furnishes half NATO's Shield strength and much of its momentum, finds that quite offensive. What would be the cost to NATO and our security of this major stride toward formalizing the Soviet consolidation of Eastern Europe, including a pair of Germanies?

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