

The Joint Intelligence Committee and the German Question, 1947-61

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The Joint Intelligence Committee and the German Question, 1947-61

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PhD thesis



Statement of originality of this thesis

I certify that this thesis, and the research to which refers, are the product of my own work, and that any ideas or quotations from the work of other people, published or otherwise, are fully acknowledged in accordance with the standard referencing practices of the discipline. I acknowledge the helpful guidance and support of my supervisor, Professor Peter Hennessy FBA.

Description of thesis

The Joint Intelligence Committee and the German Question, 1947-61

This thesis analyses the contribution that the Joint Intelligence Committee (JIC) made to British policy concerning Germany (both West and East) during the early Cold War. The question of control over war-ravaged, but strategically significant Germany was critical to the security of Europe. As such, Germany and Berlin in particular, became the most important Cold War battleground in Europe. By combining recently released JIC archives with both existing research on intelligence, foreign and defence policy and records from the other government departments, this research adds to the understanding of one of the central themes of the Cold War. It reveals how ministers, senior officials and military officers made use of the assessments produced by the JIC in formulating their policies towards Germany and the developing threat from the Soviet Union and its allies.

This research takes a chronological approach, in order to trace both the development of policy and of the role of the JIC within central government. It explores the major crises of the period: the Soviet blockade of Berlin in 1948, the riots in East Berlin of June 1953 and the 1958-61 Berlin Crisis. Away from these crises, the thesis examines the picture that the JIC painted of Soviet intentions and capabilities in Eastern Germany and of the development of the two German nations. It also looks at the JIC's contribution to British attitudes towards German rearmament. The developing role of the intelligence apparatus, both within central government and in Germany is a major theme running through the thesis. By improving its sources, its product and its administration, the JIC ensured that it became an essential tool for successive governments, and within Whitehall, became the interface between intelligence and policy.

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Abbreviations

AA	Anti-Aircraft
ACAS (Int)	Assistant Chief of the Air Staff (Intelligence)
BAOR	British Army on the Rhine
BBC	British Broadcasting Corporation
BFSU	British Forces Security Unit
BfV	Bundesamt für Verfassungsschutz – Federal Security Service (West Germany)
BIO(G)	British Intelligence Organisation (Germany)
BND	Bundesnachrichtendienst – Federal Intelligence Service (West Germany)
BRIXMIS	British Commanders’-in-Chief Mission to the Soviet Forces in Germany
BSSO	British Services Security Organisation
C	Chief of SIS
CCG	Control Commission Germany
CDU	Christlich Demokratische Union – Christian Democratic Union (West Germany)
CFM	Council of Foreign Ministers
CIA	Central Intelligence Agency (US)
CIGS	Chief of the Imperial General Staff
Comint	Communications intelligence
CRO	Commonwealth Relations Office
CX	C Exclusive (marking on SIS intelligence)
DDR	Deutsche Demokratische Republik – see GDR
DMI	Director of Military Intelligence
DNI	Director of Naval Intelligence
DP	Displaced Persons
DRPC	Defence Research Policy Committee
DRS	Documents Research Staff
DSI	Director of Scientific Intelligence
ECSC	European Coal and Steel Community
EDC	European Defence Community
Elint	Electronic intelligence
FDJ	Freie Deutsche Jugend – Free German Youth
FDP	Freie Demokratische Partei – Free Democratic Party (West Germany)
FMLM	French Military Liaison Military
FO	Foreign Office
FRG	Federal Republic of Germany
GCHQ	Government Communications Headquarters
GDR	German Democratic Republic
GOFG	Group of Occupation Forces Germany (USSR)

GRU	Glavnoye Razvedyvatelnoye Upravleniye – Soviet military intelligence
GSFG	Group of Soviet Forces Germany
HMSO	Her Majesty's Stationery Office
Humint	Human intelligence
HVA	Hauptverwaltung Aufklärung – East German foreign intelligence service
ICBM	Inter-continental ballistic missile
ID	Intelligence Division
IRBM	Intermediate range ballistic missile
IRD	Information Research Department
JIB	Joint Intelligence Bureau
JIC	Joint Intelligence Committee
JIC(G)	Joint Intelligence Committee (Germany)
JIR	Joint Intelligence Room
JIS	Joint Intelligence Staff
JSIG(G)	Joint Services Intelligence Group (Germany)
JSIC(NF)	Joint Services Intelligence Committee (Northern Forces)
JPS	Joint Planning Staff
JS/JTIC	Joint Scientific and Technical Intelligence Committees
KGB	Komitet Gosudarstvennoi Bezopastnosti – Committee of State Security (USSR)
KI	Komitet Informatsii – Committee of Information (USSR)
KPD	Kommunistische Partei Deutschlands – Communist Party of Germany
KVP	Kasernierte Volkspolizei – Barracked People's Police (East Germany)
LfV	Landesamt für Verfassungsschutz – Land Security Services (West Germany)
MGB	Ministerstvo Gosudarstvennoi Bezopastnosti – Ministry of State Security (USSR)
MI5	Security Service
MI6	Secret Intelligence Service
MI14	Military Intelligence 14
MoD	Ministry of Defence
MVD	Ministerstvo Vnutrennikh Del – Ministry of Internal Affairs (USSR)
No 1 P & EU	No. 1 Planning and Evaluation Unit (SIS Germany cover name)
NATO	North Atlantic Treaty Organisation
NFIG	Northern Forces Intelligence Group
NKFD	Nationalkomitee Freies Deutschlands – National Committee for Free Germany
NORTHAG	Northern Army Group
NSA	National Security Agency (US)
NVA	Nationale Volksarmee – National People's Army (East Germany)
OEEC	Organisation for European Economic Co-operation

ORBAT	Order of Battle
POW	Prisoner of War
PR	Photographic Reconnaissance
PUS	Permanent Under-Secretary
PUSC	Permanent Under-Secretary's Committee
PUSD	Permanent Under-Secretary's Department
PVO	Protivovozdushnaya Oborona – Air Defence (USSR)
RAF	Royal Air Force
RIAS	Radio in the American Sector
SACEUR	Supreme Allied Commander Europe
SAM	Surface-to-air missile
SED	Sozialistische Einheitspartei Deutschlands – Socialist Unity Party of Germany
SHAPE	Supreme Headquarters Allied Powers Europe
Sigint	Signals intelligence
SIS	Secret Intelligence Service
SMA	Soviet Military Administration
SOXMIS	Soviet Exchange Mission
SPD	Sozialdemokratische Partei Deutschlands – Socialist Democratic Party of Germany
STIB	Scientific and Technical Intelligence Branch
TNA	The National Archives
UN	United Nations
US	United States
USAF	United States Air Force
USMLM	United States' Military Liaison Mission
USSR	Union of Soviet Socialist Republics
WEURCINCCOM	Western European Commander-in-Chief's Committee
WRCI	Weekly Review of Current Intelligence
WSCl	Weekly Survey of Current Intelligence
WSI	Weekly Summary of Intelligence

Notes on sources

All documents referred to in the footnotes are held in the National Archives (TNA) in Kew, unless otherwise indicated.

Introduction

The context

In his report on intelligence on weapons of mass destruction before the 2003 Iraq war, Lord Butler of Brockwell wrote that secret intelligence is just one of the sources of information that contribute to the make-up of governmental decisions.¹ That very description *secret*, however, when accompanied by a lack of official documents and the influence of espionage fiction, can reduce commentary on intelligence, both historical and contemporary, to little more than ill-informed rumour. Worthwhile answers to questions surrounding the nature, value and limitations of intelligence are too easily lost in the mêlée surrounding scandal.

The academic study of intelligence has slowly developed in the United Kingdom as a counterbalance to fiction and sensationalism.² Since William Waldegrave's 1992 announcement as the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and Minister for Open Government, that some historical intelligence files would be released, this development has accelerated.³ The selected files were principally from archives of the Joint Intelligence Committee, the central assessment and co-ordinating body within the British intelligence community. This study aims to contribute to the historical understanding of the role of secret intelligence in British Cold War policy-making, through an extended case-study of the Joint Intelligence Committee and the German Question, 1947-61.

¹ *Review of Intelligence on Weapons of Mass Destruction: A Report of a Committee of Privy Counsellors*, HC 898 (London: The Stationery Office, 2004), paragraph 21

² Goodman, Michael S., "Studying and Teaching About Intelligence: The Approach in the United Kingdom", *Studies in Intelligence*, Volume 50, Number 2 (2006), pp.57-65

³ Bennett, Gill, "Declassification and Release Policies of the UK's Intelligence Agencies", *Intelligence and National Security*, 17, 1 (Spring 2002), pp.21-31

Germany, intelligence and the Cold War

Where the combined forces under the command of the United States and Britain met the Red Army of the Soviet Union at the end of the Second World War, the frontline of the Cold War, was established.⁴ Germany divided, first into zones of occupation, and then later as two nations, was the physical manifestation of irreconcilable political suspicions and ideological differences.⁵ This had not always been the intention: at least some of the participants of the Yalta Conference in February 1945 had intended that the zones of Germany should one day be reunified.⁶ The driving aim of the division was security against German resurgence, but with its economic and military potential, Germany quickly became crucial in the strategic Cold War balance.⁷ As Wilfried Loth put it, “Germany was both a cause of and a battleground for the Cold War.”⁸ The future of Germany became the German Question.

This study takes 1947 as its starting point; the earlier development of the West’s assessments of the Soviet threat is well covered in other research.⁹ By 1947, the Russian threat was clear. The Western Allies were becoming convinced that the Soviet Union posed an increasingly immediate threat to their security.¹⁰ After the unproductive Four Power Foreign Ministers’ Conference in Moscow in spring 1947, Ernest Bevin, the British Foreign Secretary, brought round the other Western Powers to accept longer-term division of Germany in preference to a unified Germany under Soviet Control.¹¹ Losing Western Germany to the Soviets was too great a strategic danger, even if that

⁴ Austria should be included here, up to 1955, when the former war-time Allies withdrew their troops and the country became neutral.

⁵ The Federal Republic of Germany and the German Democratic Republic were founded in 1949 (May and October respectively).

⁶ During the discussions at Yalta, only three zones were planned: the French zone was added later. President Roosevelt had reportedly told Churchill at Yalta that he expected the Americans to withdraw from Germany within two years. Danchev, Alex & Todman, Daniel (eds), *War Diaries 1939-1945 of Field Marshal Lord Alanbrooke* (London: Phoenix Press, 2002), p.657

⁷ Greenwood, Sean, *Britain and the Cold War, 1945-1991* (London: Macmillan, 2000), pp.6-16

⁸ Loth, Wilfried, “Germany in the Cold War: Strategies and Decisions” in Westad, Odd Arne (ed), *Reviewing the Cold War: Approaches, Interpretations, Theory* (London: Frank Cass, 2000), pp.242-257

⁹ For example, Cradock, Percy, *Know Your Enemy: How the Joint Intelligence Committee Saw the World* (London: John Murray, 2002), pp.25-49

¹⁰ Perl, Matthew, “Comparing US and UK Intelligence Assessment in the Early Cold War: NSC-68, April 1950”, *Intelligence and National Security*, 18, 1 (Spring 2003) pp.119-154

¹¹ Deighton, Anne, *The Impossible Peace: Britain, the Division of Germany, and the Origins of the Cold War* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1990), pp.136-67

meant accepting division in the centre of Europe. The solution to security, dependent on the United States, was massive economic investment through schemes such as the Marshall Plan announced in 1947, a continued military presence and a reliance on accurate information on the enemy. So relatively quickly after Hitler's defeat, some of those men and women who had come together within British intelligence during wartime, had to turn their attention to the next strategic threat.¹²

With such great conventional and atomic military power developing across the German divide and such great suspicion of the opponent's intentions, learning the secrets of the other side became a paramount concern. Michael Herman describes secret intelligence as "a central element of the Cold War, on both sides; never before was intelligence so extensive, institutionalised and prized in peacetime."¹³ The relative bonanza of wartime was over. The successes of the Government Code and Cipher School at Bletchley Park in breaking several of the Nazi ENIGMA codes had given the Allies an advantage over the Germans.¹⁴ The intelligence picture could not have made a starker contrast, however, as the main enemy changed from Germany to the Soviet Union. The West had few sources of information about the intentions and capabilities of the emerging Soviet threat. In the interwar period Britain's intelligence services had focused on the 'Red Menace', almost to the point where they completely failed to notice the threat from Nazi Germany, but there was little of significance to carry through to the post-war years.¹⁵ What intelligence the West had on the Soviet Union, in particular from the American VENONA decrypts of Russian intelligence signals, pointed largely not to Soviet intentions, but to the levels of penetration of Western governments by Soviet agents.¹⁶

¹² Aldrich, Richard J., *The Hidden Hand: Britain, America and Cold War Secret Intelligence* (London: John Murray, 2001), pp.57-67; Annan, Noel, *Changing Enemies: The Defeat and Regeneration of Germany* (London: HarperCollins, 1995), pp.137-241

¹³ Herman, Michael, *Intelligence Services in the Information Age* (London: Frank Cass, 2001), p.ix

¹⁴ For an understanding of wartime intelligence, see Hinsley, F.H., *British Intelligence in the Second World War*, Volumes 1-3 (London: HMSO, 1979-83) and Volume 4 (Hinsley and Simkins, C.A.G.) (London: HMSO 1990)

¹⁵ Andrew, C.M., *Secret Service: The Making of the British Intelligence Community* (London: Heinemann, 1985), pp.203-246

¹⁶ West, N., *Venona: The Greatest Secret of the Cold War* (London: HarperCollins, 1999)

Germany rapidly developed as the major battleground for information on the Soviet Union and the protective satellite *bloc* that was firming up around her borders.¹⁷ Markus Wolf described Berlin as “the Invisible Front”.¹⁸ Furthermore, as the former head of the East German foreign intelligence service, the *Hauptverwaltung Aufklärung* (HVA), Wolf assessed, “Strategists and politicians on both sides assumed that if there was to be a third world war, Berlin was the most likely place it would begin.” The British intelligence apparatus in Germany was considerable in the early years of the Cold War. The Intelligence Division, which encompassed elements of both military and civilian intelligence services, was within the British Control Commission which ran the British Zone and sector of Berlin.¹⁹ The scale and value of intelligence operations in Germany meant that it needed its own local directing body, the Joint Intelligence Committee (Germany).²⁰ Even as the focus of the Cold War shifted in the 1950s and beyond from Europe to struggles in Asia, Africa, and the Americas, Germany was always kept under close watch. Divided Germany and Berlin in particular, provided a convenient gateway to the Soviet *bloc*.²¹

The ultimate direction of tasking and analysis of intelligence came from London.²² The Joint Intelligence Committee (JIC) in London was and still is the hub of the British intelligence machinery.²³ By May 1948, under a Foreign Office chairman, the Committee brought together the three Service intelligence chiefs, the heads of the civilian collection agencies, MI5, the Security Service and MI6, the Secret Intelligence Service, the Director of the Joint Intelligence Bureau and the Chairman of the Joint Scientific and Technical Intelligence Committee.²⁴ Peter Hennessy describes the JIC as “the apex of the British intelligence process”, the pot into which raw information from

¹⁷ Maddrell, Paul, *Spying on Science: Western Intelligence in Divided Germany, 1945-1961* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), pp.297-8

¹⁸ Wolf, M. with McElvoy, A., *Memoirs of a Spymaster* (London: Pimlico, 1998), p.4

¹⁹ Annan, *Changing Enemies*, pp.139, 152-4

²⁰ Cradock, *Know Your Enemy*, p.260

²¹ Aldrich, *The Hidden Hand*, p.191

²² There were also local Joint Intelligence Committees in the Middle East and Far East, albeit under the ultimate control of London.

²³ Cradock, *Know Your Enemy*, p.1. For an explanation of the current central intelligence machinery, see *National Intelligence Machinery* (London: The Stationery Office, September 2006)

²⁴ CAB158/30, JIC(57)123 “History of the Joint Intelligence Organisation”, 29 November 1957

all of the civilian and military agencies collect to be mixed with overtly acquired material, for analysis and assessment.²⁵ The Joint Intelligence Staff drew up *all-source* assessments, which once considered by the Committee at weekly meetings, were passed on to the highest decision-makers in government.

The JIC was first established in 1936 and it went on to work as part of the centre of government during the war.²⁶ In 1945, the Committee emerged as a Sub-Committee under the Chiefs of Staff. In 1947, the Committee became a full Committee with two Joint Intelligence Staff teams of analysts.²⁷ Perhaps the most significant factor at this time for the future of the JIC, as Cradock puts it “was the reaffirmation by the Chiefs of Staff in their report on future defence policy in May 1947 of the importance of intelligence at a time of increasing austerity”. The Chiefs recognised the role that intelligence had to play in determining future policy when the armed forces were being dramatically reduced and Britain’s place at the top table of international politics was going to be under threat. John Young has since agreed with the Chiefs’ view: “It was in the nature of the Cold War that international tension became permanent, a ‘surprise attack’ was always possible (if unlikely) and gathering information in Communist states through normal diplomatic channels very difficult. Covert intelligence became vital, as did the use of propaganda offensives against the enemy.”²⁸

Intelligence was also at the heart of the continuing ‘special relationship’ between the United States and Britain. The exchange of secrets had become common-place during the war, and after an imagery intelligence agreement in 1946 and the UKUSA signals intelligence agreement in 1947-8, this relationship was established in the Cold War environment.²⁹ On the ground in places such as Germany, the two allies worked

²⁵ Hennessy, Peter, *The Secret State: Whitehall and the Cold War* (London: Allen Lane, 2002), p.3

²⁶ Cradock, *Know Your Enemy*, pp.7-24

²⁷ *Ibid*, p.261

²⁸ Young, John W, *Britain and the World in the Twentieth Century* (London: Arnold, 1997), p.150

²⁹ Aldrich, *The Hidden Hand*, p.213

together, whilst in London and Washington, the final products of the intelligence community, the analyses, were also exchanged.³⁰

British foreign and defence policy during the early Cold War cannot be disentangled from either the world of intelligence or from the relationship with the United States.³¹ Writing the history of British policy, therefore, should not ignore these themes. Contrariwise, historical study of the impact of intelligence on policy should never claim to be the whole story. In particular during the early Cold War, policy towards Germany was, like most other such significant areas of foreign and defence affairs, a complex set of inter- and intra-governmental debates. The JIC very rarely gave direct policy advice; rather its assessments of the current and likely future circumstances in which policy might develop sat alongside contributions from the Foreign Office, Ministry of Defence and Treasury as part of the framework around decision-making. In attempting to reveal the manner in which intelligence assessment was used by successive governments, the present study will add useful insight to the historical understanding of how decisions were made at the highest levels.

As Cradock puts it, the Joint Intelligence Committee provided “the interface between intelligence and policy”.³² It is this area that will be the main theme of this study: providing an account of the JIC’s contribution to the British government’s view and understanding of the German Question. Under the main inquiry into the impact that the JIC had on policy, there are a series of areas to be explored: what assessments did the JIC make during the high-points of tension in Germany, during the Soviet blockade of Berlin in 1948, the riots in East Berlin in 1953 and the 1958-61 Berlin Crisis? Away from those crises, what picture of Soviet intentions and capabilities in Eastern Germany did the JIC portray? How did the JIC view the two developing German nations? How did JIC assessments change over time? There were also the practicalities of the

³⁰ For details of the exchange of intelligence assessments, see Aldrich, *The Hidden Hand*, and Perl, “Comparing US and UK Intelligence Assessment”

³¹ Even where policy differed, the relationship with the United States could not ultimately be ignored. See Hennessy, Peter, *The Prime Minister: The Office and its Holders since 1945* (London: Allen Lane, 2000), pp.207-247 and Kyle, Keith, *Suez: Britain’s End of Empire in the Middle East* (London: I.B.Tauris, 2002)

³² Cradock, *Know Your Enemy*, p.1

intelligence machine: how was that machinery arranged and what information was gathered in Germany? How did the JIC develop during the Cold War to meet the needs of government, if at all?

Although the intelligence history has much to add to the understanding of government and international politics, it must be treated carefully. Rarely are the sources available to give a complete picture of the role of intelligence in history. Intelligence is necessarily secret at the time and some of it remains so for good reason.³³ Historians are confronted with a fragmentary record. The skill is to recognise the state of the record whilst drawing what conclusions are sensible, without making claims that cannot be justified. Given the significance of the role that intelligence seems to have played in Cold War decision-making, it would be to miss the chance of extra understanding if the considerable, though incomplete, intelligence archives were to be ignored.

Historiography

Since Joint Intelligence Committee files have been released, only one published work has been produced which concentrates wholly on the history of the JIC: Percy Cradock's *Know Your Enemy*. The author was himself the JIC Chairman from 1985-92, and his intention in writing was "an attempt to draw on the new material to show how Britain's view of the world developed during that time [1945-68] and how the assessments and predictions of the Committee related to the decisions ministers eventually made."³⁴ Cradock's study is not a full chronological account of the JIC during the first part of the Cold War, but rather he judges the performance of the Committee at particular moments of interest, including the Berlin blockade, the Korean War, Suez, and Berlin 1958-61. Balancing his own personal experience of the

³³ Under Section 3(4) of the Public Records Act (1958) and exemption s.23 of the Freedom of Information Act (2000) certain records can remain closed indefinitely, on the grounds that their contents might damage national security. See Bennett, "Declassification and Release"

³⁴ Cradock, *Know Your Enemy*, p.1

Committee and Whitehall with sensible historical scrutiny of those documents available to him, Cradock produced a superb overview of the JIC's place in government during the early Cold War.

Due to the lack of available JIC assessments of the conditions inside Berlin during the blockade, Cradock largely tells the story of British policy and action in 1948-9 through Foreign Office records, Chiefs of Staff, Cabinet and Cabinet Committee meetings minutes. He does, however, draw on some of the JIC papers from the blockade but was not able to make any use of the JIC (Germany) files that include the frequent reviews of any indications of escalation into war, since they had not been declassified when he was preparing his book. Cradock's chapter on the 1958-61 crisis pulls together both archival materials as well a large number of secondary sources to conclude, "The links between this showmanship [Macmillan's policy] and sober intelligence estimates were probably not very strong."³⁵ More JIC documents are now available to aid in appraising British policy at the time, including the Weekly Reviews of Current Intelligence from 1958-9 which provide a week-by-week archive of the intelligence information that was being presented to policy-makers.

Cradock is happy to acknowledge the debt he owes in his work to an earlier researcher into the JIC, Alex Craig. Craig's 1999 PhD thesis, *The Joint Intelligence Committee and British Intelligence Assessment 1945-1956*, remains unpublished. This thesis was the first scholarly attempt to use the new archives to assess the JIC performance during the early years of the Cold War. Like Cradock's work, Craig's took a global view of the material, covering the assessments of Europe, Asia and the Middle East. Given the shorter time span Craig was able to examine, he does provide a more fully chronological account of the JIC work, including very brief descriptions of the JIC view of questions over West German rearmament and the 1953 East German disturbances. Both Craig and Cradock reach a favourable conclusion of the JIC performance during this time and claim that any failings were understandable. Craig emphasises that historians have failed to recognise fully "that these were essentially

³⁵ Ibid. p.160

failures in intelligence *collection* rather than in analysis.”³⁶ Such a conclusion does not completely absolve the JIC, however, since the Committee was responsible for the overall direction of both the collection of intelligence as well its analysis.

Peter Hennessy and Richard Aldrich have written extensively on the interface between British intelligence and the politics of Whitehall. In *The Secret State*, Hennessy demonstrates the key role JIC threat assessments had to play in the wider picture of secret government Cold War nuclear defence planning. Hennessy explores the part that intelligence had to play in providing reassurances as well as warnings to decision-makers. As a provider of either comfort or concern, Hennessy reveals the impact of the JIC in one seemingly simple question, “What was it in those assessments which led to so high a proportion of the UK’s national wealth being deployed for so long on politico-military purposes?”³⁷ Aldrich focuses more on the significance of British intelligence in international relations, especially with the United States, rather than on internal planning in Whitehall. *The Hidden Hand* paints a portrait of intelligence as part of partnership against Communism, but also as a manifestation of competition. Aldrich contrasts his conclusion “Intelligence served to vanquish aggressive challengers to the Anglo-American pattern of dominance” with his assertion that “intelligence also served to increase tension among the Western powers”, as American influence displaced British imperial power.³⁸ *The Hidden Hand* is packed full of detail, which makes it an essential reference work for the intelligence historian.

Away from the analysis of intelligence and high policy, British intelligence collection in Germany has received some attention from researchers. In *Spying on Science*, Paul Maddrell focuses specifically on the unique value of Germany to the West in terms of gathering scientific and technical intelligence on the Soviet Union. He emphasises the priority given by Western intelligence agencies to finding information on all aspects of Russian military technology capability, research and development, but

³⁶ Craig, A.J., “The Joint Intelligence Committee and British Intelligence Assessment, 1945-1956” (PhD thesis, University of Cambridge, 1999), p.260

³⁷ Hennessy, *Secret State*, p.13

³⁸ Aldrich, *The Hidden Hand*, pp.9-10

does not seek to complete the story with full analysis of the impact of this intelligence on Western military planning and development.³⁹ Part of Maddrell's thesis is that so great was the fear of Western intelligence in Germany that "the building of the Berlin Wall was, to some extent, their [the East German government's] response to the West's subversion and espionage".⁴⁰

Tony Geraghty has told the story of BRIXMIS, the British Commanders'-in-Chief Mission to the Soviet Forces in Germany, through the memories of former officers and men.⁴¹ The Mission which ran from 1946 to 1990 conducted tours of East Germany sanctioned by the Soviets, often in considerable physical danger. Although the original intention behind the Mission was liaison, it rapidly became an unofficial intelligence asset. Geraghty puts forward the view that the contribution of BRIXMIS to knowledge of Soviet military capabilities was largely underestimated both at the time and by historians since.⁴² He did not, however, make use of documentary or oral evidence from higher up the intelligence chain, and consequently misrepresents the value placed on the Mission by Whitehall during the early Cold War. Nevertheless, Geraghty's account is extremely readable and provides a valuable source of personal recollections.

Perhaps the most famous of Cold War intelligence operations in Germany is explored in David Stafford's *Spies Beneath Berlin*.⁴³ The joint British-American spy tunnel in Berlin and its exposure by the Russians in April 1956 was a spectacular news story at the time and remains one of those real espionage episodes which touch on the fictional levels of excitement. Stafford's book serves two purposes. The first is rightly arguing for the value of the intelligence gathered from the tunnel, even given the Russian knowledge of the project from the start because of their agent in the British Secret Intelligence Service (SIS), George Blake. The second aim is to reveal the true extent of the British role in the operation, given the lack of credit previously attributed

³⁹ Maddrell, *Spying on Science*, p.7

⁴⁰ *Ibid*, p.15

⁴¹ Geraghty, Tony, *BRIXMIS: The Untold exploits of Britain's most daring Cold War spy Mission* (London: HarperCollins, 1997)

⁴² *Ibid*, pp.3, 286-7

⁴³ Stafford, David, *Spies Beneath Berlin* (London: John Murray, 2002)

to SIS. In some ways, Stafford's account is a response to the joint American-Russian intelligence history, *Battleground Berlin* by Murphy *et al.*⁴⁴ They detail the Berlin Operations Base, the CIA station in Berlin, work in the operation, but apart from Blake, there is no mention of British involvement. There is very little mention of British intelligence at all in the book that was the result of collaboration between CIA and KGB veterans of the espionage war in Berlin from 1945-61. It does, however, make full use of Russian and American documentary and oral archives to detail the Cold War CIA-KGB battle in Germany.

Sources and methods

The JIC archive within the National Archive is remarkably complete. The CAB 158 and CAB 186 files are made up of the long term assessments and reviews of the Committee. Some of the Weekly Summaries of Intelligence from 1954-6 survive within these files. These weekly publications provided the most senior ministerial, official and military JIC customers with highlights of current intelligence and therefore are a particularly valuable source. The Weekly Reviews of Current Intelligence (WRCI) from 1958-9 can be found in the CAB 179 files. These were further weekly digests for a wider government audience. The minutes of the weekly meetings of the JIC can be found in the CAB 159 and CAB 185 files. The CAB 176 files contains the records of the JIC Secretariat, which including correspondence. Records concerning the organisation of the Intelligence Staff can be found in the CAB 163 file.

The CAB 158 and 179 files will be the main sources for this study, with the minutes of meetings providing further background to the final products the Committee passed on. There are other archives that will make a significant contribution to the study, however. The DEFE 41 files contain the minutes of JIC (Germany) meetings from beginning of 1946 to end of 1952. These minutes include regular local intelligence

⁴⁴ Murphy, David E., Kondrashev, Sergei A. & Bailey, G., *Battleground Berlin* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1997)

summaries during the Berlin blockade of 1948 and details of the organisational development of British intelligence in Germany. A fragmentary BRIXMIS archive also exists, spread across War Office, Foreign Office and Air Ministry files. These files contain BRIXMIS intelligence reports from 1946-55, which provide evidence for a judgement on the Mission's contribution to understanding of the Soviet threat.

The archival evidence available on intelligence and Germany is able to provide a good deal of historical information on what intelligence theorists call 'the Intelligence Cycle'.⁴⁵ Put simply, this is the process which ideally governs intelligence production and use: from collection, through to analysis, dissemination to users, user feed back and then any re-tasking. The JIC (Germany) and BRIXMIS files are sources on the collection phase of the cycle. The JIC files show both the analysis and re-tasking phases. It is more difficult to find historical evidence of the user phases of the process, however. The users are often various and rarely are there records which clearly state that they enacted a certain policy because of certain intelligence information.

There are archives of use, however, that can reveal something of the relationship between intelligence and policy towards Germany. The Prime Ministers' files, Cabinet minutes and memoranda, and the Cabinet Defence Committee minutes and papers offer an insight into policy-making at the highest levels. The Chiefs of Staff Committee minutes and memoranda, and the Joint Planning Staff reports are key sources on defence policy. Foreign Office papers are also available. Of particular interest are the Russia Committee papers, the group set up to monitor Soviet policy (1946-57); Central section Germany papers (including the Control Commission Germany and High Commission papers); the Western section Germany papers; the Northern department Soviet Union papers and the Permanent Under Secretary's Committee and Department papers, set up in 1948 to 'run' the Cold War from the Foreign Office. All of these records can be used in conjunction with knowledge of the JIC reviews and assessments to help build a picture of the use made of the intelligence provided on Germany.

⁴⁵ Herman, Michael, *Intelligence Power in Peace and War*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), pp.283-304

These files obviously need to be combined with the body of published works that already exist in the fields of intelligence history, British foreign and defence policy, Cold War history and relevant autobiographies and biographies. There is a dual process: existing research can be assessed in the light of the new JIC papers, whilst the JIC archive can be set in its appropriate historical position. This study is designed to be a critical appraisal of both the JIC's contribution to British policy and its development in the centre of government, rather than just a description. Clearly, narrative description of the JIC's assessments is required, but this is done with an eye to making judgements. Furthermore, the JIC files provide an insight into collective views; they cannot provide a complete picture of individual personalities and therefore such discussion is rare.⁴⁶ The realms of counter-fact are deliberately avoided: it is impossible to answer questions about what would have happened had the JIC not existed or drawn up particular conclusions.

Interviews have been conducted with former intelligence officers with direct experience of the JIC. Their information has been used to verify the contents of documents and expand on them where necessary. Because of the restrictions on revealing the identities of such Crown servants, it has been necessary to occasionally resort to noting sources as 'Private Information'. This can be frustrating for subsequent researchers, so the use of this formulation has been kept to an absolute minimum; it has only been used in instances where information provided by interviewees was not already in the public domain.

Chapter structure

This study is written chronologically. This is the most sensible way of presenting the information given the specified purpose of analysing the development of

⁴⁶ In order to provide a reminder that the JIC was a collection of individuals and human processes, this study refers to the Committee as "they" rather than "it". Although this is grammatically incorrect, it makes an important point.

JIC assessments and function within government. Breaking down analysis into chronological chunks risks creating artificial breaks for presentational convenience where none should exist, but it is nevertheless necessary to make any research readable. The following chapters fit loosely around significant events in the development of divided Germany up to 1961.

- Chapter 1 – 1947-49: the shift from a German to a Soviet threat; the Berlin Blockade
- Chapter 2 – 1950-52: the early years of the Federal Republic of Germany and the German Democratic Republic; German rearmament
- Chapter 3 – 1953-54: the June 1953 riots and their aftermath
- Chapter 4 – 1955-57: the Geneva conferences and disarmament
- Chapter 5 – 1958-61: The Berlin crisis and the Wall

Chapter One: 1947 – 1949

Dividing Germany

Germany's strategic position... coupled with German manpower and skill in the development of modern long-range weapons, might be of decisive consequence to the security of Western Europe including the United Kingdom, if Germany were wholly at the disposal of the Soviet Union.

- JIC (47) 7 "Soviet Interests, Intentions and Capabilities", 6 August 1947¹

The years 1947-49 represented a change-over period for British intelligence in Germany from fighting the Second World War to waging the Cold War. The threat of a resurgent, nationalist Germany was replaced by the danger of Communism in central Europe as the highest order concern for the British authorities in Germany and Whitehall.² This reflected a similar shift in overall foreign policy as the machinery for international negotiation set up at the end of the War began to break down and East and West slid into stalemate that left Europe divided for nearly 45 years.³ The seeds of the division had been sown years earlier in the uneasy Alliance of the United States, Britain and the Soviet Union in the war against Nazism, but from early 1947 onwards that potential trouble became a reality.⁴ In 1947, Marshall Aid, the breakdown of the Council of Foreign Ministers (CFM), the attempted Communist rebellion in Greece and in 1948, the Communist coup in Czechoslovakia and the blockade of Berlin all contributed to this development. This very early Cold War period was largely a struggle for power in Europe, and Germany in particular, which though still devastated by the War, was of enormous strategic value.⁵

¹ CAB158/1, JIC(47)7(Final), 6 August 1947

² CAB176/22, JIC/880/49, 13 May 1949, including JIC(Germany)(49)51 "Intelligence Division, Control Commission Germany"

³ CAB129/23, CP(48)6 "The first aim of British Foreign Policy", 4 January 1948; CP(48)7 "Review of Soviet Policy", 5 January 1948

⁴ Gaddis, John Lewis, *We Now Know: Rethinking Cold War history* (Oxford: OUP, 1997), pp.1-53

⁵ Tusa, Ann & Jon, *The Berlin Blockade* (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1988), pp.40-6

Britain's military chiefs were ahead of their diplomatic colleagues in fronting up to a new enemy.⁶ The Chiefs of Staff suggested in February 1947 that British security demanded recognition of the fact that Russia was "a much more dangerous potential enemy than Germany", and consequently they should think about ways to secure Western Germany as a friend to the West.⁷ Gradually, however, all departments and all Western Allies converged on a policy of supporting a new West German State, in defiance of perceived Soviet ambitions to spread Communism throughout Europe.⁸ The question of whether the Western Allies were reacting to Soviet policies and actions in Germany or vice versa is difficult to assess accurately and would most likely lead to a conclusion that there had been miscalculations and misunderstandings on both sides. Such considerations are not the main focus here, however, since this is an attempt to examine the contribution made by the centre of the British intelligence machinery, the Joint Intelligence Committee (JIC) and its forward arm in Germany, the Joint Intelligence Committee (Germany), or JIC(G), to British policy and action concerning Germany during these early years of Cold War development.⁹

In this chapter, the aim is to examine the JIC's role during the breakdown of the CFM during 1947 and then the Committee's part in the Berlin blockade of 1948-9. Cradock dedicates a chapter to the latter issue, but since the publication of *Know Your Enemy*, those files that Cradock acknowledges were missing from his research – those of the JIC(G) and weekly JIC assessments of current intelligence – have been released.¹⁰ This chapter is not an attempt to give a detailed account of the early Cold War in Germany; that has been well done elsewhere. Rather, the following research focuses on those events to which the JIC turned its collective mind.

⁶ Greenwood, *Britain and the Cold War*, pp.6-11

⁷ DEFE4/2, JP(47)4 "Military Control of Germany", 26 February 1947

⁸ Gaddis, *We Now Know*, pp.118-9; CAB129/31, CP(48)306 "Policy towards Germany", 20 December 1948

⁹ The JIC was in fact the Joint Intelligence Sub-Committee until January 1948, when it was given full Committee status. See CAB158/3, JIC(48)2 "New title for the Joint Intelligence Sub-Committee", 10 January 1948. In order to avoid confusion, it will be referred to as the JIC throughout this Chapter, even during descriptions of 1947.

¹⁰ Cradock, *Know Your Enemy*, pp.68-82

Intelligence in Germany

Although the main focus of this study is the interaction between the JIC and the Committee's customers in Whitehall, it is worth briefly looking at how intelligence was collected in Germany, as well as how the local organisation administered the "coal face", as Aldrich describes it.¹¹ Recent research has exposed many details of British operations in Germany during the early Cold War, often using files from TNA, so there is little need to go over the same ground in detail.¹² It is important, however, to pay some attention to the administration and collection of intelligence because it reveals the character of the information that went into the making of JIC assessments.

Organisation

The JIC(G) mimicked the JIC in terms of bringing together senior military and civilian staff, although the heritage of both marked them out as more military than civilian in function.¹³ In 1947, JIC(G) was made up of: the Chief of the Intelligence Division (ID), the military intelligence organisation in Germany (always JIC(G) Chairman); the Chief of the Political Division (Control Commission Germany or CCG); the heads of the three service intelligence branches; two Deputy Chiefs of ID; the Deputy Chief of Staff Execution; and the Head of No 1 Planning and Evaluation Unit (No 1 P&EU was the cover name for the Secret Intelligence Service (SIS or MI6) in Germany at this time).¹⁴ There were three sub-committees: the JIC (Berlin), to provide intelligence on Berlin; the Public Order Sub-Committee, to provide intelligence on internal security issues and a Co-ordinating Committee to oversee operations. In January 1947, the Joint Intelligence Committee (Control Commission Germany) had become the JIC(G), to reflect the fact that the Committee was not officially part of the

¹¹ Aldrich, *Hidden Hand*, p.392

¹² The two outstanding works are Aldrich, *Hidden Hand* and Maddrell, *Spying on Science*

¹³ Hinsley *et al*, *British Intelligence in the Second War, Vol. I*, pp.3-43; Cradock, *Know Your Enemy*, pp.11-24; Aldrich, *Hidden Hand*, pp.181-2

¹⁴ CAB176/15, JIC/763/47, 5 August 1947

policy-making organisation of the Control Commission.¹⁵ The JIC(G) was in fact under joint control of the Military Governor at the head of the Control Commission and the JIC in London.¹⁶

The JIC(G) was largely a body designed to collate intelligence collected in Germany, before passing it back to London for analysis or on to the Control Commission as a part of their policy process. There was a direct link between JIC(G) and the JIC for the communication of factual intelligence.¹⁷ Any information requiring executive action by the Control Commission was passed through from the Deputy Military Governor to either Norfolk House, the London base of the Foreign Office German Department, or the Chiefs of Staff for approval. JIC permission was required to carry out clandestine activities in Germany.¹⁸

Scientific, technical and economic intelligence was handled separately through the Scientific and Technical Intelligence Branch, Germany (STIB), the “forward link” of the Joint Scientific and Joint Technical Intelligence Committees (JS/JTIC).¹⁹ STIB was “an integral part of the Intelligence Division... and it co-ordinated and inspired the collection of overt scientific and technical intelligence obtainable within Germany relating to preparations for war in Germany as a whole and the adjacent countries.” Alongside this, STIB obtained relevant economic intelligence for transmission to the Joint Intelligence Bureau, London (JIB).

British intelligence as a whole was reviewed during 1947. The Chiefs of Staff noted in their “Future Defence Policy” in May:

It is of the greatest importance that our Intelligence Organisations should be able to provide us with adequate and timely warning. The smaller the armed forces, the greater

¹⁵ CAB158/1, JIC(47)11 “Joint Intelligence Committee, Germany”, 4 February 1947

¹⁶ JIC/763/47

¹⁷ CAB176/14, JIC/247/47, 15 March 1947

¹⁸ CAB158/2, JIC(47)74(O) “Priorities of tasks for the collection of intelligence information from Germany”, 24 November 1947

¹⁹ CAB176/14, JIC/357/47, 17 April 1947

is the need for developing Intelligence Services in peace, to enable them to fulfil this responsibility.²⁰

A report produced by Air Chief Marshal Sir Douglas Evill examined the structure of British intelligence, but mainly from the point of view of improving scientific and technical intelligence aspects.²¹ Two consequences of the Evill report were the elevation of the JIC from a Chiefs of Staff Sub-Committee to a full Committee and the reintroduction of a second Joint Intelligence Staff (JIS) team of analysts to cope with demand.²² Evill paid little attention to the intelligence organisations in Germany, but self-examination of ID was taking place at the same time, inspired by the changing intelligence priorities and the need to reduce costs in Germany. In May 1947, Vice-Admiral Harold Walker, the Officer Commanding Naval Forces in Germany, wrote to the JIC(G) stating, “in view of the re-organisation of the Intelligence Division now taking place, it is considered that the moment is opportune to discuss the future intelligence policy regarding the USSR and Soviet dominated countries.”²³ Walker, like Evill, suggested that both Germany and Austria were ideal places for gathering intelligence on the Soviet Union and her satellite countries, but manpower and budget reductions would require increased efficiency.

In October, Major-General John Lethbridge, the Chief of the ID, attended the JIC to discuss the future plans for British intelligence in Germany. The central theme was the “new re-orientation” of the ID.²⁴ Recognising Cold War requirements, the JIC suggested that the “collection... of military intelligence on foreign powers” should become the highest priority, rather than the lowest, as it had been until then. Cuts in manpower meant that some intelligence tasks had to be separated away from the ID budget: political intelligence was handed over to the Political Division (CCG); No 1 P&EU had to find an alternative sponsor and overt censorship ended completely.

²⁰ DEFE4/4, COS(47)66th Meeting, 21 May 1947

²¹ CAB163/7, Misc/P(47)31 “Review of Intelligence Organisations, 1947”, 6 November 1947

²² During the Second World War, there were two JIS teams, but this was reduced to one in 1945. Cradock, *Know Your Enemy*, p.261; CAB158/3, JIC(48)20(O) “Review of JIC organisation and procedure”, 27 February 1948

²³ DEFE41/62, JIC(Germany)47/32, 23 May 1947

²⁴ CAB176/16, JIC/1113/47, 16 October 1947; CAB159/2 JIC(47)71st Meeting, 22 October 1947

The October meeting did not resolve these issues fully; rather it was a starting point for a continual review of intelligence in Germany. In November, the JIC formed a delegation with a wide remit to investigate the intelligence requirements in Germany.²⁵ The party carried out a two week visit in January 1948, visiting the major British intelligence sites – Herford (the Headquarters of ID and JIC(G) meeting place), Berlin, Düsseldorf and Hamburg²⁶ – and reported in March.²⁷ The changes made included a new charter for JIC(G), more selective demands on SIS from Service Departments for order of battle (ORBAT) intelligence in the Soviet Zone and more technically trained personnel for the ID and SIS.²⁸

The new JIC(G) charter was delivered in June.²⁹ Representatives of JIB and JS/JTIC were brought onto the Committee, in line with the increased prominence given to scientific intelligence after the Evill review. The new charter emphasised a joint responsibility to the military commanders in Germany for “providing intelligence on matters which may concern internal or external threats to the Western Zones of Germany and to the British, French and American Sectors of Berlin” and “the fulfilment of JIC London’s requirements particularly in respect of Russia and the Satellite countries leaving the Intelligence Division... to concentrate on its main task of supporting the Military Government of the British Zone of Germany”. The area of responsibility for JIC(G) was set out as the four zones of Germany and all countries bordering, plus the Soviet Union. The terms of reference required that the Committee provide the military commanders with “co-ordinated Intelligence Reports and Joint Appreciations” on internal and external threats, as well as advice “on all matters of Intelligence and Counter-Intelligence policy and organisation in respect of its primary area of responsibility”. JIC(G) was also expected to fulfil specific JIC requirements, but, as a matter of course, provided London with “joint intelligence appreciations” on the matters of concern to the military commanders in Germany. In order to meet these requirements

²⁵ CAB159/2, JIC(47)75th Meeting, 5 November 1947; JIC(47)77th Meeting, 12 November 1947; CAB176/16, JIC/1356/47, 24 November 1947

²⁶ CAB159/2, JIC(47)88th Meeting, 12 December 1947; JIC(47)91st Meeting, 19 December 1947

²⁷ CAB159/3, JIC(48)24th meeting, 19 March 1948

²⁸ CAB159/3, JIC(48)29th Meeting, 7 April 1948

²⁹ CAB158/4, JIC(48)50 Final “Charter for Joint Intelligence Committee, Germany”, 4 June 1948

JIC(G) was permitted to maintain direct contact with US and French intelligence organisations in Germany, British Embassies in countries bordering Germany, plus Moscow and Oslo, and the British intelligence agencies in Austria and Trieste.

As recommended by the JIC delegation, Major-General Charles Haydon, Lethbridge's successor, carried out an overhaul of the ID throughout 1948. In particular, the Headquarters were brought into line with their tasks, the structure of intelligence agencies in London and the requirements of the Regional Intelligence Staffs operating in Germany.³⁰ This meant five directorates: Co-ordination (within Germany and with London); Security (to provide security intelligence and physical security to the Military Administration); Production (responsible for overt intelligence including interrogations of Prisoners of War (POWs) and Deserters and liaison with BRIXMIS³¹); Analysis (agent running) and Administration. Outside these directorates there were STIB, JIB and the Special Reports Branch (economic, industrial and technical intelligence, centred in Berlin under cover of the Economic Sub-Commission). The ID's primary task remained "intelligence work in support of Military Government".³² Secondary to that was "[c]losely to watch in Germany, the activities, not necessarily directly affecting Military Government, of Russia and her satellite countries". This meant providing "in the closest liaison and co-operation with MI6, Intelligence material on the Soviet Union and satellite countries" and bringing leads beyond Germany to the notice of SIS. An equal secondary task was the provision of information to JIB "in their task of fulfilling long term requirements after the Control Commission has been withdrawn from Germany".

Unsurprisingly, relatively little reorganisation of intelligence in Germany took place during the Berlin blockade. The focus was very much on collecting as much information as possible during the crisis, with little time available for making large administrative changes that were not absolutely crucial to the short-term targets. In January 1949, the JIC(G) requested that intelligence agencies, in association with their

³⁰ CAB176/19, JIC/1223/48, 1 July 1948

³¹ See later for more on BRIXMIS

³² JIC/1223/48

London departments select “some six to eight subjects within their allotted tasks which appeared to them to be of paramount importance”.³³ This was to ensure that whilst there were “restrictions on manpower and other resources”, available effort was targeted on “the most urgent and important tasks”. Other requirements on the lists of intelligence targets were to be dealt with as and when sources and resources became apparent.

In response to the planning for the handover of power to a West German government in 1949, it was clear that the local intelligence services needed to adapt. One particular problem was the requirement to significantly reduce staff numbers and hence, costs. The JIC discussed the problem in late April 1949, pointing out that staff numbers had to be kept high enough that they could still provide the much needed intelligence on Russia.³⁴ A working party formed to examine the future of the ID had little doubt about the value of the organisation:

...it was generally agreed that, in the present international situation, the service of the Intelligence Division to London was of the greatest importance and any reduction in this service would have a most grave affect on our knowledge of Russia and her Satellites. The view was very strongly expressed, therefore, that every effort should be made to ensure that there was no diminution in the procurement of intelligence from the Soviet Union and the Satellite countries.³⁵

General Sir Brian Robertson, British Military Governor in Germany, envisaged that after the handover of power to the Germans and the Control Commission had become a High Commission, the primary and secondary roles of ID would switch, so that intelligence-gathering on Russia would be above work in support of the High Commission. The duties would be divided up in a new way:

- (i) Tasks in support of the High Commission, for example watching KPD (German Communist Party) penetration of the Western Zones and subversive activities of Communists and right wing nationalists;

³³ CAB159/5, JIC(49)7th Meeting, 19 January 1949

³⁴ CAB159/5, JIC(49)41st Meeting, 22 April 1949

³⁵ CAB176/22, JIC/1012/49, 8 June 1949

- (ii) Tasks carried out on behalf of London agencies, for example interrogation of POWs, collection of scientific and technical intelligence and exploitation of German knowledge of Russia;
- (iii) Tasks for both the High Commission and London, for example overt and covert collection of political and economic intelligence;
- (iv) Work on behalf of the Services (locally and in London), for example defector and deserter interrogation and ORBAT intelligence.

The peak in ID staff was in October 1947 when personnel numbered 3,431. In April 1948, there were 2,826 and in June 1949, 1,412. By April 1950, it was planned to be 1,090. Haydon believed that any drop below 950 would result in a “sharp decline” in the Division’s service. Robertson was prepared to accept up to 1,000 intelligence personnel in the Control Commission’s staff out of a total of 2-3,000, although care was needed to conceal this high proportion of intelligence staff from the other Allies and Germans, in order to avoid embarrassment.³⁶ Haydon and William Hayter, JIC Chairman, agreed that the numbers should remain fixed throughout 1950, during the first year of the new German Government. The JIC settled on a staff of 1090 for the ID in 1950, with the following distribution: Entries and Exits (borders) – 50; No 1 P & EU – 195; Headquarters – 298; Outstations – 158; and Regions – 389.³⁷ Roughly 500 were working in support of the Military Government and 500 on wider strategic intelligence. The High Commission carried 60 per cent of the cost on their vote and the remaining 40 per cent was split between other departments.³⁸

The new German government came into existence on 23 May 1949; the British Control Commission officially became a High Commission, although it took longer in reality to make all the necessary transfers. As far as the intelligence services in Germany were concerned very little changed; by this stage, the themes had been already been defined as a switch in target from denazification to the Cold War and controlled

³⁶ CAB176/22, JIC/1122/49, 23 June 1949

³⁷ CAB176/22, JIC/1160/49, 28 June 1949

³⁸ The other departments were Ministry of Defence (17%), Foreign Office (13%), War Office (4%), Air Ministry (3%), Admiralty (2%), Treasury, Ministry of Supply and Board of Trade (sharing 1%).

retrenchment. The JIC(G) remained responsible to the JIC and the ID to the High Commissioner.³⁹ The ID's main duty to the High Commissioner was the provision of intelligence to the Commander-in-Chief's Committee in Germany and the system whereby the Head of the ID also assumed the role of JIC(G) Chairman remained.

Collection

British efforts to gather intelligence in Germany have been exhaustively covered by other research. Maddrell has written in great detail about British operations to gather scientific and technical intelligence about the Soviet Union, which took full advantage of the unique window into the Soviet bloc provided by divided Germany.⁴⁰ Aldrich covers a wider range of intelligence targets, although he also gives great prominence to the importance of Germany in the technological fields.⁴¹ Scientific, technical and military intelligence made up the bulk of the information collected; this was the sort of material that could reveal the USSR's actual and potential capabilities. In very short supply from Germany, or anywhere else in fact, was good political intelligence; the rare gems that might provide insights into the Kremlin's intentions.

The Allied powers hoovered up German wartime scientific and technical expertise as they occupied the Third Reich, in order to learn all they could about German technological advances.⁴² This expertise became a battleground: the Western Allies vied with the Russians to secure the services of valuable individuals, both to benefit Western programmes and also simply to deny them to the opposition. Those Germans that had fallen into Russian hands, however, became a potential source on the new enemy's programmes. STIB ran operations such as MATCH BOX and TOP HAT which from 1947-9, enticed over 400 Germans across from the Soviet Zone, provided them with temporary housing, debriefed them and then found them employment.⁴³ From 1949, as

³⁹ DEFE5/18, COS(49)448 "Commanders-in-Chief Committee, British Forces, Germany", 21 December 1949

⁴⁰ Maddrell, *Spying on Science*

⁴¹ Aldrich, *Hidden Hand*

⁴² Maddrell, *Spying on Science*, pp.17-21

⁴³ *Ibid*, pp.33-43, 185-7

Germans who had been working on Soviet programmes inside the USSR began to return home in significant numbers, STIB used operation DRAGON RETURN to induce as many as possible to defect to the West.⁴⁴

Individuals with valuable knowledge from behind the Iron Curtain came in many guises: there were Displaced Persons (DPs) and POWs returning to Germany after time in the USSR who could offer their observations⁴⁵; refugees fleeing East Germany grew in numbers as the grip of socialisation tightened⁴⁶; West German businessmen and academics who legitimately travelled into the Soviet bloc could provide information on personalities and contacts⁴⁷; and deserters and defectors from the Soviet forces and administration could provide up-to-date ORBAT intelligence.⁴⁸ Of course, individuals crossing the internal German border could also be used by the Russians to feed the West disinformation and gather counter-intelligence information, so Western services had to treat them with care until their integrity had been established.⁴⁹ The JIC were acutely aware that as time went on, the flow of genuine sources would drop, both because DP and POW numbers were limited and Soviet border security would tighten.⁵⁰ As the valuable flow of defectors decreased, both the JIC and the JIC(G) worked with the Foreign Office Information Research Department (IRD) and the BBC Overseas Service to induce defection through radio broadcasts.⁵¹

The occupation of Germany yielded further intelligence opportunities. As Western forces captured elements of the Nazi administration, German intelligence on the Soviet Union fell into their laps. Operation APPLE PIE, run jointly by the British Documents Research Staff (DRS) and an American team, wrung out SS Security Service

⁴⁴ Ibid, pp.187-196, 205-235

⁴⁵ Ibid, pp.103-118; CAB159/6, JIC(49)84th Meeting, 26 August 1949; JIC(49)112th Meeting, 2 November 1949

⁴⁶ Maddrell, *Spying on Science*, pp.53-68

⁴⁷ Ibid, pp.87-97

⁴⁸ Aldrich, *Hidden Hand*, pp.193-5; CAB159/1, Confidential Annex for JIC(47)41st Meeting, 2 July 1947

⁴⁹ CAB159/4, JIC(48)99th Meeting, 10 September 1948; CAB158/5, JIC(48)124(Final) "Procedure for handling defectors arriving in the British Zones of Occupation", 8 December 1948

⁵⁰ DEFE41/63, JIC(Germany)68th Meeting, 7 December 1948

⁵¹ CAB159/6, JIC(49)84th Meeting, 26 August 1949; CAB176/24, JIC/1886/49, 19 October 1949; FO1005/1174, JIC(Germany)(M)(49)14, 1 October 1949

papers and personnel for information on Russian industry, infrastructure and geography.⁵² In another joint operation, DICK TRACY, the RAF and USAF made full use of captured Luftwaffe photo reconnaissance of the USSR in drawing up their own target lists.⁵³ Western command of German territory was not only valuable for acquiring recent Nazi intelligence, however, since occupation brought with it control of postal and telephone communications. Interception provided scientific, technical and ORBAT intelligence.⁵⁴ Liaison between the Western intelligence organisations was a simple method of increasing the intelligence flow to any one particular nation. Even away from the joint operations like communications interception and exploiting Nazi intelligence, the exchange of assessments, although fraught with security problems, offered the chance to bolster knowledge at negligible financial cost.⁵⁵

BRIXMIS, the British Commander-in-Chief's Mission to the Soviet Forces in Germany, was one of the most valuable sources of military intelligence in the British armoury. BRIXMIS and SOXMIS, the Russian equivalent, were established initially in 1946 under the Robertson-Malinin agreement, as exchange missions to keep their respective governments informed about the implementation of the Potsdam Agreement in the other's zone.⁵⁶ The Americans and French had similar agreements with the Russians. The Missions had, however, rapidly become another source of intelligence.⁵⁷ Even though both the Russians and the East Germans attempted to restrict the movement of BRIXMIS, the Mission, along with the American and French teams, had far greater access to East Germany than other Westerners. Although SOXMIS's activities in the British Zone were thought to be a risk to security⁵⁸, by April 1948, the JIC recognised

⁵² Maddrell, *Spying on Science*, pp.22-3

⁵³ Aldrich, *Hidden Hand*, pp.207-211

⁵⁴ CAB159/4, JIC(48)125th Meeting, 11 November 1948; CAB159/6, JIC(49)88th Meeting, 7 September 1949

⁵⁵ Maddrell, *Spying on Science*, pp.82-9; CAB159/2, JIC(47)84th Meeting, 1 December 1947; CAB159/4, JIC(48)99th Meeting, 10 September 1948; JIC(48)132nd Meeting, 26 November 1948

⁵⁶ The Agreement is reproduced in Geraghty, *BRIXMIS*, pp.329-331

⁵⁷ CAB176/24, JIC/2154/49, 1 December 1949

⁵⁸ There was a great deal of debate within the JIC about how great a risk SOXMIS posed. CAB176/18, JIC/1044/48, 4 June 1948; CAB176/22, JIC/996/49, 3 June 1949; CAB159/6, JIC(49)86th Meeting, 1 September 1949

that BRIXMIS was providing intelligence of such value that they were willing to accept those risks in order not to jeopardise the future of the Mission.⁵⁹

The JIC and JIC(G) files rarely reveal a great deal about other intelligence sources, such as SIS agents, early air reconnaissance over-flights of Soviet territory and signals intelligence (sigint); but this does not mean they were not going on. SIS ran agents of varying quality in East Germany during the late 1940s: many reported on military rail movements and Soviet troop dispositions; fewer on science-related projects such as the extraction of uranium from the Erzgebirge mines; and very few provided good information on the Soviet administration or East German government.⁶⁰ According to Aldrich, by 1948, limited photographic over-flights of Eastern Germany were providing target intelligence.⁶¹ He also reveals that as early as 1947, RAF planes supported by ground stations like RAF Gatow in Berlin were collecting sigint, likely to be both voice traffic (communications intelligence or comint) and electronic intelligence (elint).⁶² There was also an intercept station at Gluckstadt, near Hamburg, which was the home to the no. 1 (Special) Wireless Regiment, Royal Signals until 1950.⁶³ During the late 1940s at least, however, the most useful sigint collected relating to Germany was actually collected in the UK.⁶⁴

Priorities for Intelligence Collection

The priorities for intelligence collection in Germany were reviewed regularly by the JIC. Departments submitted their requirements to the Committee so that they could be collated and distributed to Germany. Acknowledging the shifting priorities in Germany, in August 1947, the JIC noted that the lists of information required were now

⁵⁹ CAB159/3, JIC(48)33rd meeting, 15 April 1948; CAB176/22, JIC/666/49, 9 April 1949

⁶⁰ Private information; Aldrich, *Hidden Hand*, p.417; Maddrell, *Spying on Science*, pp.119-175

⁶¹ Aldrich, *Hidden Hand*, pp.215-6

⁶² *Ibid*, p.252

⁶³ Private information; CAB176/18, JIC/1034/48, 3 June 1948

⁶⁴ JIC/1034/48

largely directed against Russia, rather than at Germany.⁶⁵ The co-ordinated tasking lists included all requirements except those of SIS, which were distributed separately as “a list of special questions prepared in consultation with consumer departments.”⁶⁶ The requirements for scientific and technical intelligence were grouped separately for no reason other than convenience.

In November 1947, no specific targets were included in Priority 1, the highest priority. This was usual since this category was reserved for “tasks of over-riding importance requiring special action” which would be indicated by the JIC to the JIC(G) in special briefs “as the situation demands”. Any such emergency requirements warranted specific, extra resources. Standing requirements of the highest priority were Priority 2. These included “Russian intentions in Germany”; “The security of the British Zone of Germany”, with particular attention to the activities of the Russian intelligence agencies in Germany, the Satellite countries and in Russia; submarine construction; information on Russian “naval exercises and manoeuvres, particularly those in which submarines play a part, and with reference to the use of radar” and “Co-operation between aircraft and warships”; ORBAT of Soviet Army and Air Forces including their organisation, “strengths, locations, designation of units, equipment, movements and identification”; “18th Air Army (Long Range Force), PVO [the air defence branch of the Soviet military], early warning system and AA [anti-aircraft] defences”; aircraft and aircraft engine production; armaments and engineering industries; the “training tactics and state of efficiency of the Soviet Armed Forces”.

“Breaches of Potsdam Agreement and progress in denazification in the Russian Zone”; the Russian use of former members of the German armed forces, German technicians and industrial experts; and the dismantling of factories in the Russian Zone of Germany were all in Priority 3, along with further military information. As a signal of issues further afield, included in Priority 3 tasks were, “[a]ctivities or organisations

⁶⁵ CAB159/1, JIC(47)57th Meeting, 29 August 1947

⁶⁶ CAB158/2, JIC(47)74(O) “Priorities of tasks for the collection of intelligence information from Germany”, 24 November 1947

for illegal immigration into Palestine” and “[a]ny symptoms of Russian interest in Jewish extremist activities”.

The list of scientific and technical intelligence requirements was daunting by any standards and reveals quite how desperate the need for any intelligence on Soviet weapons development was. This list did not change throughout 1947-9.⁶⁷ The highest priority standing tasks included information on atomic energy, biological warfare, chemical warfare, guided missiles, electronics and scientific and technical education, naval equipment, army equipment and air equipment.⁶⁸ Atomic energy was a priority for British intelligence generally, and Germany presented an opportunity for gaining some sort of insight into Russian progress on nuclear weapons manufacture.⁶⁹ On the list of requirements was information on “prospecting for, mining and processing of uranium ores, particularly in Saxony and the Erzgebirge”, “production of high purity calcium at I.G. Farben, Bitterfeld”, “production of high purity... nitric or hydrochloric acid, sodium carbonate, caustic soda, sodium hydrosulphate, oxatic [sic] acid”, “manufacture of very high purity graphite”, research being carried out and the personalities involved. Appearing twice, underlined, was information on the “destination” of the uranium ores and calcium. This revealed the need for British intelligence to work out exactly where the research and development centres were inside Russia.

Information on progress in the Soviet atomic weapons programme was in short supply. In September 1947, information on German high grade metallic calcium suggested that the Russians had more uranium than had been previously estimated.⁷⁰ The report also stated that the Russians were trying to extract every last bit of uranium from Germany and Czechoslovakia, even though it was only of poor quality. As is often the case with intelligence analysis, one piece of information received results in a call for

⁶⁷ CAB158/7, JIC(49)46(Final) “Priorities of tasks for the collection of intelligence information in Germany”, 15 June 1949

⁶⁸ JIC(47)74

⁶⁹ Maddrell, *Spying on Science*, pp.63-6; Naimark, Norman M., *The Russians in Germany: A History of the Soviet Zone of Occupation, 1945-9* (Harvard: Harvard University Press, 1995), pp.238-250

⁷⁰ CAB176/15, JIC/944/47, 13 September 1947

more. The report ended with a request for more information on the quantity, purity, use, shipping route and destination of the calcium being produced in Germany. Similar information was also needed on the uranium ores being extracted. Furthermore, any intelligence from Germany on the production of very high purity chemicals such as sulphuric, nitric and hydrochloric acids as well as high purity graphite blocks for a pile could be used as indicators of the progress in the Russian atomic project. In December, the JIB estimated that the earliest date by which the Russians could produce an atomic weapon was January 1951, whilst stating that calcium and uranium from Germany was crucial to the Russian project.⁷¹

1947: Supporting the Control Commission

In its support role for the Control Commission, the JIC(G) kept a close watch on domestic security inside Germany. In February 1947, the British and Americans carried out their last major anti-Nazi operation, SELECTION BOARD, during which 133 people were apprehended.⁷² The greater concern, however, was the threat of unrest, which the Public Order Sub-Committee met monthly to assess.⁷³ In early 1947, they had to report grim conditions: morale was low and the “news that a three year calory [sic] basis of 1800 calories is planned has caused considerable consternation, being regarded as prolonged starvation”.⁷⁴ In March, the Committee reported not only an increase in theft of food and fuel, but also an increase in infanticide and abortion.⁷⁵ In May, the food position was “very critical”.⁷⁶ Throughout that spring, the JIC(G) considered reimposing the curfew in order to head off outbreaks of desperate violence.⁷⁷

⁷¹ CAB176/16, JIC/1462/47, 9 December 1947

⁷² Aldrich, *Hidden Hand*, p.183; CAB191/1, JIC(Germany)47/19, undated; CAB176/15, JIC/825/47, 19 August 1947

⁷³ CAB159/1, JIC(47)55th Meeting, 22 August 1947

⁷⁴ FO1005/1167, JIC(CCG)47/2, 15 January 1947

⁷⁵ DEFE41/62, Public Order Sub-Committee report, 13 March 1947

⁷⁶ DEFE41/62, 10th Meeting Public Order Sub-Committee, 29 May 1947

⁷⁷ DEFE41/62, 41st Meeting JIC(Germany), 10 April 1947

Coupled with this problem of considerable discontent among the German people, there was the threat posed to security by Russian-inspired propaganda and infiltration. Intelligence reports heightened fears within the British Government that the Russians were using their own zone as a base for spreading communism throughout all Germany.⁷⁸ In June, JIC(G) reported to the JIC:

It is apparent that the Russians are now concentrating on recruiting a higher standard of agent and a consequent reduction in the large numbers of untrained line-crossers coming into the British and US Zones is noticeable. A recent report indicates that at least one espionage school is operating in the Russian Zone for the purpose of training agents for long term tasks in the British and US Zones.⁷⁹

The report explained that the Russian aim was large scale penetration of Western Zones as “part of the general plan for the eventual communisation of those areas”. The JIC(G) explained that radio stations such as Nord West Deutscher Rundfunk were already well penetrated by Communists.⁸⁰ The report also warned that “British Intelligence Services are probably facing the greatest test they have yet encountered, having as their adversary an organisation powerful in numbers and with unrivalled experience”. JIC(G) had sent a request to London asking that a “Wireless Intercept Organisation” be set up in Germany to capture information from the growing number of illicit radio transmissions, believed to be connected with both German subversive activity and foreign intelligence services operating in the Zone.⁸¹

In June 1947, Air Marshal Sholto Douglas, Robertson’s predecessor as Military Governor, warned the Chiefs of Staff that he considered it “unwise in the extreme” to further reduce the strength of the British Army on the Rhine (BAOR). His warning was specific and based on the recent trends in Germany:

Until recently, I have felt in a position to assure you that the British Army of the Rhine was quite capable of dealing adequately with any internal security situation in the zone

⁷⁸ Greenwood, *Britain and the Cold War*, pp.21-22

⁷⁹ DEFE41/62, JIC(Germany) 47/30, 4 June 1947

⁸⁰ DEFE41/63, JIC(Germany) 45th Meeting, 30 June 1947; CAB159/1, JIC(47)32nd Meeting, 30 May 1947; CAB159/2, JIC(47)74th Meeting, 31 October 1947; CAB159/2, JIC(47)82nd Meeting, 26 November 1947

⁸¹ CAB176/14, JIC/324/47, 9 April 1947; it is not clear from the files whether the request was met.

which could be foreseen under the existing conditions. Recent developments have caused me to review this position, and, in my opinion, the trend of events is placing Rhine Army [sic] in a much less favourable position to deal with the internal security situations which may arise in the future.⁸²

Real difficulty for the security forces lay in growing discontent amongst the Germans towards the Occupying Powers, egged on by Russian propaganda. This was made more difficult because not only were a large proportion of the British troops in Germany young and inexperienced National Servicemen but also the British forces were reliant on 315,500 German employees.⁸³ There was no way to vet this German labour, even in critical areas such as aviation.⁸⁴

Douglas repeated warnings to the Chiefs that planned cuts in forces would be dangerous. In July, he argued against reducing British manpower in the Zone from 103,000 to 67,000 in 1948.⁸⁵ In August, he expressed doubts that the planned 44,000 troops for 1950 would be able to meet the internal security requirements.⁸⁶ In the same month, Viscount Montgomery of Alamein, the Chief of the Imperial General Staff (CIGS), made a visit to Germany to assess for himself the requirement for troops. He recommended one Infantry Division, two District Headquarters with minimum essential administrative troops, one Armoured Brigade Group, one Infantry Brigade, one Parachute Division and three Armoured Car Regiments.⁸⁷ These British troops required the support of Belgian, Danish and Norwegian troops already in the Zone. By September, the Chiefs were looking for alternative solutions to the problem of saving money without jeopardising security. They suggested that maybe British troops could be reduced if the Americans were willing to increase their commitment.⁸⁸

In his August paper, Douglas wrote:

⁸² DEFE5/5, COS(47)136(O) "Internal security situation in the British Zone of Germany", 28 June 1947

⁸³ DEFE4/10, COS(48)8th Meeting, 16 January 1948

⁸⁴ CAB176/16, JIC/1562/47, 24 December 1947

⁸⁵ DEFE4/5, COS(47)86th Meeting, 9 July 1947

⁸⁶ DEFE5/5, COS(47)159(O) "Germany – internal situation in the British Zone", 8 August 1947

⁸⁷ DEFE5/5, COS(47)177(O)(Revise) "Germany – internal situation in the British Zone", 30 August 1947

⁸⁸ DEFE4/7, COS(47)115th Meeting, 3 September 1947

Developments so far indicate that provided Intelligence Division is maintained at reasonable strength with adequate facilities, clandestine organisations can be broken up before they become dangerous. A further period of severe hardship or widespread disorders from political causes would, however, provide an opportunity for the rapid and dangerous growth of clandestine organisations which, at present, exist only on a small scale.⁸⁹

In particular, Douglas saw the threats as the KPD working under Soviet command to create disorder, as well as clandestine organisations.

The British security organisations were targets for Russian penetration themselves. The JIC set up a Working Party to examine those measures which were necessary to combat penetration.⁹⁰ The Party reported in August that “recommendations from London on defensive security measures have not been fully implemented” in Germany. They also asserted that “offensive counter intelligence measures to counter the Russian Intelligence Services... should be regarded as the most important aspect of security tasks.” The Working Party, led by MI5, suggested a great deal more investigation was required.⁹¹

In January 1948, unrest in Germany caused both Ernest Bevin, the Foreign Secretary, and the Chiefs of Staff to express concern about “the possibility of the spread of Communism producing disaffection in the Ruhr and among civilians now employed by our occupation forces for the provision of essential services.”⁹² In little over a week, the JIC responded with an assessment of the “Possibility of disaffection and disorder in Germany”.⁹³ They concluded that “it is not unlikely that, in the future, the German Communist Party might take a more active part in initiating strike action. They would be considerably assisted in this role by continued food shortage.” They reported that the promised average daily food ration was not being met, and that unless this could be alleviated, the German Socialist Party (SPD) may well lose control of the Trade Unions

⁸⁹ COS(47)159(O)

⁹⁰ CAB159/1, JIC(47)45th Meeting, 16 July 1947; CAB176/15, JIC/839/47, 22 August 1947

⁹¹ CAB176/15, JIC/879/47, 2 September 1947

⁹² CAB158/3, JIC(48)8(O) Terms of Reference “Possibility of disaffection and disorder in Germany”, 17 January 1948

⁹³ CAB158/3, JIC(48)8(O) Final, 26 January 1948

to the KPD. The JIC had not found any evidence that the strikes which had occurred in January had been inspired by the KPD. On a more comforting note, the JIC reassured Bevin and the Chiefs, that although general disaffection among the civilian labour force employed by the British would “paralyse the British administration, no such development is likely to take place, except as a consequence of widespread disaffection among labour in general”.

1947: Watching Soviet Troops

The threats to the Western position in Germany were not all internal. Producing accurate information on Soviet troop numbers in Germany was a critical function of the JIC in assisting defence planning and foreign policy-making. As Cradock puts it, “[o]nce the enemy was identified, the question for the analysts became the seriousness and immediacy of the threat that he posed”.⁹⁴ In February 1947, the JIC judged there to be some 405,000 Soviet troops in Eastern Germany.⁹⁵ This represented a reduction of some 150,000 from the year before, and further reorganisation and reduction was taking place. In May, a further assessment confirmed this figure was made up of some men in up the Soviet Military Administration (SMA), the Russian equivalent of the Control Commission, but the vast majority of the number formed the four Soviet Armies stationed in Eastern Germany.⁹⁶ Two rifle armies were arrayed, facing “the Southern and Western demarcation line”, with two mechanised armies in support.

Troop numbers were a key bargaining counter in the diplomatic and propaganda struggle between the Soviet Union and the Western Powers for lasting control of Europe. The May JIC assessment recalled that during the Moscow CFM in March and

⁹⁴ Cradock, *Know Your Enemy*, p.50

⁹⁵ Since the end of the Cold War doubt has been cast upon Western intelligence estimates of Soviet forces. Michael Herman suggests that force numbers were consistently over-estimated because Western intelligence failed to take account of the smaller size of Russian divisions and the fact that many divisions existed on paper only. See Herman, *Intelligence Power*, pp.241-6; CAB158/1, JIC(47)14(O) Final “Movements of Russian troops outside of the USSR except in the Far East”, 26 February 1947

⁹⁶ CAB158/1, JIC(47)27(O) Final “Movements of Russian troops outside of the USSR except in the Far East”, 17 May 1947

April, the Russians had offered to reduce the number of their troops in Germany to 200,000, provided that the number of British and American troops in the respective zones together was also limited to 200,000. This proposal had been rejected on the grounds that the British and Americans thought they should be treated as separate entities in Germany, each with 200,000 troops.

No concrete demilitarisation plan was set during the 1947 rounds of Four Power negotiations, but JIC estimates of Soviet troop numbers slowly declined due to withdrawals and some reorganisation. In October, the JIC reported to the Minister of Defence, A.V. Alexander, 375,000 men or 28 divisions, with the Russian Air Force in Germany and Poland with 1,800 aircraft (roughly proportioned at 40 percent fighters, 20 percent ground attack, 25 percent bombers and 15 percent other types).⁹⁷ A further October assessment included important information for defence planners: the Rifle armies actually faced the Northern and Southern sections of the demarcation line. Furthermore, it reported “[t]here are two formations known as Guards Independent Cadre Divisions, each of which contains the staff and equipment required for an army. Each division has 30 per cent of the former army strength, but holds full scale army equipment; they were not mentioned in our last report as it is only recently that their nature has been definitely confirmed.”⁹⁸ Even so, by February 1948, there was no change in the JIC overall estimate of 375,000.⁹⁹

Supporting the Foreign Office

The CFM had been the main instrument for East-West talks since the end of the War. Germany was the most important issue for the Moscow meeting in spring 1947.¹⁰⁰ One of the British aims was the reduction of forces of occupation; Bevin told the

⁹⁷ CAB176/15, JIC/968/47, 17 September 1947

⁹⁸ CAB158/2, JIC(47)62(O)(Final) “Movements of Russian troops outside of the USSR except in the Far East”, 29 October 1947

⁹⁹ CAB158/3, JIC(48)18(O) Final “Movements of Russian troops outside of the USSR except in the Far East”, 22 February 1948

¹⁰⁰ Bullock, Alan, *Ernest Bevin: Foreign Secretary 1945-1951* (London: Heinemann, 1983), p.372

Cabinet that “[t]here were dangers in maintaining the present arrangement by which four national armies confronted one another at close quarters in Germany.”¹⁰¹ He also wanted to prevent the resurgence of a strong, centralised Germany but nevertheless to secure an upward revision of agreed levels of production for German industry.¹⁰² Bevin recognised a need for a balance between power and a good economy in Germany. According to Sir Frank Roberts, Bevin’s Private Secretary from 1947 to 1949, the Foreign Secretary felt particular responsibility “for his stewardship of the British zone of occupation in Germany and of the British sector in Berlin.”¹⁰³

The JIC worked to assist the ministers and civil servants waging the increasingly acrimonious diplomatic war. Before both of the 1947 CFM meetings, the JIC, with JIC(G) assistance, produced assessments to support the negotiating position of the British delegations. In March, before the Moscow round of talks, the JIC produced a report entitled “Evidence of Contravention of the Potsdam Agreement”, which explained the extent of Russian employment of ex-Nazis.¹⁰⁴ This report must have made uncomfortable reading for those hoping to hold a strong position on this issue: “[t]here should be no doubt that in general the process of denazification in the Russian Zone has been enforced more rigidly than in the British or American Zones”. These were exactly the accusations that Bevin had to deal with.¹⁰⁵ The assessment noted, however, that the Russian job of denazification had always been smaller than that faced by the other occupying powers. Furthermore, the Russians had reduced the number of Germans working for them in their zone by transferring armaments plants and personnel to the USSR, many as a part of operation OSOAVIAKHIM in October 1946.¹⁰⁶ Bringing up the subject of employing former Nazi scientists was not easy: to do so might have led to the Russians transferring all those remaining to Russia, denying the British the opportunity to recruit them for their own projects.

¹⁰¹ CAB128/9, CM(47)1, 2 January 1947

¹⁰² Bullock, *Bevin*, pp.372-3

¹⁰³ Roberts, Frank K, “Ernest Bevin as Foreign Secretary” in Ovendale, Ritchie (ed), *The Foreign Policy of the British Labour Governments, 1945-1951* (Leicester: Leicester University Press, 1984), pp.21-42

¹⁰⁴ CAB176/14, JIC/209/47, 1 March 1947

¹⁰⁵ Bullock, *Bevin*, p.376

¹⁰⁶ Maddrell, *Spying on Science*, pp.30-2

The number of ex-Nazis employed by the Russians was considered to be “extremely small” and of those “many of them have succeeded in achieving political backing under the present administration by becoming members of the Socialist Unity Party [SED]”.¹⁰⁷ Of particular concern to the British were the reports that the Russians were employing former German officers and soldiers, through such groups as the Seydlitz Army. Many of these Germans had been POWs taken at Stalingrad, whilst under the command of General Walter Seydlitz, some of whom had become instructors to the Russian Armed Forces. The JIC reported that in January 1946 approximately 10 former POW German officers were sent to all zones of Germany “to assist local Communist party branches in elections” after special political indoctrination. Naimark’s research suggests that this was probably an underestimation.¹⁰⁸ In April, a telegram from Germany to the JIC reporting an intercepted Soviet telephone conversation was the first time they had “got proof” that German officers were being recruited and a plan existed to employ many more.¹⁰⁹ This source was highly valued: “[t]he telephone line passes through our sector and we hope to get further valuable material by the same means. Care should therefore be taken not to compromise the source.”

The Moscow Conference (10 March – 24 April) did not go well for the British.¹¹⁰ Bevin’s report to Cabinet explained that there had been no agreement on the political future of Germany, the Russians had complained about the fusion of the British and American Zones and Britain had been heavily criticised for employing German ex-servicemen and not completing the demolitions of industrial plants.¹¹¹ Both sides had managed to agree on raising German levels of production. Bevin recognised the dangers in not solving the issues surrounding Germany, meaning that the November CFM in London “would be the critical meeting; and the most strenuous efforts would have to be made to secure agreement then on these vital questions which affected the whole future of Europe.”

¹⁰⁷ JIC/209/47

¹⁰⁸ He talks of hundreds or thousands. Naimark, *Russians in Germany*, pp.42-3

¹⁰⁹ CAB176/14, JIC/342/47, 14 April 1947

¹¹⁰ Bullock, *Bevin*, p.388

¹¹¹ CAB128/9, CM(47)43, 2 May 1947

In August 1947, between the Moscow and London CFMs, the JIC produced their annual report on “Soviet Interests, Intentions and Capabilities”.¹¹² These reports, produced from 1946 onwards, often ran over one hundred pages as they covered both the breadth and depth of Soviet past and future global policy. Unlike the majority of JIC papers in the late 1940s and early 1950s, which were marked for distribution to the Chiefs of Staff, these assessments were specifically marked to go to senior Cabinet members and officials, as well as the Chiefs.

Cradock praises the August assessment for “accurate definitions of Soviet aims in Germany”.¹¹³ It certainly left little doubt that there was not much chance of agreement with the Russians over Germany. The paper concluded that the highest priority for the Soviet Union would be the reconstruction of the Russian economy. The immediate aim was to “make good the damage done by the war to the Soviet economy”, but the longer term aim lay in over-taking the US in terms of industrial production. Further ambitions were the establishment of a protective belt; the avoidance of a major war; the continued aggressive promotion of Communism; and the “disintegration and weakening of the capitalist world wherever possible both by political infiltration and the promotion of unrest at home and in colonial territories.” The strategic, economic and political prize that Germany represented made it a centre of “acute conflict of interest with the Anglo-Saxon Powers”. The JIC considered German reparations, which the Soviets were claiming from all Zones, were “playing a significant part in Russia’s efforts to reconstruct and develop her own economy”. The Committee anticipated that the Russians would try to prevent the Western Powers from harnessing the Ruhr.

The JIC did not consider the major factor in Soviet policy towards Germany to be economic, however. Rather the Committee believed it to be strategic: the “key to her policy in Central Europe” was the collective Russian memory of two devastating wars with Germany within a thirty year period. As a consequence, the Soviet ambition would be to prevent the “rehabilitation of the industries of Western Germany by the Anglo-

¹¹² JIC(47)7

¹¹³ Cradock, *Know Your Enemy*, p.77

Saxon Powers” since “no resurrection of Germany could be contemplated unless it were a Communist-directed Germany”. The JIC was adamant that the latter would be disastrous for Britain.¹¹⁴ The Committee thought, however, that Soviet policy in East Germany was alienating the Germans. The retention of POWs and tough security, coupled with the stripping of Eastern Germany of valuable capital and people, had resulted in a lack of popularity for the “Soviet-sponsored” SED, as shown in the October 1946 Berlin elections.¹¹⁵ Nevertheless, despite not enjoying popular support the SED had “very effectively Sovietised” Eastern Germany. In the Western Zones, the JIC believed the Russians were encouraging trade unions and youth movements to be their mouthpieces whilst propaganda tried to convince Germans that reunification could only be attained under the SED.

The assessment made no mention of the Western position in Berlin. At that time, the JIC believed that the Russians would continue to rely on international diplomatic arrangements: “the Soviet Government will endeavour to keep the precarious means of intervention in the Western Zones afforded them by the quadripartite machinery.” The Soviet game would be a patient one: whilst they consolidated their base in the East, “they hope that deteriorating economic conditions in the Western Zones and mistakes by the Western Powers may give them the chance to establish firmly their political influence in these Zones.”

The Foreign Office (FO) wanted to make the Russian recruitment and training of German Armed Forces an important issue during the London CFM. The diplomats asked the JIC whether they could make use of intelligence assessments during the talks, particularly on the Seydlitz Army, as part of “a plan to carry the war into the Russian camp when they accuse us of allowing activities in our own Zone of Germany which are in contravention of the Potsdam... agreement”.¹¹⁶ As a consequence, the JIC revised an August assessment for use by the British delegation at the forthcoming conference,

¹¹⁴ See quote at the beginning of the chapter

¹¹⁵ The elections are described in Naimark, *Russians in Germany*, pp.327-9. With less than 20 per cent of the votes, the SED finished third behind the SPD (49 per cent) and the Christian Democrats (22 per cent).

¹¹⁶ CAB176/15, JIC/884/47, 2 September 1947

including the proviso, “we wish to explain, however, that although the bulk of the evidence substantiates the report, individual items of evidence cannot be produced at the conference for reasons of security.”¹¹⁷

The conclusions of the report explained and Naimark’s research agrees, that former German military personnel were certainly being employed both as advisers to the Soviet Armed Forces and after indoctrination, as administrators and policemen in the Soviet Zone of Germany.¹¹⁸ The report assessed as “probable” that the Russians were recruiting Germans both in POW camps and in the Soviet Zone and that some “small armed units” existed but not as “an organized fighting force comprising large formations”. The JIC considered that these recruits could be used either “to replace Soviet Occupation administration in Germany including the police forces” or as a “Cadre for a ‘Satellite’ Army in a future war.” The Soviets were also interested in recruiting others with technical skills as well as those who had been directly involved in fighting the Allied Normandy invasion. Ex-Luftwaffe personnel had assisted the Soviet Air Force in bringing jet fighter aircraft into service quickly (by late 1946) and the Soviet Navy was looking for former U-boat and destroyer commanders. Even by 1947, the British estimated that the Russians still held some one and half million German POWs, including one quarter of a million released by the Western Allies and rearrested by the Russians. The JIC suggested that the number of Germans recruited by the Russians either as instructors, as trained future administrators or as members of small armed units “might well number 200,000 to 300,000”, a huge rise from their earlier estimate.

The final document produced by the JIC for use by the FO included a rare insight into the sources and reliability ratings for the intelligence that went into the assessment. Over 450 pieces of information went into the report, many of which came from

¹¹⁷ CAB158/1, JIC(47)47 Final (Second Revise) “Russian recruitment and training of former members of the German Armed Forces”, 27 November 1947

¹¹⁸ Naimark, *Russians in Germany*, pp.41-4

communications interception.¹¹⁹ Although many of the individual items corroborated one-another, there were very few high-grade sources that could be used on this particular topic. It was perhaps for this reason or because of the remaining sensitivities over denazification in the British zone, that the issue was not substantively raised during the conference.¹²⁰

The Committee was also asked to examine a possible Soviet proposal at the London Conference that all occupation troops be withdrawn. The BAOR Commanders, after consulting with the American authorities in Germany, concluded that it was a “distinct possibility” that the Russians would put forward such a proposal.¹²¹ Bevin also feared that the Russians would put forward a plan for withdrawal that the Western Powers, as Bullock puts it, “would find it embarrassing to reject”.¹²² Initial discussions in October in the JIC had thrown up some early conclusions on the subject.¹²³ Hayter suggested that “by withdrawing their troops from Germany, the Soviet Government would be likely to lose control of their zone.” The Head of SIS or “C”, Major-General Sir Stewart Menzies, pointed out that “the withdrawal of British occupation forces from Germany would lead to a serious loss of intelligence.” Major-General Templer, the Director of Military Intelligence (DMI), made a prescient observation: “a further point which he considered was worthy of examination by the FO was the possibility that, in the near future, the Soviet Government might attempt to make the Zones of the Western Powers in Berlin untenable.”

By the time the London Conference had begun, the JIC had produced a large assessment entitled, “Likelihood and implications of a proposal for the withdrawal of all occupation troops from Germany”.¹²⁴ The report by the JIC was typical in that it examined the question from a Russian point of view. It concluded that the Russians would be unlikely to withdraw unless they were certain that either the Western Allies

¹¹⁹ The report records 487 pieces of information, 164 from interception, the rest from other unspecified sources.

¹²⁰ Bullock, *Bevin*, pp.494-5

¹²¹ CAB176/16, JIC/1046/47, 1 October 1947

¹²² Bullock, *Bevin*, p.491

¹²³ CAB159/2, JIC(47)67th Meeting, 8 October 1947

¹²⁴ CAB158/2, JIC(47)58(O)Final, 18 November 1947



would withdraw and Germany would become a unified Communist state or, at the very least, Eastern Germany would become a separate Communist state. Eastern Germany represented too crucial a part of the Soviet “security belt” for the Russians to lose control. The JIC reported recent and reliable information which suggested that there was no intention of withdrawing, but that “there is some evidence that the Russians intend to make a proposal for withdrawal at the meetings of the Council of Foreign Ministers with no idea of its being accepted but simply as a ruse to place the blame for continued occupation on the Western Powers”. The JIC considered that calling their bluff and accepting the proposal would most probably result in the Russians finding some way to wriggle out of any agreement.

The assessment suggested the advantages to the Soviet Union of a withdrawal were clear: it would leave the US and Britain without a military foothold on the continent and, given the levels of reparations taken by the Soviets already, there would be “little to lose economically from the evacuation of their Zone of Germany”. Furthermore, were the Allies to vacate their Zones, the Communist political presence in terms of left wing parties and the indoctrinated former POWs would be well placed to attempt the spread of Soviet socialism. The disadvantages were seen to outweigh the advantages though. The JIC repeated their doubts that the German people would readily choose the SED and without the SMA, the means of sovietisation of the Russian Zone would have gone. This would clearly mean that from a strategic point of view, the Soviet line for attack or defence had moved east, whilst there would also be fewer troops close to Poland and Czechoslovakia “to influence the course of political events”. Withdrawal from Germany would also mean “a reduction in the supplies of Uranium ore to the Soviet Union”.

The JIC believed that any Russian suggestion of a withdrawal would be inconsistent with their attitudes to Germany, which involved using occupation as the means of ensuring demilitarisation. Such a change of strategy, however, might be designed to embarrass the British and American governments with their own voters as

well as improve the standing of the Russians in the eyes of the German people.¹²⁵ The evidence indicated that the Soviets did not genuinely intend to withdraw: they were improving lines of communication through Poland; developing their own military facilities in Eastern Germany; and “planning to incorporate the Russian sector of Berlin into their Zone in the event of a breakdown at the Council of Foreign Ministers”. There was perhaps one of the earliest warnings that Berlin could well grow into an issue in its own right: “this is to some extent supported by reports that the Russians may ask for the termination of the occupation by the Western Powers of any part of Berlin”.

The 1947 London CFM was the last round of foreign minister-level diplomacy until after the Berlin blockade. The day the meeting began Bevin warned the Cabinet that he was “not optimistic about the outcome” since he believed the Russians “had no present desire to reach agreement with the Western Powers for the peaceful settlement of Europe”.¹²⁶ He was confident, however, that if the Soviets did offer to withdraw their troops, the British people would doubt the intention behind it.¹²⁷ JIC support for the British delegation continued during the CFM. The FO requested assistance in keeping records of Russian breaches of the Potsdam Agreement up to date, particularly any instances of Soviet unwillingness to enforce disarmament.¹²⁸ The JIC also responded to a request for assistance from the Board of Trade in their reparations bid for two hydrogen peroxide plants from Germany.¹²⁹

Bevin’s fears were confirmed, reporting to the Cabinet during the talks that there was likely to be no agreement over Germany and that unless the Russian attitude changed, he could see “no purpose in continuing the discussions through the medium of the Council of Foreign Ministers.”¹³⁰ In reality, there was little chance of a Soviet change; by the time of the London CFM, Russian suspicions of US intentions in Europe had been confirmed by the announcements of both the Truman Doctrine supporting

¹²⁵ Ann and Jon Tusa agree. Tusas, *Berlin Blockade*, p.85

¹²⁶ CAB128/10, CM(47)90, 25 November 1947

¹²⁷ Bullock, *Bevin*, p.491

¹²⁸ CAB176/19, JIC/1718/48, 3 September 1948

¹²⁹ CAB158/5, JIC(48)131 “Hydrogen Peroxide Plants”, 10 December 1948

¹³⁰ CAB128/10, CM(47)95, 15 December 1947

freedom (12 March) and the Marshall Plan tying American money to European reconstruction (5 June).¹³¹ Once the talks had collapsed, Bevin considered that the CFM had become a useless tool and felt that a rethink of British policy towards Europe as a whole was required.¹³²

1948: The lead up to Blockade

The breakdown of the London CFM drove Bevin to circulate a paper to the Cabinet warning that Soviet and Western policy were on a collision course.¹³³ He believed that Britain and the United States had to work to create a union of democratic states in Western Europe in order to halt the expansion of Communism westwards.¹³⁴ Germany required urgent attention. On 8 January, Bevin explained his new policy towards Germany to the rest of the Cabinet:

...the guiding principle of his policy was to foster the creation of a truly democratic Germany. While nothing should be done to preclude the eventual emergence of a united Germany, it was important that the Germans should be made more effectively responsible for managing their own affairs in the Western Zones.¹³⁵

This meant encouraging a new elected Government in the Western Zones, working to get raised production levels and improving the standard of living in Western Germany.¹³⁶ Bevin was aware that this would antagonise the Russians but he acknowledged he could at best only guess what their response might be.¹³⁷ The Chiefs of Staff were right in line. They believed that the conflict between East and West was “becoming more and more a struggle for the possession of Germany”.¹³⁸ Their aim was a German government set up in the Western Zones and then “to make this new Germany

¹³¹ Gaddis, *We Now Know*, pp.37-51

¹³² Bullock, *Bevin*, p.497

¹³³ CP(48)7 – see footnote 3, Chapter One

¹³⁴ Bullock, *Bevin*, pp.498-9; Tusas, *Berlin Blockade*, pp.97-8

¹³⁵ CAB128/12, CM(48)2, 8 January 1948

¹³⁶ Bullock, *Bevin*, p.498

¹³⁷ CAB129/23, CP(48)5 “Policy in Germany”, 5 January 1948

¹³⁸ DEFE5/10, COS(48)26(O) “The Problem of future war and the strategy of war with Russia”, 30 January 1948

so flourishing that the Germans in the Russian zones will want to join it, and will look westwards". The Prime Minister, however, was not getting carried away with the idea of building Germany back up. Attlee was disturbed by Montgomery's suggestion that the strength of Germany should once again be re-established.¹³⁹ Bevin's solution was to build Germany up inside the system of Western Union defence.

Tension in Germany mounted from the beginning of 1948. During January, the Russians began to interfere with Berlin rail and road traffic and relations were failing within the Berlin Kommandatura, the four power controlling committee.¹⁴⁰ In February, the Russia Committee, one of the FO's key Cold War bodies set up to analyse Soviet policy, warned that the issue of currency reform in Germany might well lead to trouble.¹⁴¹ In response to any agreement reached by the Western Powers outside the quadripartite machinery, they predicted "the Russians would almost certainly take serious steps to prevent the success of our efforts". The communist coup in Czechoslovakia during February served to heighten Western fears of Soviet intentions.¹⁴² The Soviets were suspicious that the Western talks on Germany that began in London on 23 February were a prelude to a West German state. On 20 March, the Russians walked out of the Allied Control Council. Nevertheless, the JIC and CIA were confident in their estimates that the Russians were not ready for war, nor would they be before the end of 1956.¹⁴³ Bevin and his senior officials were convinced by these appraisals.¹⁴⁴

April 1948 was a bad month for the hopes of lasting peace in Europe. On the 5 April, a British passenger plane en route to Berlin collided with a Soviet fighter, killing all on board. At the start of the month, the Russians began stopping Allied trains into Berlin in order to inspect papers. On 8 April, Montgomery told the Chiefs, after a trip to

¹³⁹ DEFE4/10, COS(48)18th Meeting, 4 February 1948

¹⁴⁰ Tusas, *Berlin Blockade*, pp.93-5,98-9

¹⁴¹ Aldrich, *Hidden Hand*, pp.128-130, 154; FO371/71687, Russia Committee Meeting 19 February 1948

¹⁴² Tusas, *Berlin Blockade*, pp.95-102

¹⁴³ Murphy *et al*, *Battleground Berlin*, p.55; CAB158/3, JIC(48)11(O) Final "Increase in the likelihood of a major war after the end of 1956", 13 March 1948

¹⁴⁴ Tusas, *Berlin Blockade*, pp.97-117

Germany, “that the atmosphere in Berlin was highly charged”.¹⁴⁵ By his reckoning, had the aeroplane involved in the collision been American, war would already have broken out between the Americans and Russians. In Montgomery’s view, “There could be no doubt that the Russians would now make every effort to squeeze us out of Berlin and it was obviously important that we should not allow them to do so.” There was not, however, an agreed Western response to Soviet moves.¹⁴⁶

Cradock describes the blockade as “a policy-makers’ crisis”.¹⁴⁷ He asserts that “because of the way it developed, intelligence had a relatively small part to play. The element of surprise was lacking and by the spring of 1948 the broad shape of the coming danger was widely known.” The papers made available since Cradock’s research was published, do not significantly alter this assessment. During early 1948, the JIC did not produce papers relevant to Berlin, beyond those concerning military matters. In February, they reported no increase in Soviet troop numbers in Germany.¹⁴⁸ As mentioned above, in March, the JIC maintained their view that the Russians were not ready for war. By May, although the Committee described an unclear picture, in which the Cadre Armies were possibly filling up and manoeuvres were taking place, they did not raise any alarm and actually estimated that overall Soviet troop numbers in Germany had dropped by 55,000 to 320,000.¹⁴⁹ The significance of these military assessments should not be overlooked, since they reassured ministers and officials that Soviet actions in Berlin were political not military. Beyond that, however, the JIC does not appear to have had much more of a role in British policy formation in the run-up to the blockade.

During April 1948, the JIC(G) had begun to reorganise its efforts to keep a close watch on any Soviet preparations for war. They sent the JIC a watch list of “events and trends which, if they came to pass, either wholly or in part, might lead the Committee to conclude Russia was preparing to invade Western Germany”.¹⁵⁰ The list included such

¹⁴⁵ DEFE4/12, COS(48)49th Meeting, 8 April 1948

¹⁴⁶ Tusas, *Berlin Blockade*, pp.110-2

¹⁴⁷ Cradock, *Know Your Enemy*, p.82

¹⁴⁸ CAB158/3, JIC(48)18(O) Final “Movements of Soviet troops outside the USSR”, 22 February 1948

¹⁴⁹ CAB158/3, JIC(48)43(O) Final “Movements of Soviet troops outside the USSR, except in the Far East”, 5 May 1948

¹⁵⁰ CAB176/17, JIC/690/48, 13 April 1948

things as improvements in communications, reinforcements of men, equipment and supplies, a build up of Soviet wireless and radio traffic and increased activity among the Russian intelligence services. The stockpiling of rolling stock on the dilapidated Soviet zone railway system was considered to be not only a likely sign of preparations for war, but also a bad sign for the East German economy that relied on the fragile track network.¹⁵¹ The JIC(G) intended to review any evidence at each of their three weekly meetings, before passing the information on to the JIC.¹⁵² This review was only intended to be a local appreciation of events, as opposed to an assessment of wider Russian intentions or indicators of a World War. The JIC received the first review in May.¹⁵³

The JIC(G) also proposed that they develop a new system for acquiring tactical intelligence concerning the Soviet military activities in Eastern Germany.¹⁵⁴ They informed the JIC that both British and American intelligence were receiving a large number of reports concerning Soviet troop movements and concentrations in the forward areas of the Soviet Zone. Such reports were, however, mostly from low-grade sources and were often so sketchy that useful evaluation could not be carried out. Furthermore, it often took more than a week to verify information about a given area that was just across the border. JIC(G) wanted a method of checking intelligence within 24 hours. They analysed their current sources of information and judged there was no present system available to meet the requirements. Deserters from the Soviet Army and the interrogation of German refugees and line-crossers were a poor source of dependable, tactical information, since allied interrogators did not know when and where they were going to appear, on top of which their numbers were likely to fall. 'CX sources', as SIS information was known, produced "very useful intelligence on Soviet military activities in the Soviet Zone, which they have penetrated to its full depth". The information often took three or more weeks to collect and communicate, however, plus the time taken to conduct initial tasking. BRIXMIS were able to "provide valuable information from

¹⁵¹ CAB176/17, JIC/691/48, 13 April 1948

¹⁵² JIC/690/48

¹⁵³ DEFE41/63, JIC(Germany)58th Meeting, 11 May 1948

¹⁵⁴ CAB176/18, JIC/777/48, 24 April 1948

trained officers” but it usually took days to arrange a tour and this let the Soviets know what the British were interested in. Information from BRIXMIS, like that from the censorship of mail, was open to simple Russian disruption in the run-up to war.

As a solution JIC(G) proposed a new organisation to cover the gap.¹⁵⁵ It would reach 15 miles into the Soviet Zone with a briefing-to-information-delivery time of no more than 24 hours. It required “a special network of agents” in the British Zone with as few “cut-outs” as possible to speed up communication. These agents would be selected “for their good local knowledge and connections” and “[b]riefing will be confined to basic essentials”. The network was to be run by No 1 P&EU on behalf of the primary consumer, Intelligence Headquarters, BAOR. In order to get information to the Headquarters as quickly as possible, existing military signals were employed where necessary.

The JIC approved the plan, but insisted the network cover a depth of up to 50 miles inside the Soviet Zone.¹⁵⁶ Menzies wanted to be sure that this operation did not interfere with current priorities or SIS resources. Military Intelligence whole-heartedly approved of any system that improved their knowledge. In order to improve the intelligence picture available in Germany, the Government Communications Headquarters (GCHQ), the sigint agency, increased the rate of flow of their material to the JIC(G).¹⁵⁷ No 1 P&EU made further preparations for crisis by drawing up their operation to evacuate key Germans from Berlin.¹⁵⁸

On 4 May, the JIC received the first JIC(G) appreciation of the possibility of the Russians making war.¹⁵⁹ It showed a noticeable increase in the strength of ground forces in Germany including a new mechanised army on the German-Polish border. Troop numbers were increasing as new recruits arrived, without the usual release of older

¹⁵⁵ *Ibid*

¹⁵⁶ CAB159/3, JIC(48)40th Meeting, 30 April 1948

¹⁵⁷ CAB159/3, JIC(48)44th Meeting, 12 May 1948; JIC(48)58th Meeting, 11 June 1948; CAB176/18, JIC/1034/48, 3 June 1948

¹⁵⁸ DEFE41/63, JIC(Germany)57th Meeting, 27 April 1948

¹⁵⁹ CAB176/18, JIC/842/48, 4 May 1948

classes of men. This was considered to be “part of the war of nerves on Berlin.” Increased frontier controls had been noticed, but for the moment these were considered to be “intended defensively”. As for political indicators,

They [the Russians] are undoubtedly working towards a showdown in the Kommandatura and the Berlin transport situation shows that the immediate objective is to undermine the position of the Western Allies in Berlin. But this campaign is being conducted gradually and the Soviets are clearly anxious to go as far as they can without provoking incidents leading to hostilities.

The key point was that the Russians would try to evict the Western Powers from Berlin, but “by all means short of war.” This remained in line with all earlier JIC predictions that the Soviets were not yet economically, militarily or politically ready to go to war. JIC(G) believed they would proclaim Berlin to be the capital of a new German government under Russian control and they would strengthen the Iron Curtain along the Zonal boundaries in Germany, but they were not preparing for all out war.

Montgomery was convinced war was inevitable, but he had taken on board the JIC estimate that it was unlikely at present.¹⁶⁰ The FO complained to the JIC that there was not enough information about the “anticipated timing of Russian measures for restricting movement in the Berlin Area”, “Russian intentions in respect of evacuation of their families from Berlin” or “Russian recruitment and employment of Germans”.¹⁶¹ In response to the latter complaint the JIC produced a brief paper in which they stated that they did not anticipate the use of Soviet-trained Germans in direct action against the Western zones of Germany.¹⁶²

Talks on Germany between the British, French, American, Dutch, Belgian and Luxembourg governments ended in London 1 June. The Soviets were enraged when the Western Powers reached agreements concerning economic and political reforms in the Western Zones and Western Sectors of Berlin.¹⁶³ The introduction of a new currency in

¹⁶⁰ DEFES/11, COS(48)104(O) “Preparedness for war”, 6 May 1948

¹⁶¹ CAB159/3, JIC(48)46th Meeting, 14 May 1948

¹⁶² DEFES/11, COS(48)101(O) “Germany – action against the Western zones”, 1 May 1948; CAB158/4, JIC(48)49(Final) “Germany – action against Western zones”, 28 May 1948

¹⁶³ Tusas, *Berlin Blockade*, pp.128-134

Allied controlled Germany was the final straw.¹⁶⁴ Soviet intelligence had been reporting from the beginning of 1948 that Western intentions to reform German currency were a prelude to a West German state.¹⁶⁵ In an accurate “Forecast of the World Situation in 1957”, the JIC predicted that Germany would still be divided between East and West, with two rival economies wrestling for one position as the viable and attractive Germany.¹⁶⁶ On the 18 June, the JIC sent out a list of military, political and economic indicators of Russian preparations for war to UK representatives in countries across Europe, Asia and the Middle East to be shared with American colleagues.¹⁶⁷ Some indicators such as the movement to forward areas or building up of ammunition dumps required immediate transmission to London.

The Berlin blockade

On the 24 June the road, waterway and rail access to Berlin from the Western Zones was cut. Unlike the three air corridors linking West Germany to Berlin, which were protected under a November 1945 access agreement, the land routes had no such guarantees.¹⁶⁸ The blockade had begun. British ministers acknowledged the dangers: “The Cabinet recognised that a very serious situation might develop in Berlin; and it was important that the Western Powers should take their stand on a position which they were confident of being able to sustain.”¹⁶⁹ Attlee’s committee on Berlin made up of senior ministers, military chiefs and diplomats knew that the American approach was “to maintain a firm though unprovocative attitude”.¹⁷⁰ Bevin favoured a tough, committed stance, as he had done throughout the building crisis.¹⁷¹ Although the initial estimates for what an airlift could achieve were not good, Bevin latched onto the idea and

¹⁶⁴ *Ibid*, p.138

¹⁶⁵ Murphy *et al*, *Battleground Berlin*, pp.52-5

¹⁶⁶ CAB158/1, JIC(47)42(Final), 12 June 1948

¹⁶⁷ CAB158/4, JIC(48)42(O) Final “Indications of Russian preparedness for war”, 18 June 1948

¹⁶⁸ Tusas, *Berlin Blockade*, p.48

¹⁶⁹ CAB128/13, CM(48)42, 24 June 1948

¹⁷⁰ CAB130/32, GEN241, 1st meeting, 28 June 1948

¹⁷¹ Bullock, *Bevin*, pp.540-1, 576

convinced others to go along.¹⁷² He also thought that the counter blockade the Allies had imposed on materials moving from the Western to Eastern Zones would be effective. Ministers and Chiefs of Staff decided that it was premature to decide whether they would be prepared to go to war over Berlin, but that it would be prudent to plan on the assumption that there might be a war: “[t]hey recognised that the Russians were in a position to squeeze the Western Powers out of Berlin without having to use force; if shooting started it would be the Western Allies who would do so.”

As Cradock points out, the JIC failed to predict both the exact nature of the Soviet pressure on Berlin and when it would begin.¹⁷³ In a 1951 review of their assessment accuracy, they acknowledged this failing.¹⁷⁴ The problem had been that the Russians’ decision to impose the blockade had been an administrative one with no physical preparations necessary. The limited Russian forces required to enforce the blockade would only have needed to receive the order and unless the JIC had managed to get hold of a copy of that specific piece of paper or message, they had no chance of giving prior warning. As described above, within the intelligence community preparations for providing warning of military action had been made. It is not clear, however, what significant benefits the West would have enjoyed had they received an accurate warning of the blockade. It was not a complete surprise: interference with Allied communications had been building up gradually and warnings of Soviet action in Berlin had been coming in the months before.¹⁷⁵ Furthermore, the fact that intelligence provided no indications that the Russians were preparing for imminent military action gave ministers the room to take a tough stance on Berlin.

Despite crisis-level events in Berlin, the 13 July JIC(G) assessment of Russian intentions to make war was entirely reassuring.¹⁷⁶ All military, naval, air and counter-espionage indicators were negative. On the political front, it was clear the Soviets were

¹⁷² Hennessy, Peter, *Never Again: Britain 1945-51* (London: Jonathan Cape, 1992), p.354; Tusas, *Berlin Blockade*, pp.143-153; DEFE4/14, COS(48)96th Meeting, 9 July 1948

¹⁷³ Cradock, *Know Your Enemy*, pp.76-7

¹⁷⁴ CAB158/13, JIC(51)87 “Review of assessments of Communist intentions made since January 1947 by the Joint Intelligence Committee”, 12 December 1951

¹⁷⁵ Bullock, *Bevin*, p.571

¹⁷⁶ DEFE41/63, JIC(Germany)61st Meeting, 13 July 48

determined to drive the Western Allies out of Berlin, but there was no political evidence to show that the Russians were willing to risk war to achieve this aim. Three days later, the JIC discussed their view on the state of Russian preparations for war: “[t]he general view was expressed that at the present time there was insufficient evidence to conclude that the Russians were intending to launch an offensive in the near future.”¹⁷⁷ Furthermore, the JIC decided it would, from then on, produce a weekly review on the subject. Cradock writes that Bevin asked Hayter to provide him with weekly summaries.¹⁷⁸ To assist in the acquisition of as full a picture of Soviet preparations as possible, the JIC prepared lists of targets for clandestine aerial photographic reconnaissance in Germany and the Satellite countries.¹⁷⁹

The Cold War developments of 1948 produced a shift in the JIC view of Soviet policy objectives. The coup in Czechoslovakia and the Soviet moves to consolidate their power in Germany clearly impacted on the JIC’s 1948 edition of their annual appraisal of ‘Soviet Interests, Intentions and Capabilities’.¹⁸⁰ The Russians’ “immediate search for security” had led the JIC to believe that the establishment of a protective belt of friendly countries ranked higher than the restoration of their economy in Soviet policy priorities; a reversal from 1947. The interpretation of Russian policy in Germany was almost completely unchanged from 1947, but with the new addition of: “the Russian authorities are taking advantage of the fact that Berlin is an enclave in the Russian Zone to exert strong pressure on the Western Powers in Berlin, with a view to forcing them to withdraw.” This would be done through direct interference with Allied communications and wrecking the quadripartite control machinery. The JIC acknowledged that German morale was low, but believed “[t]his is not at present a serious factor, but it might become so if there were any serious deterioration of the position of the Western Powers in Berlin.” The prediction was grim: Britain could expect the Soviet “all-round policy of harassing and aggression” in Germany to continue.

¹⁷⁷ CAB159/4, JIC(48)73rd Meeting, 16 July 1948

¹⁷⁸ Cradock, *Know Your Enemy*, p.77

¹⁷⁹ CAB158/4, JIC(48)78(O) “Measures to prevent the Russians obtaining strategic surprise”, 16 July 1948

¹⁸⁰ CAB158/3, JIC(48)9, 23 July 1948

Whilst the British adopted Bevin's policy of standing firm in the face of Soviet pressure, the Chiefs of Staff wanted measures taken at once to shore up the British defence effort in case of an escalation of the Berlin crisis.¹⁸¹ In response, the Defence Committee recommended to the Cabinet that preparations ought to include suspension of releases from the Services. Bevin requested that the Americans send three squadrons of B-29 bombers to Europe as a signal of their earnest intentions. The Chiefs recognised that the military realities of Berlin meant that the best option for the Western forces in the event of war was to withdraw to the Rhine and try to hold a defensive line there.¹⁸² They used the JIC to draw up a list of key strategic targets, such as industrial installations, that would be demolished in the event of a withdrawal.¹⁸³

The Chiefs supported the Cabinet view that forcing an armed convoy from the Western Zone to Berlin was out of the question and cabled the US Chiefs of Staff to say as much.¹⁸⁴ The only option was to keep trying to supply the city by air whilst the two sides locked horns in a diplomatic struggle, as they did throughout the second half of August and all of September in Moscow. In early August, the JIC(G) reported that the Russians had been surprised by the success of the airlift and the determination of Berliners.¹⁸⁵ Murphy *et al* write that Soviet intelligence generally underestimated the success of the airlift.¹⁸⁶ JIC(G) noted accurately that the Soviets considered their position to be strong and the Western willingness to negotiate had been taken as a sign of weakness.¹⁸⁷ An Allied counter-blockade was having some noticeable effect, however. By the end of August the JIC(G) noticed that a raw material shortage in the Soviet Zone was reducing productivity.¹⁸⁸ Geraghty writes that BRIXMIS in particular were able to gather evidence of the effectiveness of the counter-blockade.¹⁸⁹

¹⁸¹ Bullock, *Bevin*, pp.576-582

¹⁸² CAB130/32, GEN241 5th meeting, 27 July 1948; Tusas, *Berlin Blockade*, p.174

¹⁸³ CAB159/4, JIC(48)70th Meeting, 9 July 1948; CAB 158/4, JIC(48)90(O) "Demolitions policy in Germany", 11 August 1948; JIC(48)102(Final)(Revise) "Demolitions policy in Germany, Austria and Trieste", 2 February 1949

¹⁸⁴ Tusas, *Berlin Blockade*, p.173

¹⁸⁵ DEFE41/63, JIC(Germany)62nd Meeting, 3 August 1948

¹⁸⁶ Murphy *et al*, *Battleground Berlin*, pp.67, 78

¹⁸⁷ JIC(G) assessments are supported by Murphy *et al*; *Ibid*, pp.63-4

¹⁸⁸ DEFE41/63, JIC(Germany)63rd Meeting, 24 August 1948

¹⁸⁹ Geraghty, *BRIXMIS*, pp.23-4

After a few months of the airlift, called Operation PLAINFARE by the British and VITTLES by the Americans, the supply of food and fuel to Berlin was improving slowly, but it was still only proving just enough to keep the population alive.¹⁹⁰ Viewed from any direction, the Allies were not in a strong position. Berlin was indefensible militarily, and supplying the city depended on a somewhat fragile sky bridge. Hopes of negotiating a way out of crisis must have been founded on the belief that the Russians were not prepared to go to war. The Cabinet's Defence Committee was convinced the Soviets were still not ready for war.¹⁹¹ The JIC provided an assessment on the first day of October stating "[p]ositive indications of Soviet preparations for war in the near future are few, indefinite and not all confirmed."¹⁹² Although there were a few positive indicators, "[n]egative indicators have far outnumbered positive and provide strong ground for believing that Russia is not making preparations for war in the near future." In the future though, it would not be so easy to make timely predictions: "we believe that although no attempt has been made to mobilise the [Soviet] armed forces, or to bring army formations up to their full strength, these forces are even now sufficiently powerful to undertake a limited offensive without warning." The JIC supplied detailed forecasts of Soviet movements in a war to the UK delegation to the Military Council of the Western Union Chiefs of Staff Committee.¹⁹³ The JIC held the view that the destruction of Allied forces on the Rhine would be the first aim in any Russian plan to invade Western Europe.

Although the conversations in Moscow did not produce a settlement, the JIC(G) believed, somewhat hopefully, towards the end of October that the Russians genuinely wanted to see tension relaxed and find a resolution to the Berlin currency issue, even if it meant lifting the blockade.¹⁹⁴ They noted that the Soviet press had eased off its attacks on the West whilst the question of Berlin was before the United Nations. JIC(G) was,

¹⁹⁰ Tusas, *Berlin Blockade*, pp.143-233

¹⁹¹ CAB131/6, DO(48)61 "Defence Review", 14 September 1948

¹⁹² CAB158/4, JIC(48)70(O) Final "Short term indications of Soviet preparedness for war", 1 October 1948

¹⁹³ CAB158/5, JIC(48)115(Final) "Intelligence brief for UK delegation to the Military Committee of the Western Union Chiefs-of-Staff Committee", 9 November 1948

¹⁹⁴ DEFE41/63, JIC(Germany)66th Meeting, 26 October 1948

however, still busy making plans for the worst. Project SAFE PASSAGE for covertly moving people either from or to Berlin via the Western Zone had set up suitable routes. By the end of the blockade in May 1949, operation EASY EXERCISE involved eight safe passages between Berlin and the Western Zones and vice versa, four of which were regularly tested.¹⁹⁵ Such routes were used only for the highest grade agents; during the blockade they were utilised by No 1 P&EU “with complete success on several occasions”.

Berlin’s division between East and West was made more complete in December. Berlin Assembly elections in the Western Sectors were countered with further restrictions on movement into the Eastern Sector by the Russians.¹⁹⁶ On 7 December, the JIC(G) told the JIC that the Russians had set up a “puppet Magistrat” to run the Eastern Sector.¹⁹⁷ JIC(G) believed that this had split Berlin and had made it more difficult to resolve the currency issue. They maintained the belief that the Russians were intent on meeting their objectives, namely consolidation of the Eastern Zone and an intensification of the war of nerves, without violence. Away from Berlin, during the last few months of 1948, the British, Americans and French had also set in motion their policy for creating a democratic West German state.¹⁹⁸ German political representatives met in Bonn in their Parliamentary Council to draw up a draft constitution, or Basic Law, whilst the Allied Military Governors ironed out an Occupation Statute handing over power to a German government.

The JIC were happy that intelligence on the state of the Soviet forces in Germany was improving.¹⁹⁹ In September 1948, in response to a FO United Nations delegation request, the JIC produced an assessment of Soviet troop numbers.²⁰⁰ They estimated there were 300,000 land forces, 150,000 in excess of “reasonable requirements” and 1,450 aircraft, a 1,100 excess. As part of their first monthly ‘Periodic Intelligence

¹⁹⁵ FO1005/1173, JIC(Germany)(49)48, May 1949

¹⁹⁶ Tusas, *Berlin Blockade*, pp.291-5

¹⁹⁷ DEFE41/63, JIC(Germany)68th Meeting, 7 December 1948

¹⁹⁸ Tusas, *Berlin Blockade*, pp.282-3

¹⁹⁹ CAB159/4, JIC(48)135th Meeting, 3 December 1948

²⁰⁰ CAB158/4, JIC(48)101(O) Final “Strength of Russian forces outside the Soviet Union”, 27 September 1948

Summaries for the Western European Commander-in-Chiefs Committee' (WEURCINCCOM), in December, the JIC estimated there to be 320,000 troops. They also included a list of senior Group of Soviet Forces Germany (GSFG) personalities.²⁰¹

In early January 1949, when the JIC reflected on Soviet movements between October and December 1948, they noted that although Soviet troop numbers were great enough to overwhelm Allied garrisons in Germany with their 5,000 tanks and self-propelled guns and 1,500 aircraft, any further reinforcements would be noticed.²⁰² The Soviet forces had been operating at about 70 percent strength, their peacetime establishment. In order to get the forces to war strength, some 105,000 additional troops would be required. The JIC noted that the Cadre divisions at least would expand before offensive operations. The news was that there was "no evidence of reinforcement of these cadre formations".

In February, the JIC(G) reported the first indications that troop numbers might be increasing.²⁰³ A few weeks later, the suggestion was that these were reinforcements for the Cadre armies.²⁰⁴ Haydon commented that "it was possible that a period of some tension was ahead and probably a good many alarms an[d] excursions".²⁰⁵ Without Russian deserters, intelligence was difficult to come by. In mid-March, one such deserter revealed that "in effect all Soviet formations in Germany and Austria were being brought up to full strength".²⁰⁶ The JIC had to report that this meant even less warning "of Soviet aggressive intentions, since such reinforcement would otherwise have served as an indicator of these intentions".

²⁰¹ CAB158/5, JIC(48)136(Final), 30 December 1948

²⁰² CAB158/4, JIC(48)70/1 Final "Short term indications of Soviet preparedness for war", 10 January 1949

²⁰³ DEFE41/64, JIC(Germany)71st Meeting, 14 February 1949

²⁰⁴ DEFE41/64, JIC(Germany)73rd Meeting, 29 March 1949

²⁰⁵ DEFE41/64, JIC(Germany)72nd Meeting, 4 March 1949

²⁰⁶ CAB159/5, JIC(49)27th Meeting, 11 March 1949

Mild times

During the 1948-9 winter, the weather was milder than expected, which meant the airlift was able to keep Berlin supplied with just enough food and fuel.²⁰⁷ Robertson knew that it was ultimately down to the people of Berlin to decide the outcome of blockade. As he told the Chiefs of Staff,

It is... not a subject on which one can make definite conclusions, based on mathematical calculations, because our ability to hold Berlin depends on the final issue, upon the morale of the population, which is a factor not susceptible of exact measurement.²⁰⁸

Whilst every effort was made to improve supplies for Berlin, the JIC reappraised the likelihood of war. They maintained that the Soviet leaders would not deliberately seek conflict before the end of 1956, but they did acknowledge it was possible war could come about by miscalculation.²⁰⁹ “The situation in Germany” stood out as one place in which miscalculation could lead to war. So far, the JIC believed that the Russians had “exercised caution” in pursuing their policy objectives in Berlin and Germany as a whole. Even “the most drastic measures intended to squeeze the Western powers out of the city have been introduced piece-meal and only after it has become reasonably clear in each case that they would not provoke war.” The JIC thought that the Russians faced a choice:

If the situation in Berlin is not altered by March, 1949, the Soviet Leaders will have the choice short of open warfare, of continuing the blockade, which is producing economic difficulties in the Soviet Zone as well as the Western Zones; or of coming to terms; or of taking extremely provocative action, not excluding the use of violent means, in order to make the position of the Western Powers untenable.

The JIC predicted that the Russians would not deliberately take any action that would lead to war. Such predictions confirmed the path Bevin had chosen for British policy; thanks to the success of the airlift, the blockade was failing to squeeze the West from Berlin and furthermore, it had in fact accelerated the delivery of the West German state,

²⁰⁷ Tusas, *Berlin Blockade*, pp.307-9

²⁰⁸ DEF5/13, COS(49)15 “Appreciation of the Berlin Airlift”. 10 January 1949

²⁰⁹ CAB158/5, JIC(48)121(Revised Final) “Possibility of war before the end of 1956”, 27 January 1949

secured the Western European defence agreements under the Brussels Treaty and raised the probability of the North Atlantic Treaty.²¹⁰

As part of the first quarterly report the JIC produced for the WEURCINCCOM, they assessed the state of affairs in Germany.²¹¹ The JIC, like Robertson, recognised that the circumstances in Berlin could become even more crucial if the typical cold weather set in, since “the stocks of coal accumulated before the Russian blockade will be exhausted in January.” The good news, however, was that the airlift was forcing a change in Soviet policy:

It is clear that since the beginning of December the Russians have been occupied in reconsidering both policy and tactics and that in doing so they have been less optimistic about Berlin than three months ago. There has been a notable lull in propaganda demanding the withdrawal of the Western Occupying Powers from Berlin.

Bevin shared this assessment in a paper he wrote for the ministerial committee on Berlin.²¹² The Russia Committee debated amongst themselves whether the Russian attempts to drive the Allies out of Berlin was in fact a genuine, final Soviet policy, or whether it was merely being used as a bargaining counter.²¹³

It was becoming clear that the Soviet attempt to force the Allies from Berlin was not looking likely to pay off. As Sheila Kerr has argued, even though it seems likely that the Russians were receiving good intelligence on Western intentions from their agent in the FO, Donald Maclean, they did not make good use of it.²¹⁴ The counter-blockade and Soviet policy of stripping the Eastern Zone was telling: the economy had been forced to “a low ebb.”²¹⁵ The Soviets had introduced administrative measures to improve production, but these yielded little advance. Political changes were

²¹⁰ Bullock, *Bevin*, pp. 657-665; the Brussels Treaty was signed 17 March 1948, the North Atlantic Treaty was signed 4 April 1949

²¹¹ CAB158/5, JIC(48)138(Final) “Periodic intelligence summaries for WEURCINCCOM”, 29 January 1949

²¹² CAB130/32, GEN241/4 “Germany and Berlin”, 4 February 1949

²¹³ FO371/77623, Russia Committee meeting, 3 February 1949

²¹⁴ Kerr, Sheila, “The Secret Hotline to Moscow: Donald Maclean and the Berlin Crisis of 1948” in Deighton, Anne (ed), *Britain and the First Cold War* (London: Macmillan, 1990), pp.71-87

²¹⁵ JIC(48)138(Final)

strengthening Communist control over the Eastern Zone and the JIC believed that the Russians had already formed “the nucleus of the future Government of the Eastern Zone”.²¹⁶ The Russia Committee did not think remaining opposition parties in the Zone actually offered any viable alternative to Soviet control.²¹⁷ In March, the JIC produced a very detailed assessment of parties and individuals in both East and West.²¹⁸ The story told was rather a grim one: after nearly four years of occupation, Germany was divided with neither the Western nor Eastern zones enjoying the hope of certain improvement.

The JIC thought that the politics of the Western Zone and in particular the German peoples’ attitude towards the Allies was dominated by economics. The Committee expected Germans to be suspicious of a new democratic regime, because it had been delivered by the Occupation Powers. The success of the government lay simply in the living conditions in Germany: “[i]f material conditions continue to improve ‘democracy’ will be held to be vindicated; if the economic situation deteriorates, then ‘democracy’ will be considered to have failed.” Food rations had slowly increased during 1948, as had wages, but not in keeping with price rises. Currency reforms had led to some revival in the economy, but it had meant “great hardships” for many Germans including unemployment figures rising to 1 million out of the 40 million population in early 1949. The housing shortage was still desperate: 7 of the 19 million pre-war German houses had been “written off”. There was no notion that the German people naturally leant more towards Russia than the West, but still there was antagonism towards the Allies. There was “suspicion against the British in particular that the policy of the Occupying Power is directed towards eliminating German competition in British markets”; the Ruhr Statute which internationalised basic German industries was one such example. In the JIC’s view, Konrad Adenauer, the man viewed likely to be Federal Chancellor of the new West Germany, had “proved on the whole obstructive to Military Government” and “a political leader of considerable calibre”. Fortunately, there was no evidence that either extreme left or extreme right posed much danger in the wider scheme of Western German politics.

²¹⁶ Naimark confirms the assessment; Naimark, *Russians in Germany*, pp.308-317

²¹⁷ FO371/77623, Russia Committee meeting, 21 January 1949

²¹⁸ CAB158/6, JIC(49)23(Final) “Intelligence for WEURCINCCOM”, 10 March 1949

Politics in the Soviet zone was more difficult for the JIC to interpret accurately.²¹⁹ The failure to force the West from Berlin had disrupted plans to consolidate the Eastern zone with a “fully-fledged communist government”.²²⁰ Although SED speeches towards the end of 1948 had indicated a more “cautious and conciliatory line”, supported by Moscow, the JIC did not believe that the ultimate aim had changed: “The change is merely a change of propaganda tactics and has been accompanied by no relaxation of political pressure in the Zone or slowing down of the process of sovietisation.” Genuine opposition parties had been terrorised into disappearance. Internal security had developed: the Ministry of the Interior was due for transformation into “a fully fledged German MVD [secret service]” with the transfer of control of the police forces from the Soviet MVD in late 1948. The Russians would keep a tight grip, however: “[o]verall intelligence and security planning is controlled by the Soviet MGB (the Ministry of State Security) organisation, which operates on a semi-autonomous relationship with the SMA... It is believed that the MGB will continue to exercise general security control.” After the transfer of control of the police forces, there had been a purge on political grounds as well as an increasing emphasis on professional police training, “verging on military training”. The JIC was still uncertain, however, of the true strength of the *Bereitschaften*, the para-military police, although they were confident these forces would be used for domestic purposes only.

Political and economic hardships enforced by the Russians led the JIC to the conclusion that “there can be no doubt whatever that the great majority of the population of the Eastern Zone is strongly opposed to the communist regime.” They estimated some 230,000 people had been put in concentration camps in the Soviet zone.²²¹ 24,000 a month were leaving for the Western zones. Even so, there was “no evidence that any significant ‘resistance movements’ exist[ed]”. The nature of the “police state” meant that no such organisation was likely in the future.

²¹⁹ Although Naimark’s research generally supports the JIC’s conclusions; Naimark, *Russians in Germany*, pp.44-68, 353-397

²²⁰ JIC(49)23

²²¹ Naimark suggests the 240,000 is a reasonable estimate of the number who passed through the camps; Naimark, *Russians in Germany*, pp.376-8

Important intelligence on the Eastern Zone and on the Soviet armed forces in particular came from deserters during the blockade, but increased security reduced the flow. In March, the JIC reported that in September, October and November 1948 there were eight per month, in December four, in January 1949 three and in February none.²²² The JIC estimates of Soviet forces changed slightly, staying with 22 line divisions in Germany, including eight Cadre divisions, but by February 1949 giving a strength of roughly 310,000 men.²²³ The JIC noted that 120,000 reinforcements would be needed to bring all divisions up to strength. Even so, with 2-3,000 men per personnel train, only 50 trains would be required to achieve this. The JIC warned, "Such a nett increase can only too easily be disguised within a leave train programme which makes true analysis impossible, but the evidence strongly supports the view that some nett increase has taken place and is proceeding." Unusual activity had been noticed, outside expected movements in the case of large-scale troop movements. The cause was considered to be either large-scale war strength manoeuvres, sabre rattling, a genuine increase in readiness in response to the international tension or it really was the first step in preparation for an offensive. Without supporting economic, political or military evidence they concluded it was probably the first, although the second and third were no doubt factors. One of the deserters, a Soviet Army Colonel, brought information on Russian military plans.²²⁴ He reported that so long as the Western Allies did not resort to the use of atomic or other weapons of mass destruction, the Russians were only likely to follow up a Western withdrawal to the Rhine on the outbreak of war.

The Soviet grip on Berlin gradually slipped as it became clear that the blockade had failed to force the West out of the city. The blockade did not officially end until 12 May, after East and West agreed to reengage through a CFM, scheduled to begin in Paris on 23 May.²²⁵ The JIC reported to the WEURCINCCOM in late April that progress towards completing the establishment of a Western German government and growing

²²² CAB158/6, JIC(49)29 "Soviet troop movements in Europe", 12 March 1949

²²³ Unusually, the sources of this assessment are given: 4 deserter reports; 1 SIS report; 4 BAOR reports: and 19 reports from American organisations.

²²⁴ CAB176/22, JIC/732/49, 22 April 1949

²²⁵ Tusas, *Berlin Blockade*, pp.331-4, 352-4

Russian fear that their policy in Berlin had failed meant the Allies “must expect more determined Russian attempts during the summer to reopen four Power discussions on Berlin and Germany as a whole”.²²⁶ Supporting this assessment were Stalin’s comments to the press in January that indicated there might be a way to negotiate an end to the blockade without having to address the difficult topic of Berlin currency, alongside the general relaxation of Russian propaganda.²²⁷

The JIC recognised that the crisis over Berlin had allowed the Western Allies to settle some internal differences over such things as disarmament in Germany, national boundaries and policy towards prohibited German industry.²²⁸ But this had been at the cost of Berlin, where “during the last few months the split between the Soviet sector of Berlin and the Western Sectors has been completed”. The JIC noted that a *de facto* solution to the East-West tension over Berlin through a mutually, but grudgingly, accepted split, meant that Soviet tactics had switched to focus on a “peace campaign” to unite all Germans in opposition to the establishment of a West German government and a *de jure* split within Germany.²²⁹ To that end, the sovietisation of the Eastern Zone had slowed, temporarily, and the SED leaders were warning all Germans that war within Germany was imminent. The Soviets had also been forced to supply the Eastern Zone with steel, food and equipment from the USSR to alleviate the dire economic conditions in the Zone. The JIC did not know the significance of the replacement of Marshal Sokolovsky with General Cuikov as Commander of Soviet Occupation forces, although they were sure of the Russian intention to use the *Bereitschaften* to relieve Soviet forces in Germany in the event of a withdrawal.

²²⁶ CAB158/6. JIC(49)4(Final) “Periodic Intelligence Summaries for WEURCINCCOM”, 26 April 1949

²²⁷ Tusas, *Berlin Blockade*, p.328

²²⁸ JIC(49)4

²²⁹ Naimark describes these efforts; Naimark, *Russians in Germany*, pp.57-8

The Bereitschaften

The question of Russian recruitment of former members of the German Armed Forces, which had arisen during 1947, remained during the blockade. In February 1948, the JIC received a CIA report suggesting that JIC assessments of the numbers involved were exaggerated.²³⁰ They had received no intelligence that “an organised German army” was “being maintained in the USSR”. They did believe that some German armed units and “a form of central staff” were in existence. Murphy *et al* write that the CIA had good coverage of the subject.²³¹

As described above, in the run-up to the blockade, the JIC produced a negative assessment of the likelihood of Russian-trained Germans being used in direct action against the Western Zones in Germany, after Bevin had raised the matter.²³² The Committee did not discount the possibility of East German saboteurs, however, although they did not have any evidence of specific plans. “Numerous reports” during 1948 suggested that former POWs were being trained in Russia and then re-introduced into the Soviet Zone as a police force. The JIC also believed that a small number of Germans were being sent as political agitators to industrial areas in the British Zone.

By September, the JIC had received a JIC(G) report saying that the National Committee for Free Germany (NKFD), or Seydlitz Army, had no real military presence, despite being organised along military lines.²³³ The group instead was providing police units and advisers to Russian forces, whilst other men were being trained as administrators or political agitators. In October, JIC(G) was able to report back to JIC that the first units of an armed police force, the *Polizeibereitschaften*, had been set up.²³⁴ Naimark’s research shows that this was good, up-to-date intelligence.²³⁵ In November, a high-ranking defector passed on information stating that the *Bereitschaften* were to be

²³⁰ CAB176/17, JIC/287/48, 11 February 1948

²³¹ Murphy *et al*, *Battleground Berlin*, pp.61-2

²³² JIC(48)49

²³³ CAB176/19, JIC/1842/48, 23 September 1948

²³⁴ DEFE41/63, JIC(Germany)65th Meeting, 5 October 1948

²³⁵ Naimark, *Russians in Germany*, p.371

equipped with tanks and artillery, becoming the military wing of the East German government.²³⁶

In January 1949, the JIC produced a brief for the WEURCINCCOM on the *Bereitschaften*.²³⁷ They had to admit that the Seydlitz Army had probably never existed. The Committee reported, however, that the armed police force had been formed in July 1948, with former POWs making up about 50 percent of the strength. The JIC had no evidence that these former POWs had received military training, although American intelligence reports indicated they had.²³⁸ Since deserters were already crossing into the Western zones, the JIC expected more information. They could report that *Bereitschaften* headquarters was responsible to a special branch of the Ministry for the Interior and estimated the force's strength at approximately 36,000 strong, but suggested that a figure of 200,000 was the ultimate goal.²³⁹ The role of the *Bereitschaften* was not then understood. The JIC thought that they would be used to "enforce Russian policy and keep order" or perhaps to take over from Soviet occupation forces in the event of a withdrawal. The Committee thought it unlikely that the *Bereitschaften* would be employed to spread communism into the Western Zones by force whilst Allied troops remained there, especially since the Communist Party in the West was so weak. Nevertheless, intelligence on the emerging *Bereitschaften* did encourage British military planners to begin rethinking their approach to European defence.²⁴⁰

The question of strength and purpose of the *Bereitschaften* remained unsettled through to the end of 1949. In March, the JIC received information that recruitment for the *Bereitschaften* was proving unsuccessful and a number of defectors had reported that they had only joined the force as a way to get from POW camps in Russia back to Germany.²⁴¹ Certainly defectors remained an important source of information. Between

²³⁶ CAB159/4, JIC(48)126th Meeting, 12 November 1948

²³⁷ CAB158/5, JIC(48)130 Final "Aggression in Germany", 10 January 1949

²³⁸ Naimark, *Russians in Germany*, pp.371-2

²³⁹ Naimark suggests the figure was more like 10,000.

²⁴⁰ Dockrill, Saki, "Britain and the Settlement of the West German Rearmament Question in 1954", in Dockrill, Michael and Young, John W. (eds), *British Foreign Policy, 1945-56* (London: Macmillan, 1989), pp.149-172

²⁴¹ CAB159/5, JIC(49)24th Meeting, 4 March 1949

January and the end of November 1949, deserter figures into the British Zone alone numbered 128 from the Bereitschaften and 303 from the Grenzpolizei, the border police.²⁴² Uncertainty about these forces existing at level of inter-Allied relations. The French feared they were being prepared for aggression in Germany.²⁴³ The CIA disagreed with JIC assessment of actual and potential strengths of the police forces.²⁴⁴ The Americans did not think the forces could reach 200,000 in number, and they put the current strength at 10,000 for each of the two police forces, with 75 percent of recruits being former POWs. Although the CIA did not put the potential figure of the forces as high as the JIC, they did expect that the reliability of the forces would increase as pay and conditions improved. As a response to all the uncertainty, the War Office, who thought that the police forces would have reached 50,000 in early 1950, suggested that a great deal more intelligence was required on training, recruitment, present and future strength and desertion rates.²⁴⁵

British policy after the blockade

The Paris CFM was a tense and fruitless affair.²⁴⁶ The Allies were confident by then, however, that Berlin could be supplied by air, should the Russians reinstitute the blockade.²⁴⁷ The Russia Committee believed the main Soviet objective was the restoration of trade between the Eastern and Western Sectors as well as a limitation of economic and democratic development in the Western sectors of Berlin.²⁴⁸ No matter what Russian aims were, the Chiefs of Staff and FO agreed that any proposals for total withdrawal from Germany should be rejected.²⁴⁹ Once the Conference was over, the JIC summarised the talks:

²⁴² CAB176/24, JIC/2184/49, 6 December 1949

²⁴³ DEFE4/20, COS(49)45th Meeting, 22 March 1949

²⁴⁴ FO1005/1173, JIC(Germany)(49)30, 20 April 1949

²⁴⁵ CAB159/6, JIC(49)105th Meeting, 14 October 1949

²⁴⁶ Tusas, *Berlin Blockade*, pp.369-372

²⁴⁷ *Ibid*, p.365

²⁴⁸ FO371/77623, Russia Committee meeting, 8 June 1949

²⁴⁹ Tusas, *Berlin Blockade*, p.368; DEFE4/21, COS(49)70th Meeting, 12 May 1949

The meeting of the Council of Foreign Ministers in Paris ended on the 20 June when a strictly limited agreement was reached which in effect recognises for the time being the existing division of Germany while leaving the door open for further efforts to reach agreement on political and economic unity.²⁵⁰

The new West German constitution, the Basic Law, had been drawn up and agreed by the Germans and Allied powers in April.²⁵¹ A draft constitution for the Democratic Republic of Germany had been approved in March. The JIC noted that although there were many echoes of the Weimar Constitution in the Basic Law, new limitations on the power of central government displayed lessons well learnt.²⁵² The Federal Republic of Germany (FRG) had a positive outlook for the future; the Allied powers had signed the Occupation Statute specifying their limited powers in Germany. Alongside this, the Allies had agreed to the end of military government in Germany once the Federal German government and Occupation Statute had come into effect. Even so, the JIC did not anticipate relations with the Germans would suddenly improve, since some matters of dismantling and denazification remained.

The division of Germany was, of course, most evident in Berlin. The JIC acknowledged the worsening divide as the Western Military Governors had issued a new statute similar to the Occupation Statute, granting full legislative, executive and judicial powers to the Berlin City Government, whilst the Russians had set up a “puppet Eastern Berlin City Government” under Fritz Ebert.²⁵³ The JIC believed there was no mistaking the style of government in the Eastern Sector where a system of street wardens had been established to act as informers on the population and armed police had been used to break the railwaymen’s strike over pay in May and June. Elections for the “People’s Congress” took place on 15/16 May, when votes were cast for or against single-party lists of candidates, the overwhelming majority of whom belonged to the SED or its affiliated organisations. An unusually large no vote (33 per cent) was probably deliberate, “in order to give the impression to the outside world that the elections had been held in a democratic way”, but the JIC thought a political purge was impending in

²⁵⁰ CAB158/6, JIC(49)4/1(Final) “Periodic Intelligence Summaries for WEURCINCCOM”, 22 July 1949

²⁵¹ Tusas, *Berlin Blockade*, pp.341-51

²⁵² JIC(49)4/1

²⁵³ *Ibid*

the Soviet zone as a consequence. Internal security in the Eastern Zone was intensifying. The JIC reported that the Interior Ministry top brass was being bolstered with successful policemen and the K-5, the Political Police, had been placed under the direct command of the Vice-President of the Interior Ministry. The Bereitschaften was also developing whilst more rigorous political selection measures had been brought in to tackle the problem of desertion.

The picture concerning Soviet troops in Germany did not settle into focus immediately after the blockade. The JIC was unsure how to interpret reports in July and August of possible increases in Cadre army strength as well as some runway lengthening.²⁵⁴ Time was needed to draw accurate conclusions from the information on troop numbers, especially given the annual rise and fall during the main training season. The JIC remained confident, however, that they would detect the necessary Soviet preparations for hostile action in the forward areas close to the Zonal frontier. By September, the Soviet troop estimate had increased to 350,000.²⁵⁵ The JIC was interested in the development of close air-to-ground co-operation during the annual training, but overall, interpreted the troop movements during the year “as defensive preparations and a general tightening up of the efficiency of the armed forces.”²⁵⁶ By December, the JIC confirmed that the two mechanised armies that were in cadre form had been brought to full peacetime strength.²⁵⁷ The Committee was puzzled though by the unusually large armour to infantry ratio. They judged that either a “radical change” in Soviet doctrine had taken place or before offensive action could be mounted, the Russians would have to bring in more rifle divisions. If it were the latter, they hoped this would be noticed by British intelligence in Germany or Poland.

The German Democratic Republic (GDR) was founded on 7 October 1949. The JIC(G) considered this an important step in the full integration of the Eastern Zone into

²⁵⁴ CAB159/6, JIC(49)68th Meeting, 8 July 1949; JIC (49) 76th Meeting, 5 August 1949

²⁵⁵ CAB158/7, JIC(49)55 Final “Soviet intentions and capabilities”, 6 September 1949

²⁵⁶ CAB159/6, JIC(49)128th Meeting, 9 December 1949

²⁵⁷ CAB158/8, JIC(49)118(Final) “Soviet long term preparations for war – review of major developments during the year ending 31 December 1949”, 17 March 1950

the Soviet Bloc.²⁵⁸ Diplomatic missions were exchanged with other Satellite countries and SED economic representatives were admitted into Moscow's economic planning bodies. The Political Division in Germany did not think that the GDR government would get "any real measure of sovereignty" since the SMA would not become a High Commission like the Western Control Commissions. The Russia Committee noted that the Russians had not made any real concessions of power to the East Germans.²⁵⁹ The JIC(G) thought that the Soviet intention was to outdo the Bonn government in appealing to German nationalism whilst demonstrating Russian equanimity through adherence to quadripartite agreements. The exact nature of the hand over of power in the Eastern Zone was kept "deliberately obscure", but the Russians were able to ease life in the Eastern Zone by proclaiming an end to rationing after the 1950 harvest, although this was in fact dependent upon large imports from the USSR and Satellite countries.²⁶⁰ As time went on, the Russians were keen to emphasise the economic plans and successes in the Eastern Zone, especially under General Chuikov, the new Soviet Control Commissioner.²⁶¹ The JIC(G) correctly predicted that the Russians would carry out a campaign to win recognition for the GDR from Western states as well as win support in Western Germany through demonstrations of Soviet-German co-operation.

The JIC reported to WEURCINCCOM on the results of the first elections for the new Bundestag in the FRG.²⁶² The Christian Democrats (CDU) won 139 seats, the SPD 131 and the FDP 52. Theodor Heuss was elected President and Konrad Adenauer, the CDU leader, was elected Chancellor with a CDU-FDP-German Party coalition government. Of concern from the election was the appreciable rise in support for nationalist parties in the British Zone, and the prominence in every party's campaign of opposition to British dismantling policies. The "Growth of Right Wing nationalist and

²⁵⁸ DEFE41/64, JIC(Germany)(M)(49)14, 18 October 1949

²⁵⁹ FO371/77624, Russia Committee meeting, 25 October 1949

²⁶⁰ DEFE41/64, JIC(Germany)(M)(49)15, 8 November 1949

²⁶¹ DEFE41/64, JIC(Germany)(M)(49)16, 29 November 1949

²⁶² CAB158/6, JIC(49)4/2(Final) "Periodic Intelligence Summaries for WEURCINCCOM", 25 October 1949

militarist organisations in Germany” had actually been added as a Priority 2 target in the list of priorities for intelligence collection in Germany back in January.²⁶³

The economic circumstances in Berlin had continued to be dire, long after the blockade had ended.²⁶⁴ Credit aid from the Western zones was required, and supplies had not been restored sufficiently until August, when the airlift finally wound down. Some of the crews and planes remained on standby in case the operation had to be reinstated at short notice. That looked possible to the JIC in October, since although some quadripartite talks had taken place, there was still considerable disagreement over amongst other things, currency agreements.²⁶⁵ The Eastern Zone was little better off economically than Berlin; the JIC noted that shortages had led to the railways working “under increasing strain”, roads and bridges going unrepaired and waterway tonnages falling well short of the yearly plans.

An increase in the flow of deserters from the police forces in the Eastern Zone during July, August and December had provided good information. The JIC reported that both overt and covert sources were indicating that the Russians intended to form an Army from units of the *Bereitschaften*.²⁶⁶ Recruitment drives were taking place among “reliable” groups of SED or Free German Youth (FDJ). The Committee’s revised estimate of strength put the *Bereitschaften* at 12,000 and the *Grenzpolizei* at 11,000. The “preparation of the... *Bereitschaften* for an operational role” had been included in the list of “Indications of Russian Preparations for War” from June onwards.²⁶⁷

²⁶³ CAB159/5, JIC(49)7th Meeting, 19 January 1949

²⁶⁴ Tusas, *Berlin Blockade*, pp.373-7

²⁶⁵ JIC(49)4/2

²⁶⁶ *Ibid*

²⁶⁷ CAB158/6, JIC(49)41(Final) “Indications of Soviet preparations for war”, 15 June 1949

The new West German State

A *de facto* divided Germany was not the final aim of British policy; the idea of reunification at some point in the future remained.²⁶⁸ The division had really been the result of Western policies to establish the Federal Republic, the Soviet efforts to develop the GDR and the residual *modus vivendi* left by the breakdown of Four Power control and the blockade of Berlin. From a British perspective, a divided Germany would be a source of friction and possible war between East and West; Allied garrisons in Berlin would be “hostage[s] to fortune”; and the recovery of Germany would “inevitably be retarded”. However, the divided Germany meant American troops remained in Europe which the British believed crucial to European security. In the eyes of the JIC, the significant point was that during 1949, Soviet policy in Europe had been badly hampered.²⁶⁹ The North Atlantic Treaty, the establishment of the FRG, Tito’s continued dissention from Moscow and the failure of the Communist rebellion in Greece had all checked Russian ambition. The great Soviet success had been the detonation of their first atomic bomb on 29 August 1949, a development that took British and American intelligence by surprise.²⁷⁰

The progress of the fledgling West German State was more important to the government than reunification. Stage one of the British policy towards West Germany had been completed with the establishment of the democratic Federal government through the Basic Law and Occupation Statute. Stage two, Sir Ivone Kirkpatrick, then head of the FO German Section, put it to the Chiefs, was to “see to it that the German Government [was] a success”.²⁷¹ The Petersburg Agreement signed on 22 November 1949 by Adenauer and the Allied High Commissioners went some way along that path: the FRG was incorporated into the Western European community as an associate member of the Council of Europe; the West Germans agreed to join the International Authority for the Ruhr and co-operate with the Military Security Board, the Allied

²⁶⁸ Bullock, *Bevin*, p.693; DEFE4/26, COS(49)166th Meeting, 9 November 1949

²⁶⁹ JIC(49)118

²⁷⁰ Cradock, *Know Your Enemy*, pp.55-6

²⁷¹ DEFE5/16, COS(49)294 “Level of German industry”, 9 September 1949

oversight body of military and security matters; and the industrial dismantlement programme was vastly reduced.²⁷² There were no decisions about German rearmament; a looming issue which the Chiefs of Staff had recognised back in September 1948.²⁷³

Plans for a Federal Security Service had been drawn up in April 1949 by Robertson as a way for the Western German State to protect itself from communist subversive forces, since without effective intelligence any police or defence force would be powerless.²⁷⁴ His plans were modelled on the British system of the Security Service and Police Special Branches, with an emphasis on decentralised power. On JIC advice, the Chiefs agreed to a Federal Security Service, based on close supervision by British intelligence officers at all levels.²⁷⁵ They were keen to ensure that the Service did not develop around the framework set up in the American Zone, since evidence existed that the American organisation had been penetrated by Russian agents. The JIC(G) pointed out that the original British plans did not guarantee against penetration by Soviet agents, nor did they include enough provision for Allied control over the Service.²⁷⁶

These matters were left, however, during the negotiations that accompanied the ending of the blockade since they were too politically sensitive.²⁷⁷ By October, in the absence of a tripartite Allied agreement, the British had gone ahead and implemented their plans in their own zone, hoping this would later become the model for the whole of Western Germany.²⁷⁸ Robertson reported, however, that the Germans themselves had suggested a much more centralised Security Service, and if the Americans and French agreed to it, the British ought to follow suit, whilst insisting that the Service did not have the powers of arrest and was well separated from the police. Before the end of October, the Americans had put forward their own proposals based on the organisation already

²⁷² Bullock, *Bevin*, pp.738-9

²⁷³ DEFE5/12, COS(48)217(O) "Employment of Germans in the defence of Western Europe", 27 September 1948

²⁷⁴ DEFE5/14, COS(49)122 "Western German State – Arrangements for internal security", 6 April 1949

²⁷⁵ DEFE4/21, COS(49)66th Meeting, 6 May 1949

²⁷⁶ CAB176/22, JIC/699/49, 14 April 1949

²⁷⁷ DEFE4/22, COS(49)80th Meeting, 31 May 1949

²⁷⁸ DEFE5/17, COS(49)349 "Establishment of Security Services in Germany", 19 October 1949

established in their zone.²⁷⁹ As the American proposals represented a worst-case scenario, the British accepted the German plans. The JIC admitted that a more concentrated service would make the jobs of “supervision and liaison” easier for the Allies.²⁸⁰ They were adamant, however, that a separation of powers between the Security Service and Special Branches must exist. As Aldrich writes, the British had success in influencing the foundation of the German Security Service, although it is questionable whether much was done to improve security in Germany.²⁸¹

Settling Berlin

In October 1949, the JIC produced a report on “Soviet intentions in Berlin” after the stalemate of the Paris CFM.²⁸² Robertson had warned at the end of September that the Russians might be preparing to adopt “a stiffer attitude” in Berlin.²⁸³ The first draft of the JIC report concluded that the Russians were unlikely to attempt to evict the Allies from Berlin whilst German morale was high, but the Chiefs of Staff suggested that the JIC had not taken full account of the decline in morale in Berlin due to worsening unemployment and a lack of political progress.²⁸⁴ The Chiefs concluded it was necessary for the JIC to reconsider the question of Berlin and to carry out a study of ways to prevent the Russians from interfering in a future airlift as part of a joint Anglo-American study.

The final report began by stating that despite the failure of the blockade, the Russians maintained their ambition of evicting the Western Allies from Berlin.²⁸⁵ The JIC did not, however, alter their conclusion that there was “little likelihood of a renewed attempt to evict us from Berlin by means of a blockade, while the Western Allies are

²⁷⁹ DEFE4/25, COS(49)156th Meeting, 24 October 1949

²⁸⁰ CAB158/8, JIC(49)100(Final) “Establishment of Security Services in Germany”, 12 November 1949

²⁸¹ Aldrich, *Hidden Hand*, pp.430-3; see later chapters for more on this.

²⁸² CAB158/7, JIC(49)54(Final)(Revise), 10 October 1949

²⁸³ FO371/77624, Russia Committee meeting 27 September 1949

²⁸⁴ DEFE4/25, COS(49)149th Meeting, 5 October 1949

²⁸⁵ JIC(49)54

united and on good terms with the Germans and so long as German morale is high.” The conclusions did accept that German morale was vulnerable which, when combined with a lack of Allied attention to the matter, could motivate the Russians to reintroduce the blockade. The JIC recognised that Berlin certainly remained a thorn in the side of Russian ambitions to develop a viable East German State as a reaction to the FRG. The Soviets had taken preparatory measures to shore up the Eastern Sectors of the city including building up stocks from the Western Zone, ensuring key personnel were resident in the Eastern Sector, developing food reserves, increasing training for the normal and para-military police and building rail communications.

The JIC warned that the Russians could easily reimpose a blockade and furthermore, they could easily interfere with another airlift. The JIC expected determined disruption of another airlift, using balloons or smoke to complicate final approaches, heavy cross traffic in the airspace, jamming of communications and radar, sabotage or “stirring up labour unrest”. The question of interference depended on political gambles the Russians were prepared to make. The JIC still believed the Russians did not want to risk war for the moment over Berlin, but they would, nevertheless, be able to have a serious effect on the success of a second airlift without taking great chances. The JIC’s more positive note, however, was that Berlin was now much better prepared to survive a blockade.

As part of his contribution to the joint Anglo-American study of Berlin, Robertson agreed with the JIC that the Russians would not reimpose the blockade, but, if they did, Berlin could cope.²⁸⁶ Neither Robertson nor the JIC seem to have known that the RAF were planning to make serious cuts in Transport Command, which would have meant an even greater burden on the Americans and the new West German government to supply aircraft for any airlift.²⁸⁷ For the moment, he expected the Russians and the GDR “to abide by the quadripartite agreements”. Any interference with the Allies in Berlin by the new East German government would be cautious to begin with, for example, hampering Allied communications across the Eastern Zone. Forecasting

²⁸⁶ DEF5/18, COS(49)415 “Soviet intentions in Berlin”, 28 November 1949

²⁸⁷ DEF4/27, COS(49)186th Meeting, 16 December 1949; COS(49)189th Meeting, 22 December 1949

action some twelve years in advance, Robertson thought that the most drastic measures the East Germans would employ would be sealing off the Western Sectors of Berlin under Soviet encouragement. His further conclusion was that the Russians could attempt to force the Allies into official dealings with the Eastern government by claiming to have handed over all issues concerning communication rights.

Conclusions

More than anything, the 1947-9 period was about the JIC establishing and developing its Cold War role. In terms of collection, organisation and presentation, the intelligence community was bending to meet new challenges, as was the rest of Whitehall.²⁸⁸ Cradock writes that before the Berlin blockade, “Western assessments of the main Soviet objectives and the underlying Soviet caution were correct”.²⁸⁹ In terms of a specific warning, however, he notes that Western intelligence did not deliver, although he remarks that the CIA got closer than the JIC. The files made available since *Know Your Enemy* was published, validate these conclusions. British intelligence had developed enough to assess the general mood of the Cold War, but not the specifics. In November 1947, Evill wrote in his review:

Our knowledge of Russia, geographical, economic, industrial and military is seriously lacking or out of date. Our knowledge of Russian intentions, tactical and strategic doctrines, scientific and technical capacity, and the progress of their research and development in the military field appears even more seriously inadequate.²⁹⁰

By the end of 1949, the JIC had only really begun to address these problems.

It is clear that the JIC did not have a major role to play during the blockade; the Committee had more of a supporting, but still noticeable, function. Bevin was the driving force behind British policy, probably motivated more by his vision for Britain’s security and future than by intelligence assessments. Of course, the estimates provided

²⁸⁸ Hennessy, Peter, *Whitehall* (London: Secker & Warburg, 1989), pp.120-168

²⁸⁹ Cradock, *Know Your Enemy*, p.82

²⁹⁰ Misc/P(47)31

in JIC papers, were part of the foundation of information on which judgements would have been based. In particular, the Committee's constant reference to an absence of information indicating Soviet preparations for military action in Germany was proof that the crisis was not turning into a war. The JIC's picture of Soviet military activity improved during 1947-9, to the extent that the Committee became confident they would learn of Soviet reinforcements. The sources available to the British such as BRIXMIS, low-level agents, deserters, defectors and other line-crossers, all of which were largely *de visu*, leant themselves more to these sorts of targets than either the political or scientific areas. The system of conducting weekly reviews of Soviet preparations for war also developed to make more consistent and focused use of the intelligence.

Beyond the military intelligence, there was little political insight in the JIC assessments that added much beyond the FO and Control Commission reports. British intelligence simply did not have the sources to provide any more than broad appreciations of Soviet intentions. That said, what the JIC did write was often accurate. They had recognised before the blockade that Russia rather than Germany needed to be their top priority. The Committee also produced sensible analysis of Soviet aims in Europe. They wasted no time in relaying the exact nature of the East German state that had developed under Soviet control. Furthermore, in constantly reminding customers of the shortages in Western Germany, the JIC reflected the vulnerability of the Western zones to disaffection and communist infiltration and influence.

A big part of the JIC's function was to provide the surrounding Whitehall departments with whatever assessments they could muster. For example, they provided the FO with assessments on largely military matters likely to come up at CFM meetings and the Chiefs of Staff with estimates of Soviet intentions and strengths. Outside Britain, soon after the foundation of Western European Commands, the JIC began to prepare papers for international consumption. No matter who the customer was, assessments were mainly focused on purely military matters or on the political ramifications of military considerations because of the Committee's raw intelligence

supply and function. The JIC was slowly becoming fit to operate at the crossroads between foreign and defence policy.

Chapter Two: 1950 – 1952

Strengthening Allies

A Korean feint?

When the Cabinet first discussed the invasion of South Korea by North Korean troops, they were uncertain as to the level of Moscow's involvement in the action and what the US response might be.¹ The government was unsure of what exactly might unfold either in the Far East or even in Europe. The West found it difficult to shake the idea that it was a Russian hand controlling events in the Far East, even though the troops were North Korean. This, in turn, raised anxiety of a Soviet attack on Western Europe by proxy.² British intelligence had failed to predict the invasion because of a lack of Far Eastern sources focused on Korea or China.³ A JIC note from the 30 June brought some good news, however: "We have no intelligence of any Soviet intention to make any immediate attack" in Europe, Turkey, Persia or Afghanistan.⁴ Reports from JIC(G) in the last week of June and into July showed no indications of large-scale Russian preparations for war on the European frontline.⁵ But this was not to be taken as the final word on likely events in Germany, since the JIC had to warn:

Although we would expect to have intelligence of intensified Soviet preparations for a world war, we are less confident of receiving warning of local communist aggression.⁶

The JIC believed, however, that so long as NATO stood firm in Western Germany, Berlin and Austria, the risk of a major war would be too great for the Russians to sponsor a westwards attack by the Satellite powers.

¹ The invasion began on 25 June 1950; CAB128/17, CM(50)39, 27 June 1950

² Kirkpatrick, Ivone, *The Inner Circle* (London: Macmillan, 1959), p.238

³ Aldrich, *The Hidden Hand*, p.272

⁴ FO371/86756, RC/101/50 "Implications of the war in Korea on our defence policy in other parts of the World", 30 June 1950

⁵ DEFE41/65, JIC(Ger)(M)(50)9, 27 June 1950; JIC(Ger)(M)(50)10, 17 July 1950

⁶ CAB158/11, JIC(50)72(Final) "Possible uses by the Soviet Union of Satellite Forces", 2 August 1950

As Cradock describes, by the end of August, the JIC were confident they had fathomed Communist intentions such that they could dismiss the idea that the Korean attack was a Soviet feint to divert attention from either Europe or the Middle East.⁷ That was not to say that the British should be unconcerned about the shift from Russian's "skilful exploitation of the cold war technique" to a "noticeable tendency to increase the tempo".⁸ The diagnosis for Germany including Berlin, therefore, was increased Communist pressure on the West to withdraw their forces, utilising propaganda and more direct methods including interference from the *Bereitschaften*, but stopping short of war. The JIC did not believe the East German Police were yet capable of an attack on the Western Zones or the Western sectors of Berlin, but that was thought to be a possibility for 1951. If so, they could be used in a new attempt to force the West from Berlin, giving such action "a purely East German nationalist interpretation." This would be particularly attractive to Soviet leaders since the GDR was now in a sufficient position to impose a blockade without direct Soviet participation, plus the *Bereitschaften* were well trained in provoking civil disturbances and the Anglo-American airlift capability was "seriously reduced" by Korean commitments. Renewed pressure on Berlin concurrent with the Far Eastern war could well have dangerously split Western strength and attention. The Russia Committee certainly shared the sentiment that it was a vulnerable time for Allied interests in Berlin.⁹ The Chiefs of Staff were grateful for USAF reinforcements dispatched to Europe.¹⁰

Soviet interference with communications in Berlin in February, had resulted in heightened tension for a short period, especially when the West Germans reacted by imposing restrictions on exports to the East.¹¹ A JIC report in May 1950, distributed to the Minister for Defence, Foreign Secretary and Prime Minister as well as the Chiefs, assessed that the Russians were unlikely to risk military action or the reimposition of a

⁷ Cradock, *Know Your Enemy*, p.93

⁸ CAB158/11, JIC(50)75(Final) "Probable Soviet Short Term developments", 23 August 1950

⁹ FO371/86762, RC/105/50, Minutes from 4 July 1950

¹⁰ Two extra bomber groups and one extra fighter group. Cradock, *Know Your Enemy*, pp.93-4

¹¹ CAB128/17, CM(50)4, 7 February 1950

full blockade during that year.¹² Some interference with communications was expected, particularly by the GDR authorities as they attempted to assert their power. The Eastern zone in general had been bolstered by the increased strength of the Bereitschaften and a reduction in reliance on imports from Western Germany. The JIC expected the Russians to use propaganda, economic measures and political infiltration in an attempt to weaken West Berliners' morale. The FO, however, pointed out to the JIC that in fact the economic circumstances in the Western Sectors had improved, making circumstances there a little more steady.¹³ Evidence later in the year from JIC(G) contradicted this view, suggesting West Berlin was still vulnerable on the economic front.¹⁴

Soon after the war in Korea had begun, the FO drew up a paper on the importance of Berlin to the West.¹⁵ They believed the Allies had to stand firm and prepare for action in the guise of a Bereitschaften attack or a new blockade, in order to preserve the Western presence in what was considered to be both a "spy-hole" behind the Iron Curtain and a perfect Western "shop-window" to Eastern Europe. The JIC October assessment of "Soviet Intentions in Berlin" reported that military action or a full blockade was unlikely, but economic and propaganda pressure would be determined.¹⁶ Once the Bereitschaften had improved in strength, equipment and training, this might change. Since the last report in May, the JIC believed that the Russian "pin-pricks against communications" had kept potential investors away from West Berlin, at a time when the standard of living in the Eastern sector had been rising. Soviet interference with transport routes was also able to limit exports from the Western sectors.¹⁷

¹² CAB158/10, JIC(50)43(Final) "Soviet Intentions in Berlin during 1950", 5 May 1950; DEFE4/31, COS(50)80th Meeting, 22 May 1950

¹³ CAB159/8, JIC(50)88th Meeting, 23 August 1950

¹⁴ CAB159/8, JIC(50)108th Meeting, 11 October 1950

¹⁵ DEFE5/23, COS(50)291 "Importance of Berlin", 5 August 1950

¹⁶ CAB158/11, JIC(50)80(Final), 20 October 1950

¹⁷ CAB128/20, CM(51)54, 23 July 1951

Rearming

The key to understanding the long-term effect of the Korean War on the German question is to recognise the role the war played as an accelerant on rearmament in Europe and the further entrenchment of the divide between the FRG allied to the West and the GDR satellite of the Soviet Union. Matthias Peter writes that, “Within 48 hours [of the Korean invasion], the Pentagon discussed the question of West German and Japanese rearmament, and four weeks later recommended the formation of German units within NATO.”¹⁸ As part of the Petersburg Agreement, the Allies had relaxed limitations on German shipbuilding and modified the industrial dismantling programme, but the emphasis at that stage was on economic recovery not some sort of remilitarisation. When Robert Schuman, the French Foreign Minister, proposed his plan in May 1950 for what was to become the European Coal and Steel Community (ECSC), the intertwining of French and German (and later Italian and Benelux) heavy industries began.¹⁹ Whilst Britain did not join the ECSC, from the early moments, Attlee’s government welcomed the idea of European co-operation, a trend which continued when Churchill took power in October 1951.²⁰ Extant records suggest that the JIC had no notable involvement in these economic matters.

There was awareness amongst the British government, however, of even more difficult deliberations ahead. The day before the unveiling of Schuman’s Plan, as part of their discussion in preparation for the London Foreign Ministers’ Meeting, the Cabinet had recognised that “before long, it would be necessary to consider how Germany could best contribute towards the defence of Western Europe – though this raised grave questions which would require most careful consideration.”²¹ Even though fear of the Soviet Union created an increased willingness to accept the idea of German rearmament, ministerial worries over Soviet reactions, age-old apprehension of a militarised

¹⁸ Peter, Matthias, “Britain, the Cold War and the Economics of German Rearmament, 1949-51” in Deighton (ed), *Britain and the First Cold War*, pp.273-290

¹⁹ Bullock, *Bevin*, pp.768-774

²⁰ Hennessy, *Never Again*, pp.390-404; CAB128/17, CM(50)34, 2 June 1950; CAB128/23, CC(51)10, 22 November 1951

²¹ CAB128/17, CM(50)29, 8 May 1950

Germany, uncertainty over the damage likely to be done to hopes of reunification and significant British and French political and public resistance to an armed Germany still remained.²² The Chiefs of Staff realised that whilst German rearmament was essential to the defence of Western Europe, it was not an ambition they could yet pursue on political grounds.²³

The outbreak of the Korean War, however, “erased the gap between military desirability and political feasibility” of West German rearmament, as Gaddis puts it.²⁴ The Chiefs had their initial view of how best to use German resources in the defence of Western Europe ready by early August 1950.²⁵ The path towards agreement on German rearmament was rocky, however. Before the end of 1950, Churchill had advocated a European Army, the United States and France had traded proposals and counter-proposals for a German military force and His Majesty’s Government had welcomed the idea of a German Army contributing to a European force supported by an increased American commitment to the defence of Western Europe. The West Germans themselves spent a good deal of time debating the issue in their Parliament and press.

German rearmament was only part of the developing Western defence plans. Attlee’s Cabinet sanctioned an increase in British defence spending from £3bn to £4.7bn over three years, at huge economic and some political cost.²⁶ Britain, France and the United States agreed to increase their troop numbers in Germany: in 1951 the UK would send an extra armoured division (to bring their total to four divisions), the French offered five divisions to double their forces and the US promised five-and-a-half divisions to bring their total to seven-and-a-half.²⁷ As conditions of West German rearmament, Attlee wanted to see NATO countries rearm, Allied forces strengthened before a German contribution was raised, all German units associated with NATO forces

²² Dockrill, Saki, *Britain’s Policy for West German Rearmament, 1950-1955* (Cambridge: CUP, 1991), pp.12-5

²³ DEFES/20, COS(50)139 “Defence Policy and Global Strategy”, 1 May 1950

²⁴ Gaddis, *We Now Know*, p.124

²⁵ Dockrill, *Britain’s Policy*, pp.21-58

²⁶ Hennessy, *Never Again*, pp.409-418; Dockrill, *Britain’s Policy*, p.73

²⁷ CAB131/8, DO(50)19th Meeting, 16 October 1950

to counter any German threat and the West German government agree on their level of contribution.²⁸

Whilst the JIC had, in effect, been contributing to the policy debate over West German rearmament for a number of years by stressing the dangers of the Soviet Union to Western Europe, the strength of the *Bereitschaften* and the necessity of a strong NATO presence in Germany to block Russian ambitions, their records show they did not start specifically discussing detailed aspects of it until September 1950, at roughly the same time as the Cabinet.²⁹ The JIC explored how they could contribute to the security of any new force by analysing what information was held by British intelligence agencies on ex-Wehrmacht officers who might potentially end up in the German Armed Forces. The JIC discovered some useful information, but doubted that it could be used effectively since the Germans were unlikely to allow the Allies to vet their officers.³⁰

In January 1951, the JIC got involved in a policy-making dispute between the Chiefs, FO and Cabinet about defence, by advocating general Western rearmament.³¹ Cradock notes that the JIC moved away from their normal practice of analysing events to blatant advocacy for a particular policy, in this case proposed by the Chiefs in the face of some Cabinet opposition.³² Using language far stronger than usual, the paper urged that the West had to equip itself with forces and weapons adequate to deter the Russians from using their preponderance of conventional forces in pursuit of their ambitions.³³ Failure to do so would leave the West “powerless to stop continued encroachment by the Soviet Union over the territories of the free world.” The view of Soviet aggressive intentions was extreme and capped with an appeal that without rearmament, “the survival of the United Kingdom would... be in jeopardy.”

²⁸ Dockrill, *Britain's Policy*, p.56

²⁹ CAB159/8, JIC(50)96th Meeting, 13 September 1950

³⁰ CAB159/8, JIC(50)105th Meeting, 4 October 1950

³¹ Mawby, Spencer, *Containing Germany: Britain and the arming of the Federal Republic* (London: Macmillan, 1999), pp.52-61

³² Cradock, *Know Your Enemy*, p.94

³³ CAB158/12, JIC(51)6(Final) “The Soviet Threat”, 19 January 1951

The constant watch on events in Germany had intensified after June 1950 and intelligence production on the threats to peace in Europe continued. By October, the JIC recorded that the *Bereitschaften* had developed into a force that could be used “to attack the Western Zones initially in order to create conditions highly suitable for a follow up attack by Soviet troops.”³⁴ These para-military policemen certainly represented a threat to Allied forces in Berlin. General Kenneth Strong, Director of JIB, felt, however, after hearing German opinions on this matter, that the *Bereitschaften* was not yet considered reliable enough politically by the Russians to use in an attack on the West.³⁵ As recruitment brought in more young, faithful Communists over time this was expected to change.

Once the Western powers had begun to seriously pursue West German rearmament, it became essential to have accurate insights into likely Soviet reactions. In their pre-Korean War paper on “Defence Policy and Global Strategy”, the Chiefs of Staff had noted:

The fact remains, however, that in the long run the defence of Western Germany against a Russian invasion can only be secured with the assistance of some form of German armed forces. We do not suggest that this should or could be adopted as our policy in the near future; indeed, to do so might well split the Western Union in half and might even terrify the Russians to the point of preventive war.³⁶

The crisis in the Far East certainly focused Western European minds sufficiently to deal with the problem of Western Union cohesion, but the uncertainty about the Russian reactions remained. The 1950 update of Soviet intentions and capabilities, produced by the JIC in October, stressed that the fear of German aggression was the prime motivation in Russian desires to unify Germany under Communist control.³⁷ The JIC believed, however, that the tools by which the Russians would achieve their German ambition would remain economic and political, rather than military, with an emphasis placed on

³⁴ CAB159/8, JIC(50)111th Meeting, 18 October 1950

³⁵ CAB159/8, JIC(50)127th Meeting, 23 November 1950

³⁶ COS(50)139

³⁷ CAB158/9, JIC(50)6(Final), “Basic Review of the Foreign Policy and Strategy of the Soviet Union”, 9 October 1950

their propaganda campaign to appeal to the peaceful and unified hopes of the German people. The Communist campaigns launched at the October Prague Conference and the Second World Peace Conference in Warsaw, leading to the Russian proposal of a CFM to discuss Germany in November, seemed to buttress the JIC theory.³⁸ Alongside achieving their ambitions in the Far East, British intelligence believed that wrecking German rearmament was the highest priority for Soviet foreign policy. Murphy *et al*'s research into Russian intelligence archives shows that reporting back from the KI foreign intelligence agency residencies in Germany to Moscow tended to play up the threat of German rearmament and NATO, but failed ever to mention that the Korean War had a significant role in Western thinking.³⁹ Stalin seems to have known little of the true motivation of the West.

The JIC believed that the Soviets would press hard for a peace treaty and a withdrawal of occupation forces, so that the whole of Germany would be left ripe for invasion by the *Bereitschaften* or easy picking for Communist economic and propaganda efforts.⁴⁰ Molotov's threat in December that rearmament had to be prevented either through war or a permanent peace treaty was taken seriously by the JIC.⁴¹ The West should expect "a sharp Soviet reaction" if negotiations for a CFM came to nothing. The British recognised that the Russians were making a lot of noise in order to try and influence the meetings of the NATO Council, with specific attention being given by Soviet propaganda to the weak links in the West, such as France. The results of Western failure to respond favourably to Russian advances, the JIC thought,

might take a number of forms, ranging from the denunciation of the Anglo-Soviet Treaty, re-imposition of the Berlin blockade, or withdrawal from the United Nations, to actual military measures against Western Germany. The last would almost certainly provoke a world war, however, and the indications continued to point against any such military action in the immediate future.

³⁸ CAB158/12, JIC(51)4(Final) "Soviet long term preparations for war – review of major developments during the year ending 31 December, 1950", 4 April 1951

³⁹ Murphy *et al*, *Battleground Berlin*, pp.79, 88-90

⁴⁰ CAB158/11, JIC(50)104 "Russian Strategic Intentions and threat to Peace", 28 November 1950

⁴¹ CAB159/8, JIC(50)138th Meeting, 21 December 1950

The FO and Chiefs of Staff requested JIC input into a paper produced for ministers early in 1951 on likely Soviet reactions to German rearmament.⁴² After Chinese intervention in Korea in November 1950, the FO became particularly nervous that Western moves towards rearmament in Europe would spur a serious Soviet reaction.⁴³ Bevin and the FO preferred to see a German contribution to defence wait, whereas the Chiefs saw it as an even more pressing priority. The JIC agreed with the FO on the overriding Soviet intentions in Europe, but believed more consideration had to be taken of the measures the Russians could take “to hinder or prevent the rearmament of Western Germany.”⁴⁴ In particular, the JIC believed that the FO had underestimated the likely capabilities of the *Bereitschaften* by the end of 1951. Even so, intelligence indicated that Soviet leaders could not expect to prevent rearming, “unless by frightening the Germans themselves off it.” The more likely Soviet reaction was an attempt to weaken Western co-operation.

At the same time as working on the FO paper, the JIC were producing their annual assessment on the likelihood of war with the Russians.⁴⁵ This stated that the Soviets did not have a sufficient atomic stockpile or the means to deliver the weapons over long-range, to risk total war before 1954. Even if the Russians decided on a preventive war before US and German rearmament was completed, they would look for as much preparation time as possible. Previous assessments of Russian preparations for war had judged that they would not have either the air force or atomic stockpile they would need until 1955.⁴⁶ The JIC believed that if the Russians were to make a move before either they or the West were fully ready, the “period of greatest danger appears to be about the end of 1952”.⁴⁷ That said, the Russians were not thought likely to take drastic action until the process of arranging a CFM had failed conclusively. In that

⁴² CAB159/9, JIC(51)12th Meeting, 1 February 1951; DEF5/27, COS(51)41 “Possible Soviet Reactions to the rearmament of Western Germany”, 26 January 1951

⁴³ Mawby, *Containing Germany*, pp.48-50

⁴⁴ CAB158/12, JIC(51)13 “Possible Soviet Reactions to the Rearmament of Western Germany”, 8 February 1951

⁴⁵ CAB158/11, JIC(50)111(Final) “Likelihood of total war with the Soviet Union up to the end of 1954”, 15 February 1951

⁴⁶ CAB158/11, JIC(50)77(Revise) “The likelihood of war with the Soviet Union and the date by which the Soviet leaders might be prepared to risk it”, 18 August 1950

⁴⁷ JIC(50)111

event the West could look forward to attempts to stir up public disorder in Germany against rearmament, the reimposition of a blockade of Berlin or a “military coup directed against Berlin by the *Bereitschaften*”, whose forces would be in a position to attack West Berlin by the end of 1951. Mawby suggests that this assessment had a significant impact on ministers, officials and the Chiefs of Staff, convincing all that rushing through German rearmament might provoke the Soviets.⁴⁸

The JIC views of the preliminary CFM talks, taking place in Paris in early March 1951, were not too optimistic.⁴⁹ Whilst the first meeting had been “relatively business-like and unprovocative”, the second had included Gromyko giving “a long propaganda outburst” and he “showed no disposition to compromise with Western proposals for the Ministerial agenda”. The Russians insisted that demilitarisation of Germany, a peace treaty including the withdrawal of all troops and a Europe-wide reduction in arms be included in the talks. Their focus shifted over time, however, since they later insisted that NATO and American bases in Europe be put on the agenda, a proposal which the Western Powers could not accept.⁵⁰ The JIC believed the Russians were changing horse in mid-stream, moving away from the claim that German rearmament was the main source of tension in Europe to the statement that NATO was the problem.⁵¹ They thought the Soviet goal had altered: “the main objective is now to undermine the Western defence effort as a whole, not simply in Germany.”

The Four Power talks collapsed without much hope of regeneration at the end of June.⁵² The consequences of the breakdown were not as in the worst case scenario the JIC had given earlier; rather the JIC believed things might well calm down as Soviet tactics changed.⁵³ Sir David Kelly, Ambassador in Moscow, persuaded the JIC that the Russians would make maximum use of their peace campaign so that whilst continuing with their own military preparations, they would “change their political tactics so as to

⁴⁸ Mawby, *Containing Germany*, pp.60-1

⁴⁹ CAB159/9, JIC(51)26th Meeting, 8 March 1951

⁵⁰ Dockrill, *Britain's Policy*, p.67

⁵¹ CAB159/9, JIC(51)57th Meeting, 31 May 1951

⁵² Dockrill, *Britain's Policy*, p.68

⁵³ CAB158/13, JIC(51)73(Final) “Soviet policy and tactics”, 30 August 1951

lull the fears of the West and so slow down Western rearmament, resorting to blandishments instead of threats.”⁵⁴ The JIC considered that the Soviet peace campaign remained a potentially powerful disruptive weapon. The appraisal of the August 1951 Berlin Youth Festival concluded that it had given a loud voice to the Communist peace campaign propaganda, although for the time being, such measures had “failed to impress the Western German populace”.⁵⁵

Agreement between the Western powers was finally reached on the nature of German rearmament, as well as on the future status of Germany after the end of occupation, in Washington during September 1951.⁵⁶ German forces were to be raised within a European Army that would form a part of the European Defence Community (EDC). Eisenhower had already been appointed Supreme Allied Commander Europe (SACEUR) in April 1951, as part of the early agreements on the strengthening of US military ties to Western Europe.⁵⁷ Negotiations with the West Germans in early 1952 ironed out both the exact German contribution to Western defence and the wording of the Contractual Agreements to end occupation and hand full power over to the Germans.⁵⁸

Soviet wrecking operations did not come to an end with the final general agreement between the Western nations, since the opportunity to disrupt ratification still existed. Secret intelligence suggested that as a reaction to the Washington talks, the Soviets were to offer a peace treaty to either the whole of Germany or just the GDR, followed by troop withdrawal.⁵⁹ An offer of all-German elections from Otto Grotewohl, the GDR’s Prime Minister, which included a guarantee of Communist representation for the GDR in the small print, was countered by the FRG proposal for free elections guaranteed by a UN Commission.⁶⁰ Initially, the JIC were unsure how great the Russian

⁵⁴ CAB159/10, JIC(51)86th Meeting, 16 August 1951

⁵⁵ CAB158/12, JIC(51)32(Final Revise) “Survey of World Communism in 1950”, 22 June 1951; JIC(51)2/7(Final) “Periodic Intelligence Summary for SHAPE”, 18 September 1951

⁵⁶ Dockrill, *Britain’s Policy*, p.79

⁵⁷ Gaddis, *We Now Know*, p.125

⁵⁸ Dockrill, *Britain’s Policy*, p.97

⁵⁹ CAB159/10, JIC(51)98th Meeting, 20 September 1951

⁶⁰ CAB159/10, JIC(51)103rd Meeting, 4 October 1951

concessions to secure a demilitarised Germany might be, believing it possible that the Soviets would allow free national elections in return for German impotence.⁶¹ Intelligence reviewed in January 1952 hinted, however, that Soviet intentions might be in the opposite direction from unification:

There are indications that arrangements are being made to permit the effective sealing of the East German frontier with Western Germany if such action should become necessary without dislocation of the East German economy.⁶²

East Germans who crossed into the West for work were being found jobs in the East, and Western workers with jobs in the East were being replaced.

The negotiations between the US, Britain, France and Germany over the specifics of the EDC and the Contractual Agreements continued throughout the first half of 1952.⁶³ At the same time, a pointless “battle of the notes” between the East and West was waged, with each side offering completely unacceptable solutions to the German Question to the other.⁶⁴ The JIC reported in May that there was no intelligence to suggest either an increase in Soviet aggressive action or a real attempt to follow up Russian “conciliatory words” with deeds.⁶⁵ However, the West should expect the Kremlin to “react strongly” to the ratification of the EDC Treaty and Contractual Agreements, by rapidly expanding the *Bereitschaften* or renewing pressure on Berlin. As part of a ploy to disrupt the conclusion of the Western negotiations, the West should expect more Russian offers of free elections and peace treaties to force the West into more talks and win over public opinion across Europe. The failure of Western agreements would represent a considerable boost to Soviet intentions. The JIC review of events in mid-May noted that the GDR government had issued a threat saying the signature of the Contractual Agreements would be “immediately answered” with

⁶¹ CAB158/13, JIC(51)103(Final) “Likelihood of total war with the Soviet Union up to the end of 1954”, 16 November 1951

⁶² CAB159/11, JIC(52)9th Meeting, 17 January 1952

⁶³ The Treaty ending occupation in the FRG was signed on the 26 May 1952; the Treaty for the EDC was signed 27 May 1952

⁶⁴ Gaddis, *We Now Know*, pp.127-8

⁶⁵ CAB158/14, JIC(52)32(Final) “Likelihood of total war with the Soviet Union up to the end of 1954”, 21 May 1952

pressure on Berlin.⁶⁶ This needed careful watching, since the intelligence suggested a blockade “as a measure to hamper negotiations, was a distinct possibility.” The following week, the JIC stated that action against Berlin before ratification was not anticipated.⁶⁷ A few days after the signature of the Contractual Agreements, intelligence showed the only reaction had been the slight tightening of boundary controls.⁶⁸

The JIC did not believe the Russians had given up their hopes of preventing West German rearmament and creating an all-German nation on their terms, even by June 1952.⁶⁹ They thought East Germany would not be fully integrated into the Soviet bloc, whilst opportunities remained to disrupt Western progress, since that might risk speeding up the ratification of the treaties. The JIC doubted, however, that the Russians could succeed in their ambitions and would therefore make plans to further draw the GDR into the Soviet orbit, sealed off from the West. Once the EDC and Contractual Agreements were enacted, the most likely course of Russian action was the acceptance of a divided Germany, where the GDR would be built up with strong armed forces and continuous pressure on the Western sectors of Berlin. An appeal to West Berliners to free themselves from occupation, made by Walter Ulbricht, SED First Secretary, at the SED Congress in July, was assessed as indicating Soviet contentment to work through the GDR government.⁷⁰ In August, the JIC believed that the Soviets had “made up their minds that a United Germany is impossible of attainment on terms acceptable to them.”⁷¹

Before 1952 was over, assessments revealed a belief that the period of tension over Germany was cooling. The JIC thought it unlikely the Russians would commit to war before 1955, although they would continue to make full use of all methods short of war.⁷² The threat of conflict through miscalculation remained, where an unforeseen

⁶⁶ CAB159/11, JIC(52)55th Meeting, 15 May 1952

⁶⁷ CAB159/11, JIC(52)58th Meeting, 22 May 1952

⁶⁸ CAB159/11, JIC(52)61st Meeting, 29 May 1952

⁶⁹ CAB158/14, JIC(52)15/1(Final) “Soviet intentions in Germany”, 17 June 1952

⁷⁰ CAB159/12, JIC(52)79th Meeting, 17 July 1952

⁷¹ CAB159/12,, JIC(52)93rd Meeting, 28 August 1952

⁷² CAB158/14, JIC(52)67(Final) “Likelihood of general war with the Soviet Union up to the end of 1955”, 22 December 1952

incident escalated or the Soviets reacted to some Western move through fear. "It is by combining strength and unity with resolution and restraint that the Western Powers can best hope to avoid a general war", declared the JIC. Furthermore, they felt confident that intelligence sources would pick up on the large scale movements of armed forces into East Germany, that would be a necessary preparation for a full-scale Russian mobilisation.⁷³ The likely warning period for a surprise attack on Britain remained a few hours, however, based upon reports coming in of Russian air force movements over Germany or Scandinavia and messages from the frontline saying Soviet ground forces were crossing into Western Germany.

Counting on trouble

Whereas JIC assessments on political developments often had to go forward to customers alongside separate FO reports, the one area in which JIC information was paramount during the Western negotiations over the plans for rearmament and the Contractual Agreements, was on Soviet and GDR military developments. During periods of tension, even more than usual, accurate intelligence on troop movements on the Cold War frontline was an essential part of reading Russian intentions: a difficult task for British intelligence given its lack of accurate sources. As a consequence, although the JIC were never convinced that the Russians were preparing for war, specific estimates of Soviet strengths fluctuated.

Morale amongst Russian troops was thought to be lower in the GDR than at home in early 1950, despite attempts to use political indoctrination to focus the soldiers' minds.⁷⁴ Realism in their battle training was stressed, with exercises including approximately 60 percent of forces in Germany focused on river-crossing and airborne attacks, whilst intensive airfield development took place.⁷⁵ The JIC believed the numbers of Soviet troops stationed in Germany remained relatively constant in 1950,

⁷³ CAB158/14, JIC(52)51(Final) "Warning of Soviet attack 1952-54", 18 December 1952

⁷⁴ CAB158/9, JIC(50)4/1(Final) "Periodic Intelligence of WEURCINCCOM", 26 January 1950

⁷⁵ CAB158/9, JIC(50)30/1(Final) "Periodic intelligence summary for WEURCINCCOM", 20 April 1950

with 370,000 men divided into 32 divisions (22 line divisions), accompanied by nearly 1,500 aircraft.⁷⁶ The ground forces were still in an odd formation, with an usually high proportion of armour to infantry, but the Committee thought it likely that this was just some temporary anomaly whilst forces were reorganised.⁷⁷ The potential of the Red Army was certainly not just in their numbers though: as the JIC put it in April 1951, “The Soviet Army is the most powerful and effective ground combat force in being in the world today.”⁷⁸ The good news was that the numbers of troops in Germany remained well below what the JIC thought the Russians would need to launch an attack on Western Europe. An assault would require some 50-60 divisions initially, rising to 75-90 and 4,400 aircraft with 2,100 in reserve.

The annual rotation of Russian forces meant the JIC assessments of troop numbers were constantly reviewed. During the heightened tension of the initial Western rearmament negotiations, information from deserters led to the JIC to believe the Soviets in Germany were 40,000 over strength.⁷⁹ Development of airfield installations indicated to the JIC that “the Russians were contemplating some permanency of occupation.”⁸⁰ Photographic intelligence was gathered on the deployment of new twin-engined light bombers (Il-27s) to the Soviet Zone, whilst runways were constructed that could accommodate TU-4 heavy bombers.⁸¹ Anti-aircraft defences were also improved in the first months of 1951.⁸² In late 1950, the JIC formally brought in a policy of not handing back Russian equipment that had ended up in the British Zone by accident or desertion, until all who wanted had had a chance to fully inspect it, so that the utmost was made of every opportunity to learn about the capabilities of Soviet bloc weapons.⁸³

⁷⁶ CAB158/10, JIC(50)37/1(Final) “Periodic intelligence summary for WEURCINCCOM”, 21 April 1950 (including amendments through to December 1950)

⁷⁷ JIC(51)4(Final)

⁷⁸ CAB158/11, JIC(50)101(Final) “Soviet intentions and capabilities in the event of total war in 1951”, 24 April 1951

⁷⁹ CAB159/9, JIC(51)21st Meeting, 22 February 1951

⁸⁰ CAB159/9, JIC(51)10th Meeting, 25 January 1951

⁸¹ CAB159/9, JIC(51)50th Meeting, 10 May 1951; JIC(51)53rd Meeting, 24 May 1951

⁸² CAB159/9, JIC(51)45th Meeting, 26 April 1951

⁸³ CAB159/8, JIC(50)97th Meeting, 14 September 1950; DEFE41/65, JIC(Ger)(M)(50)14, 9 October 1950

Intelligence began to reach the JIC in July 1951 that troop numbers were being increased.⁸⁴ A combination of rail-watching and copies of rail authority orders revealed that troop trains were arriving in late June, bringing the new class of recruits and artillery to Germany.⁸⁵ Estimates were that up to 70,000 men were arriving, without an equivalent number of departures, leading the JIC to believe the net increase was in the region of 49,000.⁸⁶ In August, intelligence was received that trains had been crossing into Germany through routes previously unknown, raising the JIC estimate to an increase of 100,000.⁸⁷ Intelligence on the purpose of the strengthening was lacking, leaving the JIC to wonder whether cadre units were being brought up to peace establishment, existing units were being brought up to war establishment or whether a very large release of troops had just simply not yet taken place. Nevertheless, an alert was sent to the Chiefs of Staff, including possible reasons for the unusual activities going on behind the Iron Curtain.⁸⁸

The JIC believed that 140,000 men were required to bring the Soviet formations in Germany up to war-strength, leaving them to conclude that the men had been “used to bring units above Peace Establishment but not to full War Establishment and also to activate certain cadre units.”⁸⁹ Reinforcements had also been seen entering Austria and Hungary. Good intelligence on training indicated that the Russians were still focusing on river crossing and airborne assaults.⁹⁰ The good news was that the numbers of aircraft in the Soviet Zone had only slightly increased by about 100.⁹¹ However, further alarm was caused in October, when the annual Russian large-scale manoeuvres failed to begin at the usual time.⁹² This was a possible indicator of aggressive intention, although the War Office felt that it was more likely that an attack would be launched “under the

⁸⁴ CAB159/10, JIC(51)70th Meeting, 5 July 1951

⁸⁵ CAB159/10, JIC(51)73rd Meeting, 12 July 1951

⁸⁶ CAB159/10, JIC(51)76th Meeting, 19 July 1951

⁸⁷ CAB159/10, JIC(51)83rd Meeting, 9 August 1951

⁸⁸ CAB158/13, JIC(51)72, “Recent activity in the Western Sector of the Soviet Orbit”, 17 August 1951

⁸⁹ CAB159/10, JIC(51)87th Meeting, 23 August 1951

⁹⁰ CAB158/12, JIC(51)2/7(Final) “Periodic intelligence summary for SHAPE - General”, 18 September 1951

⁹¹ CAB158/12, JIC(51)3/7(Final) “Periodic intelligence summary for SHAPE - ORBAT”, 18 September 1951

⁹² CAB159/10, JIC(51)105th Meeting, 11 October 1951

cloak of large-scale manoeuvres.”⁹³ Once the Soviets had begun their training, the JIC did not consider that preparations for an attack were underway, especially since some 300 aircraft were withdrawn east out of Germany at roughly the same time.⁹⁴ British and American intelligence differed hugely on troop movements towards the end of the year.⁹⁵ US sources indicated that 45,000 Russian troops had come into Germany, but 29,000 had left, whereas the British estimated out the figures at 3,000 in and none out. The JIC had to admit that “there has been a remarkable lack of information through British sources and we cannot therefore confirm or deny American reports”.

The difference between the Allies was resolved early in 1952, when the Americans accepted 385,000 as the strength of Soviet forces, showing a rise of 81,000 over their previous estimates.⁹⁶ The US put the Russian line divisions at 95 percent of war strength. The JIC reviewed their estimate, assessing that the increase in strength since May 1951 had been 69,000, but believed that in actual fact there had been no real increase in establishment. It was clear that by mid-June the Headquarters of the Soviet Group of Occupation Forces had carried out their long-planned move from Potsdam to Zossen-Wunsdorf.⁹⁷ In September, JIC intelligence for NATO’s Supreme Headquarters Allied Powers, Europe (SHAPE) noted that information on Soviet troops in Germany, and in particular on their training, was not sufficient to produce comprehensive reports.⁹⁸

The British did, however, feel confident enough in their intelligence to increase their estimate of Soviet troops in Germany to 400,000 (although this clearly does not add up to the late 1950 figure of 370,000 plus a 69,000 increase during 1951/2).⁹⁹ The JIC believed that troop numbers were still going up during 1952, although the quantities

⁹³ CAB159/10, JIC(51)108th Meeting, 18 October 1951

⁹⁴ CAB159/10, JIC(51)114th Meeting, 1 November 1951; Russian fighter squadrons were re-equipped in early 1952, CAB159/11, JIC(52)9th Meeting, 17 January 1952

⁹⁵ CAB159/10, JIC(51)127th Meeting, 29 November 1951

⁹⁶ CAB159/11, JIC(52)30th Meeting, 13 March 1952

⁹⁷ The JIC first had intelligence on the move in April 1951, CAB159/9, JIC(51)34th Meeting, 5 April 1951; CAB159/11, JIC(52)68th Meeting, 19 June 1952

⁹⁸ CAB158/14, JIC(52)1/9(Final) “Periodic intelligence summary for SHAPE and other NATO commands”, 12 September 1952

⁹⁹ CAB158/14, JIC(52)2/9(Final) “Periodic intelligence summary for SHAPE and other NATO commands”, 18 September 1952

involved were not as high as the 1951 figures.¹⁰⁰ It is clear from the records that neither intelligence sources, methods of interpretation nor assessment were consistent though. The War Office noted:

last year's [1951] method of counting was not as accurate as this year's was thought to be. It seemed, however, that last year there was a total increase of 86,000 men. This year's increase appears to be about 48,000 men. The combined increase for the two years was, therefore, considerable. It would seem, therefore, that the Soviet army in Germany was slowly but steadily increasing. It was not easy, as yet however, to make a good intelligence deduction on this vital subject. Nevertheless, the sharpest possible watch should be kept on the situation.¹⁰¹

By the end of the year, although demobilisation was still continuing, the JIC believed that the Soviet forces had increased in strength since July by 60,000 men, 1,800 armoured fighting vehicles and 2,200 guns.¹⁰²

Accurate accounting for the *Bereitschaften* was as essential during the 1950-2 period as it was for Soviet troops, especially after the North Korean invasion of the South raised the possibility in Western minds of local forces being used to expand the Communist frontier elsewhere.¹⁰³ After July 1949, the GDR police forces had been seen reorganising and developing rapidly.¹⁰⁴ The JIC estimated their strength to be 42,780 in early 1950, although they were unsure of the exact organisation, training and equipping. The JIB, in particular, was trying to establish what weapons were being issued to the *Bereitschaften*.¹⁰⁵ The JIC was unable to confirm press articles in December 1949 that the East German police were to be turned into an Army, although they did believe the claims made sense.¹⁰⁶ Information on intensive recruiting in early 1950 reached the JIC, raising their estimate of strength to 51,000.¹⁰⁷ Secret sources reported that some factories were preparing men between the ages of 18-40 for service in the

¹⁰⁰ CAB159/12, JIC(52)110th Meeting, 9 October 1952

¹⁰¹ CAB159/12, JIC(52)113th Meeting, 16 October 1952

¹⁰² CAB159/12, JIC(52)139th Meeting, 11 December 1952

¹⁰³ Dockrill, *Britain's Policy*, p.22

¹⁰⁴ JIC(50)4/1(Final)

¹⁰⁵ CAB159/7, JIC(50)11th Meeting, 27 January 1950

¹⁰⁶ CAB158/9, JIC(50)16(Final) "Intelligence for WEURCINCCOM", 25 January 1950

¹⁰⁷ JIC(50)30/1(Final)

“Volkspolizei”, perhaps as a prelude to some sort of National Service order. The JIC also confirmed that the forces had been equipped with armour enough for four units.

BRIXMIS, in particular, were used to gather information on the para-military police developments inside the Soviet Zone.¹⁰⁸ Bereitschaften defectors also provided valuable intelligence, but whereas the numbers of those reaching the British Zone in May, June and July 1950 had been 100 a month, towards the end of the year they had fallen to almost zero.¹⁰⁹ The JIC put this down to more committed recruits entering the service, as well as improved defection-prevention methods.

The Ministry of Defence (MoD) requested views from the Chiefs on the level of threat the Bereitschaften posed to West Germany after the Korean War began. Field Marshal Sir William Slim, the CIGS, thought Berlin could be held against an East German attack, but resupply problems would make such a defence short-lived.¹¹⁰ Information from the West Germans passed to the FO stated that the GDR police were “being rapidly developed into a highly mechanised army and will be increased from 50,000 to 150,000 men by 1951.”¹¹¹ Kirkpatrick, now British High Commissioner, was wary of such reports, believing they could have been fabricated for sale to intelligence agencies.¹¹² Even though BRIXMIS had helped dispel the fears about Soviet aggression against Western Europe in the months following the outbreak of war in the Far East, “the danger of action by the Bereitschaften still remained.”¹¹³ By October, the JIC believed the East German forces could be at the vanguard of an attack on the Western Zones of Berlin.¹¹⁴ Accurate information about the intended use of the Bereitschaften was still lacking in November, but the JIC believed they would be trained and equipped,

¹⁰⁸ DEFE41/65, JIC(Ger)(M)(50)6, 25 April 1950

¹⁰⁹ JIC(50)30/1(Final) December 1950 amendments; CAB159/8, JIC(50)135th Meeting, 14 December 1950

¹¹⁰ DEFE4/35, COS(50)140th Meeting, 31 August 1950

¹¹¹ FO371/86758, RC/127/50 “Summary of indications regarding Soviet Foreign Policy”, 31 August 1950

¹¹² FO371/86758, RC/130/50 “Summary of indications regarding Soviet Foreign Policy”, 13 September 1950

¹¹³ CAB159/8, JIC(50)94th Meeting, 7 September 1950

¹¹⁴ JIC(50)111th Meeting

ready for independent action within five months.¹¹⁵ Even so, it was not clear that the Russians yet fully trusted the East German forces.¹¹⁶

Throughout 1951, intelligence told a story of the expansion of what was becoming an East German fledgling military capability. Soon after Western announcements of their plans to rearm West Germany, British intelligence received information from a deserter in February 1951 indicating for the first time that small arms manufacture had begun in East Germany.¹¹⁷ The following month, reports suggested that plans were being drawn up to develop an aircraft industry in the Soviet Zone.¹¹⁸ The JIC estimate of *Bereitschaften* strength rose to 57,000 in April, following a reorganisation of the force into the equivalent of 24 Soviet mechanised infantry regiments.¹¹⁹ Intelligence on the further development of the administration in support of the para-military forces was enhanced in May, when sources told of the establishment of a central office to control all procurement.¹²⁰ *Bereitschaften* defectors did come across in small numbers during the year, enough to provide useful information for the British to draw up reports on status and fighting efficiency.¹²¹

The JIC intelligence summary for NATO in September 1951 contained a huge section on the para-military police in East Germany, since good information about the strengths and capabilities of the forces was necessary for NATO planning purposes.¹²² Twenty-four all-arms units, a few specialist signals and transport units and fourteen training schools were known to exist, giving an approximate strength of 53,000. Recruitment had been difficult and slow during early 1951, certainly well below the numbers required to swell the *Volkspolizei Bereitschaften*, as they were now known, from its current cadre form into a 100,000 strong force. The JIC believed that 100,000 could be the target for the end of 1951. It seemed as though rumours of heavy weapons

¹¹⁵ CAB158/11, JIC(50)97(Final) "Threat to the Jutland Peninsula – 1951", 22 November 1950

¹¹⁶ CAB159/8, JIC(50)127th Meeting, 23 November 1950

¹¹⁷ CAB159/9, JIC(51)15th Meeting, 8 February 1951

¹¹⁸ CAB159/9, JIC(51)24th Meeting, 1 March 1951

¹¹⁹ JIC(50)101(Final)

¹²⁰ CAB159/9, JIC(51)50th Meeting, 10 May 1951

¹²¹ DEFE41/66, JIC(Ger)(M)(51)13, 11 September 1951

¹²² JIC(51)2/7(Final)

could be dispelled, since at that time only small arms had been issued, although artillery and armour existed in very small quantities as training aids. Training during 1950 was thought to have been substandard due to poor instruction, whilst 1951 training was still underway. Declining morale during the first half of 1951 had increased the supply of defectors at the end of 1950: 296 had come across during the first six months, allowing the JIC to judge that the men in the forces were now of considerably higher calibre than had been previously seen. A small "Seepolizei" of some 3,000 men, equipped with minesweepers and fast patrol boats formed an embryonic East Germany navy. The JIC believed these forces could be rapidly expanded to double their strength at short notice.¹²³ Rumours that conscription would be introduced in East Germany during 1952, suggested that general expansion was on the cards.¹²⁴

US intelligence on the *Bereitschaften* was somewhat at odds with British estimates. In February 1952, the Americans believed the *Bereitschaften* was to be expanded to 120,000 men.¹²⁵ By that stage the JIC reckoned their strength was up to 60,000, but they considered that this "could not be increased by more than about 20,000 men, without detriment to economic activity." Deserter intelligence did indicate, however, that an "Air Police" was being developed.¹²⁶ Furthermore, reports that prototype tracked vehicles, probably eventually destined for the *Bereitschaften*, were being produced in the Soviet Zone, offered even more weight to the argument that these forces were being turned into fully-fledged armed forces in all but name.¹²⁷ By the middle of the year, British intelligence learnt that a Ministry of Defence was to be set up, followed by the call up of five per cent of factory personnel (78,000 men in the 20-30 age group).¹²⁸ Intensive recruitment in 1952 raised the JIC strength estimate to 83,000 by the end of July, by which time it was clear that an East German Army was being developed along Soviet model lines.¹²⁹ The JIC felt that the East German forces

¹²³ CAB158/13, JIC(51)79(Final) "Appreciation of Soviet Capabilities and Intentions, 1951-1954 for NATO Standing Group", 28 September 1951

¹²⁴ CAB158/13, JIC(51)117(Final) "Soviet and Satellite War Potential 1952-55", 22 April 1952

¹²⁵ CAB159/11, JIC(52)22nd Meeting, 21 February 1952

¹²⁶ CAB159/11, JIC(52)30th Meeting, 13 March 1952

¹²⁷ CAB159/11, JIC(52)33rd Meeting, 20 March 1952

¹²⁸ CAB159/11, JIC(52)63rd Meeting, 6 June 1952

¹²⁹ CAB159/12, JIC(52)84th Meeting, 31 July 1952

were certainly being “used as an effective weapon in the cold war” by the GDR government, who were having to respond to West German determination to integrate fully with the West.¹³⁰

Between June and September 1952, the JIS pulled together all of the information on the Bereitschaften in order to assess “the size and nature of East German Military forces”, should the Russians decide to respond to developments in West Germany by fully militarising the East German police forces.¹³¹ During this time, the GDR government announced it would be forming armed forces to “protect” their country from the West, although the JIC believed the plan could yet be cancelled as part of some last-ditch effort to prevent enactment of the Contractual Agreements and the EDC Treaty.¹³² Since there was no military imperative behind the move, due to the available Soviet Army strength in the GDR, the development was political in nature. The East German forces did not, therefore, have to match the planned West German forces in size, but rather it was some sort of boost in self-esteem for the Soviet Zone. The JIC believed that the needs of the Soviet Zone economy meant the forces could not expand beyond 150,000 men, although the Russians were unlikely to permit growth over these limits anyway because of their inherent fear of German power. The armed forces would be formed out of the further development of the police forces, rather than founded afresh, boosted by recruitment from well-indoctrinated Communist youth groups. Both the navy and air force were likely to remain small. Before the forces could become an efficient fighting force, however, they needed more weapons and vehicles, useful Headquarters and Staffs and at least 18 months training. Even once the East Germans were prepared militarily, the JIC felt the Russians were “unlikely to entrust to East German forces any important offensive role in a conflict with the West.”

¹³⁰ JIC(52)1/9(Final)

¹³¹ CAB158/14, JIC(52)38(Terms of Reference) “Possible development of East German Military Forces”, 12 June 1952

¹³² CAB158/14, JIC(52)38(Final) “Possible development of East German Military Forces”, 23 September 1952

Turning enemies into allies

By late 1949, progress had been made in improving the economic prospects in the FRG. The Petersburg Agreement reduced the number of plants for dismantling and cleared the way for German membership of the Ruhr Authority. The Allied High Commissioners also authorised a German representative to the OEEC. Improving trade, including with the Soviet Zone, gave hope of strong economic recovery in the Western Zones. The JIC saw a contrast with the Soviet Zone where, even after the proclamation of the GDR, there was uncertainty as to how tight the Russian grip on Eastern Germany would be.¹³³ After Wilhelm Pieck, GDR President, had become “ill”, Ulbricht had started to run the SED, bringing party discipline into line. The JIC knew Ulbricht enjoyed “the special trust of the Kremlin”.¹³⁴ There was not much hope that the trend of a developing Communist police state would be reversed: “There is little active resistance in the Zone and there is a danger that the population will gradually come to accept the Communist system if not as satisfactory, at least as inevitable.”¹³⁵ The East Germans had enjoyed some economic improvement, but there was still reliance on agricultural rather than industrial exports, even after the Russians stepped in to enforce Satellite trade agreements to tackle unemployment and raw material shortages in 1951.¹³⁶ The JIC did notice a rise in living standards in the Eastern Zone during that year, including an improvement in the exchange rate of the East Mark against the West Mark.¹³⁷

Both the JIC and the Russia Committee examined the likelihood of a Soviet withdrawal from Eastern Germany during 1950, after reports suggested that Andrei Vyshinsky, the Soviet Deputy Foreign Minister, had discussed it with the Germans during his December 1949 visit. The Russia Committee information stated that there would be no formal peace treaty forcing recognition of the Oder-Neisse line, but there

¹³³ JIC(50)4/1(Final)

¹³⁴ JIC(50)37/1 (Final)

¹³⁵ CAB158/9, JIC(50)6(Final) “Basic Review of the Foreign Policy and Strategy of the Soviet Union”, 9 October 1950

¹³⁶ JIC(51)2/7(Final)

¹³⁷ CAB158/14, JIC(52)22(Final) “Survey of World Communism in 1951”, 21 April 1952

might well be an end to the state of war.¹³⁸ The FO felt no Soviet move would occur without a reciprocal Western measure. The JIC believed there were no indications to suggest a withdrawal was likely, rather economic, political and military aspects suggested consolidation.¹³⁹ Even before the effects of the Korean War were felt in both West and East Germany, the *de facto* divisions already ran very deep.

The decision to rearm Western Germany would have seemed unbelievable to many five years earlier. Global politics had turned a one time enemy into an essential military ally against a new foe in an incredibly short time. Before the Germans could be brought fully into the fold, however, the problem of trust had to be resolved. The JIC, as the highest official body specifically responsible for security, began to consider the difficulties of sharing military information with the Germans in early 1951, by asking the JIC(G) to carry out a study.¹⁴⁰ Although this first JIC(G) report is not present in full in the files, the conclusions are reported in another document and the minutes discussing it make it clear that it did not make for comfortable reading.¹⁴¹ JIC(G) thought the Federal Government was “completely insecure”, fully penetrated by the Russian intelligence services and two years away from having an effective security service, all of which meant that “any military information passed at the present time... would undoubtedly run the grave risk of reaching a hostile intelligence service”. At least, however, the JIC felt confident of “the pro-Western attitude of both the Government Coalition [under Adenauer] and the Social Democrat Opposition”.¹⁴² The Chiefs’ Joint Planning Staff (JPS) had already notified the JIC that in order for the Germans to take up a useful role in Western defence, NATO strengths and plans would need to be shared with them.¹⁴³ The JIC decided the matter had to be urgently discussed with the Americans, concurrent with considerable attention from the British authorities.

¹³⁸ FO371/86750, RC/9/50 “Summary of indications regarding Soviet Foreign Policy no.47”, 21 January 1950

¹³⁹ CAB158/9, JIC(50)25 “The possibility of a withdrawal of Soviet Forces from Eastern Germany in 1950”, 6 March 1950

¹⁴⁰ CAB159/9, JIC(51)7th Meeting, 18 January 1951

¹⁴¹ CAB158/12, JIC(51)30 “Disclosure of information to Germany”, 21 March 1951; CAB159/9, JIC(51)28th Meeting, 15 March 1951

¹⁴² JIC(50)101(Final)

¹⁴³ JIC(51)30; JIC(51)28th Meeting

Joint British and American examination continued throughout 1951 and into 1952, but little actual progress was made in improving security in Federal Government.¹⁴⁴ The JIC advised NATO in July 1952, that the Germans were certainly penetrated by Communist intelligence agencies and were still not in a position to enforce COSMIC (the codename for the system of NATO secrecy) security requirements, especially since the BfV (Bundesamt für Verfassungsschutz, the German Security Service) was not in a position to adequately vet German staff.¹⁴⁵ Britain's advice was that information given to the Germans as part of the EDC preparations should be specially drafted with minimal inclusion of sensitive NATO material. The JIC were not willing to share any classified information with the Germans until they had installed a system limiting the circulation of such to properly vetted individuals.¹⁴⁶ JIC(G) had, in fact, been passing local security intelligence to the BfV since 1950.¹⁴⁷ Of course, the problem of ensuring adequate security was likely to increase once the EDC had come into being and German industry was involved in the supply of arms.¹⁴⁸

Major-General Kirkman, the Commander of the British Intelligence Organisation (Germany), attended the JIC in October 1952 to discuss German security. In his view, the Germans "were psychologically unable to be as secure as say the British" because of their "need to amount to something" and their lack of an "authority or individual who commanded unquestioning loyalty such as formerly the Kaiser, Hitler or the Wehrmacht".¹⁴⁹ It appeared to Kirkman that resentment caused by conflicts of power between Land Security Services (LfVs) and the Federal BfV made the problem worse. He also thought the higher up the ladder the officials got, the less likely they were to obey security regulations, especially where political advantage could be gained from disclosure of information. Kirkman was hopeful, however, that improvements would soon be made. The EDC Interim Committee, the NATO group developing the EDC

¹⁴⁴ CAB159/12, JIC(52)73rd Meeting, 3 July 1952

¹⁴⁵ CAB159/12, JIC(52)74th Meeting, 4 July 1952

¹⁴⁶ CAB159/12, JIC(52)86th Meeting, 8 August 1952

¹⁴⁷ DEFE41/65, JIC(Ger)(M)(50)8, 6 June 1950; CAB159/7, JIC(50)40th Meeting, 21 April 1950

¹⁴⁸ CAB159/12, JIC(52)114th Meeting, 17 October 1952

¹⁴⁹ It is incredible that Kirkman was able to maintain such snobbery in the face of the cases of Burgess and Maclean, both of whom had fled in May 1951; CAB159/12, JIC(52)117th Meeting, 24 October 1952

idea, had solved some of their problems by introducing the SPHERIC system which enabled “sanitized” NATO information to be shared with the Germans during the planning stages. The JIC welcomed this progress, whilst echoing Kirkman’s hope that in time German security would improve. They gave full support to the NATO Standing Group Security Co-ordinating Committee which travelled to Germany to work with the Germans on the short-comings.¹⁵⁰ Kirkman’s views were expanded in a JIC(G) report for the Chiefs of Staff, concluding that action was required at the highest levels of the Federal government, with Allied advice, to remedy a serious problem.¹⁵¹

At the end of the war, the Allies had captured German documents on the Soviet Union, former service personnel and other military topics that would have given the Germans a useful start in contributing to Western defence. The JIC thought from the earliest days of the rearmament question, however, that returning the archive was “undesirable from a security point of view.”¹⁵² The Germans requested the return of all captured documents in 1950, but the response was a long time coming. The Cabinet Office Historical Section and the JIC came together in November 1951 to draw up a policy on the release of documents, prompted by a further request from the German government for copies of personnel records held by the British.¹⁵³ A joint US/UK agreement not to return documents existed on the matter, but the JIC thought that after consultation with the Americans and with a proviso that the British could refuse particular requests on security grounds, copies of files could be given to the Germans.¹⁵⁴ The JIC were alarmed when they discovered that the US seemed to be employing a much less strict policy on the release of material, leaving them to insist on a new joint agreement not to release certain classes of information which might “prejudicially affect” inter-government relations.¹⁵⁵ This included material on Allied “clandestine or intelligence services”, “cryptographic matters of any shape or kind”, Soviet intelligence services, German interrogation reports of Allied prisoners and intelligence gathered by

¹⁵⁰ CAB159/12, JIC(52)126th Meeting, 13 November 1952

¹⁵¹ CAB158/14, JIC(52)73 “German Security”, 21 November 1952

¹⁵² CAB159/8, JIC(50)95th Meeting, 8 September 1950

¹⁵³ CAB159/10, JIC(51)116th Meeting, 3 November 1951

¹⁵⁴ CAB159/11, JIC(52)46th Meeting, 25 April 1952

¹⁵⁵ CAB158/14, JIC(52)37 “The release of captured German documents to the Germans”, 6 June 1952

the former Nazi intelligence services on the Allies. The Cabinet decided in October 1952 that all diplomatic documents could be returned to the Germans, but some military material would be withheld on security grounds.¹⁵⁶

Herbert Morrison, Bevin's replacement as Foreign Secretary, announced in July 1951 that the state of war with Germany would be "terminated forthwith".¹⁵⁷ The process of drawing up the full hand over of power back to the Germans began to run concurrently with the EDC negotiations. As a result, tricky questions about intelligence in Germany arose. Granting full sovereignty to the Germans meant losing the powers both to prevent the development of a West German external intelligence service and to carry out intrusive collection on German territory.¹⁵⁸

The JIC had discussed reports in January 1950 that the FRG already had "certain agencies" collecting limited intelligence from abroad, but they agreed that for the moment, developments should be carefully watched.¹⁵⁹ It was considered unwise on security grounds to allow German services to have contact with neighbouring foreign organisations.¹⁶⁰ Bertie Blount, the Director of Scientific Intelligence, noted after a visit to Germany in September 1950 that the Federal Government had already set up an office dealing with science and a research council.¹⁶¹ SIS reported back to the JIC every six months on the progress of the German foreign intelligence service, including early indications that the Gehlen Organisation (the group under American control in line to become the external collection agency) was penetrated by the Soviet and other Satellite intelligence agencies.¹⁶² The KGB station in Karlshorst had a good deal of success

¹⁵⁶ CAB128/25, CC(52)85, 14 October 1952

¹⁵⁷ CAB128/19, CM(51)50, 9 July 1951

¹⁵⁸ Critchfield, James H., "The Early History of the Gehlen Organization and Its Influence on the Development of a National Security System in the Federal Republic of Germany" in Bungert, Heike, Heitmann, Jan G. and Wala, Michael (eds), *Secret Intelligence in the Twentieth Century* (London: Frank Cass, 2003), pp.159-166

¹⁵⁹ CAB159/7, JIC(50)2nd Meeting, 5 January 1950

¹⁶⁰ CAB159/7, JIC(50)58th Meeting, 9 June 1950

¹⁶¹ CAB159/8, JIC(50)94th Meeting, 7 September 1950

¹⁶² Critchfield, James H., *Partners at the Creation: The Men behind Postwar Germany's Defense and Intelligence Establishments* (Annapolis: Naval Institute Press, 2003), pp.92-161; CAB159/9, JIC(51)3rd Meeting, 5 January 1951

during this time in crippling West German operations against the GDR or other Communist states.¹⁶³

The British realised that there was nothing they could do to prevent the Germans acquiring an intelligence service once power had been transferred back from the Allies, but there was the opportunity to exploit the time taken for the organisation to become fully effective.¹⁶⁴ The Germans might be persuaded that it was essential for their own protection that the Allies maintain their own strong intelligence services during the start-up period of a German service. Kirkman thought the Germans might accept the presence of British intelligence arrayed against the Russians on their territory, but they were unlikely to allow operations concerned with German domestic security and intelligence.¹⁶⁵ Given that the Gehlen Organisation, codenamed RUSTY, was already in existence under American oversight, he believed the British ought to at least be on speaking terms with it. Moreover, it was essential that Britain safeguard some of the rights granted to their intelligence services in order to maintain effective cover of the Soviet threat. ZEI 68, the law which enabled the British arrest and interrogation of suspected enemy agents in Germany, or at least the right to conduct an initial interview, had to be kept. Kirkman also wanted to be able to continue detaining and interrogating enemy deserters, defectors and line-crossers. Finally, he thought the interception of mail from Russia was “essential” whilst it would be “highly desirable” to continue examining mail from the GDR.¹⁶⁶

JIC(G) and SIS thought that the sooner RUSTY “was recognised, and proper relations with it established, the better”, presumably based on improved security in the organisation.¹⁶⁷ In July 1951, permission was given for “very cautious contacts” with RUSTY, initially through General Truscott, CIA Head in Germany.¹⁶⁸ The Chancery at

¹⁶³ Andrew, Christopher and Mitrokhin, Vasili, *The Mitrokhin Archive: The KGB in Europe and the West* (London: Penguin, 2000) pp.571-2

¹⁶⁴ CAB159/9, JIC(51)28th Meeting, 15 March 1951

¹⁶⁵ DEFE41/119, STIB/D.7 Note by Chief, ID on Intelligence and the future German Government, 5 March 1951

¹⁶⁶ CAB159/7, JIC(50)37th Meeting, 5 April 1950; CAB159/9, JIC(51)69th Meeting, 4 July 1951

¹⁶⁷ CAB159/9, JIC(51)63rd Meeting, 20 June 1951

¹⁶⁸ CAB159/10, JIC(51)79th Meeting, 26 July 1951

Wahnerheide was not convinced that improvements in German security would be easy, however. Kirkman visited the RUSTY headquarters in Munich in November 1951 and reported back to the JIC that he had found an adequate nucleus of a German intelligence service, although SIS would need to investigate the levels of Soviet penetration.¹⁶⁹ He later noted that it was in Britain's interests that the Germans set up a "good intelligence service", requiring that the British did "everything possible to influence its development along the right lines."¹⁷⁰

The JIC considered a JIC(G) report on the future of German intelligence in June 1952, finally setting out the British position.¹⁷¹ They believed it was not yet possible to predict exactly what form an overt service would take, since international negotiations about the EDC, for instance, were still in progress. Any covert organisation had to be unified and efficient, with very close links to the German BfV and Allied intelligence services. The JIC felt it was time for the UK High Commissioner to approach the German Chancellor to express British views on the subject, after which more precise examination could take place. The Chancellor ought to be persuaded that the British pattern was the best one to follow, where departments were independent but under a central co-ordinating committee.¹⁷² The High Commissioner's brief suggested advising that military intelligence ought to be organised under NATO requirements, whilst RUSTY and the BfV ought to be official and under government control through separate ministries with political safeguards.¹⁷³

The High Commissioner's Office was a key part of the negotiations for the Contractual Agreements with the Germans and this extended to the intelligence aspects of the treaty. On occasion this led to clashes of opinion, as over ZEI 68. Kirkman believed that such a law was essential to the provision of protection against enemy intelligence services, especially whilst the German counter-intelligence apparatus was

¹⁶⁹ CAB159/10, JIC(51)127th Meeting, 29 November 1951

¹⁷⁰ CAB159/11, JIC(52)59th Meeting, 23 May 1952

¹⁷¹ CAB159/11, JIC(52)67th Meeting, 18 June 1952; some sentences in these minutes have been redacted.

¹⁷² CAB159/12, JIC(52)73rd Meeting, 3 July 1952

¹⁷³ DEFE41/119, STIB/DC.5 "Draft Brief for the High Commissioner on the future German Intelligence Service", 7 July 1952

embryonic, whereas the High Commission was willing to let it go.¹⁷⁴ Whilst the JIC was aware of the political difficulties in persuading the Germans to accept what would be considered “unconstitutional by British standards” (because the law included the power to imprison without trial), they believed Kirkman was right.¹⁷⁵ After Patrick Reilly, Hayter’s replacement as JIC Chairman, had made a visit to Germany in July 1951, he reported back that the Chancery were not optimistic that the Germans would accede to British wishes, although they might be willing to accept some temporary solution until an effective German counter-intelligence organisation had been put in place.¹⁷⁶ The JIC insisted, however, that every effort should be made to stress the importance of the ZEI 68 provisions to the Germans.¹⁷⁷ The War Office pointed out that a similar level of importance ought to be attached to the retention of Allied powers to hold and interrogate defectors and deserters.¹⁷⁸ Reilly pointed out, however, that no special legal provisions were required in this area so long as the defectors continued to voluntarily put themselves into the hands of the Allied powers.

The Contractual negotiations ran from July 1951 to May 1952, discussing areas of disagreement between the parties, such as German rearmament and occupation expenditure, security safeguards against German aggression, decartelisation of industry and the custody of war criminals.¹⁷⁹ During this time British intelligence kept a close watch on how the final agreements might affect their operations in Germany. Whilst the Germans seemed keen not to accept openly anything that contravened their own constitution, there was the hope that informal arrangements might solve some of the problems over the powers granted to Allied intelligence services. The Service departments, in particular, agreed with the JIC(G) that the end of communication monitoring in Germany would be a considerable blow to intelligence production, but this was one area where the Germans were thought to be willing to covertly co-operate in the

¹⁷⁴ DEFE41/66, JIC(Ger)(M)(51)10, 10 July 1951; JIC (Ger)(M)(51)12, 21 August 1951

¹⁷⁵ CAB159/9, JIC(51)66th Meeting, 27 June 1951

¹⁷⁶ CAB159/10, JIC(51)79th Meeting, 26 July 1951

¹⁷⁷ CAB159/10, JIC(51)85th Meeting, 15 August 1951

¹⁷⁸ CAB159/10 JIC(51)91st, 29 August 1951

¹⁷⁹ Dockrill, *Britain’s Policy*, pp.65-6

continued interception of mail in return for a share of the take.¹⁸⁰ The JIC was pleased with the “Memorandum of Understanding” issued jointly in May 1952 with the FRG covering the rights of foreign forces stationed in Germany.¹⁸¹ The Germans agreed to notify the Allies of all defectors and deserters coming across, as well as permitting the continued interception of external, but not internal, communications.¹⁸² Furthermore, the Allies were permitted to protect their forces from sabotage or other attack, side-stepping the precise problems of replacing ZEI 68.

Intelligence, politics and strategy

William Hayter left the Services Liaison Department in the FO to become Minister at the Embassy in Paris in December 1949.¹⁸³ Patrick Reilly, a man with wartime experience as Personal Assistant to ‘C’, took over as JIC Chairman with corresponding seats on the Russia and PUS Committees.¹⁸⁴ It is difficult to deduce which changes in JIC procedures were a result of changing personalities and which were responses to world events. One of Reilly’s early actions as JIC Chairman was to revive the wartime practice of attaching a FO man to SIS (to be known as the Foreign Office Adviser rather than as Personal Assistant to ‘C’), in order to improve liaison, but also to ensure that the FO knew exactly what SIS were up to.¹⁸⁵

In September 1951, encouraged by both the Chairman and the Korean War, the JIC decided to carry out a review of its own performance in assessing Communist intentions since January 1947.¹⁸⁶ Of the papers concerning Germany which were reviewed, it was judged that five had already been proved correct and one had “not yet

¹⁸⁰ CAB159/11, JIC(52)40th Meeting, 4 April 1952

¹⁸¹ CAB159/11, JIC(52)59th Meeting, 23 May 1952

¹⁸² Maddrell, *Spying on Science*, p.100

¹⁸³ Hayter, William, *A Double Life* (London: Hamish Hamilton, 1974) p.84

¹⁸⁴ Andrew, Christopher, *Secret Service: The Making of the British Intelligence Community* (London: Heinemann, 1985) p.467; CAB159/7, JIC(50)1st Meeting, 4 January 1950

¹⁸⁵ Davies, Philip H J, *MI6 and the machinery of spying*, (London: Frank Cass, 2004) p.222

¹⁸⁶ CAB159/10, JIC(51)98th Meeting, 20 September 1951

proved correct”.¹⁸⁷ By and large they had managed to predict that the Russians were unlikely to withdraw from Eastern Germany in either 1947 or 1950, whilst they had managed to accurately forecast Soviet unwillingness to cause all out war over Berlin since early 1949. They had not yet seen the disaffection and disorder in Western Germany that the JIC feared in January 1948. Overall, the number of mistakes by the JIC was considered low, but that was received with little comfort:

Our assessment of Communist intentions has not however, been as good as the small number of miscalculations suggests. In the first place we failed altogether to forecast the blockade of Berlin in 1948 and the attack on South Korea in 1950. We have also, in many cases, drafted our conclusions somewhat equivocally and so allowed ourselves a fairly wide margin of error.

The next necessary step in the review process took place within a month. A paper entitled, “Present state of our intelligence on the Soviet Union, the European Satellites and China, and measures to improve it” was produced in early January 1952.¹⁸⁸ It recognised that information enabling the forecast of the “exact nature” of changes of Soviet policy was scarce due to “a high level of efficiency” in Russian security. Secret sources, including sigint were able to provide “partial cover only and because of the lack of confirmation cannot always be relied on.” The current formula for Cold War predictions was:

For the most part we must rely on a combination of political speculation and such limited intelligence as we can obtain on Soviet preparedness for war in the military, air, naval, economic and scientific spheres.

“The acceptance of greater risks and the provision of greater resources” were the only ways to ensure the necessary improvement in the standard of intelligence on the intentions and capabilities of the Communist countries.

The JIC knew that occupied Europe and the Satellites were slightly easier targets for intelligence-gathering, but even here there were “numerous gaps in our intelligence, and security measures appear to be becoming more restrictive.” Sigint, defectors and

¹⁸⁷ JIC(51)87

¹⁸⁸ CAB158/13, JIC(51)126(Final), 7 January 1952

deserters and agents were considered to be the best potential sources of intelligence. Aerial photographic reconnaissance was still limited until the long range and high flying Canberra PR7 came into operation in 1953.¹⁸⁹ Since the last review of intelligence-gathering methods, in 1950, agents had continued to enter the Soviet bloc either by parachute or by boat. SIS in Germany was heavily involved in sending émigrés back into the Soviet Union and satellites, although given the level of KGB penetration of both agent networks and SIS itself, through Kim Philby, these missions were almost completely unsuccessful.¹⁹⁰ Ignorant of these problems, the JIC suggested that both parachute- and submarine-landed agent operations should be expanded. This also required the FO to set up a Working Party organisation to co-ordinate these operations as well as to obtain the specific ministerial permission that was required before each operation could be conducted.

An improvement in quality and quantity of staff involved in intelligence was also recommended by the JIC.¹⁹¹ An increase in source material from expanding collection and a greater burden of NATO requirements had in fact been met by a reduction in staff in some areas. As a result, the JIC thought efforts on collation and evaluation of intelligence had suffered. Special grades for civil servants involved in intelligence were required in order to provide attractive pay and conditions, as well as opportunities for cross-posting across the range of organisations and ministries.

When Churchill returned to Number 10 as Prime Minister and Minister for Defence in October 1951, a man with vast experience of and passion for intelligence returned to the top job in British politics.¹⁹² With progress already under way on German rearmament and the Contractual Agreements, little changed in policy towards

¹⁸⁹ Aldrich, *Hidden Hand*, p.396; Intelligence was gathered before this time by some photographic intelligence missions and by other flights, such as the British European Airways flight to Prague and the RAF courier service to Warsaw.

¹⁹⁰ Bower, Tom, *The Perfect English Spy: Sir Dick White and the Secret War, 1935-90* (London: Heinemann, 1995), pp.203-7

¹⁹¹ JIC(51)126

¹⁹² Stafford, David, *Churchill and Secret Service* (London, Abacus, 2000), pp.1-10; Viscount Alexander of Tunis took over as Minister for Defence in February 1952

Germany under the Conservative Government.¹⁹³ Cold War strategy did change, however, during the 1950-2 period and not just because of an election result. There had been unease in the civilian quarters of Whitehall from early in 1950 with the use of covert organisations in stirring up trouble behind the Iron Curtain as part of a ‘liberation’ plan.¹⁹⁴ Only the Chiefs of Staff tended towards a more aggressive approach to fighting the Cold War, more in line with the uncompromising American ambitions set out in the NSC 68 “United States Objectives and Programs for National Security” of April 1950.¹⁹⁵ The Russia Committee was very wary of making use of Titoist and Yugoslav propaganda in Germany in an attempt to fracture the Soviet bloc, although “small but successful” programmes were carried out in both Eastern and Western Germany to encourage “deviationism”.¹⁹⁶

In December 1950, however, the Official Committee on Communism (Overseas), also known as the Dixon Committee after its Chairman Sir Pierson Dixon, gained ministerial approval for limited covert operations in the Satellite States in order to “check the gradual isolation of the Satellite countries of Eastern Europe and their absorption by Russia, and to reduce the value of these countries in the event of war.”¹⁹⁷ By mid 1951, the JIC noticed that with American support, Eastern European émigré organisations had begun to develop into significant anti-Soviet groups, including in Germany.¹⁹⁸ Intelligence suggested “widespread opposition to Sovietisation”, but this remained mainly passive because of “repressive methods used by the Communist Governments”. There were no signs of “indigenous resistance” in the Soviet Zone of Germany but many of the defectors from the East had received help along the way from sympathetic East Germans. The JIC also reported that groups were trying to set up clandestine networks from Western Germany into the Eastern Zone to spread anti-SED

¹⁹³ Dockrill, *Britain's Policy*, pp.83-8

¹⁹⁴ Aldrich, *Hidden Hand*, pp.316-7

¹⁹⁵ COS(50)139; *Foreign Relations of the United States 1950*, Volume 1 (Washington DC, Government Printing Office) pp.234-92; LaFeber, Walter, *America, Russia and the Cold War, 1945-2002* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 2004), pp.101-3

¹⁹⁶ FO371/86751, RC/27/50 “Anti-Stalinist Communism”, 18 February 1950; FO371/86755, RC/78/50 “Western measures to counter Soviet expansion and indications of their effect”, 20 May 1950

¹⁹⁷ DEFE5/34, COS(51)627 “Future Cold War Strategy”, 26 October 1951

¹⁹⁸ CAB158/13, JIC(51)66 “Activities of Anti-Communist elements within the Soviet Orbit in Europe during the past 18 months including significant developments in Émigré Affairs”, 3 August 1951

and anti-Soviet propaganda. The Chiefs felt that although British covert operations had been no more than a “nuisance to the Soviet bloc”, if limitations on action were lifted, “operations in Eastern Germany could pay a more significant dividend.”¹⁹⁹

Towards the end of 1951, disagreements within the Dixon Committee showed it was necessary to pull together future strategy in order to combat the divergence of views between the military and diplomats, and between Britain and the United States.²⁰⁰ The Chiefs stuck to their view that more “positive action” was required to win the Cold War, since a policy of “containment” would not do the job.²⁰¹ This action should “weaken the Communist ideological and military potential internally”, especially in Eastern Germany. The Chiefs felt “a more realistic and less apprehensive approach” to the worries of such action provoking the Russians, would not only bring Britain into line with the US, but might also allow “the United Kingdom to have some moderating influence on US activities in that sphere.” During this time, fears were at their height in Whitehall that the US might make use of their nuclear superiority in a pre-emptive war against the Russians.²⁰² The Director of Naval Intelligence (DNI), Vice Admiral Eric Longley-Cook, wrote a paper for very limited circulation in the summer of 1951, which revealed his belief that some in Washington were eager for war.

The FO returned fire with their “Future Strategy towards Soviet Russia” paper, which appears to have been written as much with the Americans in mind as the Chiefs.²⁰³ Although Dixon had been meeting with the Chiefs during the second half of 1951 in order to emphasise common ground, the basic underlying thrust of the paper shows differences remained.²⁰⁴ The Permanent Under-Secretary’s Committee (PUSC) advocated finding a *modus vivendi* with the Russians, based on some sort of equilibrium between the two sides, with “local and limited settlements” solving issues in trouble

¹⁹⁹ COS(51)627

²⁰⁰ DEF5/34, COS(51)655 “Future Cold War Strategy”, 12 November 1951; Young, John “The British Foreign Office and Cold War fighting in the early 1950s: PUSC(51)16 and the 1952 ‘Sore Spots’ Memorandum” (Leicester University Discussion Papers in Politics, April 1995)

²⁰¹ DEF5/35, COS(51)745 “Future Cold War Strategy”, 14 December 1951

²⁰² Aldrich, *Hidden Hand*, pp.320, 326-332; Greenwood, *Britain and the Cold War*, p.110

²⁰³ FO371/125002, PUSC(51)16(Final), 17 January 1952

²⁰⁴ DEF4/50, COS(51)206th Meeting, 18 December 1951

spots. They concluded “operations designed to liberate the satellites are impracticable and would involve unacceptable risks”, and where they failed, it left the West in a weaker position. The focus needed to be more on psychological warfare, using broadcasting, until Western strength had been built up enough to interfere behind the Iron Curtain with relative immunity from Soviet counter-punches. The FO wanted covert operations to focus on intelligence-gathering rather than raising revolution, although they would accept limited, “specialist operations designed either to disrupt the machinery of government or the economic structure of satellite States, or to poison relations between the satellite Governments and the Soviet Union.” The Russia Committee believed any Western pressure on the Russian position in Germany, however, would most likely lead to general war.²⁰⁵ Where the FO and Chiefs did agree was on the necessity of keeping an eye on the US and their Cold War plans.

By July 1952, the Chiefs and the Cabinet’s Defence Committee had come to accept that the Cold War offensive needed to be founded on Western strength in air defence and nuclear weapons, with propaganda as the main weapon.²⁰⁶ They had softened on the need for liberation operations behind the Iron Curtain at the present time:

In prosecuting the Cold War with increasing vigour care must be taken to avoid the stimulation of premature reaction in the satellite states. The need for close co-ordination of subversive activities with the development of a situation favourable for their success was demonstrated during the war. It is the interests of friends and potential rebels against Communism that must be considered and not Russian susceptibilities.

Young asserts that the PUSC view had little impact on Anthony Eden’s thinking as Foreign Secretary, perhaps because the “the general lines of the paper seem to have fitted in with his own approach”.²⁰⁷ During joint conferences in 1952, the British had little success in winning over the Americans with regard to special operations in the

²⁰⁵ “Soviet Reactions to Western Pressure on ‘Sore Spots’ ”, 19 February 1952, reproduced in Young, “The British Foreign Office and Cold War Fighting”

²⁰⁶ DEF5/40, COS(52)361 “Defence Policy and Global Strategy”, 15 July 1952; issued also as CAB131/12, D(52)26, 17 June 1952

²⁰⁷ Young, “The British Foreign Office and Cold War Fighting”, p.6

satellite states.²⁰⁸ Rather as Aldrich puts it, it was the events of June 1953 in Berlin and November 1956 in Hungary, that really seem to have been the demonstrators of “the futility of resistance operations against police states”.²⁰⁹

British Intelligence Organisation (Germany)

The intelligence organisation in Germany was thrown into administrative chaos during the early 1950s, by the twin considerations of limited funds and the handover of power. Sir Philip Vickery, who had been head of Indian Political Intelligence 1926-47, delivered a report to the FO in May 1950, recommending reductions in those parts of the intelligence organisation which served the High Commission.²¹⁰ The report stated that there should be no diminution in the flow of intelligence produced in Germany for London on the Soviet Union. Vickery recommended 150 staff should be cut, although Robertson instructed Haydon to find 300 officers and junior grades that could go.²¹¹ Some tasks, such as POW interrogation, were coming to their natural end, so some reductions were obvious.²¹² The JIC had to debate the figure, however, after Haydon reported that intelligence on Russia would suffer if 300 staff were lost.²¹³ Whilst they agreed with Vickery and Haydon, the FO was unable to persuade the High Commission to reverse its decision. The JIC also noted that any loss of intelligence on Western Germany was inopportune whilst power was being handed over to the Germans, but this was a secondary concern to intelligence on the Soviet Union.

Vickery attended the JIC on 29 June.²¹⁴ In the face of War Office warnings about reducing security in Germany, Robertson’s demand for extra cuts had been based on a belief that in the light of the power granted under the Basic Law and Occupation

²⁰⁸ DEFE4/53, COS(52)53rd Meeting, 18 April 1952

²⁰⁹ Aldrich, *Hidden Hand*, p.338

²¹⁰ CAB159/7, JIC(50)45th Meeting, 4 May 1950

²¹¹ CAB159/7, JIC(50)58th Meeting, 9 June 1950

²¹² CAB159/7, JIC(50)34th Meeting, 29 March 1950

²¹³ JIC(50)58th Meeting

²¹⁴ CAB159/7, JIC(50)67th Meeting, 29 June 1950

Statute to the Germans, intelligence work in support of the High Commission should be cut. Vickery seems to have been the peacemaker, commenting that it was difficult to predict what demands would be placed on intelligence in Germany in the future, so they would struggle to see beyond the end of 1950. Whilst he recognised that if the German Security Bureaux functioned properly in their early months there ought to be much less need for ID to carry out security work, it was too early to bank on this. The debate was put on hold until Reilly had made a tour of Germany in July.²¹⁵

During his trip, Reilly managed to persuade Kirkpatrick, Robertson's successor, to accept Vickery's original recommendation of a 150 cut during 1950, whilst the proposed further cut of 150 for early 1951 ought to be "reviewed in the light of the Committee's views".²¹⁶ Haydon's final proposals for a reduction of 183 by 31 December 1950, to leave ID in Germany with 767 officers and junior grades were accepted by the JIC.²¹⁷ Since by now more than half of ID's work covered the Soviet threat, Reilly suggested that the Service Departments take over the greater part of the ID's costs from the FO German Section.

Major-General John Kirkman became Head of ID and Chairman of JIC(G) in January 1951.²¹⁸ Reilly's attempt in late 1950 to make the Deputy High Commissioner, a FO post, JIC(G) Chairman *ex officio* failed on administrative grounds.²¹⁹ In particular, as the ID moved from Herford to Wahnerheide during 1951, the demands put on uncertain communications for the Deputy High Commissioner to fulfil the role would have been too great.²²⁰ Rear Admiral Anthony Buzzard (DNI), reported back to the JIC after a visit to Germany in July 1952, that the distance between the JIC(G) and the Service Headquarters was likely to cause critical problems during a crisis.²²¹ In March 1951, JIC(G) was given a new charter that reflected the organisational changes that were

²¹⁵ CAB159/7, JIC(50)68th Meeting, 30 June 1950

²¹⁶ CAB159/8, JIC(50)78th Meeting, 27 July 1950

²¹⁷ CAB159/8, JIC(50)89th Meeting, 24 August 1950

²¹⁸ DEFE41/66, JIC(Ger)(M)(51)1, 2 January 1951

²¹⁹ CAB159/9, JIC(51)28th Meeting, 15 March 1951

²²⁰ DEFE41/66, JIC(Ger)(M)(51)15, 23 October 1951

²²¹ CAB159/12, JIC(52)84th Meeting, 31 July 1952

going on in Germany.²²² The Committee now reported to the High Commissioner's Military Conference in Germany rather than to the High Commissioner, but the responsibility to JIC (London) remained.

In December 1950, an enquiry into the charter and functions of the ID had begun. A draft revised charter rearranged the primary and secondary tasks of the organisation, placing the production of intelligence on Russia above intelligence on Germany.²²³ That much remained settled during the following months, unlike the question of responsibility for ID. Once SACEUR had been introduced, the Commanders-in-Chief, Germany, to whom ID partially answered, would "bear certain responsibilities towards SHAPE."²²⁴ The JIC did not want ID to fall under SHAPE responsibility, although it was clear there would need to be contacts between the two.²²⁵ It was also necessary to transfer the Division's financial burden from the ever-shrinking Control Commission to the High Commissioner's Military Conference; that is from the FO to the War Office.²²⁶ These matters had to be considered amongst the uncertainty of how the full handover of power to the Germans would affect the organisation. The JIC noted that the doubts about the future status and size of the Division was resulting in staff resigning in order to take up more secure contracts elsewhere.

This question over the future of the ID was sent up to Permanent Under-Secretary level, with meetings between the MoD, the Service Departments and the FO.²²⁷ Here it was decided that the transfer from the FO had to take place and studies by both JIC and JIC(G) of the mechanics of the move began soon after.²²⁸ The personnel problems were not helped by the planned change. Kirkman reported to the JIC that the FO was reluctant to fill vacancies whilst the transfer was being prepared and the War

²²² CAB158/12, JIC(51)28, "Charter for Joint Intelligence Committee, Germany", 16 March 1951

²²³ CAB159/8, JIC(50)133rd Meeting, 7 December 1950

²²⁴ CAB159/9, JIC(51)28th Meeting, 15 March 1951

²²⁵ For instance, British intelligence in Germany contributed information on tactical and strategic demolitions in Germany in the event of war to SHAPE, CAB158/13, JIC(51)85(Final) "Demolitions in Germany", 4 December 1951

²²⁶ CAB158/12, JIC(51)27, "Future of Intelligence Division in Germany", 16 March 1951

²²⁷ CAB159/9, JIC(51)48th Meeting, 3 May 1951

²²⁸ CAB159/9, JIC(51)67th Meeting, 28 June 1951

Office could not yet take the responsibility. Reilly made another trip to Germany in July 1951 and discovered that nearly all of the contracts for staff in the Division were due to expire in September 1952.²²⁹ Unless some sort of security of tenure could be offered in early 1952, it was likely that a serious loss of staff would occur.

The JIC decided that the ID's charter needed slightly amending, as a bridge between the transfer to the War Office in October 1951 and the final outcome of the Contractual negotiations with the Germans some time in 1952, in order to ensure political intelligence reports continued to reach the High Commission.²³⁰ A new title for the Division was also required which would make it clear that it did not come under the command of SHAPE.²³¹ British Intelligence Organisation (Germany), or BIO(G), made the point.²³² The Chief, ID became the Commander, BIO(G).

The War Office took up the question of contracts in April 1952, barely in time for the September expiry date.²³³ Kirkman's answer was "to offer established posts to some 50 to 60 selected officers, but short contracts accompanied by a gratuity scheme."²³⁴ He was very concerned that the normal processes of promotion and filling existing positions were failing to function as a result of the uncertainties about the future of BIO(G). One happy coincidence of the staff problems in Germany may have been their role in Leo Long's departure from his senior job in MI14.²³⁵ Recruited pre-war by Anthony Blunt, Long had been spying for the Russians since he joined the Intelligence Corps in 1940. It seems that his work for the Soviets reduced when he joined the intelligence section of the British Control Commission in 1945, but Blunt still occasionally visited him in Germany to pick up information of interest, until Long left in 1952. Whilst JIC(G) had been making concerted efforts to tighten security by limiting the circulation of papers and removing Communist Party members from the Control

²²⁹ JIC159/10, JIC(51)79th Meeting, 26 July 1951

²³⁰ CAB159/10, JIC(51)91st Meeting, 29 August 1951

²³¹ CAB159/10, JIC(51)135th Meeting, 13 December 1951

²³² CAB159/11, JIC(52)14th Meeting, 25 January 1952

²³³ CAB159/11, JIC(52)41st Meeting, 9 April 1952

²³⁴ CAB159/12, JIC(52)73rd Meeting, 3 July 1952

²³⁵ Andrew, Christopher and Gordievsky, Oleg, *KGB: The Inside Story of its Foreign Operations from Lenin to Gorbachev* (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1990) pp.175, 244-5, 303

Commission since 1950, they failed to discover Long.²³⁶ Requests for extra manpower for protection duty all across the British Zone were refused.²³⁷ JIC(G) fought a particularly tough battle in 1951 with all of the British departments in Germany to persuade them to tighten security, particularly regarding the Germans they employed.²³⁸

Changes in responsibility, security and personnel were not the only arenas of trouble for intelligence in Germany. In late 1952, the Commanders-in-Chief Committee (Germany) passed judgement on JIC(G), stating that it was “unable in its present form to meet the increasing requirements of the Commanders-in-Chief and their staffs for Intelligence appreciations at short notice and for day to day Intelligence on Service matters.”²³⁹ The problem was tripartite and in no small way a result of earlier organisational changes. During 1952, the British forces in Germany became an increasing part of the SHAPE organisation. The BAOR became the dominant component of the NATO Northern Army Group (NORTHAG), with the BAOR C-in-C becoming the NORTHAG C-in-C, responsible for the front from Hamburg to Kassel in the event of a Soviet invasion. The first part of the problem was that BAOR HQ at Bad Oeynhausen became the NORTHAG HQ, putting the JIC(G) and BIO(G), in their new Wahnerheide location, some 150 miles from the military command they had to support. Demands from BAOR for short term intelligence appreciations for NATO planning purposes grew but, of course, it had been specifically decided in 1951 that JIC(G) and BIO(G) had to remain outside the Allied organisation; the second part of the problem. Finally, in the event of war, both JIC(G) and BIO(G) were to disappear, even though the requirement for joint intelligence under the Commanders-in-Chief would remain.

Changes were required, whilst recognising the peculiarities of intelligence in Germany. The organisations had the opportunity to provide “intelligence of wider scope and of a longer term nature which is urgently required by London departments”; however, this information could not necessarily just be passed to the local commanders

²³⁶ DEFE41/65, JIC(Ger)(M)(50)1, 10 January 1950; JIC(Ger)(M)(50)8, 6 June 1950

²³⁷ DEFE41/65, JIC(Ger)(M)(50)13, 19 September 1950

²³⁸ DEFE41/66, JIC(Ger)(M)(51)9, 19 June 1951

²³⁹ DEFE5/42, COS(52)585, “Proposed re-organisation of the existing Joint Intelligence Organisation in Germany”, 24 October 1952

to satisfy their requirements. The Commanders-in-Chief accepted that a good deal of this intelligence was unsuitable for sharing within NATO circles. The problems with information exchange amongst the NATO allies in Germany had been put before the JIC by the JIC(G) on more than one occasion.²⁴⁰ There was, however, a critical need for a political element to all intelligence and planning in Germany and in particular Berlin, since every move was “deeply influenced by political considerations”.²⁴¹

The JIC(G) discussed the question of passing more sensitive political and economic intelligence to SHAPE from May 1951.²⁴² Special channels were established between the military parts of the High Commission organisation and SHAPE to ensure a limited flow of intelligence from the British to the Allied effort.²⁴³ In the summer of the following year, the JIC considered handing over responsibility for the exchange of all information with the NATO commands to the Commanders-in-Chief in Germany, so that the process could be speeded up.²⁴⁴

The JIC(G) began to search for a permanent solution to the problematical relationship between national intelligence and the Allied Commands in August 1952. Some sort of new JIC (Northern Forces) seemed to be the best option to those stationed in Germany.²⁴⁵ There would be only one JIC in Germany, but there would be a standing group to deal with the operational requirements of the Northern Army Group.²⁴⁶ The final proposal put forward to the Commanders-in-Chief Committee and to the JIC (London) was for a permanent intelligence group (with the working title “Northern Forces Intelligence Group”, or NFIG) based at the Northern Forces Headquarters whilst the JIC(G) remained in its current role and position.²⁴⁷

²⁴⁰ CAB159/8, JIC(50)116th Meeting, 27 October 1950; JIC(50)119th Meeting, 3 November 1950; JIC(50)136th Meeting, 15 December 1950

²⁴¹ COS(52)585

²⁴² DEFE41/66, JIC(Ger)(M)(51)8, 29 May 1951

²⁴³ DEFE41/66, JIC(Ger)(M)(51)15, 23 October 1951

²⁴⁴ CAB159/12, JIC(52)74th Meeting, 4 July 1952

²⁴⁵ DEFE41/67, JIC(Ger)(M)(52)11, 19 August 1952

²⁴⁶ DEFE41/67, JIC(Ger)(M)(52)12, 9 September 1952

²⁴⁷ DEFE41/67, JIC(Ger)(M)(52)13, 30 September 1952

NFIG was to be made up of the three senior Service intelligence officers, a JIB representative and a political representative, with the specific task of providing day-to-day intelligence for military planning purposes.²⁴⁸ The JIC initially received the plan with a good deal of scepticism, fearing that the two-organisation solution would lead to conflicts in authority.²⁴⁹ They did, however, eventually approve the establishment of the Group, with the stipulation that it should be limited in scope and subordinate to the JIC(G), although in the event of war the whole effort would be put under the NFIG.²⁵⁰ The name of the organisation was finally fixed as Joint Services Intelligence Committee (Northern Forces) or JSIC(NF). The JIC granted a trial period of six months for the new organisation, to be followed by a further review.²⁵¹

The 1950-52 period was unsettled to say the least for the intelligence organisation in Germany. Staff had been lost throughout and reviews repeatedly questioned the functions and administration of the 'sharp end' of British intelligence. Perhaps the greatest challenge of all revealed itself after the signature of the Bonn Treaty in May 1952, which enabled the end of Allied occupation of Germany and forewarned of the imminent end to the occupation costs paid by the Germans to the Allies. Kirkman notified the JIC in July 1952 that whilst the financial future of his organisation was uncertain, he considered it unwise to keep intelligence efforts at full pelt until his Deutschmark budget ran out.²⁵² He thought it better to begin to economise where possible and make sacrifices in order to prolong his resources, and to do this the JIC had to prioritise the activities of BIO(G). The JIC was provided with a list of activities to choose from by Kirkman, but they were unable to agree on a ranking order for economies since no single item for sacrifice could be agreed on by all of the departments.²⁵³

²⁴⁸ COS(52)585

²⁴⁹ CAB159/12, JIC(52)116th Meeting, 23 October 1952

²⁵⁰ CAB159/12, JIC(52)126th Meeting, 13 November 1952

²⁵¹ CAB158/14, JIC(52)70 "Proposed reorganisation of the Joint Intelligence Organisation in Germany", 13 November 1952

²⁵² CAB159/12, JIC(52)73rd Meeting, 3 July 1952

²⁵³ CAB159/12, JIC(52)98th Meeting, 10 September 1952; JIC(52)116th Meeting, 23 October 1952

A paper produced by Kirkman for the JIC showed that the Germans were paying approximately two-thirds of the total BIO(G) budget.²⁵⁴ The assumption for the future was that the Germans would make no contribution to Allied intelligence efforts, since they would be contributing financially to their own defence under the EDC. Making an assessment on which areas of activities in Germany could be lost was almost impossible since the products from Germany “covered intelligence over the whole range of priorities”. In April 1952, the Treasury had required that the MoD reduce the costs of its Service Attachés abroad by at least 15 percent, but cuts in Germany had been deliberately overlooked.²⁵⁵ Material for which there was no alternative source to Germany would have to be built into the future intelligence budgetary requirements. In December, a JIC delegation was formed to “re-examine the provision of intelligence from Germany in anticipation of probable financial cuts.”²⁵⁶ The intelligence staffs of the services and BRIXMIS were outside of the terms of reference, since the delegation’s only concern was to find ways to reduce the £2.4 million budget of BIO(G) without damaging the supply of vital intelligence. BIO(G) and the JIC had to wait until 1953 to discover where the axe would fall.²⁵⁷

Collection

Amidst the administrative uncertainty, the supply of intelligence had to be maintained. The JIC(G)-IRD-BBC campaign to encourage deserters continued to develop. Increased Soviet security measures made it more difficult for defectors to flee to the West, however.²⁵⁸ Into 1952, Russian countermeasures such as jamming BBC broadcasts advanced.²⁵⁹ The value of the encouragement campaign was demonstrated, nevertheless, by the few individuals that had managed to cross the frontier stating they had done so because of BBC broadcasts.²⁶⁰ In August 1952, the IRD intensified the

²⁵⁴ CAB159/12, JIC(52)121st Meeting, 3 November 1952

²⁵⁵ CAB158/14, JIC(52)29 “Reductions in Service Intelligence Representation abroad”, 18 April 1952

²⁵⁶ CAB158/14, JIC(52)78 “Intelligence from Germany when occupation costs are no longer met by the Germans”, 19 December 1952

²⁵⁷ See next chapter

²⁵⁸ DEFE41/66, JIC(Ger)(M)(51)6, 17 April 1951

²⁵⁹ DEFE41/67, JIC(Ger)(M)(52)1, 22 January 1952; JIC(Ger)(M)(52)5, 17th April 1952

²⁶⁰ JIC(Ger)(M)(51)6

campaign. Broadcasts included “direct incitement” to defect, as opposed to the more general reports of better living in the West.²⁶¹ The JIC agreed on the high value of the operation, acknowledging the small numbers of defectors involved but also the relatively small costs. In March 1952, the JIC, Chiefs of Staff and FO agreed that a defector with low intelligence value, who had killed a guard in the process of fleeing, should be handed back to the Russians to face prosecution for murder.²⁶² The JIC wanted to be sure that the publicity aspects of the case were carefully handled so as to minimise the damage to the encouragement campaign.

The disposal of defectors was a problem, since many needed language and skills training.²⁶³ The JIC Sub-Committee on Defectors proposed that “defectors who could not be resettled elsewhere within six weeks of arriving in the British Zone of Germany, should be transferred to the United Kingdom.”²⁶⁴ This meant that one of the long-term defector training centres in Germany could be closed.²⁶⁵ A further centre that had been set up in Germany to handle defectors, Number 11 Assessment Centre at Bad Salzufen, was ear-marked for removal to the UK, so that under SIS and Security Service control, the staff could continue their operations.²⁶⁶

Securing the services of German scientists and technicians was as much of an intelligence battleground as it had been in the years before. Anyone, even of minimal value, was snapped up.²⁶⁷ In mid-1951, the JIC along with their American colleagues drew up a list of those Germans who would have to be evacuated from the country in the event of a Soviet attack, because they were too important to fall into Russian hands.²⁶⁸ The STIB-run Operation DRAGON RETURN was given a new set of targets in September 1950 when 218 Germans who had been working on guided missile and

²⁶¹ CAB159/12, JIC(52)134th Meeting, 3 December 1952

²⁶² CAB159/11, JIC(52)28th Meeting, 6 March 1952; Defectors with high intelligence value were not handed back, CAB159/12, JIC(52)98th Meeting, 10 September 1952

²⁶³ CAB159/8, JIC(50)71st Meeting, 12 July 1950

²⁶⁴ CAB159/10, JIC(51)124th Meeting, 22 November 1951

²⁶⁵ CAB159/12, JIC(52)81st Meeting, 24 July 1952

²⁶⁶ CAB159/12, JIC(52)87th Meeting, 13 August 1952; JIC(52)134th Meeting, 3 December 1952

²⁶⁷ CAB159/8, JIC(50)134th Meeting, 8 December 1950

²⁶⁸ DEFE5/32, COS(51)445 “Denial of German Scientists to the USSR”, 30 July 1951

aircraft research and development in the USSR returned to Eastern Germany.²⁶⁹ The operation helped to prove the value of STIB and ultimately save it from disbandment, when its existence came under threat from the High Commission in late 1950.²⁷⁰ The JIC was called on to assist the Defence Research Policy Committee (DRPC), the body overseeing the fate of Germans working for the British, in reducing the risk of the Russians making equivalent use of former British employees.²⁷¹ Because the employees were thought to be irreplaceable, the DRPC rejected the JIC's recommendation that the only way to keep down the security risk was to limit the knowledge the Germans had of British projects either by keeping them to lesser research or by sending them back to Germany quickly.²⁷² Instead, since Operation MATCH BOX had reached the conclusion of its original function as a recruiting facility, STIB was asked to convert its services to an employment agency for Germans returning from Britain in order to keep them out of Soviet hands.²⁷³

During 1950, the briefing system for BRIXMIS by agencies in Germany and London was improved so that they could better perform a full intelligence function.²⁷⁴ A delay in the Russians issuing passes to BRIXMIS for several months in 1950, limiting the Mission to travel between Berlin and their base in Potsdam, represented a significant loss of vital information on Soviet troop developments in the Eastern Zone.²⁷⁵ The position of the British Mission was always precarious since its activities were known to the Russians; this meant the only action available to the JIC in response, however, was to treat SOXMIS in exactly the same way.²⁷⁶ Since both Missions were carrying out intelligence-gathering activities with at least some knowledge on the part of their hosts, it has to be assumed that each side placed enough value on their own Mission and was confident enough of the ineffectiveness of the opposing Mission, that this kind of observance of strict reciprocity, posturing and bluffing was the best way to solve

²⁶⁹ DEFE41/91, STIB/7003/7113 "Operation DRAGON RETURN", 11 October 1950

²⁷⁰ CAB159/8, JIC(50)134th Meeting, 8 December 1950

²⁷¹ CAB159/8, JIC(50)119th Meeting, 3 November 1950

²⁷² CAB159/9, JIC(51)46th Meeting, 27 April 1951

²⁷³ DEFE41/66, JIC(Ger)(M)(51)3, 13 February 1951; CAB159/9, JIC(51)12th Meeting, 1 February 1951

²⁷⁴ DEFE41/65, JIC(Ger)(M)(50)12, 29 August 1950; DEFE41/67, JIC(Ger)(M)(52)1, 22 January 1952

²⁷⁵ CAB159/7, JIC(50)60th Meeting, 14 June 1950

²⁷⁶ CAB159/8, JIC(50)70th Meeting, 7 July 1950

problems for both sides.²⁷⁷ The issue of six month travel permits to the British Mission early in 1951 without the usual fuss was welcome news for the JIC.²⁷⁸

In order not to antagonise the Russians, the FO wanted to keep BRIXMIS out of the most sensitive areas of the Soviet Zone, especially where there was coverage by other sources.²⁷⁹ One of the roles that BRIXMIS could perform well, however, was to double-check intelligence from other sources. The Air Ministry in particular tasked its section of the Mission with confirming material already received from sigint or photo reconnaissance. The risks in touring the Soviet Zone were constant, as witnessed by a tour hunting for new Russian aircraft types in December 1951.²⁸⁰ The Mission car was shot at, halted and detained by the Russians. On the release of the tour leader, Wing Commander Hutchinson, the Russians protested at his behaviour, so much so that the British High Commissioner and Mission Chief, Brigadier Dewhurst, recommended the Wing Commander's withdrawal. The JIC realised that nothing could be allowed to jeopardise the future of the Mission and that casualties were to be expected "in operations of this nature", so had no choice but to sacrifice Hutchinson for the good of the Mission.

In 1950, BRIXMIS answered exclusively and directly to the High Commissioner, although both the Services and JIC(G) were able to offer briefings.²⁸¹ The Contractual Agreements presented an opportunity to change this administration of the Mission, especially since the High Commissioner was due to change into an Ambassador.²⁸² SOXMIS could not be accredited to the British Ambassador who in turn was accredited to the Federal German Government, since this represented a *de facto* Soviet recognition of the FRG and a British recognition of the GDR if BRIXMIS were

²⁷⁷ DEFE41/65, JIC(Ger)(M)(50)17, 12 December 1950

²⁷⁸ CAB159/9, JIC(51)2nd Meeting, 4 January 1951

²⁷⁹ CAB159/11, JIC(52)20th Meeting, 13 February 1952

²⁸⁰ CAB159/11, JIC(52)8th Meeting, 16 January 1952

²⁸¹ AIR37/1454, JIC(Ger)(50)218 "Activities of BRIXMIS", 4 November 1950; CINC/P(50)56, 30 November 1950

²⁸² AIR37/1454, PSO/P(51)93 "Status of BRIXMIS and SOXMIS after signature of the Contractual Agreements", 29 November 1951

accredited by the Soviet Ambassador.²⁸³ The Commander-in-Chief, BAOR, instead became responsible for BRIXMIS and issued passes to SOXMIS.²⁸⁴ The War Office took over the financial and administrative burdens of BRIXMIS from the FO in a very quiet transfer.²⁸⁵

The tour reports of the British Mission from 1950-52 reveal actually how valuable BRIXMIS could be both in terms of liaison and intelligence-gathering. On two occasions the recovery of crashed British aircraft in the Soviet Zone was done by BRIXMIS, performing a liaison role in keeping with its original function.²⁸⁶ Intelligence-gathering covered the *Bereitschaften*, Soviet military manoeuvres and training, as well as non-military aspects of life in the Soviet Zone.²⁸⁷ Their ability to offer support during political machinations was shown during April and May 1952, when tour reports noted “there has as yet been no major physical reaction to the signing of the Contractual Agreements by the Western Powers”.²⁸⁸ The tour conditions fluctuated, however, often with the wider political mood. Of the 68 tours carried out between September 1950 and February 1951, only three were held up by the East German Police.²⁸⁹ By mid-1951, in the midst of Western negotiations over the future of Germany, the hold-ups were becoming frequent.²⁹⁰ BRIXMIS had to report that touring was “difficult” during the first months of 1952 due to increased security, a worsening relationship with the Russians and restrictions on their freedom of movement.²⁹¹ Nevertheless, an elaborate decoy system involving more than one car going out at a time, with one going on a real mission and the others taking pointless trips round the countryside was enabling two-thirds of real tours to get away without being trailed.²⁹² British complaints to General Chuikov meant a brief let up in shadowing, but by the end

²⁸³ AIR37/1454, 143/2/11/52, Kirkpatrick to Air Marshall Sir Robert Foster, 10 October 1952

²⁸⁴ AIR37/1454, DO 6511/25 CCS, 4 November 1952

²⁸⁵ CAB159/11, JIC(52)20th Meeting, 13 February 1952

²⁸⁶ WO208/4978, BRX/BLN/R(50)10, October 1950; WO208/4987, BRX/405/18, August 1952; AIR37/1454, JIC(Ger)(50)218, 4 November 1950

²⁸⁷ WO208/4980, BRX/BLN/R(50)11, November 1950; WO208/4982, BRX/405/8, November 1951; BRX/TS/405/6/1, 14 September 1951

²⁸⁸ WO208/4984, BRX/405/15, May 1952

²⁸⁹ WO208/4978, BRX/BLN/R(50)10, October 1950;

²⁹⁰ WO208/4982, BRX/TS/405/2, May 1951

²⁹¹ WO208/4983, BRX/405/11, January 1952; BRX/405/12, February 1952; BRX/405/13, March 1952

²⁹² WO208/4983, BRX/405/14, April 1952; WO208/4984, BRX/405/15, May 1952

of the year when BRIXMIS was trying to carry out tours of Soviet military training areas, the trailing and restrictions were worse than ever.²⁹³

Conclusions

The JIC's role in the rearmament debate was more significant than it had been in the Berlin blockade. The January 1951 paper on the Soviet threat stands out as rare example of the Committee wading obviously into policy-making. In doing so, the JIC explicitly supported the Chiefs of Staff view that rearmament was necessary; this came on top of the more constant function whereby the Committee described the threat from Soviet forces and the developing *Bereitschaften*. The JIC's impact did not lie just in advocating rearmament, however. As Mawby writes, when the February 1951 assessment of the likelihood of war suggested that rearmament might speed up the outbreak of war with the Russians, the government responded by employing a policy of delay.

It is noteworthy that the JIC was quickly able to allay fears in 1950 that war in Korea was a prelude to action in Europe and again in 1952 that completion of the Bonn and EDC treaties would result in Soviet aggression. This relied on the sort of military intelligence that British intelligence in Germany could handle, as it had done during the blockade. Beyond the immediate estimate of Soviet preparations for war, however, the JIC struggled; intelligence had not developed sufficiently to provide anything more than confused assessments of exact Soviet force strengths throughout the 1950-2 period. Whilst the Committee offered reassurance that war was not imminent, they provided a worrying picture of growing Soviet and East German forces.

The predictions for Soviet intentions were of mixed success. The Committee, without specific intelligence, often seem to have hedged their bets by suggesting that the Russians could put pressure on Berlin; in June 1950, in early 1951 when examining the

²⁹³ WO208/4986, BRX/405/17, July 1952; WO208/4990, BRX/405/22, December 1952

probable outcomes of the CFM and in May 1952 after the completion of the Bonn and EDC treaties. As the tension over German rearmament relaxed, the JIC's assessments became more accurate when they predicted the Russians would seek to build up the *Bereitschaften* as a response to West German forces. It is not obvious, however, that after the September 1951 internal review of JIC performance, assessments became any less equivocal.

In the administrative arena, the JIC and JIC(G) were properly aware of how the changing politics and finances in Germany would affect intelligence; discussions began early enough. Setting up relations with the infant German intelligence services was clearly prudent. The solutions devised to manage the decline in resources and increase in functions were not always sensible, however; recognising the importance of intelligence from Germany whilst simultaneously failing to make adequate arrangements for staff seems somewhat absurd. It appears that the Committee were often aware of problems and shortcomings, as with the constant recognition that collection was deficient, but not so often able to invent successful solutions.

Chapter Three: 1953 – 1954

Riot

Intelligence test

The events of June 1953 offer a chance to make a judgement on whether British intelligence performed better in that key Cold War moment than it did either in the Berlin blockade or in the Korean War. Had intelligence collection developed enough to allow the JIC to move away from its track record of good assessments of Cold War mood to successful, specific warnings of impending crisis? In 1954, as Chairman of the JIC, Patrick Dean produced a brief for the Foreign Secretary, Sir Anthony Eden, on the results of British intelligence activities that partly answers this question.¹ He told the JIC that “it was perhaps not always realised that policy decisions were often taken against a background provided by Intelligence, a background now so well known that knowledge of it had become virtually subconscious.” Dean noted that defence and defence research policy was now “based almost entirely” on intelligence appreciations. For him, one of the key duties of the intelligence agencies was “to establish a pattern of normal activities”, so that the abnormalities were always noticed. Furthermore, it was essential that on the day war broke out, as much information about the enemy was in British hands as possible as; “there would never be time to make good deficiencies once war had broken out.”

Dean’s words defined the relationship between intelligence and policy; what lies beneath them is fascinating. The JIC told the Chiefs of Staff in March 1954 that “although we had no grounds for complacency, within the limits of manpower and finance a great deal of knowledge on the Soviet bloc had been gained.”² The major gaps were “Russian strategy and intentions on the highest level and the early stages of development of new Russian weapons.” The JIC acknowledged that a “great deal of

¹ CAB159/17, JIC(54)85th Meeting, 28 September 1954

² DEFE4/69, COS(54)36th Meeting, 31 March 1954

intelligence” came from “purely overt sources”, so there’s little surprise about the nature of the gaps.³ From 1947, the overriding question for the JIC was whether war was coming. Intelligence, and particularly those collection elements in Germany, had improved enough for the JIC to estimate they would have up to 30 days warning of a full scale Russian assault on Western Europe, although a small-scale sudden attack would be virtually impossible to predict.⁴

By 1954, the armed services felt they had good coverage of the military targets within Eastern Germany that were potential indicators of aggression.⁵ An overview of the weekly JIC reviews that concerned East Germany reveals that the vast majority of information being collected on a week-by-week basis was military. What is more, some thing like 70 percent of that information suggests it was collected from *de visu* sources, such as BRIXMIS and low-level SIS rail- and troop-watching agents.⁶ Political information on East Germany was rare and usually labelled only confidential, the vast majority of which came straight from diplomatic reporting or open sources, such as Russian newspapers.⁷

Intelligence collection in Germany had clearly been the frontline of the Cold War in Europe and the effort that was going into it by 1953 was commensurate with its centrality. The SIS station in Berlin was MI6’s largest with about one hundred staff.⁸ There were plenty of people willing to supply them with information in return for payment, with some individual agents working for more than one organisation or country at a time. So long as these agents were assumed to be working for multiple agencies, their information could still be of some value if treated with care.⁹ By 1953, SIS officers were also having some success in recruiting agents within the East German authorities, although it is unclear whether these were of any real value.¹⁰ Peter Lunn

³ CAB159/15, JIC(54)17th Meeting, 25 February 1954

⁴ CAB158/15, JIC(53)61(Final) “Warning of attack”, 18 August 1953

⁵ DEFE41/80, JSIG(G)/P(54)30 “Direction of intelligence effort”, 19 July 1954

⁶ Of 191 reports over the 1953-4 period, 135 are obviously recognisable as *de visu*.

⁷ For example, CAB159/13, JIC(53)2nd Meeting, 8 January 1953; JIC(53)9th Meeting, 22 January 1953

⁸ Blake, George, *No Other Choice*, (London: Jonathan Cape, 1990), p.168

⁹ Private information

¹⁰ CAB159/14, JIC(53)79th Meeting, 23 July 1953; Bower, *Perfect English Spy*, p.211

took over as head of the Berlin station in 1953, with the express intention of looking for telephone cables to tap, building on the work he had done in Vienna.¹¹ What sigint there was in Germany at this time tended to be low-level, focused on elint monitoring of Soviet radar and interception of voice traffic using stations such as RAF Gatow in Berlin.¹² The JIC described the switch to higher frequency radio links within the Soviet Army in Germany as “a very serious development from our point of view”; “everything possible” was done to break the new system.¹³

The intelligence BRIXMIS gathered was highly valued military information, often labelled ‘Top Secret’ in JIC reports.¹⁴ In January 1954, BRIXMIS were granted permission to ignore Russian restrictions on their movement, if the objective was rated sufficiently high and they had received permission beforehand from the High Commission.¹⁵ The Mission’s work-rate increased through 1953 and 1954, as their intelligence-gathering function became more ingrained. In September 1953, they carried out 56 tours, covering 26,200 miles!¹⁶ Additionally, more of their work tended to be done in liaison with other organisations such as GCHQ, RAF photo reconnaissance teams and their US counterparts, so that individual pieces of intelligence could be double-checked.¹⁷

Defectors continued to be valuable, although the numbers remained small. The campaign to encourage defection combined, under constant review, BBC broadcasts and covertly distributed unattributable leaflets.¹⁸ The value of the campaign was contested within the JIC, however, whilst the Home Office stressed they were unwilling to have

¹¹ Stafford, David, *Spies Beneath Berlin* (London: John Murray, 2002) p.86; see next chapter for more on the Berlin tunnel operation.

¹² Aldrich, Richard, “GCHQ and Sigint in the Early Cold War, 1945-70”, *Intelligence and National Security*, Vol. 16, 1, Spring 2001, pp.67-96

¹³ COS(54)36th Meeting

¹⁴ For example, CAB159/13, JIC(53)19th Meeting, 19 February 1953; JIC(53)30th Meeting, 18 March 1953

¹⁵ CAB159/15, JIC(54)1st Meeting, 6 January 1954

¹⁶ WO208/4999, BRX/405/31 Monthly report September 1953, 10 October 1953

¹⁷ WO208/4995, BRX/405/27 Monthly report May 1953, 29 May 1953; WO208/5000, BRX/405/32 Monthly report October 1953, 7 November 1953

¹⁸ CAB159/13, JIC(53)49th Meeting, 13 May 1953

messages put out that would encourage all types of refugee to Britain.¹⁹ The FO in particular was unhappy at the use of direct-incitement-to-defect messages within the distributed leaflets.²⁰ Better security measures on the Eastern side of the border and improved morale amongst the indigenous armed forces was thought to have reduced the flow of defectors coming west.²¹ Some high quality defectors, such as Nikolai Khokhlov from the MVD's Second Chief Directorate, still found ways to come across.²² In September 1954, the JIC concluded that it was not politically desirable to extend the campaign of encouragement whilst the West was trying to improve relations with the Russians.²³ They did, however, agree to a review of the material being used in the campaign to see whether more valuable defectors could be induced across the frontier.

German scientists and technicians maintained their value as sources on Russian weapons development and industry. Although the JIC with the DPRC decided to abandon the list of those scientists they wanted to deny to the Russians in the event of war, useful East Germans were still contacted.²⁴ The ambition, however, had moved away from inducing defection to recruiting the Germans as long-term agents-in-place.²⁵ By 1954, British intelligence had interviewed about a quarter of the 2500 returning scientists and technicians about their work in Russia.²⁶ Maddrell writes that these Germans provided a "considerable amount of intelligence" on atomic energy, guided missiles, aircraft, electronics and more, although because of the way the Russians employed them, the returnees were unable to provide much "up-to-date intelligence on research and development".²⁷

¹⁹ CAB159/14, JIC(53)92nd Meeting, 26 August 1953

²⁰ CAB159/14, JIC(53)133rd Meeting, 23 December 1953

²¹ CAB159/15, JIC(54)24th Meeting, 18 March 1954

²² For more on Khokhlov, see Aldrich, *The Hidden Hand*, pp.433-5; PREM11/772, PM/IK/54/75 "The Khokhlov Case", 8 May 1954

²³ CAB159/17, JIC(54)81st Meeting, 15 September 1954

²⁴ CAB158/18, JIC(54)79 "Denial of German scientists to the Soviet Bloc", 22 September 1954

²⁵ Maddrell, *Spying on Science*, pp.188-9

²⁶ DEFE41/161, Returnee Exploitation Group No EG 100 "List of German scientists and technicians who have returned from the USSR to the Soviet Zone of Germany", 19 August 1954; Maddrell cannot confirm this figure, *Spying on Science*, pp.187-8

²⁷ Maddrell, *Spying on Science*, p.205

Detailing collection of intelligence is only part of the story, however, since it was through the assessment and distribution of JIC reports that intelligence had a chance to affect policy decisions. There is little doubt that under Dean's Chairmanship, which began in April 1953, the JIC tried to make serious attempts to widen their assessments to cover such matters as long-term Soviet economic policy.²⁸ But perhaps the biggest change made to reporting during this period was the advent of the Weekly Review of Current Intelligence (WRCI). The weekly Perimeter Review of events the JIC had carried out since the blockade was not written up into an agreed document, but rather individual members of the Committee drafted the items discussed and distributed them to their departments.²⁹ The WRCI procedure required the JIC secretariat to produce a draft summary of briefs provided after the relevant departmental heads of section had met.³⁰ The JIC then saw the summary and the original briefs to agree a final version of the WRCI. Dean noted that "the idea of producing a Summary had the advantage, amongst other things of giving some publicity to the work of the Committee." It mattered to him that the work of his committee had the greatest possible influence. The first WRCI was produced on 8 July 1954 and began, as many did thereafter, "There are no indications of Soviet military aggression."³¹

Measures had improved in terms of collection, assessment and distribution by the end of 1954. The immediate question, however, is did the intelligence system function well enough in the first half of 1953 to ensure the policy-makers were not left flat-footed? There is a valid argument that says overall British policy would not have changed with or without good intelligence, because successive governments had already decided against liberation operations.³² This view does not, however, invalidate analysis of intelligence performance during 1953 since clearly it mattered that British responses to Cold War developments were based on as much accurate information as possible.

²⁸ CAB158/16, JIC(53)117(Final) "Soviet bloc economic policy and defence", 1 February 1954

²⁹ CAB159/15, JIC(54)4th Meeting, 14 January 1954

³⁰ CAB159/16, JIC(54)58th Meeting, 1 July 1954

³¹ CAB158/18, JIC(54)66/1 WRCI, 8 July 1954

³² See previous chapter

The run-up to 17 June 1953

JIC estimates put the Soviet Group of Occupying Forces, Germany (GOFG) at 380,000 troops plus 20,000 Security troops in April 1953.³³ The Joint Services Intelligence Group (Germany) (JSIG(G), formerly JSIC(NF)³⁴) reckoned that there had been an increase of some 40,000 since March 1952, putting their figure at around 405,000.³⁵ This placed the GOFG at somewhere near 90 percent of their war establishment. The Soviet Air Force in Germany, however, was assessed at only 66 percent of its peace establishment. BRIXMIS found themselves trying to gather this sort of information under increased restrictions, including more shadowing of tours and a larger number of out of bounds signs near military and industrial installations.³⁶

Very useful intelligence was available which indicated that, for the first time, the Russians were planning huge winter exercises in Germany. The JIC reached this conclusion after information was received on Soviet orders for rolling stock.³⁷ This is a rare occasion where intelligence seems to have been received before the movements had taken place. The origin of this material is noted as “reliable British and Allied sources”, possibly indicating some sort of sigint or valuable agent. By the end of February, “ten of the thirteen major training areas [were] active”.³⁸ By March, however, British and American sources agreed that the unusual activity had ended.³⁹

The JIC had enough information to map the ORBAT of the East German Air Force in January 1953.⁴⁰ Other developments in East German rearmament were taking place: the creation of registration offices in towns, along with quotas for supplying numbers of recruits to the Kasernierte Volkspolizei (KVP), was thought to be the

³³ CAB158/15, JIC(53)14(Final) “Soviet and Satellite War Potential, 1953-56”, 10 April 1953

³⁴ The name was changed to JSIG(G) in March 1953, DEFE5/45, COS(53)128 “Joint Intelligence for Northern Forces”, 3 March 1953

³⁵ DEFE41/80, JSIG(G)/P(53)5(Final) “Increase in Soviet readiness for war 1 March 1952 – 1 March 1953”, 20 April 1953

³⁶ WO208/4991, BRX/405/23, BRIXMIS Monthly report January 1953, 30 January 1953

³⁷ CAB159/13, JIC(53)19th Meeting, 19 February 1953

³⁸ CAB159/13, JIC(53)22nd Meeting, 26 February 1953

³⁹ CAB159/13, JIC(53)25th Meeting, 5 March 1953

⁴⁰ CAB159/13, JIC(53)9th Meeting, 22 January 1953

introduction of conscription.⁴¹ A defecting engineer reported on the development of harbour facilities on Ruegen Island on the Baltic.⁴² The installations were designed to allow destroyers to dock, facilitate amphibious operations and provide submarine shelters. But despite improvements across all three of the East German services, the JSIG(G) still believed that the GDR forces were limited in operational capacity.⁴³ Within the KVP alone, there were an estimated 90,000 men, but a poor standard of training, maladministration and a lack of vehicles led the JSIG(G) to believe that these forces could only be used within the GDR frontiers, including West Berlin. If these problems were quickly rectified, the JSIG(G) thought that the KVP would be ready for other active operations in 1954.

The JIC, however, was not only concerned with the military developments in the GDR; deductions about Russian foreign policy were also necessary. In July 1952, the SED had announced plans for “building Socialism” and the Committee knew that central and local government had been reorganised, rearmament had quickened, the GDR-FRG border had been tightened, transport links between East and West Berlin had been cut, laws akin to the other Communist states had been drawn up and “severe sentences were awarded in various espionage trials”.⁴⁴ The conclusion was that, “appearing to accept the continued division of Germany for the time being, the Soviet Government began [during late 1952] to accelerate the Sovietisation of the Eastern Zone”. In January 1953, Major-General Coleman, the British Commandant in Berlin, reported that as a consequence, “[p]robably never before has the regime been so unpopular.”⁴⁵

According to the JIC, the first steps towards collectivisation of agriculture had been accompanied by the “inevitable results”: “severe food shortages” were used as an

⁴¹ The Bereitschaften became the KVP in 1952. CAB159/13, JIC(53)22nd Meeting, 26 February 1953

⁴² CAB159/13, JIC (53) 36th Meeting, 1 April 1953

⁴³ DEFE41/80, JSIG(G)/P(53)10 “The aggressive potential of the East German Para-Military Forces”, 30 April 1953

⁴⁴ CAB159/13, JIC(53)19th Meeting, 19 February 1953; CAB158/15, JIC(53)29(Final) “Survey of World Communism in 1952”, 28 April 1953

⁴⁵ FO371/103838, CS 1016/3, Kirkpatrick to FO including Coleman’s “Report on political developments in the last quarter of 1952”, 21 January 1953

excuse to purge both remaining opposition parties and the SED.⁴⁶ In January, the Committee noted that Karl Hamann, the Minister of Trade, and his State Secretary, Rudolf Albrecht, had been arrested in a prelude to show trials over the failings within the economy.⁴⁷ Georg Dertinger, the Foreign Minister, was arrested for espionage, echoing the charges made at the show trial of Rudolph Slansky, the Secretary General of the Czech Communist Party, in December 1952.⁴⁸

The JIC reported that there were two causes of the shortages: planned shortages as a result of the focus on building stockpiles through production and investment on certain goods and industries; and unplanned shortages which were likely in all inflexible, planned economies.⁴⁹ The burden of rearmament on the GDR economy was considerable, made worse by poor management and the prioritisation of military over civil production, whilst collectivisation could “only dark[en] the outlook for the consumer for some time to come.”⁵⁰ The Committee did not think all these measures were irreversible, however, since “such a course could always be arrested to meet any change in the general situation.”⁵¹

The economic and political conditions in East Germany were observed by Lieutenant-Colonel Harry Spice, the economic representative on BRIXMIS.⁵² Whilst the Western press were reporting that the GDR was close to collapse because of famine, mass refugees, stampedes for food and general chaos, Spice reported, “on the contrary, the East German Government, and certainly its Soviet masters, have no such ideas, and the country is now in a ruthless grip of control the like of which it has never known before.”⁵³ Spice had noted some food shortages and the flight of older East Germans, and he anticipated that the GDR authorities would soon put a stop to any economically valuable people leaving the zone. According to JIC figures, 48,700 people fled

⁴⁶ JIC(53)29(Final)

⁴⁷ CAB159/13, JIC(53)2nd Meeting, 8 January 1953

⁴⁸ CAB159/13, JIC(53)9th Meeting, 22 January 1953

⁴⁹ JIC(53)2nd Meeting

⁵⁰ CAB159/13, JIC(53)22nd Meeting, 26 February 1953

⁵¹ JIC(53)29(Final)

⁵² Geraghty, *BRIXMIS*, p.10

⁵³ BRX/405/23

westwards during March 1953.⁵⁴ During early 1953, nevertheless, Spice did not witness a slow down in “the industrial tempo”. Agriculture in the East remained “somewhat an enigma” however, as Spice received conflicting reports over the amount and success of cultivation.⁵⁵

In the immediate aftermath of the Stalin’s death on 5 March, the JIC began to interpret movements in Germany as part of the Soviet response to the news. A British Lincoln bomber on a training exercise on 12 March flew off course within the Berlin air corridor, violated East German airspace, as three other aircraft had done that day, and was consequently shot down by Soviet MiGs.⁵⁶ Kirkman “considered the incident was probably due to the nervousness on the part of the Soviet authorities who, since Stalin’s death, might be watching for possible frontier crossings for propaganda purposes”.⁵⁷ The cancellation of leave in the GOFG just prior to Stalin’s death was “thought to have been a security measure imposed as soon as the authorities were aware that Stalin was dangerously ill”.

Before the end of March, however, the JIC noted that the Russians looked like they were being more “conciliatory” over smaller international considerations, such as dealing with the Lincoln bomber incident (where BRIXMIS had actually been able to perform their liaison function⁵⁸), the reopening of the Rothensee ship-canal, freeing up the flow of inter-zonal transport and the Economic Commission for Europe talks.⁵⁹ Such measures were welcomed as “relatively minor” and judged as part of a “tactical withdrawal in the cold-war”. They did note that, although propaganda attacks on the US had not completely ended, the “peaceful co-existence” theme was becoming more prevalent. Military training in the Eastern Zone continued to follow familiar patterns throughout March, April and May.⁶⁰

⁵⁴ CAB158/16, JIC(53)68(Final) “Disturbances in East Germany, June 1953”, 4 September 1953

⁵⁵ WO208/4994, BRX/405/26, BRIXMIS Monthly report April 1953, 1 May 1953

⁵⁶ Geraghty, *BRIXMIS*, pp.41-3

⁵⁷ CAB159/13, JIC(53)31st Meeting, 19 March 1953

⁵⁸ Geraghty, *BRIXMIS*, pp.41-3

⁵⁹ CAB159/13, JIC(53)34th Meeting, 26 March 1953

⁶⁰ CAB159/13, JIC(53)42nd Meeting, 23 April 1953; JIC(53)47th Meeting, 7 May 1953

A more co-operative attitude was not taken as indicating any change in Soviet policy towards Germany at this stage, however. Reilly pointed out that whilst construction of the kind at Ruegen harbour continued, the Russians clearly were not planning any sort of withdrawal.⁶¹ The FO urged caution over playing guessing games about Soviet intentions: “[s]o little is known of the character and views of Malenkov and Beria [the two men who seemed to be most in control] that it would be wise to keep an open mind in interpreting Soviet methods since Stalin’s death.”⁶² They noted that the Soviet leadership had decided “to make the carrot more evident than the stick in their handling of the Soviet population and also to adopt more fluid and even more conciliatory tactics in foreign policy.” The diplomats thought that this might be an opportunity both to demonstrate the feasibility of peaceful co-existence and to lay bare “Western unity and cohesion.”

The JIC remained uncertain about developments in Germany. They do not seem to have had any prior warning of the 28 May announcement that the Soviet Control Commission was being dissolved and replaced with a civilian High Commission, led by Vladimir Semyonov.⁶³ The Committee did have information that General Chuikov was being replaced simultaneously as Soviet Commander-in-Chief, Germany by General Gretchko. The real significance of the change from Control Commission to High Commission was unknown, but the JIC suspected that the change was “one of form rather than substance”. Soviet rights in East Germany were to be maintained as were existing Four Power agreements, allowing the JIC relief since “we need not yet fear the unpleasant consequences for Berlin that might flow from a relinquishment of Soviet rights to the ‘German Democratic Republic’.” The Committee actually believed that Semyonov’s terms of reference might indicate a desire to return to working quadripartite contact or Four Power talks. Overall, however, their more pessimistic conclusion was that:

⁶¹ CAB159/13, JIC(53)36th Meeting, 1 April 1953

⁶² CAB159/13, JIC(53)39th Meeting, 16 April 1953

⁶³ CAB159/13, JIC(53)57th Meeting, 10 June 1953

In the main... the course of Soviet policy towards Germany appears to have remained unchanged in recent months and, if this is so, the Kremlin may be making it plain by this action that they do not intend to delay the normal development of their policy towards Eastern Germany pending the possibility of a Four-Power Conference, the success of which they may doubt.

These conclusions seem to be almost exactly the same, word-for-word, as those presented by Selwyn Lloyd, Minister of State for Foreign Affairs, to Churchill, six days earlier.⁶⁴ This is an indication, perhaps, that the JIC was reliant on the FO for this sort of foreign policy assessment. Lloyd added in his summary that “so far as we can judge at present, this Soviet move does not change the position significantly for better or for worse.”

The JIC did not predict the events of 17 June, nor did their American allies.⁶⁵ Whilst they had been observing for some time the changing circumstances in East Germany after the announcement of the enforced sovietisation in 1952 and then the change of leadership in Moscow, the Committee did not believe active resistance was likely:

Although there is evidence of the hostility of the people of the Satellite countries to their Communist regimes, there are no appreciable signs of resistance, and continued improvement in Communist methods of control will prevent the development of effective opposition.⁶⁶

Certainly, the JIC were under no illusions that the security apparatus in the GDR would allow an uprising. In fact, the most recent research carried out on Russian and German archives by Ostermann indicates that Moscow had little knowledge of how quickly things were deteriorating in the GDR until late May.⁶⁷

⁶⁴ FO371/103838, CS 1016/24, Lloyd to Churchill, PM/MS/53/146, “Dissolution of the Soviet Control Commission in East Germany”, 4 June 1953

⁶⁵ Murphy *et al*, *Battleground Berlin*, pp.169-170

⁶⁶ JIC(53)14(Final)

⁶⁷ Ostermann, Christian F. , *Uprising in East Germany, 1953: The Cold War, the German Question, and the first major upheaval behind the Iron Curtain* (Central European University Press, 2001) pp.11-21

British intelligence did not yet have the capability to discover the disagreement between the SED leadership and Moscow, more specifically Beria, over the future course of action in the GDR. This information would have required high-level agents within the Soviet or GDR government. During talks in Moscow between Ulbricht, Grotewohl and the Kremlin leadership, the East Germans were warned that their tough path towards socialisation was leading to “a catastrophe”.⁶⁸ The announcement of a “New Course” on 11 June was designed to ease the immediate pressure. Selwyn Lloyd reported to Churchill on this policy on 16 June, stating that economic and “psychological” concessions were included in the announcement: farmers were to be spared collectivisation; there was to be less restriction on the Protestant Church; and inter-zonal travel would be made easier.⁶⁹ The FO viewed mention of a Russian desire for German reunification as well-timed given that a West German election campaign was just beginning. Kirkpatrick reported to Lloyd that Berliners remained “sceptical”, however.

None of this reporting noted that the increase in production norms, announced in the GDR in May⁷⁰, remained in force, nor did it accurately portray the depth of feeling in East Germany that meant people were willing to protest, despite all they knew about the power of the security apparatus in the GDR. From the 12 June, workers in East Berlin had been demonstrating against their government’s decision to demand higher production levels.⁷¹

Riots and responses

The feed of official information through to the British government about what was happening in East Germany during the June riots can be reconstructed with the help of the FO messages from Germany back to London, JIC discussions and BRIXMIS

⁶⁸ Ostermann, *Uprising*, p.19

⁶⁹ PREM11/441, PM/MS/53/238 Lloyd to Churchill “The Recent Measures in the Soviet Zone of Germany”, 16 June 1953

⁷⁰ Ostermann, *Uprising*, p.xxxiii

⁷¹ *Ibid*, p.163

reports. Clearly, wireless news from the BBC, other broadcasting services and printed news would have also played a part in forming the picture of events for those in Whitehall. It was perhaps BRIXMIS, with relatively free access to the Soviet Zone, who had the best opportunity to witness events.⁷² Tours entered East Berlin on both 16 and 17 June but were forbidden entry on 18 June. Eleven further scouting missions of East Berlin took place between 19 and 24 June.

BRIXMIS had seen demonstrators on 16 June and recognised that rioting “began with startling suddenness”. According to Geraghty, it was an East German maid who first alerted the Mission to the emerging events.⁷³ At 1045 am on 17 June, Jack Ward, the Deputy High Commissioner, sent a message to London reporting that protests against the norm increases had come to a head with a march from the Stalinallee to the GDR government buildings.⁷⁴ He observed that the crowd had ignored pacifying calls, but there had not yet been any police interference. Ward noted that the authorities had responded by sending loudspeaker vans to tour the streets announcing that the norm increases had been cancelled. A further message from Berlin, just after midday reported that there had been no KVP intervention and that they were “so far behaving with tact and restraint” despite the fact that some speakers were claiming this was “a rising of the people from the whole of East Berlin against the regime”.⁷⁵ BRIXMIS saw Soviet troops, with armour, moving into the city between 1130 and 1230.⁷⁶ Sir William Strang, PUS at the FO, told Churchill that “[w]e are keeping a close eye on these interesting and encouraging, but also potentially dangerous developments. If the Russians have to fire, this will undo all the effect of their recent gestures.”⁷⁷

At 1406 the garrison in Berlin reported that a state of emergency had been declared in the Soviet sector.⁷⁸ They thought the demonstrations were “a spontaneous

⁷² WO208/4996, BRX/405/28 BRIXMIS Monthly report June 1953, 1 July 1953

⁷³ Geraghty, *BRIXMIS*, p.48

⁷⁴ FO371/103839, CS 1016/35, No 545 Wahnerheide, Ward to the FO, 17 June 1953

⁷⁵ PREM11/673, No. 109 Berlin to the Foreign Office, 17 June 1953

⁷⁶ BRX/405/28

⁷⁷ PREM11/673, Strang to Prime Minister “Situation in Berlin”, 17 June 1953

⁷⁸ FO371/103839, CS 1016/37, No 112 Berlin to FO, 17 June 1953

outburst of feeling” rather than an orchestrated rising.⁷⁹ Information remained scant, especially after the Eastern Zone had effectively been sealed around midday. Nevertheless, BRIXMIS saw shots fired and crowds in West Berlin, poorly controlled by the West German police, urge on the rioting.⁸⁰ The situation report produced for Churchill during the evening noted that after some firing during the day, order had been restored to East Berlin.⁸¹ Reports that the KVP had been in action alongside the Soviet troops were dismissed, but credit was correctly given to information that other disturbances in the Eastern Zone had taken place.

Firing was heard during the night of the 17/18 June. The Berlin garrison reported that “increased numbers of Soviet troops, tanks and anti-tank guns are visible, and emplacements have been constructed at strategic points”.⁸² BRIXMIS noted a large number of broken down Soviet vehicles that had been abandoned en route into Berlin.⁸³ It appeared that little notice had been taken of the SED calls to return to work. Ward had made contact with Otto John, the head of the BfV, to get his view on the disorder.⁸⁴ John claimed to “have evidence that [the] original demonstration was a put-up job by the Russians aimed at getting rid of the SED and replacing it by a government of ‘bourgeois’ parties.” Ward thought that the “systematic way the demonstration started, before spontaneous popular feeling took charge” gave some credence to this conspiracy theory. He did note that John was alone, however, since “[o]ther senior German officials have expressed [the] view that riots were an entirely spontaneous reaction to the Soviet attempt to relax the restrictions in the East Zone for reasons of wider policy.”

On 18 June, the British had no clear estimate of the number of Russian troops in East Berlin, partly due to BRIXMIS repeatedly being denied access to the city.⁸⁵ Coleman reported American estimates of 20,000 troops and 350 tanks. He was convinced, however, that the riots were not being used as a pretext for a move on West

⁷⁹ FO371/103839, CS 1016/38, No 111 Berlin to FO, 17 June 1953

⁸⁰ BRX/405/28

⁸¹ PREM11/673, Situation report at 1945hrs “Berlin”, 17 June 1953

⁸² PREM11/673, No.118 Berlin to FO, 18 June 1953

⁸³ BRX/405/28

⁸⁴ PREM11/673, No.463 Wahnerheide to FO, 18 June 1953

⁸⁵ PREM11/673, No.125 Berlin to FO, 18 June 1953; BRX/405/28

Berlin; there were no signs of aggressive preparations. Formations were consistent with internal security operations and defensive against incursions from the West.⁸⁶ In fact, Coleman felt the troops had acted “with marked restraint and moderation” and had used a “minimum of force”. BRIXMIS had reported to him that their patrols of other major towns in the Soviet Zone had witnessed martial law in place and KVP, Soviet troops and armour controlling matters.⁸⁷ There had been “a general air of tension in the towns visited but no visible signs of rioting.”

The JIC met on the 18 June whilst information was still coming in. They too concluded that “the demonstrations were spontaneous and not deliberately planned, that they were probably the result of economic difficulties and food shortages.”⁸⁸ The Committee recorded their view that this was not part of a Soviet aggressive move, but the risk of inadvertent escalation remained. The Chairman, now Dean, drew attention to the level of provocation from crowds in West Germany, propaganda broadcasts and Adenauer’s message of support for the rioters. He predicted that “these demonstrations would make the Russians extremely distrustful of the Germans and that consequently they would probably increase their control over East Germany”. The Committee had to admit that they were unable to interpret accurately the decisions behind the announcement of the New Course a week earlier, but they recognised the GDR had to do something about the growing internal economic crisis. The JIC thought the disturbances in the Soviet Zone had arisen from this deterioration.

The Western Commandants had been forced into countering Russian claims that the riots had been instigated by Western *agent provocateurs*.⁸⁹ In particular, they denied that Willy Geottling, a West German who had been executed for his part in the disturbances, was under the command of Western intelligence. Instead, the Commandants denounced the “harsh restrictions” and “irresponsible recourse to military

⁸⁶ FO371/103839, CS 1016/52, No.126 Berlin to FO, 18 June 1953

⁸⁷ BRX/405/28; No.125 Berlin to FO, 18 June 1953

⁸⁸ CAB159/13, JIC(53)61st Meeting, 18 June 1953

⁸⁹ PREM11/673, No. 555 Wahnerheide to FO, 18 June 1953

force.” These words irritated Churchill since he had not cleared them prior to release.⁹⁰ He certainly thought the Russians could not have been expected to remain inactive, rather he “had the impression that they acted with considerable restraint in the face of mounting disorder.” The Prime Minister had Kirkpatrick recalled immediately from his vacation in Austria.⁹¹

By nightfall on the 18 June, Coleman reported, “All is apparently quiet in the Eastern Sector and shooting seems to have stopped” and “West Berlin is quiet”.⁹² His staff was still being refused entry to East Berlin on official business, although BRIXMIS had managed to conduct three tours during that day.⁹³ These tours recorded that to a degree, transport was again running and Soviet troops were still holding key positions. It looked to BRIXMIS that the troops had come straight from training areas, giving an indication that the rioting had taken the Russians by surprise. Two tours of other cities in the Soviet Zone turned up no signs of rioting, but evidence of Soviet troops in barracks standing by.

Coleman believed that a state of emergency remained in other parts of the Soviet Zone. For the first time, he felt able to give an account of what had been happening over the last few days, agreeing that the disorder was “entirely spontaneous”.⁹⁴ He believed that the discontent had been rising for days before 17 June, but that even on 16 June, the crowds were merely “rowdy” rather than dangerous. By the morning of 17 June, “the character of the demonstrations had completely changed” into something more akin to an uprising with hopes of over-throwing the government. Clashes with the KVP took place, but both they and Russian troops had been more passive than aggressive in manner, an attitude which acted as further encouragement to the crowds that they might succeed. Coleman was in no doubt that “fuel was added to the fire by incitement of various sorts from West Berlin”. Once the Russians had taken over control of operations, cordoned off the Eastern Sector and begun to open fire, the major

⁹⁰ PREM11/673, Prime Minister to Strang, 19 June 1953

⁹¹ Kirkpatrick, *The Inner Circle*, p.255

⁹² PREM11/673, No.123 Berlin to FO, 18 June 1953

⁹³ BRX/405/28

⁹⁴ PREM11/673, No.128 Berlin to FO, 19 June 1953

disturbances dissipated quickly. Coleman dismissed John's theory that this had been a Russian-inspired plot, since he could see that only damage had been done to Soviet credibility in East Germans eyes.

Ward notified London on 20 June that,

reliable evidence has just become available from British intelligence sources (postal examination and telephone monitoring) that spontaneous protest strikes and riots, also originating in economic grievances, broke out in the Soviet Zone several days in advance of the first demonstrations in Berlin on June 16.⁹⁵

The first indications dated back to 7 June. There is no surprise that given the sources he quotes, it had taken several days for the information to become clear. Intercepting mail, reading, translating and reporting it would have taken some time. Telephone monitoring would probably have been quicker, but such operations rarely provided real time intelligence.

Ward was not so sure that incitement from West Berlin was as significant as Coleman and others had made out. He had found the Americans eager "to disclaim any direct action by German propaganda groups in which they are covertly interested". Ward suggested that the Russians had increasingly laid the blame for the riots on Western intelligence and that they were "genuinely scared of intervention from West Berlin." He was certain that Russian policy had taken a blow and the Soviets now faced a dilemma over whether to pacify the East German population with relaxations of policy or continue to shore up the faltering GDR government. Until now, even though "the Russians have overwhelming military force and few scruples", it appeared that "they have apparently been, by their standards, so far restrained in their repressions."

By 21 June, the Eastern Sector of Berlin had largely returned to normal, except for increased numbers of police, who had replaced Soviet troops.⁹⁶ Five BRIXMIS tours during 20 and 21 June reported that the KVP had gradually taken over from Soviet

⁹⁵ PREM11/673, No.559 Wahnerheide to FO, 20 June 1953

⁹⁶ PREM11/673, No.137 Berlin to FO, 21 June 1953

troops, who had gone into reserve on the outskirts of the city.⁹⁷ Trips into East Berlin and other cities over the next few days saw a gradual reduction in this Soviet presence. Things seemed to have calmed and in fact “civilian morale appeared to be high”. Given this, it came as a surprise to Brigadier Meadmore, the Chief of BRIXMIS, that the Western missions were then denied further access to East Berlin from 24 June to 2 July.⁹⁸ Meadmore wanted air reconnaissance to fill the gap in knowledge, but only one sortie was made.⁹⁹

Churchill had been content with the information supplied throughout the disturbances, but he let Coleman know of his irritation at the discrepancy between the Commandants’ condemnatory remarks and the private messages from Berlin commenting on Russian restraint.¹⁰⁰ The Prime Minister warned him, “We shall not find our way out of our many difficulties by making for purposes of local propaganda statements which are not in accordance with the facts.” He was more thankful that Ward had managed to persuade the Americans against putting out a message in support of the rioters:

It would indeed be a poor service to the German people, with whom I have the deepest sympathy, to provoke them into revolt against overwhelming power which might easily have been used and may still be used without the “restraint” of which General Coleman writes.¹⁰¹

Three days after his first summary of events, Coleman submitted his second, based on “information from political sources, British Exchange Mission to the Soviet Zone and BIO(G)”.¹⁰² His new information included the fact that some of the KVP had defected to the West during the disturbances and casualty estimates of somewhere between 20 and 30 dead and 123 injured admitted to West Berlin hospitals. More had been killed outside Berlin as news of the riots had led to disturbances in other cities. Coleman now believed that two Soviet mechanised divisions had been in Berlin on 17

⁹⁷ BRX/405/28

⁹⁸ FO371/103842, CS 1016/142 No.611Wahnerheide (Kirkpatrick) to FO, 1 July 1953

⁹⁹ WO208/5002, BRX/425, Meadmore to Col. J.V.Davidson-Houston (MI3), 16 July 1953

¹⁰⁰ PREM11/673, No.168 FO to Berlin, 22 June 1953

¹⁰¹ PREM11/673, No.483 FO to Wahnerheide, 22 June 1953

¹⁰² PREM11/673, No.140 Berlin to FO, 22 June 1953

June, with a third arriving on the 19 June. Given the commitment of troops to other areas in East Germany, there had been a considerable interruption to summer exercises. He noted that the movement of the troops had been “chaotic”, with a “high proportion of breakdowns”. BRIXMIS went further in their comments: “this particular move must have created almost a world’s record in the huge number of tanks left crashed, bogged or just plain broken-down along the various axes of movement.”¹⁰³ Coleman also gave his first impressions on the likely GDR government response to the riots, reporting that whilst some arrests had taken place and propaganda continued to blame the West, the “tendency of [the] government is to excuse the misled masses who took part in the demonstrations and to promise further instalments of the liberalization policy with particular attention to the needs of the workers.”

Ward went over all he knew about East German and Russian policy before the riots and concluded the authorities had been following “a middle line between repression and relaxation.”¹⁰⁴ He believed the Soviets had to return to this, since they were clearly going to neither give up the GDR nor reinstitute a military government. The restoration of normal traffic and trade between Berlin sectors was an indication of this. Ward reported that the West German reaction to the riots had been “tremendous and very emotional”, with the rioters hailed as heroes. He felt that Western policy ought to toe a careful line between sympathy for all Germans and further antagonism towards the Russians. Propaganda had to be kept under control, whilst boundaries and order were strictly observed so as not to give further opportunity for the GDR authorities to claim Western provocation. Ward commented that American-controlled “propagandists do not always seem under control”. FO German specialists were unsure whether the Americans had sent people to stir up the riots, but they were certain that American Radio in Berlin (RIAS) had boosted the protests by broadcasting speeches of the strike-leaders.¹⁰⁵ The speech made in the Commons by Selwyn Lloyd on the 24 June urged “prudence and

¹⁰³ BRX/405/28

¹⁰⁴ PREM11/673, No.564 Wahnerheide to FO, 22 June 1953

¹⁰⁵ FO371/103842, CS 1016/126 Mr E M Rose to Mr C H Johnston, 23 June 1953; FO371/103844, CS 1016/182 105/18/274/03 Political Branch, Berlin to Central Dept, FO, 9 July 1953

restraint so that further bloodshed and suffering may be avoided”, whilst re-emphasising Britain’s commitment to reunification.¹⁰⁶

On 25 June, the JIC decided to begin an in-depth study of the events in Germany to see whether any lessons could be learnt from a political or intelligence point of view.¹⁰⁷ Kenneth Strong suggested that the movement of Russian divisions was probably similar to those that would be made in a transition to war, so the danger remained that such disturbances could be used as a cover for troop deployment. Dean was more interested to know how much the Russians knew of the unrest, what West German responses had been and why the Volkspolizei had taken no action. The CIA representative stated that the American view was that after the second day of the riots, there had been little encouragement from the West Germans.

Intelligence available for the 25 June weekly Perimeter Review indicated that four divisions had been employed in Berlin, and “field guns, mortars, machine guns and tanks were seen on the streets.” The JIC noted that BRIXMIS had seen “no signs of disturbances” outside Berlin. The Committee did not change their view that the riots had been a result of economic factors, dismissing John’s theory that the Soviets were behind it all. It was the “impotence” of the GDR government and the Russians’ desire “to maintain the appearance of fairness and consideration for the population of their ‘new look’ policy” that had allowed the protests to take place; nevertheless they needed to be crushed immediately. The JIC thought that the Russians were likely to return to the “new look” policy once order and control had been restored. The CIA felt that the Russians were more likely to reconsider their policy before moving forward.

The following week, the JIC suggested that recent speeches in the GDR indicated that the “new look” policy was to be pursued once more.¹⁰⁸ Increased pay for miners, improved supplies of food and consumer goods and reduced production quotas for farmers had all been promised. Grotewohl had supposedly offered to pay for these

¹⁰⁶ PREM11/673, No.494 FO to Wahnerheide, 24 June 1953

¹⁰⁷ CAB159/13, JIC(53)65th Meeting, 25 June 1953

¹⁰⁸ CAB159/13, JIC(53)68th Meeting, 2 July 1953

improvements by increased industrial efficiency and cuts in military spending. Reports had already reached the JIC, however, that the flow of refugees from East to West had begun again, made up largely of East Berliners. The Committee judged that the mood of East Germans was “one of sullen passive resistance and it is always possible that disorder might break out again”.¹⁰⁹ The fact that a few extra Soviet troops remained in East Berlin, over two weeks after the riots, suggested that the Russians were not confident that further disturbances were impossible. The JIC felt that Soviet policy across the Satellites was under strain because of poor economic performance; they noted “tactical withdrawals” of policy in Hungary and unrest in Czechoslovakia, Poland, Bulgaria and Romania.

Beria’s downfall, reported by the JIC on 14 July, was seen as “the first crack, coming sooner than expected, in the apparent solidarity of the post-Stalin leadership”.¹¹⁰ Very little was known about the reason behind the changes, even down to whether Beria had been too much of a proponent or opponent of the more liberal policies. The remaining presence of more Russian troops than normal in Berlin, reports of strikes in the Eastern Zone and indications that the Rügen Island construction had stopped left the JIC even more confused about what was going on in the GDR: “it is at present impossible to predict what further manifestations may take place...in the present uncertain atmosphere, overshadowed by the possibility of Four-Power talks, and the developments in Russia.” Some minor changes in GDR government personnel were seen as attempts to restore control.¹¹¹ As a result of the pressure that had grown during the riots and the general unease surrounding questions of future policy towards Germany, an offer of Four-Power talks on Germany for autumn 1953 was extended by the Western Allies to the Russians in July.¹¹² The Cabinet’s primary aim remained the EDC, but they also recognised that the issue of German unity, required genuine effort and attention.¹¹³

¹⁰⁹ CAB159/14, JIC(53)72nd Meeting, 7 July 1953

¹¹⁰ CAB159/14, JIC(53)75th Meeting, 16 July 1953

¹¹¹ CAB159/14, JIC(53)79th Meeting, 23 July 1953

¹¹² Ostermann, *Uprising*, p.320

¹¹³ CAB129/61, C(53)187 “Foreign Ministers’ meeting in Washington: policy towards the Soviet Union and Germany”, 3 July 1953; C(53)194 “Policy towards the Soviet Union and Germany”, 7 July 1953

On the morning of 30 July, the Chiefs of Staff received a signal from Germany stating that “troop movements of an abnormal nature in East Germany had come to their attention.”¹¹⁴ The alert had been triggered because “on the face of it, they appeared to indicate an aggressive intention by the Russians”. In an immediate briefing, the JIC had to decide whether the movements of rolling stock indicated “a reshuffle of troops or a reinforcement of East Germany”. Other intelligence on the GDR was mixed: Soviet policy still seemed to be a muddle of the “new look” and attempts to restore control; a US-West German led scheme to distribute food to East Germany had begun on 27 July to the great irritation of the Russians; the Seepolizei had just taken charge of an ex-Soviet submarine; Russian troop training was normal; and some reports indicated that the KVP was being reduced. The Committee concluded, for the moment, that it was unlikely the Russians were embarking on an aggressive reinforcement of their forces in East Germany.¹¹⁵ Dean noted, however, that “the political situation in Russia is most confused” and the FO felt a power-struggle was taking place in Moscow. Furthermore, the food distribution scheme had “had a remarkably damaging effect on the Communists” and some more uncoordinated riots had been seen. Dean warned that the Russians were “taking a more serious view than a month ago of civilian disorders”.

The JIC reported that the food distribution scheme had been a considerable success after only a week. Something like \$15 million worth of food parcels had been collected by East Germans from West Berlin, but even that could not meet the demand. The GDR authorities had done all they could to prevent people getting into Berlin and those with parcels often had them confiscated. They had also attempted to set up their own scheme. The JIC reckoned the project had had “a very considerable effect in Eastern Germany”, indicating that the food shortage was so bad that people were willing to risk openly defying the government. Kirkpatrick thought the scheme needed “careful watching if it is not to land us in serious and unnecessary difficulties.”¹¹⁶ After warning the Americans of this, he had learnt that the project had very strong backing in

¹¹⁴ CAB159/14, JIC (53) 84th Meeting, 30 July 1953

¹¹⁵ CAB159/14, JIC (53) 85th Meeting, 6 August 1953

¹¹⁶ PREM11/673, No.737 Wahnerheide, Kirkpatrick to FO, 11 August 1953

Washington and more worryingly “there are too many Americans...who think that annoying the Russians is an end in itself, and who are zealous to play with fire in Berlin.” The Chiefs of Staff were at the same time trying to dissuade the Americans from inflaming tension further by setting up a Free-Volunteer Force of anti-Communists in West Germany.¹¹⁷ By the time phase one of the food distribution scheme, where aid had mostly gone to East Berliners, had ended on 15 August over two-and-a-half million parcels had been given out.¹¹⁸ Phase two lasted to October, handing out parcels to those who lived outside Berlin only. To the eyes of the JIC at least, tension between the people and the GDR authorities was maintained and even encouraged by the food distribution project.

Lessons learnt

The process of reviewing events in East Germany that the JIC began in late June went on for some months. “A valuable contribution” to the study was made by Ray Cline, the CIA representative on the JIC.¹¹⁹ The first draft was produced by the JIS for Committee discussion in August.¹²⁰ Dean felt the key points in the study ought to be the fact that Soviet, rather than local, troops had been used against the uprising and “the remarkable resilience of the East Germans”. Whereas the JIC had not considered an uprising in the Satellites likely before June 1953, Dean now stressed that “the East Germans were formidable people and these events showed their character coming out”. Buzzard (DNI) wondered whether the JIC machinery had been sufficient to pick up on the economic factors behind events.

¹¹⁷ DEFE5/47, COS(53)348 “Scheme proposed by US Government for recruitment of anti-Communist nationals from Iron Curtain Countries into a ‘Free Volunteer Force’ ”, 17 July 1953; DEFE4/64, COS(53)92nd Meeting, 23 July 1953

¹¹⁸ CAB158/15, JIC(53)1/9 “Periodic Intelligence Summary for NATO Commands”, 23 September 1953

¹¹⁹ CAB159/14, JIC(53)72nd Meeting, 9 July 1953

¹²⁰ CAB159/14, JIC(53)85th Meeting, 6 August 1953

The final report was printed in September.¹²¹ The factual account of events included hardly varied from the day-to-day picture that had been sent back from Germany during the rioting, suggesting that later investigations had demonstrated that despite many difficulties, the accuracy of reporting from the scene had been high. Kirkman informed the JIC separately that in his view the arrangements for briefing Coleman on intelligence had been “deplorable” and as a consequence he had set up a local committee in Berlin to cover this gap.¹²²

The report concluded that the unrest had been aimed more at the GDR government than the Russians. The deteriorating economic conditions and mishandling of the “new look” policy lay behind the rioting. The JIC had also been able to examine the Western role in encouraging the riots. Whilst the Committee dismissed the Russian claims that the riots had begun because of Western agitators, they did, however, admit that some elements, including RIAS, West German Trade Unions and the SPD had encouraged trouble. All this, the JIC estimated had led to genuine fear amongst the Russians about Western intentions, hence the defensive positions taken up by their troops.

The analysis of the unrest’s significance is most interesting and was the main purpose behind the review. There is no surprise that the report states that “the position in Germany is still extremely fluid”: there were discussions about a Four-Power conference; the Soviet leadership and policy did not look settled; and West Germany was going through elections whilst the outcome of the EDC and final power transfer negotiations were unknown.¹²³ The riots, the JIC felt, had come as a shock to the Russians and had since “dealt a damaging blow to Soviet prestige and weakened the Communist control over the East German population.” Along the way, the Russians had “badly overestimated the efficiency of the East German Government machinery.” Once things had begun to boil over, “the Soviet authorities acted promptly and firmly, but with restraint”. The Committee doubted the assumption that such restraint would be

¹²¹ JIC(53)68(Final)

¹²² CAB159/14, JIC(53)96th Meeting, 3 September 1953

¹²³ JIC(53)68(Final)

shown in any future unrest, especially now the Russians had cause to doubt the reliability of Communist authority across all of the Satellites. They felt it was likely that Moscow had relied on the East Germans for information on internal security, rather than their own intelligence services, and “bearing in mind the Communist capacity for self-delusion, we believe that the riots took the East German Government genuinely by surprise”. The JIC believed the GDR government would take a long time to re-establish its prestige, especially since the people had learnt “their united strength in resistance of authority”.

It mattered to the JIC that conclusions be drawn about the performance of Russian troops during the unrest. BRIXMIS had reported that the East German Police were ineffective and the KVP were only a little better.¹²⁴ They had seen the Soviet troops ordered to support them taken by surprise and then move in quickly but with poor march discipline and frequent breakdowns. The JIC agreed with BRIXMIS, however, that once the troops were in place, they had “displayed a good standard of discipline and efficiency during the disturbances”, despite provocation from the crowds.¹²⁵ BRIXMIS felt they had been ordered “to show overwhelming power but to use the minimum necessary.”¹²⁶ One of the greatest effects of the disturbances was that because “elements of at least fourteen tank and mechanised divisions, the “teeth” of the Soviet forces in Germany”, had been drawn away from their crucial summer training, the GOFG readiness for war had been adversely effected. The Chiefs of Staff agreed that, when the unrest in East Germany was combined with the leadership changes within the Kremlin and more flexible policies, “the Soviet Government, temporarily at least, will be more cautious in the conduct of their cold-war struggle against the West”.¹²⁷

¹²⁴ WO208/4996, BRX/405/28 Appendix B “Soviet troops on duty in aid of the civil power in East Berlin and the Soviet Zone”, 7 July 1953

¹²⁵ JIC(53)68(Final)

¹²⁶ WO208/4997, BRX/405/29 Appendix B “Notes of the use of Soviet troops in aid of the civil power, 16 June – 10 July 1953”, 5 August 1953

¹²⁷ DEF5/49, COS(53)519 “Likelihood of general war with the Soviet Union up to the end of 1955”, 21 October 1953. This was a re-issuing of CAB158/16, JIC(53)79(Final), 10 September 1953

It is interesting to note that the Chiefs decided specifically not to share this assessment with the Americans. Churchill agreed with both the substance of the paper and the decision to limit its circulation:

In particular, he deprecated the suggestion that it should be communicated to the United States authorities – it was unnecessary for us to do anything with might encourage them to reduce the level of their defence expenditure.¹²⁸

Given that the both the Americans and Russians had exploded their first H bombs, Churchill thought the Cold War was entering an even more troubling phase, even more in need of negotiations.¹²⁹ Before his December trip to Bermuda to persuade Eisenhower to agree to a Summit, the Prime Minister received a briefing note from the Chiefs warning that the US intelligence agencies were not sharing their assessments on key matters.¹³⁰

Political assessments

Before the Four-Power conference on Germany met in Berlin from 25 January – 18 February 1954, a long, wrangling exchange of notes took place.¹³¹ It was clear early on from Russian replies to the Allies' invitation to talks that they wanted to meet to discuss all of the major sources of tension, not just Germany.¹³² In the opinion of the JIC, the Russian notes displayed that their priorities for the future of Germany had not changed: “the peace treaty first, All-German Government second and free elections last.”¹³³ The disruption of NATO and the EDC remained the main Soviet aim according to the JIC, but now this goal included agreement to attend a peace conference and draw up a provisional all-German government within six months.

¹²⁸ CAB131/13, D(53)13th Meeting, 14 October 1953

¹²⁹ Jenkins, Roy, *Churchill* (London: Macmillan, 2001), p.869. The American explosion was on 1 November 1952. The Russian explosion (12 August, 1953) was, in fact, a hybrid bomb. DeGroot, Gerard, *The Bomb: A Life* (London: Jonathan Cape, 2004), pp.178-181

¹³⁰ DEFE5/47, COS(53)294 “United Kingdom/United States intelligence co-operation”, 24 June 1953

¹³¹ Dockrill, *Britain's Policy*, pp.128-9

¹³² CAB129/62, C(53)236 “Reply to the Soviet notes”, 20 August 1953; C(53)242 “Reply to the Soviet notes”, 28 August 1953

¹³³ CAB159/14, JIC(53)91st Meeting, 20 August 1953

The Committee saw the announcement of further relaxations of Soviet policy towards East Germany in late August as an interesting development.¹³⁴ The leaders of the two nations had met in Moscow between 20-23 August, followed by a communiqué describing agreements on the principles of a peace treaty, an end to reparations, the cancellation of debts, economic aid for the GDR, the exchange of full diplomatic representation and the return of more POWs. The JIC noted that so many decisions in so short a time probably indicated “little, if any, real negotiation”. The intention to bolster the GDR government was clear, as was the attempt to influence the West German elections. There was little cause for celebration in the GDR yet, according to the Committee, since the economic concessions did not necessarily mean an end to the “milking” of East Germany. Yet they slightly contradicted themselves within their summary, stating that the return to German ownership of all enterprises except Wismuth A.G., the uranium mining company, would mean “that the East German economy is going to benefit”. The agreements might “lessen... the contrast between East and West Germany”, but the JIC warned, “as a whole the decisions hardly seem a good augury for agreement on reunification”.

Certainly, the antagonistic language from each side about the other’s plans for Germany did not end.¹³⁵ Coleman reported to Sir Frederick Hoyer-Millar, Kirkpatrick’s successor as High Commissioner in Germany, that he was no more optimistic now about German unity than he had been before. The Commandant explained, “nothing has... been done to make the Eastern programme for unity appear more acceptable to Western opinion and in reality German unification is probably regarded at best as only a distant goal.”¹³⁶

The JIC believed nothing had changed in terms of Soviet intentions in Germany since their last assessment in June 1952. Their paper in October made the point that

¹³⁴ CAB159/14, JIC(53)93rd Meeting, 27 August 1953

¹³⁵ JIC(53)1/9

¹³⁶ PREM11/441, CS 1013/2 “Political developments in the Soviet Zone of Germany, July – September 1953”, 19 October 1953

both East and West shared the same ultimate aim: to integrate the whole of Germany into their alliance via securing the parts of Germany they currently occupied.¹³⁷ The Committee thought that this meant the immediate Russian aim had to be the frustration of the EDC and NATO. They also believed that, even though the Soviets might be willing to accept a permanently neutral and unified Germany because it was more of a blow to Western defence than their own, the riots in June and Adenauer's success in the West German autumn elections must have demonstrated that free elections in Germany would go against them. This meant "the prospect of their offering constructive proposals for the settlement of the German problem has therefore diminished", and in fact the JIC doubted whether the Russian offer of a unified, neutral Germany could be serious. The Committee noted, though, that due to the pressure from Germany for reunification and French uncertainty over the EDC the Soviet government had "considerable room for manoeuvre." They would be able to constantly dangle the prospect of reunification, and in the case of the EDC failing, make such an offer genuine. Even then, the JIC thought the deep-seated Russian distrust of Germany would make it unlikely they would offer a full withdrawal on conditions acceptable to the West.

In November, the Committee produced a paper on the "Situation in East Germany", at the request of the FO, summarising the developments in the Zone since June.¹³⁸ It described a familiar scenario, involving more liberal economic policies and political rearrangements designed to boost the GDR's credibility in the face of the EDC agreements. Changes had, however, been noted within the East German armed forces:

The emphasis is no longer on making them fully effective combat forces. The intention seems to be to keep the naval and air forces as training cadres and to use the KVP primarily as an internal security force. All three could however be expanded for an operational role if necessary.

¹³⁷ CAB158/15, JIC(53)62(Final) "Soviet intentions in Germany", 15 October 1953; Frank Roberts' report from the US, UK and French official talks on Germany, Austria and Security Arrangements certainly proves the JIC understood Western intentions, CAB129/64, C(53)316 "Germany, Austria and Security Arrangements", 13 November 1953

¹³⁸ CAB158/16, JIC(53)89(Final) "Situation in East Germany", 12 November 1953; CAB159/14, JIC(53)93rd Meeting, 27 August 1953

The KVP was estimated to have been reduced from 94,000 men to about 76,000. Besides these developments, the JIC reported that the Soviet air forces in Germany had been inexplicably weakened by the withdrawal of the Il-28 bomber force. The rest of the GOFG training and trooping remained normal, with an estimated strength of 400,000 men.¹³⁹ A slow down or complete halt in construction at some airfields, Ruegen Island and the old Junkers aircraft factory had been seen, however.

The explanation for most of these new arrangements was that the GDR government was meeting its earlier promises of reduced defence spending.¹⁴⁰ Such a reduction, plus the concessions from the Soviet Union announced in August and a focus on food and consumer goods production, was likely to “be of real benefit to the East German economy” according to the JIC.¹⁴¹ From September on, there had been some speeches indicating a hardening attitude towards renewed efforts for collectivisation and increases in worker norms, but the Committee noted that “so far care is being taken not to spoil the effect of the economic improvement”. BRIXMIS reported the “completion of a successful harvest and the tremendous increase at reduced prices of consumer goods available to the public”.¹⁴² The other side to the GDR government, however, was a tightening grip on security. Tough people were brought into the Ministry of Justice to hand out harsh penalties to those accused of being Western provocateurs during the riots.¹⁴³ The JIC also had information that “the security drive continues and recently the [GDR] Government may have picked up a few genuine agents of the Gehlen organisation”. The Committee concluded “all in all, the [GDR] Government seem to be succeeding in reimposing their grip”.

The beginnings of the Four-Power conference in Berlin did not bode well. Disagreements took place about where the talks would be held and what issues would be

¹³⁹ CAB159/14, JIC(53)100th Meeting, 17 September 1953; JIC(53)113th Meeting, 29 October 1953; JIC(53)1/9

¹⁴⁰ See also CAB158/16, JIC(54)117(Final) “Soviet Bloc economic policy and defence”, 1 February 1954

¹⁴¹ JIC(53)89(Final)

¹⁴² WO208/5001, BRX/405/33 Monthly Report November 1953, 9 December 1953

¹⁴³ JIC(53)89(Final)

allowed on the agenda.¹⁴⁴ Dean commented, “It was difficult to see the reason for all this prevarication unless it was due to a Russian desire to boost the East German Government.”¹⁴⁵ Once the conference had begun, the JIC gloomily reported that “even before the Berlin Conference opened there was little expectation among the Soviet Zone population that it would succeed; but if it fails, there will be a feeling that the last chance of liberation and reunification has been lost.”¹⁴⁶ Tight security in the GDR during the talks ensured there were no disturbances, nor did the JIC anticipate riots as a response to the potential failure of the conference. Instead, the Committee predicted that the more likely outcome would be a large increase in the numbers of refugees from the East. Hoyer-Millar reported mid-way through the talks that the “German public seems now to have accepted with resignation that there is no chance of an agreement on the reunification of Germany.”¹⁴⁷ He continued,

Each successive Plenary Session has seemed to batten down the Iron Curtain a little more firmly... Everybody is waiting to see what will be the last rabbit out of Mr Molotov’s hat in the form of a wider European security system but there is a general impression that Mr Molotov’s rabbits are already looking a bit long in the tooth.

Once the conference had finally ended unsuccessfully, Eden’s report to Cabinet suggested that the JIC had accurately predicted that the Russian attitude to Germany had not changed.¹⁴⁸ The Foreign Secretary told his colleagues, “One of the most noticeable features had been the extreme rigidity of the Soviet attitude towards European problems.” He was more reassuring, however, given he felt that the Russians did not have “any real fear of the Germans in the immediate future or that they would regard the ratification of the European Defence Community as a serious threat demanding some form of military counter-action.” Eden had also seen that the West Germans were becoming very impatient over the delays in bringing the EDC and Bonn agreements into force.

¹⁴⁴ Mawby, *Containing Germany*, pp.137-140

¹⁴⁵ CAB159/15, JIC(54)4th Meeting, 14 January 1954

¹⁴⁶ CAB159/15, JIC(54)14th Meeting, 11 February 1954

¹⁴⁷ FO371/109560, CW 1013/7 UKHC Hoyer-Millar to FO, 11 February 1954

¹⁴⁸ CAB128/27, CC(54)10th Conclusions, 22 February 1954

In the months after the Berlin Conference, the JIC kept a close eye on the Russian response for indicators of future policy. In March, the Committee interpreted one of Molotov's speeches as an indication that the disruption of the EDC and NATO remained the highest Soviet priority, but that thoughts were now turning to the conference scheduled for spring in Geneva to resolve outstanding issues on the Far East.¹⁴⁹ He had given no indication that he would be prepared to compromise in Geneva. The JIC recognised, however, that the Russians would continue to offer up proposals to interrupt the ratification of the EDC. The Soviet note of 31 March renewed the offer of a European Security Pact, first made in Berlin, as an alternative to NATO and the EDC.¹⁵⁰ The Russian suggestion that they could perhaps join NATO was thought to be part of the obvious propaganda efforts to cast the Western Allies as uncooperative aggressors. Hoyer-Millar reported that the Soviet's insistence on granting the GDR "sovereignty" in March was adding to the mood of uncertainty in West Germany.¹⁵¹

In April, the JIS carried out their first survey of the implications of the Russians granting the GDR freedom to form its own internal and foreign policies.¹⁵² They concluded that the changes proposed were in fact ones of form rather than substance, since the SED as a puppet of the Russians would take over. "Effective control over East Germany" would remain in Soviet hands. The real change for the West, the JIS thought, would be an increasing pressure to recognise the GDR government. They foresaw that the Russians would try to force negotiations to take place with the GDR direct, and should the West refuse this, the difficulties in conducting normal business concerning Germany might be multiplied. The FO felt it was too early to predict any of this though. Hoyer-Millar was able to report that the GDR government was "more firmly in the

¹⁴⁹ CAB159/15, JIC(54)21st Meeting, 11 March 1954

¹⁵⁰ CAB159/15, JIC(54)32nd Meeting, 8 April 1954

¹⁵¹ FO371/109560, CW 1013/19 Hoyer-Millar to FO, 29 April 1954

¹⁵² CAB176/47, JIC/886/54 "Implications of the Russians handing over control of the Soviet Zone of Germany to the East Germans", 12 April 1954

saddle that ever before”, with their strength bolstered by the improvements in the consumer side of the economy and even tighter state security.¹⁵³

Dean commented to the JIC in June that “it was becoming obvious that there were likely to be changes in the political scene in Germany in the next few months.”¹⁵⁴ Restrictions on movement had been lifted and the Soviet High Commission was being reduced in size. The JIC concluded that these measures, on top of the other moves towards sovereignty since March, were “no doubt intended to pave the way for fresh attempts to establish relations between East and West Germany.” By the end of August, the Russians had given up their buildings in Karlshorst and had moved all of their people into the Soviet Embassy in Unter den Linden.¹⁵⁵

Throughout the Berlin conference and beyond, the JIC’s reporting on the Soviet Forces flowed. The Prime Minister was encouraged to hear whilst the conference was on, that SHAPE felt the Russians were not in a position to launch an attack and that the movement of the required reinforcements to the forward areas in Eastern Germany would probably be noticed.¹⁵⁶ The JIC reported that during the negotiations, all Russian training activity and movements remained normal.¹⁵⁷ The pattern of training did alter after the conference but the Committee thought this was down to the fact that General Gretchko had just come in as the new Commander-in-Chief of GOFG.¹⁵⁸ A short period of intensive training, not usually seen in spring, was short-lived, however.¹⁵⁹ One of Gretchko’s lasting changes was the renaming of GOFG as GSFG (Group of Soviet Forces in Germany).¹⁶⁰ Summer training too was different under the new Commander, held at lower levels in the early season than had been seen before, but with very large-scale exercises later.¹⁶¹ By the end of the year, it looked as though GSFG might actually

¹⁵³ FO371/109500, CS 1013/1 Hoyer-Millar to Eden “Political developments in the Soviet Zone of Germany”, 21 May 1954

¹⁵⁴ CAB159/16, JIC(54)55th Meeting, 24 June 1954

¹⁵⁵ CAB158/17, JIC(54)1/9 “Periodic Intelligence Summary for NATO Commands”, 23 September 1954

¹⁵⁶ CAB131/14, D(54)3rd Meeting, 9 February 1954

¹⁵⁷ CAB159/15, JIC(54)9th Meeting, 28 January 1954

¹⁵⁸ CAB159/15, JIC(54)27th Meeting, 25 March 1954

¹⁵⁹ CAB159/15, JIC(54)38th Meeting, 29 April 1954

¹⁶⁰ CAB159/16, JIC(54)52nd Meeting, 17 June 1954

¹⁶¹ CAB159/16, JIC(54)71st Meeting, 12 August 1954; CAB158/18, JIC(54)66/14, 7 October 1954

be increasing in size, as the annual trooping brought in more men than it took away.¹⁶² The JIC estimated that both morale and numbers swelled to 420,000 during late 1954.¹⁶³

The British assessments of the East German forces in 1954 remained the same, however, concluding that the whilst the KVP might be up to 80-85,000 better trained men, it and the other GDR forces remained unable to provide “any efficient first line formations”.¹⁶⁴ The Americans decided that because of improvements in training, however, the KVP should be “credited... with limited offensive capabilities”.¹⁶⁵ The JIC reported that improved morale and security had resulted in a “sharp drop” in the rate of defection, and therefore intelligence.¹⁶⁶

Dealings with West Germany

Nineteen Fifty Three began with controversy for the British – West German relationship. Dr. Naumann, Goebbels’ former State Secretary, and his collaborators were arrested in January for their attempts to infiltrate the FDP and the autumn elections.¹⁶⁷ The British authorities had decided to exclude the Germans from the operation because of worries about reliability, so the inevitable consequence was offence within the BfV.¹⁶⁸ Eden told the Cabinet that in his view, “if this had been left until all powers had been transferred, the Federal Government would probably have been reluctant to make any drastic move until the conspiracy had assumed more formidable proportions.”¹⁶⁹ Once the haul of seized documents had been examined by BIO(G), the British handed over the case to the Germans with the intention that they prosecute

¹⁶² CAB159/17, JIC(54)97th Meeting, 4 November 1954

¹⁶³ JIC(54)1/9; JIC(54)2/9, 23rd September 1954

¹⁶⁴ CAB158/17, JIC(54)8(Final) “The development of the East German armed forces”, 1 February 1954; JIC(54)1/9

¹⁶⁵ CAB159/17, JIC(54)86th Meeting, 30 September 1954

¹⁶⁶ CAB159/15, JIC(54)24th Meeting, 18 March 1954

¹⁶⁷ Kirkpatrick, *The Inner Circle*, p.252

¹⁶⁸ CAB176/40, JIC/204/53 “The Naumann Circle”, 26 January 1953

¹⁶⁹ CAB128/26, CC(53)3rd Conclusions, 20 January 1953

Naumann.¹⁷⁰ Adenauer gave his private approval for British actions throughout the operation, but in the end a firm enough case could not be put together to try Naumann. For Kirkpatrick, despite the lack of a trial, the value of the case lay in both disrupting the network and drawing German attention to the fact that these kinds of dangers still existed.¹⁷¹

There was still a distinct lack of trust towards the Germans, even though the EDC and Bonn agreements were awaiting ratification. The JIC believed that special measures were required for information sharing within the planned EDC system because neither were the Germans yet reliable partners, nor were they rectifying this problem quickly enough.¹⁷² Furthermore, once the Germans were in the EDC, the security problem would expand to include their industries relating to defence.¹⁷³ Indicating that some things were considered too important to be handed over, under the Bonn conventions, the Germans were not to be given control of their border with East Germany or dealings with the Russians in the GDR.¹⁷⁴

The activities of some German ex-military men and scientists in Egypt, who it was felt were assisting the Council of the Revolutionary Command against British forces, raised concern.¹⁷⁵ The War Office and FO conducted regular analysis on the levels of influence these Germans had.¹⁷⁶ A JIC paper produced in January 1954 concluded that West Germans were engaged in military activities in Egypt, Syria, Spain and South America.¹⁷⁷ Whilst these groups were not thought to be particularly co-ordinated, they had the potential to combine with West German officials to form a series of networks “of considerable intelligence value”. The Committee thought that so long as German and British interests remained close, these groups should present no problem,

¹⁷⁰ CAB128/26, CC(53)20th Conclusions, 17 March 1953

¹⁷¹ Kirkpatrick, *The Inner Circle*, p.253

¹⁷² CAB159/13, JIC(53)43rd Meeting, 24 April 1953; JIC(53)50th Meeting, 14 May 1953

¹⁷³ CAB158/13, JIC(53)48th Meeting, 8 May 1953

¹⁷⁴ DEFE5/44, COS(54)34 “Responsibilities of the C-in-C British Forces Germany for internal security after the entry into force of the Bonn Conventions”, 21 January 1953

¹⁷⁵ DEFE5/46, COS(53)254 “German military influence in Egypt”, 28 May 1953

¹⁷⁶ CAB159/13, JIC(53)24th Meeting, 4 March 1953

¹⁷⁷ CAB158/16, JIC(53)105 “German activities abroad”, 5 January 1954

but still “the activities described must be closely watched for their effect on British interests.”

The JIC(G) was exploring the West German intelligence agencies during the summer of 1953. Of particular interest was the Blank Office, the department named after its director Theodor Blank acting as an unavowed Ministry of Defence, which was both the main customer and co-ordinator of the FRG’s intelligence activities.¹⁷⁸ In July 1953, a joint BfV – British operation caught Bruno Sniegorski, a Polish intelligence service agent, who had been working inside the Blank Office.¹⁷⁹ Kirkman felt that the German intelligence services were “leaning more and more to the UK agencies for guidance”.¹⁸⁰ He thought there needed to be a gradual handover of responsibility to them once the Bonn agreements came into force, but only after a Memorandum of Understanding had been agreed that permitted the Allies to continue some of their intelligence work on German soil. In particular Kirkman felt that good work done establishing sound relations with both the Länder authorities and the Gehlen organisation would put the British in a strong position to get what they needed. Ward felt that in fact more could be done by the Security Service, in particular in trying to work with the BfV and LfVs to improve their poor record.¹⁸¹

The upsurge in interest in reunification after the June riots and the early talk of Four-Power talks dominated the September 1953 West German elections.¹⁸² Although he was returned as Chancellor, Adenauer had undergone some criticism from his opposition that commitment to the EDC made reunification less likely. The feeling in the JIC was that the Germans did not want reunification at all, but that it was too politically risky for them to say so.¹⁸³ Once the Berlin conference had failed the pace of change in relations between the Allies and Germany quickened. Talking with the Russians had been seen to fail, so final movement towards enacting the EDC and Bonn

¹⁷⁸ DEFE41/70, STIB/D7/3271 “List of German Intelligence Agencies”, 22 July 1953; STIB/D7/3632, 19 August 1953

¹⁷⁹ DEFE41/70, JIC/7033/35 “SNIEGORSKI”, 17 August 1953

¹⁸⁰ CAB159/14, JIC(53)124th Meeting, 3 December 1953

¹⁸¹ CAB176/47, JIC/547/54 “Future of the BfV and LfV System”, 4 March 1954

¹⁸² Dockrill, *Britain’s Policy*, p.127

¹⁸³ CAB159/14, JIC(53)107th Meeting, 8 October 1953

agreements could begin. The problem though was French ratification. The Chiefs of Staff had first noticed in late 1953 that the French government might not get the EDC Treaty through the French Assembly.¹⁸⁴ As a consequence, Eisenhower put pressure on the British to guarantee forces for European defence and the Chiefs of Staff and FO began considering alternative ways for the Germans to make a defence contribution.¹⁸⁵

The JIC recognised that the circumstances of intelligence in Germany would soon change and all the talk of the last couple of years about reducing costs in Germany, German security and relations with the German intelligence services would have to be turned into policy.¹⁸⁶ The JIC(G) considered what level of intelligence would be required on the FRG itself after ratification of the EDC, in order to keep a check on whether they were sticking to the agreements.¹⁸⁷ They decided that they should “not be given the task of collecting intelligence about the Federal Republic after ratification but nevertheless they should continue to supply London with any intelligence which came their way.”¹⁸⁸

Preparations for the failure of the EDC Treaty were well under way during the summer of 1954.¹⁸⁹ Dick White, Director General of MI5, recommended after a visit to review the BfV and LfVs that a new German security service was needed in order to cope with the demands of participation in European defence.¹⁹⁰ At the same time the Chiefs of Staff had decided on the strengths that the West German armed forces should have if they rearmed under NATO rather than the EDC.¹⁹¹ The Foreign Secretary told the Cabinet in early July that the delays in the French ratification were causing unease in

¹⁸⁴ DEFE5/51, COS(54)14 “French ratification of the EDC Treaty”, 14 January 1954

¹⁸⁵ CAB128/27, CC(54)17th Conclusions, 10 March 1954; DEFE4/69, COS(54)27th Meeting, 11 March 1954

¹⁸⁶ CAB159/15, JIC(54)21st Meeting, 11 March 1954

¹⁸⁷ CAB159/15, JIC(54)40th Meeting, 5 May 1954

¹⁸⁸ CAB159/16, JIC(54)70th Meeting, 11 August 1954

¹⁸⁹ Dockrill, *Britain's Policy*, p.140

¹⁹⁰ CAB159/16, JIC(54)62nd Meeting, 15 July 1954

¹⁹¹ DEFE5/53, COS(54)248 “Restrictions on German rearmament”, 30 July 1954. They decided on 375,000 strong army plus 134,000 for internal defence and border control, 1,326 aircraft for the air force and 311 vessels for the navy. The Germans were to be allowed no strategic submarines or bombers.

West Germany and that the British and Americans had decided to uncouple the Bonn agreements from the EDC Treaty.¹⁹²

According to Hoyer-Millar, “the prestige of the Federal Government [had] suffered a painful blow”, when in July, Otto John, the head of the BfV, appeared to defect to East Germany.¹⁹³ The JIC were told by SIS that their conclusion was that John had crossed to East Berlin “voluntarily but not necessarily with the intention of defecting”.¹⁹⁴ They also mentioned the antipathies that had existed between the various German intelligence organisations, the real cause of John’s disaffection according to Markus Wolf.¹⁹⁵ Wolf, the former head of East German foreign intelligence, also claims that John never intended to defect, but was taken across the border whilst drunk or drugged by an old friend. Roger Hollis, Deputy Director of MI5, told the JIC that his Service had not gained the impression John was planning to defect during their recent dealings with him. The Committee as a whole thought that the risk of damage to British intelligence operations was “not great” but that the political ramifications were more serious. Explanations from the West German authorities that John had been kidnapped were blown away when John held a press conference in East Berlin on 11 August.¹⁹⁶ He claimed his motivation had been Nazi influence in the FRG and a desire to reveal the true nature of the Bonn agreements and the EDC. A further defection, that of Karlfranz Schmidt-Wittmack, a CDU Bundestag deputy, on 22 August brought more revelations about secret parts of the EDC Treaty allowing stronger West German forces than had been announced.

In August, the French Assembly failed to ratify the EDC Treaty.¹⁹⁷ They were, however, willing to allow the Bonn Conventions through.¹⁹⁸ The JIC thought the Russians would continue to use propaganda to play on French fears to ensure German

¹⁹² CAB128/27, CC(54)49th Conclusions, 9 July 1954

¹⁹³ FO371/109561, CW1013/32, Hoyer-Millar to FO, 28 July 1954

¹⁹⁴ CAB159/16, JIC(54)67th Meeting, 29 July 1954

¹⁹⁵ Wolf and McElvoy, *Memoirs*, p.81

¹⁹⁶ JIC(54)1/9

¹⁹⁷ Dockrill, *Britain’s Policy*, p.140

¹⁹⁸ CAB129/70, C(54)276 “Alternatives to the European Defence Community”, 27 August 1954

rearmament would not occur by any means.¹⁹⁹ Hoyer-Millar reported that even though failure had been expected, the West Germans were bitterly disappointed.²⁰⁰ Peter Hope, the FO official who took over the JIC(G) Chairmanship from Kirkman at the end of 1953, explained to the JIC in September that the plans for intelligence collection in Germany now needed to be renegotiated, since they had all been drawn up based on the EDC.²⁰¹ It was his view that the Americans might take the opportunity to press for the retention of more intelligence privileges under a secret Memorandum of Understanding, even though it looked likely the Germans would be granted increased sovereignty under post-EDC agreements.²⁰² By the end of September the answer to German rearmament looked certainly to be West German membership of NATO.²⁰³

The talks between the Western European allies and the US in London from 28 September – 3 October did not discuss the detail of intelligence requirements in Germany.²⁰⁴ It was agreed that the allied forces would retain their existing powers to protect themselves until the West Germans themselves could offer such protection. This meant communications interception could continue until German legislation allowed them to take it over. Dean emphasised that this meant that once interception was in German hands, it would be down to intelligence co-operation to secure the product of this valuable source. Shortly before the talks in Paris between the US, Britain, France and Germany that agreed the termination of the occupation of Western Germany and German entry into NATO for 1955, the secret Memorandum of Understanding was agreed with the Germans.²⁰⁵ It stated that, as before, the forces in Germany reserved the right to protect themselves so long as the Germans could not.²⁰⁶ Communications interception was to go the same way: it remained in allied hands until the Germans could do it themselves. The key point was that the Germans should agree to the use of these

¹⁹⁹ CAB158/18, JIC(54)69(Final) “Likely Communist causes of action up to mid-1955”, 18 September 1954

²⁰⁰ FO371/109561, CW1013/37 Hoyer-Millar to FO, 2 September 1954

²⁰¹ CAB159/17, JIC(54)85th Meeting, 28 September 1954

²⁰² DEFE41/70, A89 to HQ NAG, 14 September 1954

²⁰³ Dockrill, *Britain's Policy*, pp.143-6

²⁰⁴ CAB159/17, JIC(54)89th Meeting, 7 October 1954

²⁰⁵ The talks took place from 20-22 October

²⁰⁶ FO371/109583, CW 1072/311 No.876 Hoyer-Millar to FO, 14 October 1954

powers before they were used, unless military urgency precluded it. Hoyer-Millar was satisfied that Britain's intelligence requirements would be met under this agreement.

The JIC reported in December that Soviet bloc Moscow Conference, which threatened to set up a Soviet–Satellite defence organisation and increase Eastern European armament if the Paris agreements were ratified, was a return to the familiar tactics of Russian propaganda.²⁰⁷ The Committee thought the Russian note of 9 December which re-emphasised the Moscow threat was more “intimidation than cajolery”.²⁰⁸ They did not, however, foresee that if the Paris agreements came into force, the Soviets would reverse their policy of “peaceful co-existence”.²⁰⁹ The JIC thought the Russians would probably go through with their threats to bolster East European defence, but they would “avoid actions which they estimate would run the risk of provoking a war”.

Cutting the cloth

The preparations for reorganising and rationalising British intelligence in Germany in response to the handover of power had actually begun long before the Bonn agreements were finally ready to come into force at the end of 1954. Reilly and Kirkman realised the numbers and costs of BIO(G) had to be cut so they continued the series of planned reductions that had been taking place since 1947. However, they went further than before, presenting to the Chiefs in August 1953, not only a schedule for drastic cuts in manpower, but a wholesale reorganisation of the chaotic intelligence collection bodies that came under the BIO(G) umbrella.²¹⁰

²⁰⁷ CAB158/18, JIC(54)66/23, 9 December 1954

²⁰⁸ CAB158/18, JIC(54)66/24, 16 December 1954

²⁰⁹ CAB158/18, JIC(54)66/25, 23 December 1954

²¹⁰ DEFE4/64, COS(53)98th Meeting, 21 August 1953

The decision to rebuild stemmed largely from the findings of the JIC delegation that travelled to Germany on 10 – 24 January 1953.²¹¹ Their task was to examine the machinery, the manpower, the collection methods and the financing of BIO(G), all with an eye to making reductions in budget without reductions in product.²¹² In mind also was the sensitive issue of needing to continue intelligence collection without offending the Germans.²¹³ The delegation found the 1952/53 cost of BIO(G) was £2.68 million of which roughly £1 million came from the UK, the rest coming from the Occupation Costs.²¹⁴ About £1 million of the total budget was spent on SIS in Germany, noted as C's "most important overseas station" by the delegation, including about £400,000 for agent payments.

The final proposals went before the Chiefs in August. From early on, it was clear to the JIC that JIC(G) needed a new charter and permanent contracts for staff in Germany.²¹⁵ The JIC had the first of several extraordinary meetings about intelligence in Germany on 10 April.²¹⁶ They agreed straight away with the delegation's recommendation that BIO(G) be split down into four smaller units: a "British Forces Security Unit" (BFSU) to interrogate refugees, intercept communications and provide security²¹⁷; with SIS, JIB and STIB organisations. The last three were to be directed by their London departments, but administered locally by the Army through the BFSU. The JIC(G) was given an FO chairman, Peter Hope, and made the co-ordinating body for these new units.²¹⁸ The JIC also decided that as much of the new organisations as possible should move to Munchen Gladbach to be closer to the Northern Army Group.²¹⁹ They also wanted to begin implementing these changes straight away, working on a gradual run-down until the Bonn conventions were ratified, a levelling-out

²¹¹ DEFE41/70, JIC/7053/16, 10 January 1953

²¹² CAB176/40, JIC/50/53, 6 January 1953

²¹³ DEFE4/59, COS(53)1st Meeting, 1 January 1953

²¹⁴ CAB176/40, JIC/50/53, 6 January 1953

²¹⁵ CAB159/13, JIC(53)31st Meeting, 19 March 1953

²¹⁶ CAB159/13, JIC(53)37th Meeting, 10 April 1953

²¹⁷ BFSU was renamed the British Services Security Organisation (BSSO) in March 1954, see

CAB159/15, JIC(54)23rd Meeting, 17 March 1954

²¹⁸ CAB159/14, JIC(53)113th Meeting, 29 October 1953

²¹⁹ CAB159/13, JIC(53)50th Meeting, 14 May 1953

in reductions whilst German intelligence developed and then a final set of cuts once the Germans were in a position to take over more functions.

SIS in Germany was to be saved from major cuts because their output was valued too highly by the customer departments in London.²²⁰ Also outside the major upheavals was JSIG, which was left to operate as part of the Northern Forces HQ within the NATO structure, although it was given more relaxed guidance on what material could be shared with Allies.²²¹ It was important that the JIC leave some of these planks in place so that their submission to the Chiefs could reasonably claim the provision of intelligence would not be diminished.²²² Furthermore, the JIC stressed that “the programme of reduction should wherever possible be related to the ability of the Germans to fill the resulting gaps in our intelligence from their own resources.” The proposal to the Chiefs outlined a shrinkage in budget from £2.25 million to £1.8 million, but with the SIS portion remaining at £1 million. Personnel would be cut from 880 to 550-600 British staff, probably with a larger number of locally employed Germans.

Once the Chiefs had approved the plan, mid-1954 was the target date for the changes.²²³ The major problem foreseen was persuading the Treasury to establish the permanent posts in Germany. Only 35 permanent senior posts had been agreed, but at lower pay than before. Three-year temporary contracts were to be offered to others. Within their acceptance of the proposal, the Chiefs noted that satisfactory terms of service were necessary for BIO(G) in order to keep the right calibre people in Germany.²²⁴ They also commented that because of the end of Occupation Costs, the intelligence burden on the British budget would increase, despite these reductions. As such, they anticipated further cuts would have to be made down the line.

²²⁰ CAB159/13, JIC(53)68th Meeting, 2 July 1953

²²¹ CAB159/14, JIC(53)79th Meeting, 23 July 1953; CAB158/16, JIC(53)82 “Release of classified information within NATO and to Allied officers of integrated staffs”, 15 September 1953

²²² CAB158/16, JIC(53)83 “Future of the British Intelligence Organisation, Germany”, 13 August 1953

²²³ CAB159/14, JIC(53)88th Meeting, 13 August 1953

²²⁴ DEFE5/48, COS(53)423 “Future of the British Intelligence Organisation, Germany”, 26 August 1953

The JIC discussed the new JIC(G) charter in November, with Peter Hope in attendance.²²⁵ The charter had to mould the old system into a committee that matched the changes within BIO(G). The JIC would keep its split responsibility to the High Commission and Commander-in-Chief, Germany as well as the JIC. It was thought that although JIC(G) would not be given its own JIS, some formal arrangement for a staff was required “as a considerable amount of drafting work was likely to fall to the Committee in the future”. The new committee was also probably going to be required to meet more than once a month to execute its functions adequately, which looked like they would increase. In fact, the new JIC(G) came into force in January 1954, before the changes to BIO(G) were complete.²²⁶ The Chiefs and FO sent a message to the High Commissioner and Commanders-in-Chief in Germany to back-up the advent of the new Committee. They stated that the new JIC(G)’s “main task will be to maintain and if possible improve the flow of vital intelligence from Germany, especially on the USSR and Eastern Germany, at as low a cost as possible.” As part of this, the Committee was to “establish and maintain relations with the future German intelligence authorities and organisations so that the latter may be in a position as soon as possible to take over progressively many of the functions now discharged by the British intelligence services.” These tasks, however, would be difficult because of other allied intelligence organisations in Germany, the long distances to be travelled for meetings and the state of flux within BIO(G).

When Kirkman retired from BIO(G) in December 1953, he told the JIC the reorganisation was going smoothly.²²⁷ He reported that he was leaving relations with the French, Americans and Germans improved, but still with their difficulties. He also thought that intelligence was interpreted in a “more balanced” way than it was in 1951. The Service staff though “were inclined to be insufficiently curious and expected too much to be done for them by intelligence authorities”. Soon after Kirkman’s farewell, the Permanent Under-Secretaries Committee on Intelligence met to discuss costs in

²²⁵ CAB159/14, JIC(53)118th Meeting, 12 November 1953

²²⁶ CAB158/16, JIC(53)120 “Organisation of intelligence, Germany”, 14 December 1953

²²⁷ CAB159/14, JIC(53)124th Meeting, 3 December 1953

Germany and Austria.²²⁸ They demanded further cuts as soon as possible. They also decided that from 1954 onwards, the costs would be met by the Service departments alone, rather than splitting the burden between the Services and the FO.

Dean visited Germany and the new JIC(G) in February 1954 to examine the progress of the reorganisation.²²⁹ He was satisfied, but noted that events in Germany were moving on. With the Berlin conference out of the way, the path finally looked clear towards the handover of power. This signalled that the financial and political pressures which the JIC had been discussing were about to become reality. More importantly Dean thought, this meant that Ministers were required to begin making decisions on the degree to which co-operation with the Germans should take place.²³⁰ He told the Chiefs that “the moment had been reached when certain responsibilities would have to be turned over to the Germans.” He went on, “There were three important aspects in which we required German co-operation – Secret Intelligence, censorship and security – and these had such important political considerations that Ministerial approval would be required for any steps that could be taken.” His specific recommendations on this were made in April and approved by the Prime Minister in May.²³¹ The details of this have been withheld from public view. It is clear from other sources, however, that Britain continued to work with the Germans to improve the efficiency of the BfV, liaison with the Gehlen organisation improved and censorship remained in Allied hands until the Germans were able to take it over.²³²

Conclusions

The pace of events up to June 1953 was so quick that the riots took most by surprise; the East Germans, the Russians, the Americans, and the British, including the

²²⁸ CAB176/46, JIC/148/54 “Allocation of charges, BIO(G) and Austria”, 18 January 1954

²²⁹ CAB159/15, JIC(54)17th Meeting, 25 February 1954

²³⁰ DEFE4/69, COS(54)36th Meeting, 31 March 1954

²³¹ CAB158/17, JIC(54)30(Final) “Review of Intelligence and Security Organisations in Germany”, 13 April 1954

²³² CAB159/16, JIC(54)62nd Meeting, 15 July 1954; Critchfield, *Partners at the Creation*, p.177

JIC. British intelligence suspected the unpopularity of GDR regime and knew of some of the underlying economic problems. The JIC misjudged, however, the bravery of some East Germans in the face of terrifying internal repression. It is hard, nevertheless, to criticise the Committee for not predicting a spontaneous event; the very nature of such an event means that the key indicating information probably does not exist in any form that any intelligence service can acquire and make use of. Once the rioting had begun, BRIXMIS demonstrated yet again their value as a source of critical information. That the JIC appreciations of the causes and course of the disturbances produced shortly after stand up well next to recent historical research, indicates that the JIC at least had the right mind-set to produce accurate interpretations of Soviet bloc affairs when relevant information was available.

The specifics of high Russian policy and intentions still eluded the Committee. The whole of Whitehall admitted a lack of understanding of the post-Stalin Kremlin, of Beria's downfall and of Soviet-GDR policy in the aftermath of the June 1953 riots. Under Dean's September 1954 definition of the JIC's role, however, this does not appear to have been as significant as it may initially seem. Taking the Chiefs of Staff 1947 hope that intelligence should provide warning of events, the JIC had clearly failed with the Berlin blockade, the Korean War and the 1953 riots.²³³ By Dean's definition, however, the Committee had been performing a more successful function: providing a constant backdrop to policy-making; establishing patterns of Soviet bloc activity; and gathering as much relevant information as possible for the eventuality of war. That Dean wanted to introduce the WRCI indicates his ambition to drive on the development of the Cold War JIC system.

By the end of 1954, the future shape of the operating-environment of British intelligence in Germany was clearer. The JIC hoped that the process of British retrenchment would be matched by increased reliance on the Germans to provide intelligence cover of their own. There is little doubt that intelligence liaison is never as perfect a solution to intelligence gaps as being able to afford your own arrangements, but

²³³ See Chapter One

there was no choice for the JIC. British intelligence had been forced to recognise politically and financially, and then demonstrate in reality, that British relations with West Germany had changed from occupation to alliance.

The June 1953 riots also demonstrated that the rules of engagement for British intelligence operating in Europe were fixed; intelligence-gathering, rather than liberation was the role. The Government had rejected the idea of fermenting unrest behind the Iron Curtain in 1952, but the 1953 riots were the first practical test. Even the Americans were restrained; propaganda and the food distribution scheme seemed to be the limit of their activities. Wilfried Loth describes the June 1953 riots as “precisely the point at which the structure of the Eastern and Western blocs ceased to be at risk”.²³⁴ The Soviet use of force to support the GDR government and the Western reticence to intervene directly to facilitate revolution demonstrated that the division in Europe was fixed in the minds of Cold War leaders.

²³⁴ Loth, “Germany in the Cold War” in Westad, *Reviewing the Cold War*, p.253

Chapter Four: 1955 – 1957

Lows and highs of intelligence

The very lowest

Historical attention has been drawn to Whitehall and British intelligence during 1955-7 for all the wrong reasons; and not just on account of the Suez débacle. It is difficult to reasonably propose that there was an active role for intelligence assessment in policy-making during Eden's premiership, when so many authors have so cogently argued that the Whitehall machine as a whole malfunctioned during 1955-6. Although Cradock does not ascribe a "flawless performance" to the JIC over Suez, he does suggest that what good advice they had to give was ignored by Eden:

While the Prime Minister was ready to call on individual officials or parts of the intelligence community to do his bidding, he and his colleagues were clearly not prepared to listen to the collective wisdom of its senior body.¹

Kyle describes a problem far wider within government: so few people in key ministries actually knew about the deal struck between Britain, France and Israel agreeing to collude in an attack on Egypt that proper administration of the build-up to military conflict was impossible.² One of those kept out of the loop, Sir William Hayter, reported in his memoirs the reply of one of his colleagues in the FO, after Hayter had enquired as to whether Britain would use force to regain control of the Canal: " 'That I can't tell you,' replied the Under-Secretary." Hayter observed:

At the time I took this somewhat ambiguous reply to mean that he did not know the answer. I have since wondered whether that meant that he knew the answer but was not allowed to tell me.³

¹ Cradock, *Know Your Enemy*, p.133

² Kyle, *Suez*, pp.346-7

³ Hayter, *A Double Life*, p.140

Within the JIC, that the Prime Minister was ignoring their assessments was not the only symptom of disease. The members found themselves meeting together to discuss Egypt, with some round the table knowing the full story, such as Dean who had sealed collusion by signing the Sèvres Protocol on behalf of the government, whilst others knew little.⁴ Effective and meaningful assessment of events must have been impossible. The JIC often found itself working with minimal intelligence during the Cold War; that the Committee was in a position at any time where those present had to withhold crucial information in a crisis is a sign of administrative insanity.

Suez was not the only difficulty facing British intelligence between 1955-7, however. Questions asked in the House during the autumn 1955 session about Burgess, Maclean, Philby and their relationship with Moscow caused the government to worry about the need for a public enquiry into security.⁵ Although revelations about intelligence were minimal, the public hunt for the “third man” was on.⁶ Only a few months later, in April 1956, two SIS operations could have openly disrupted the visit of Khrushchev and Bulganin to Britain. That the visit was completed without a diplomatic row was down to Russian decision-making not British. The Berlin spy tunnel, a joint SIS-CIA operation, ran from 11 May 1955 and tapped Soviet telephone lines in East Berlin via a tunnel from West Berlin.⁷ Thanks to George Blake, one of the officers involved with the project and a KGB spy, the Russians knew about the project from the start. The Russians ‘discovered’ the tunnel whilst carrying out repair work on 22 April 1956. At the same time, Buster Crabb, an SIS-employed frogman, disappeared whilst trying to gather intelligence on the Soviet cruiser *Ordzhonikidze* in Portsmouth harbour.⁸ The Russians said nothing until after Khrushchev had left, when the press started to sniff around the story. An enquiry into the operation conducted by Sir Edward Bridges, Head

⁴ Cradock, *Know Your Enemy*, pp.123-4

⁵ CAB128/29, CM(55)36th meeting, 20 October 1955; *House of Commons Official Report*, Vol. 545, 25 October 1955, Col. 29 and 7 November 1955, Col. 1483-1611

⁶ Aldrich, *Hidden Hand*, p.436

⁷ See Stafford, *Spies Beneath Berlin*

⁸ Aldrich, *Hidden Hand*, pp.523-5

of the Civil Service, revealed that the operation had been conducted without proper precautions or authority.⁹

Although each of these events caused relatively little publicity about the workings of British intelligence, during those days of absolute secrecy on such matters, even the slightest revelation was unwanted. Indicating the levels of anguish behind closed doors, Eden hastened Sinclair's replacement as Chief of SIS with Dick White, the former Director General of the Security Service, and ordered Dean with the Cabinet Secretary, Sir Norman Brook, to look at intelligence oversight.¹⁰ Suez followed soon after. The greatest significance of this catalogue, however, lies in the responses to these low points. White went on to rule over a period described by many SIS officers of the time as "the foundation of the modern Service", although White was only one of a few key figures in this renaissance.¹¹ Dean and Brook ushered in a new system of Ministerial approval for operations.¹² The JIC too, reached new heights once the Egyptian dust had settled, moving from the Chiefs of Staff to become a more powerful body within the Cabinet Office.¹³ Despite, or perhaps because of, the problems of 1955-6, intelligence took on a form in 1957 with far more potential influence within the British government.

Exorcising the Geneva Spirit

The assessment of international politics was a closely guarded FO function that the JIC had to work alongside. In a paper prepared for the Foreign Secretary, unnamed FO officials made accurate predictions in January 1955 with regard to the Russians' reactions to the Paris Agreements, which had been designed to bring the FRG into

⁹ "Report of an enquiry on an intelligence operation against Russian warships", Bridges, 18 May 1956, released under the Freedom of Information Act by the Cabinet Office, June 2006
http://www.cabinetoffice.gov.uk/foi/reading_room.asp

¹⁰ Bower, *Perfect English Spy*, pp.161-162; Aldrich, *Hidden Hand*, p.525

¹¹ Private information

¹² Aldrich, *Hidden Hand*, p.526

¹³ See below

NATO.¹⁴ The JIC received a copy of the assessment which stated that Soviet threats made to deter ratification of the Agreements might well be put into action, if the Western plans remained intact, in order to save face. The FO felt it “very probable” that both Anglo- and Franco-Soviet Treaties would be denounced and an Eastern European defence organisation would be established. It was deemed “probable” that East German armed forces would be overtly formed, but potentially only once West German forces had been established. Whilst the FO thought it “unlikely” that the Russians would try to invade West Berlin, they believed it “very likely that the Western Powers will be forced to deal with the East Germans on all matters affecting their rights in Berlin”. The paper was somewhat off in terms of predicting other Soviet diplomatic responses to the Agreements, however: it did not foresee a Soviet-East German peace treaty and it suggested that the Russians were likely to be uninterested in international conferences on Germany and disarmament.

The Naval Attaché in Moscow, Captain G M Bennett, attended the JIC on 3 February to give his assessment of Soviet reactions to German rearmament.¹⁵ He reported that “from his contacts with ordinary people in Russia”, there was genuine fear that the Germans would break free of the restraints put upon them under NATO and attempt to retake Eastern Germany before marching on Russia. Like the diplomats, Bennett thought the advent of an Eastern European counterweight to NATO likely, including an East German army. Bennett commented that whilst ordinary Russian citizens were aware of atomic weapons, “they were more frightened of German divisions than of bombs dropped from American aeroplanes”. Kenneth Strong, Major-General Boucher (DMI) and Dean all agreed that if current estimates of Soviet atomic warfare training were correct, their defensive nature fitted into logic based around Bennett’s observations.

Unexpected changes in the Soviet leadership during February slightly unsettled the JIC view of Soviet intentions. The Committee assessed the resignation, or ousting,

¹⁴ CAB176/52, JIC/148/55 “Soviet Reactions to the Paris Agreements”, 17 January 1955

¹⁵ CAB159/18, JIC(55)12th meeting, 3 February 1955

of Malenkov as Chairman of the Council of Ministers on 10 February, two days after announcements had been made in the Russian news.¹⁶ They recognised that Khrushchev's hand in the determination of policy would now be stronger; a worrying development given that he had "shown a more doctrinaire and inflexible approach on international issues than Malenkov". The JIC were in the majority of people who had no idea that Khrushchev's previous attitudes had been part of a ploy to win conservative Soviet support in a bid for power, before going on to adopt Malenkov's more conciliatory approach to the West.¹⁷ To have known this, the JIC would have had to have pulled off an intelligence miracle: access to the inner-most thoughts of Khrushchev himself. Consequently, the Committee anticipated "a sharper phase of Soviet foreign policy", under a "more impulsive" leader.

The following week, the JIC issued a Special Weekly Summary entitled "Changes in the Soviet leadership".¹⁸ A copy of this assessment can still be found in the Prime Ministers' files, giving a firmer indication than usual that at least this assessment reached the very highest tier of British policy-making.¹⁹ The paper admitted that little was known about the motivations behind Malenkov's resignation, suggesting a combination of pressure from poor economic performance and internal power-struggles. The JIC believed that Bulganin's promotion to Chairman of the Council of Ministers and Zhukov's elevation to Defence Minister represented both a victory for Khrushchev in the race for overall power and a stronger influence on the Kremlin for the Army, because of both Bulganin and Zhukov's military backgrounds. As they had in the past, the JIC had to admit, "Soviet actions are incalculable. We have no reliable evidence of proceedings within the Soviet leadership." Furthermore, there was no great improvement over the next couple of years as further changes took place.

¹⁶ CAB158/19, JIC(55)8/6, Weekly Summary of Intelligence (WSI) 10 February 1955

¹⁷ Harrison, Hope M., *Driving the Soviets up the Wall: Soviet-East German relations, 1953-61* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2003), pp.52-3

¹⁸ CAB158/19, JIC(55)8/8 WSI 17 February 1955

¹⁹ PREM11/1015. In the vast majority of cases intelligence-related papers are removed from the Prime Ministers' files before they are released for public access.

The FRG finally joined NATO on 8 May, after the Paris Agreements had been ratified by the Western allies. As before, French agreement was the crux of the development of plans into reality. The period running up to May was tense, so the JIC kept up political reporting about likely Soviet responses.²⁰ In March, the Committee and the CIA agreed that the East German authorities were planning to disrupt railway traffic between East and West Berlin, in the event of ratification.²¹ The Soviet Union was expected to continue making full use of propaganda and diplomatic means to upset Western defence plans.²² By this stage, the JIC was also reporting that the Russian responses to the Agreements were an indication of “how real is the fear of Germany inside the Kremlin”, perhaps an indication that Captain Bennett made an impact during his visit. SIS reports were rather more alarming. They had received indications that arrangements were being made to run Soviet agents in West Germany, without means of communication via West Berlin: “the implication was that they [the Russians] were preparing for the occasion when West Berlin would cease to be a political entity.”²³

The Soviet response to the Paris Agreements was not the only concern with regards to West German entry into NATO. The problem of security had been a constant talking point within the JIC since 1950. By 1955, the difficulties had not evaporated; a NATO inspection team reported that no classified information could be trusted to the Germans.²⁴ The JIC recognised that this was politically unfeasible since the FRG had to be treated like any other NATO power. Furthermore, intelligence on West Germany had to change. British assessments of West Germany produced for NATO would clearly have to end.²⁵ Whilst some intelligence-gathering powers were retained under the Memoranda of Understanding, by and large, the Germans themselves would have to be the biggest force in counter-intelligence and counter-subversion work.²⁶ That said, even

²⁰ CAB159/18, JIC(55)25th meeting, 24 March 1955

²¹ CAB159/18, JIC(55)20th meeting, 3 March 1955

²² CAB158/19, JIC(55)10(Final) “Survey of World Communism in 1954”, 24 March 1955

²³ JIC(55)25th meeting

²⁴ CAB159/18, JIC(55)3rd meeting, 7 January 1955

²⁵ CAB176/52, JIC/274/55 “Quarterly counter-intelligence reports by JIC(Germany)”, 26 January 1955

²⁶ CAB176/52, JIC/467/55 “Future intelligence requirements in Germany”, 15 February 1955

by 1957, the British government was not keen to renegotiate the Memoranda, in favour of relinquishing more powers to the Germans.²⁷

The question of whether West Germany should be an intelligence target and with what priority attached, was not easily solved.²⁸ A visit by Dean to Germany in November 1955 revealed that British intelligence resources were overly-focused on collecting “short range tactical intelligence” concerning a Soviet attack.²⁹ It was possible to produce some papers on the FRG, although it seems unlikely that much of their content came from secret intelligence.³⁰ Because of the reductions in Germany, however, there was little opportunity to improve the balance. Investigations into the value of intelligence-gathering in Germany in 1956 and 1957, reported that return on investment was still good, especially from BRIXMIS and improving liaison with Gehlen’s organisation.³¹ The continued existence of JIC(G) was agreed in a new charter in late 1957.³²

The Cabinet agreed that once French ratification of the Paris Agreements looked certain, offers to confer with the Russians “on the outstanding political problems of Europe” must be made.³³ The Chiefs of Staff and FO rapidly dug up the papers drafted back in 1953 on demilitarisation in Europe.³⁴ All of the old problems remained: successful negotiations might mean the recall of occupying forces and Russian insistence on a Germany non-aligned with the West. Failure of talks would continue the division of Germany, with the FRG remaining in NATO, but increased problems in Berlin and greater dissatisfaction in West Germany towards the West. The Chiefs’ Joint Planning Staff recommended that, from a strategic defence point of view, the West could not accept a reunified and neutral Germany without foreign troops stationed within her

²⁷ FO371/130860, WG 1695/IG P.A. Wilkinson to C.M. Anderson, 13 February 1957

²⁸ CAB159/19, JIC(55)39th meeting, 19 May 1955; CAB159/21, JIC(55)85th meeting, 26 October 1955

²⁹ DEF32/4, COS(55)103rd meeting, 13 December 1955

³⁰ Approximately one a year was produced; see below

³¹ CAB159/24, JIC(56)64th meeting, 26 July 1956; CAB159/25, JIC(56)97th meeting, 25 October 1956; CAB159/27, JIC(57)53rd meeting, 5 June 1957

³² CAB159/28, JIC(57)73rd meeting, 21 August 1957

³³ CAB128/28, CC(55)27th Conclusions, 30 March 1955

³⁴ DEF5/57, COS(55)74 “Talks with the Soviet Union”, 7 April 1955

borders.³⁵ The minimum settlement for Britain had to be a united Germany, no foreign troops, but German association with the West. Put this together with the JIC's recognition of the Kremlin's over-riding fear of Germany, and the British negotiating fall-back position looks like nonsense.

As had been widely expected in Whitehall, the immediate response to West German admittance into NATO was the signature of the Warsaw Pact on 14 May. The JIC felt this was one component of a two part strategy: on the one hand the Russians were proving the strength of their bloc, whilst on the other, as part of the positioning before Four Power talks, they were "propagating the concept of a neutral zone of countries" in central Europe.³⁶ The Committee believed that the primary intention was the interruption of Western defence plans, but such a strategy may also have been "a reflection of a difficult internal situation, of a desire to limit the risk of nuclear warfare and of the exorbitant cost of modern weapons".

The JIC was very active during the preparations for the July Geneva summit. In June, they examined, from the Soviet point of view, the implications of a unified Germany, first as a neutral power and then as a member of the Western defence organisation.³⁷ The assessment largely went over old ground, stating that despite more recent Russian conciliatory displays, their basic objectives remained the same: they were only likely to agree to withdraw from East Germany and allow reunification if there were firm guarantees that all foreign forces would leave, Germany would remain neutral with minimal forces and their "political influence with an all-German government" was sufficient to keep this position. The Soviets were unlikely to agree to a reunified Germany, free to ally herself with the West; the economic, military and political deficits would be too great. There was a new thought attached to this though:

If, however, a wider settlement involving a general reduction of tension has become of greater importance to them than we believe they might be prepared to be less rigid than

³⁵ DEFE6/29, JP(55)42(A) "Germany – Implications of case 3", 16 May 1955

³⁶ CAB158/19, JIC(55)8/21 WSI 19 May 1955

³⁷ CAB158/20, JIC(55)36(Final) "Factors affecting the Soviet attitude towards reunification of Germany", 2 June 1955

we have suggested in their approach to German reunification, especially if they believed that the long term result might be the withdrawal of US forces from Europe and other territories.

The inclusion of the FRG within NATO, thought the JIC, might appear as a confirmation of Western defence built around a permanent US presence in Europe. Furthermore, twelve West German divisions, whilst slightly lessened in potential in a thermonuclear age, still represented a shift in the balance of forces. These factors combined, commented the Committee, could potentially make defence too great a burden on the Soviet economy as well as heighten fear of nuclear attack, such that the Russians accepted disarmament at any cost. This view was presented, however, as an unlikely possibility. The Chiefs of Staff did not have any sympathy with such views, sticking firmly to their opinion that Western defence would suffer too greatly if Germany were neutral and unarmed; they wanted their forces as far east as possible.³⁸

More detailed assessments of Soviet disarmament proposals were drawn up along side those looking specifically at the German problem.³⁹ The JIC believed the motivation behind Russian suggestions for a disarmed central Europe was a feeling of military inferiority; in terms of nuclear weapons, delivery systems, conventional weapons (once West Germany had rearmed within NATO) and the economic burden of defence. This meant that “the proposals [were] made with the genuine desire that they should be accepted” and Western rejection would hand the Russians considerable propaganda material. The Russian offer to drastically reduce nuclear weapons, bombers, missiles and development facilities looked good: even if the Soviet Union managed to keep a clandestine stockpile of weapons, they could not hide enough for a decisive strike. Furthermore, the suggested limits on aircraft and ballistic missiles would leave the Russians incapable of delivering a knock-out blow. One great problem, the Committee concluded, would be finding a satisfactory system of monitoring the agreements. A JIC report produced in March had noted that, at the very least, by giving

³⁸ DEFE4/77, COS(55)41st meeting, 8 June 1955

³⁹ CAB158/20, JIC(55)39(Final)(Revise) “Soviet disarmament proposals”, 15 June 1955

up East Germany, the Russians would be losing control of uranium resources “of very great importance”.⁴⁰

Kirkpatrick, now PUS in the FO, felt that the British aim for the Geneva talks had to be a united Germany, free to associate with the West.⁴¹ As a consequence, he urged that the West offer a demilitarised zone in Europe, limits on NATO and Warsaw Pact forces, and some sort of security guarantee. The Chiefs of Staff drew up a disarmament plan which the JIC thought the Russians would reject on grounds that it militarily disadvantaged them more than NATO.⁴² This proposal offered a completely demilitarised zone in East Germany, Austria and Western Poland, balanced conventional forces in West Germany and Eastern Poland and equal forces in France, Italy and the Western Soviet Union. Under this suggestion, NATO forces stayed put and were balanced with Warsaw Pact forces, but the Soviet Union had to shift its defensive perimeter hundreds of miles east. The Joint Planners and the JIC agreed though that a demilitarized zone further west would be unacceptable to NATO.⁴³ The Cabinet agreed that a firm stand had to be taken at the summit in an attempt to achieve some sort of progress on German reunification, although demilitarization of some part of Germany and other security guarantees would have to be offered up in return.⁴⁴

The Geneva summit took place on 18-24 July. As Gaddis puts it, once there, “The Americans remained wary, seeing in Khrushchev’s very flexibility a tactic that might lull the West into complacency, delaying German rearmament and the consolidation of NATO.”⁴⁵ Harrison suggests that the Soviet leader never had any intention of giving up the GDR.⁴⁶ Eden reported to his Cabinet that the Russians insisted on new security arrangements before Germany could be reunified.⁴⁷ The Prime

⁴⁰ CAB158/20, JIC(55)25 “The importance to the USSR of the East German Uranium mines”, 3 March 1955

⁴¹ PREM11/894, Telegram no. 3084 FO to Washington, 2 July 1955

⁴² CAB158/21, JIC(55)46(Final) “Europe demilitarized zones – likely Soviet view”, 4 July 1955

⁴³ DEFE6/30, JP(55)64 “Germany – demilitarized zones”, 11 July 1955

⁴⁴ CAB128/29, CM(55)23, 14 July 1955

⁴⁵ Gaddis, *We Now Know*, p.207

⁴⁶ Harrison, *Driving the Soviets up the Wall*, pp.54-6

⁴⁷ CAB128/29, CM(55)26, 26 July 1955

Minister's impression echoed the views promoted by the JIC earlier in the year that the Soviet leadership was more fearful of German re-emergence than American power. Bulganin had told Eden that neither the Red Army nor the Russian people were ready to accept an agreement on German reunification.⁴⁸

Nevertheless, the good news from Geneva was that the Russians seemed "genuinely anxious to secure a relaxation of international tension and a friendlier relationship with the Western Powers." The JIC echoed the Prime Minister's view.⁴⁹ Their early gloomy assessments of foreign policy under Khrushchev had not been proven correct so far. International relationships, and expectations, had still not settled in a post-Stalin world. The Bonn Embassy report on Geneva probably explains this best:

Judging by reactions in Western Germany so far, the Geneva Conference has succeeded in a very difficult feat: it has achieved a reduction in tension between the West and the Russians without any visible progress on the German question – a prospect which the Germans have always dreaded in the past – and yet has had a good reception from German opinion.⁵⁰

The JIC had been struggling to make sense of Russian policy towards the FRG. Khrushchev's invitation for Adenauer to visit Moscow, issued before the Geneva talks, was seen as an attempt to win German sympathy.⁵¹ Certainly, the Committee's reports after these bilateral talks had taken place in September hint at British discomfort with improving Soviet-FRG relations.⁵² The resumption of normal diplomatic affairs between the two powers, felt the JIC, could make things more difficult in the future. Whilst there was no doubting Adenauer's commitment to the West, "a direct line to Moscow may make it easier for his successors to revert to the old game of playing off East against West". The Committee believed that by allowing two German embassies in Moscow, the Federal Chancellor had given the Russians a bolster in their ambitions to gain recognition for the GDR. The agreement to return to Germany from Russia some

⁴⁸ CAB129/76, CP(55)99 "Four Power talks", 27 July 1955

⁴⁹ CAB158/19, JIC(55)8/31 WSI 28 July 1955

⁵⁰ FO371/118152, WG 1013/32 Hoyer Millar's weekly report, 28 July 1955

⁵¹ CAB158/19, JIC(55)8/25 WSI 16 June 1955

⁵² CAB158/19, JIC(55)8/38 WSI 15 September 1955

9,000 POWs, however, was likely to have “great emotional value” in Germany, dulling the pain of concessions.

The JIC assessments of Soviet-GDR relations following the Geneva summit noted that Khrushchev had given assurances to the East German leadership that they would not be abandoned, even within the framework of peaceful coexistence.⁵³ Continuing difficulties in Berlin were reported, where both numbers of refugees fleeing the East and restrictions on travel had increased. The Russians had also begun a new campaign to encourage line-crossers to return.⁵⁴ The announcement of the Soviet-GDR treaty granting the GDR sovereignty on 20 September was received with little anguish by the JIC.⁵⁵ “In practice, it changes little in the existing position”, they noted. Rather it was an attempt to inflate East German prestige by admitting them as full members of the Warsaw Pact and force the West Germans into dealings with the GDR. In particular, the Russians had granted the East Germans control of all but allied traffic in Berlin, giving them the opportunity to exert pressure on the FRG. However, the Committee remained confident that whilst the aim of Soviet policy for the foreseeable future would be as before (the disruption of Western defence plans, increasing influence in Asia and the Middle East), the chosen method would be the reduction of international tension.⁵⁶ They allowed for the unlikely possibility that if the Foreign Ministers’ Conference planned for October in Geneva failed to reach agreement on any of the big Cold War issues, the Kremlin might be tempted “to revert to harsher policies”.

Disarmament proposals continued to come under consideration between the two sets of Geneva talks. The Chiefs of Staff tried to tackle the problem of inspection by analysing the possibility of using a small land force, perhaps based on BRIXMIS.⁵⁷ Their American colleagues preferred aerial inspection. The JIC, for their part, assessed

⁵³ CAB158/19, JIC(55)1/9 “Periodic intelligence summary for NATO Commands”, 20 September 1955

⁵⁴ CAB158/21, JIC(55)55 “The Soviet and Satellite repatriation campaign”, 17 August 1955

⁵⁵ CAB158/19, JIC(55)8/39 WSI 22 September 1955

⁵⁶ CAB158/21, JIC(55)58(Final)(Revise) “Likely Soviet courses of action up to 1 January 1957”, 30 September 1955

⁵⁷ DEFES/60, COS(55)205 “Geneva proposals – inspection of forces”, 22 August 1955

the impact of disarmament on Soviet policy.⁵⁸ They believed that even with a reduction in forces from over four million men to one-and-a-half million, the Soviet Union would be able to uphold their Cold War ambitions. Although a more defensive posture would have to be adopted by the Russians, they would be able to retain control of the Satellites and maintain a limited offensive capability within Europe.

The British Government's position going into the second Geneva conference was almost identical to that before the first: offers of security guarantees were necessary to make progress on German reunification.⁵⁹ After a week of talks, the JIC summarised, "there is little prospect of real agreement at Geneva on the basic issues."⁶⁰ Soviet proposals on new European security agreements were unacceptable to the West. The Committee predicted no progress on disarmament either. Although the talks were likely to make no head way, the Russians would look for further negotiations; "they doubtless calculate that they stand to gain by assiduously cultivating the 'Geneva Spirit' and that further Conferences will contribute to this." By the end of the talks, however, the JIC's tone had changed, stating surprise at the "inflexibility" shown by Molotov in particular.⁶¹ They wondered if this reflected foreign policy disagreements within the Kremlin, increased confidence or perhaps a realisation that the Soviet line had been giving false impressions of their determination to remain in control over Eastern Europe.⁶² As a consequence, the assessment became slightly more pessimistic: "the Soviet Government aim[s] to freeze the situation in Europe while waiting for the German situation to ripen in their favour" and in the meantime they would shift their focus to the Middle East.

Eden wrote to Eisenhower, "I do not think we should take too gloomy a view of the Geneva failure. It was hardly to be expected that our summer weather could have

⁵⁸ CAB158/22, JIC(55)65(Final) "Partial disarmament of conventional forces – probable effects on Soviet and Chinese service allocations and strategy", 13 October 1955

⁵⁹ CAB128/29, CM(55)36, 20 October 1955

⁶⁰ CAB159/21, JIC(55)88th meeting, 3 November 1955

⁶¹ CAB158/19, JIC(55)8/48 WSI 24 November 1955

⁶² CAB159/21, JIC(55)92nd meeting, 24 November 1955

been continued into the winter.”⁶³ He was concerned, however, that it looked as if Germany were to remain divided, and so he promised to use the visit of Khrushchev and Bulganin to London in April 1956 to make progress. In the meantime, Eden told his Cabinet, the West’s priority must now be to firm up German opinion in favour of the West and quickly move along with bringing West German forces into NATO.⁶⁴

The particular difficulties of maintaining Berlin as a city under Four Power control were brought into sharper focus by the passing of the Geneva conferences and then the Soviet-GDR treaty. The confident tone of East German proclamations concerning their own powers and Soviet support were early indicators of that.⁶⁵ In November, the JIC reported that the “responsibility for guarding the inter-zonal border and the Berlin perimeter” was being transferred from Soviet to East German border guard units.⁶⁶ By December, Soviet statements led the Committee to question whether the Russians and East Germans still considered the Four Power Agreements over access to Berlin to be valid.⁶⁷ The JIC admitted that it was “not yet clear how far the Russians are prepared to push this matter”. A week later, after further administrative transfers of border control, their assessment reported that “it does appear to be their [the Soviets] intention at present is to change the existing situation regarding the Four Power status of Berlin.”⁶⁸

A hint of contradiction can be found within JIC reports produced around this time regarding Soviet intentions. This is, perhaps, a reflection of the process by which assessments were drawn up. Weekly current intelligence summaries picked up the recent developments in Berlin and were drawn up by the weekly Heads of Section meeting. The larger, longer-term studies were drawn up less frequently by teams within the JIS probably using a wider range of material over a longer drafting period. The “Probable Soviet policy in the light of the Geneva Conference of Foreign Ministers”

⁶³ PREM11/899, Telegram No. 5442, 17 November 1955

⁶⁴ CAB128/29, CM(55)41, 17th November 1955

⁶⁵ JIC(55)1/9

⁶⁶ CAB158/19, JIC(55)8/46 WSI 10 November 1955

⁶⁷ CAB158/19, JIC(55)8/54 WSI 8 December 1955; CAB159/21, JIC(55)96th meeting, 8 December 1955

⁶⁸ CAB158/19, JIC(55)8/55 WSI 15 December 1955; CAB159/21, JIC(55)99th meeting, 15 December 1955

paper was produced in mid-December, but appears to take little or no account of developments in Berlin.⁶⁹ The main conclusion is consistent with events; the Committee reassured that “the Soviet leaders will refrain from major aggression and do not intend to allow points of friction, such as Berlin, to develop into major crises.” However, on the specifics of Soviet policy, where the Committee anticipated the Russian desire to “freeze Europe in the status quo pending the communisation of Germany”, the transfer of power in Berlin hinted, at the very least, that this view might already be outdated.

All such criticism is perhaps nothing more than a reflection of how difficult a job political prediction was for the JIC, or indeed any intelligence organisation in any age. Even access to the thoughts of a foreign leader does not necessarily guarantee accurate prediction. The Committee had already conceded on more than one occasion during 1955, that the knowledge of minds within the Kremlin was beyond their powers. An old hand at both political reporting and intelligence, Sir William Hayter, then Ambassador in Moscow, sent his views to the Foreign Office on Soviet policy, offering a unification of ideas and observations:

As for Europe, the [Soviet] policy seems to be for the present to put it on ice. Insidious nibbling at our position, in Berlin most obviously but also probably in Scandinavian countries, will no doubt continue, but probably not to the point where dangerous risks are to be run.⁷⁰

An averted gaze

The JIC files reveal the shifting levels of importance placed by the British government on the various theatres of the Cold War. The weekly assessments from 1956 show a more prominent place for Middle Eastern affairs than had previously been given.⁷¹ The JIC had suggested that given the post-Geneva stalemate in Europe, Soviet attention would shift to increasing their influence in the Middle East, where they had

⁶⁹ CAB158/22, JIC(55)76(Final), 13 December 1955

⁷⁰ PREM11/1341, 1038/122/55 Hayter to Ward “Summary of Soviet Foreign Policy post-Geneva”, 13 December 1955

⁷¹ CAB158/23, JIC(56)14 series and CAB 179/1 series.

been successfully “fishing in troubled waters”.⁷² As it happened, events relating to the Cold War in Europe ensured that the JIC could not focus all of its collective attention on the Middle East.

The JIC maintained their overall view that the Soviets wanted to avoid war, and this was only likely to change if “new and more violent leaders come into power”.⁷³ The 20th Party Congress in February, thought the Committee, was a key indicator as to the strength of Khrushchev’s hold over the Kremlin.⁷⁴ Besides Khrushchev’s rejection of Stalin’s “cult of personality”, resolutions passed were firmly in line with the First Secretary’s speech, especially those concerning international affairs where the concepts of peaceful co-existence, preventing wars and “various forms of transition to socialism” loomed large. The JIC’s forecast for 1956 remained as before: the main Soviet effort would go into the Middle East and South-East Asia, whilst they sought to maintain divisions in Europe but with tempting offers of disarmament to placate Western opinion.

In March, the Russians proposed reductions to conventional forces in Europe. The JIC carried out a support function for the British delegation to the international Disarmament Sub-Committee by analysing the proposals.⁷⁵ They believed these to be a genuine offer. Nuclear armouries meant the Soviet Union could maintain her military position without having to rely on conventional forces. Furthermore, by suggesting that Germany and her neighbouring states remain nuclear-free zones, the Russians were aiming to disrupt Western defence plans far more than their own. The Committee thought that the benefit to the Russians of these proposals would not only be military, however. The Soviet economy would gain from something like ten percent more investment as well as an extra two-and-a-half million workers. In terms of international politics, the rewards would be high: a demonstrable desire to rely on peaceful means would have considerable propaganda value, encourage neutralism in Western Europe and force the West to acquiesce in the continuing division of Germany. At the same

⁷² See above; CAB158/23, JIC(56)10(Final) “Survey of World Communism in 1955”, 20 April 1956

⁷³ CAB158/23, JIC(56)4(Final) “Soviet strategy in the event of global war up to the end of 1960”, 2 January 1956

⁷⁴ JIC(56)10(Final)

⁷⁵ CAB158/24, JIC(56)49(Final) “Soviet disarmament proposals of 27 March 1956”, 10 April 1956

time, the JIC reported in their weekly review that the first hints of Soviet unilateral withdrawals from Germany were appearing in the German press.⁷⁶

The Committee had been keeping a watch on West Germany, both to gauge the effect of international events on internal German politics and the development of her forces. A twenty two page report on "The outlook in the Federal German Republic" was produced in March.⁷⁷ It noted that whilst the West German economy was in an extremely healthy state and the armed forces were developing, politically, the dominant theme was still reunification. Adenauer's government was under increasing pressure of accusations from opposition parties that not enough had been done to explore the possibilities with the Russians. However, the paper concluded that the Chancellor's parliamentary position remained strong enough to reasonably expect the "continuation of pro-Western policies and of the defence build-up". The Committee did think that the Federal government would be forced into further contacts with the GDR, no matter how much they resisted. There remained "no prospect" of reunification on terms acceptable to the West Germans, though. Nevertheless the Committee reminded readers that the Western Allies had to keep up appearances of working for reunification, whilst demonstrating determination to maintain their position in Berlin and the FRG's place in the Western alliance.

The assessment included the first significant appraisal of the West German economic miracle. The rate of expansion was "remarkably high", but the JIC did not think it could last.⁷⁸ The good news for other NATO nations and their defence industries was that German manufacturers did not look eager to develop an indigenous supply of military hardware. West German armed forces were expected to be operational by 1959-60, with the necessary political restraints on military power in place. One of the only causes of delay was likely to be postponement of conscription laws, which the JIC did not think could be passed until after the autumn 1957 federal elections. In fact, reports later in 1956 suggested that the exact role of the armed

⁷⁶ CAB159/23, JIC(56)36th meeting, 12 April 1956

⁷⁷ CAB158/24, JIC(56)35(Final), 26 March 1956

⁷⁸ 10.5 % in 1955, 7.6 % predicted for 1956.

services in West German life was a developing debate, without any clear conclusions.⁷⁹ The Committee thought that the exact future size of the forces was uncertain, but they were sure that the security arrangements showed no signs of improved effectiveness in either 1956 or 1957.⁸⁰ Dean realised that British industry needed German orders enough to ignore the problems of protecting secrets: “if we want to sell our goods, we cannot afford to be too scrupulous on the security side.”⁸¹

According to the JIC, Khrushchev and Bulganin’s visit to Britain in April “resulted in a marked improvement in the atmosphere of Anglo-Soviet relations”.⁸² Fortunately, the Soviet delegation did not raise the matter of either the British role in the Berlin tunnel or Buster Crabb’s ill-fated mission, although protests about the latter were made later from Moscow.⁸³ Unfortunately, the minutes of JIC discussions about these operations and their aftermath are not yet available to the public. It would be fascinating to read exactly how the Committee discussed the fact that it was intelligence-gathering that could have easily caused serious embarrassment, if not significant damage to relations with the Soviet Union.

The summer of 1956 was a relatively quiet period for matters concerning Germany and certainly the attention of Whitehall was being drawn further towards the Suez Canal. The JIC reported in July that the Soviet Foreign Ministry appeared to be bolstering their German expertise with new appointments, whilst East German-Soviet talks in Moscow revealed “no change” in Russia’s policy towards Germany.⁸⁴ Khrushchev’s closing address reaffirmed that he thought “the time was not yet ripe” for negotiations over reunification. The major change was a reduction by half in the support costs the GDR had to pay for Soviet troops stationed on their soil. This was later backed

⁷⁹ CAB179/1, WRCI week ending 1 November 1956

⁸⁰ CAB159/25, JIC(56)92nd meeting, 11 October 1956; JIC(56)97th meeting, 25 October 1956; CAB158/29, JIC(57)45 “Security in Western European Union countries”, 23 April 1957

⁸¹ CAB159/28, JIC(57)81st meeting, 19 September 1957

⁸² CAB158/25, JIC(56)63(Final) “Six monthly intelligence digest for the Ministry of Supply – period mid-November 1955 to mid-May 1956”, 2 July 1956

⁸³ Stafford, *Spies Beneath Berlin*, pp.169-170

⁸⁴ CAB179/1, WRCI week ending 19 July 1956; WRCI week ending 26 July 1956

up with promises of “material advances in living conditions” in the GDR, so that the East could shine as a beacon for socialism.⁸⁵

The only link drawn between the Suez crisis and East Germany by the JIC was the necessity to keep watch on Soviet troop movements, as a measure of Russian reaction to British, French and Israeli movements in the Mediterranean. Annual manoeuvres in the GDR, however, did “not indicat[e] any intention to cause alarm, since they were still on a small scale.”⁸⁶ Events in October and November 1956 in Hungary and Poland were far more relevant to East Germany. The rise of Gomulka to power in Warsaw and Nagy in Budapest looked, briefly, like real challenges to Soviet domination.⁸⁷ The West German press began reporting in October that unrest in industrialised areas of East Germany had been suppressed by troops, but the JIC claimed there was no reliable evidence that “anything serious had happened”.⁸⁸ Intelligence confirmed that five Soviet divisions in the GDR had left their garrisons for the Polish border, although they had not yet crossed. By the 1 November, these forces were reported to be returning to their bases. There was no sign of the Polish and Hungarian “infection spreading” to the other Satellites.

On 4 November, the Red Army invaded Hungary; the JIC reported that whilst there had clearly been evidence of a softer Soviet attitude to the Satellites over the last few months, in the Kremlin’s view, things had obviously gone too far.⁸⁹ The Committee noted that forces in East Germany and other Satellites were on alert in case they were needed to crush any further anti-Soviet unrest. GDR forces had been replaced by Russian forces on the East-West German border.⁹⁰ A significant observation was that there were no signs of any intention to use these forces for action outside their bloc

⁸⁵ CAB179/1, WRCI week ending 9 August 1956

⁸⁶ CAB159/24, JIC(56)86th meeting, 27 September 1956

⁸⁷ Gaddis, *We Now Know*, pp.209-210

⁸⁸ CAB179/1, WRCI week ending 25 October 1956

⁸⁹ CAB179/1, WRCI week ending 8 November 1956

⁹⁰ CAB159/25, JIC(56)114th meeting, 29 November 1956

borders. The JIC was also quick to quash rumours within Whitehall of Khrushchev's fall from power.⁹¹

By mid-November, difficulties had arisen concerning Allied access to Berlin. On the night of the 25 November, Soviet authorities at the border refused to allow a British train to leave Berlin because it did not meet new paperwork requirements.⁹² This was the first time a train had ever been returned to its origin. The JIC was undecided as to the significance: was it the first indication of a tougher Soviet policy, a "routine probing exercise to test the strength of Allied resistance" or was it a warning to the Western powers not to take advantage of the difficulties within the satellites? The Americans also had a road convoy turned back on 5 December because they had refused to allow their vehicles to be inspected. In the face of Soviet intransigence, the JIC concluded that all the Allies could do was produce the new documentation required by the Russians, whilst agreeing a long-term response with the US and French authorities.⁹³

In December, the JIC reviewed "Soviet policy in the light of the situation in the Middle East and the Satellites".⁹⁴ The Committee thought that the Russians would continue to take full advantage of Arab nationalism and anti-Western sentiment. Suez had given the Kremlin "an opportunity to consolidate their position" in the Middle East and delight in an Anglo-American split. With regard to the Satellites, however, Soviet policy was on a knife-edge, given the parallel ambitions of maintaining their bloc intact whilst offering some concessions towards liberalisation. Forceful intervention in Hungary had damaged the "initial advantages" gained by the policies of peaceful co-existence, but sticking with this policy would have to be their method of overcoming such set-backs. The Russians needed to face economic problems in the Satellites as well as a loss of trust in Satellite armed forces.

⁹¹ CAB179/1, WRCI week ending 22 November 1956; WRCI week ending 29 November 1956

⁹² *Ibid*

⁹³ CAB179/1, WRCI week ending 6 December 1956

⁹⁴ CAB158/26, JIC(56)123(Final)(Revise), 6 December 1956

A specific study of “the present internal situation in East Germany” was issued separately.⁹⁵ It included reports of both internal division within the SED and support within the intellectual community for “national communism”. Ulbricht had not yielded any ground, however, reliant on his support from Moscow. His criticisms of Polish and Hungarian attempts to diverge from Soviet communism were stronger than those made in Russia herself. Such confidence, noted the JIC, had prompted “a tendency for East German leaders to talk big about their attitude to the West”. Threats about Berlin had not yet been supported by the Soviet government, although they were clearly happy that the Allies had been forced into complying with the new documentation regime for access to the city. The assessment concluded, however, that the Russians were not yet ready to impose a partial blockade on Berlin by enforcing an inspection regime of trains and vehicles which the Allies had already refused to accept. Further reassurance came with news that, except in Hungary, both Soviet and satellite forces had returned to a normal, less threatening routine.⁹⁶

Assessments showed that economically, the GDR was suffering, as both food and coal shortages had further damaged an already feeble system.⁹⁷ The Russia Committee concluded that it was not the threat from “national communism” that posed the greatest threat to Ulbricht’s regime, but rather the shortages in both fuel and consumer goods.⁹⁸ The number of refugees crossing from the GDR to the West had increased from 252,870 in 1955 to 279,189 in 1956, which was taken as a further indicator that the East German economy must be creaking.⁹⁹

⁹⁵ CAB179/1, WRCI week ending 13 December 1956

⁹⁶ CAB179/1, WRCI week ending 20 December 1956

⁹⁷ CAB159/25, JIC(56)112th meeting, 22 November 1956

⁹⁸ FO371/128993, RC/1/57 “Trends in Communist policy – December 1956”, 4 January 1957

⁹⁹ FO371/128993, RC/4/57 “Trends in Communist policy – January 1957”, 5 February 1957

1957: testing Allied resolve in Berlin

In January 1957, the JIC reported that apart from in Hungary, Soviet forces were no longer maintaining “a special state of readiness”.¹⁰⁰ There had also been a return to the normal course of Soviet-GDR affairs, demonstrated by joint talks in Moscow. The promise of credit and increased imports from Russia represented a boost for the East German economy.¹⁰¹ On the political side, the JIC explained that there had been further agreements between the Russians and East Germans in favour of both a disarmed zone in Germany and an interpretation of the Four Power rules governing the Berlin air corridor as of “temporary and limited character”. The Committee anticipated a final resolution of the outstanding issues concerning Soviet troops based in the GDR. The CIA suggested these talks were likely to be an attempt to bolster the Ulbricht regime.¹⁰² They were also concerned that the pronouncements over the air corridor might foreshadow East German efforts to “exert control” over Western commercial air travel to Berlin.

The 30th Plenum of the Central Committee of the SED took place at the end of January, giving Western intelligence a relatively easy opportunity to pick up clues as to the state of East Germany. The JIC noticed “indications of the precarious economic position of the GDR” such as reductions in investment, coal and steel consumption.¹⁰³ Planned production targets had already been reduced as a result of the coal shortages.¹⁰⁴ In an attempt to avoid future difficulties, the GDR offered the Polish government credit to help develop their coal industry.¹⁰⁵ The overall emphasis of the Plenum, however, appeared to be on “ideological conformity and party discipline”, amidst a regime not showing particular signs of fear of impending unrest.¹⁰⁶ The trial and imprisonment of the philosopher Wolfgang Harich in March, over charges of counter-revolutionary

¹⁰⁰ CAB179/2, WRCI week ending 10 January 1957

¹⁰¹ CAB179/2, WRCI week ending 17 January 1957

¹⁰² CAB159/26, JIC(57)4th meeting, 10 January 1957

¹⁰³ CAB179/2, WRCI week ending 14 February 1957

¹⁰⁴ WRCI w/e 17 January 1957

¹⁰⁵ CAB179/2, WRCI week ending 14 June 1957

¹⁰⁶ CAB179/2, WRCI week ending 28 February 1957

dealings was designed “to give intellectuals a lesson in the perils of subversion and deviationism”.¹⁰⁷ This, thought the JIC, was not “the panic reaction of a frightened regime”.

Press reports about possible revisions to the GDR-Polish border along the Oder-Neisse line, prompted the JIC to issue a special report in February.¹⁰⁸ The issue was thought to be part of the Soviets’ approach to maintaining the integrity of their bloc, where moving the border in favour of either the Germans or Poles could be used as a reward or punishment depending on behaviour. The assessment concluded that the Russians had forced the GDR government to issue statements denying any pressure to revise the border, in order to avoid internal disagreement within the Warsaw Pact. The question of territory also had significance in the West German federal elections, where a powerful lobby was attempting to force the government to state their claim to lost territory in Poland. The JIC had also reported that the Russians had been attempting to influence the course of West German elections, not through discussion of the Oder-Neisse line, but by combining threats of nuclear retaliation with trade, cultural and diplomatic inducements.¹⁰⁹ Such ploys were not so one-sided, however, since Selwyn Lloyd, the Foreign Secretary, informed the Cabinet that in view of the elections, “it was desirable that [Western] discussions on German reunification should now be resumed”.¹¹⁰ As a consequence, an international working group was set up in March.¹¹¹

Throughout early 1957, the JIC was trying to make sense of events in Eastern Europe so that they could not only determine the exact state of the bloc’s integrity but also suggest future trends. A lengthy assessment drafted by the JIS in February produced “tentative” conclusions, largely in line with those since October 1956.¹¹² The Satellites would remain both economic and military assets, but also “a political liability” to the Soviet Union. In Hungary, the aim remained crushing disaffection, but in Poland,

¹⁰⁷ CAB179/2, WRCI week ending 14 March 1957

¹⁰⁸ CAB179/2, WRCI week ending 21 February 1957

¹⁰⁹ WRCI w/e 14 February 1957; WRCI w/e 28 February 1957

¹¹⁰ CAB128/31, CC(57)2nd Conclusions, 21 January 1957

¹¹¹ CAB129/86, C(57)53 “Germany”, 4 March 1957

¹¹² CAB158/27, JIC(57)13(Final) “The present situation in the European Satellites and East Germany, and the possible trend of development during the next few years”, 27 February 1957

socialism would be allowed to take some account of national feeling. The prognosis for East Germany remained the same as it had for ten years: the Russians had to improve material conditions there so as to make a favourable comparison with the West. The JIC had noticed a “qualification” of the language and promises made at the 20th Congress, since these seemed to have been the spark of trouble in Hungary and Poland.

In the GDR, liberalisation had always been “very carefully controlled by the regime”, since the events of 1953. Despite limited concessions, however, since November 1956, the Russians had made clear their intention to keep their bloc intact. There had, however, been carrot as well as stick, in terms of pledges to improve the economic conditions of ordinary people. The JIC noted these promises went largely unfulfilled in East Germany, but memories of the 1953 suppression and twenty two Soviet Divisions ensured no unrest. Perhaps the most interesting observation was “the refugee stream provides a safety valve through which discontented elements are always likely to be siphoned off to the West in times of stress”.

The Committee believed that the Soviet requirement for closely-governed Satellites had not yet diminished.¹¹³ The GSFG needed to be maintained as a counterbalance to NATO forces in Europe, so this relied on secure lines of communication and forward airfields in Poland. Bauxite from Hungary, uranium ore from East Germany and Czechoslovakia, Polish coal and German machinery could not easily be replaced either given their value to the Russian economy. Perhaps of greater significance though was the political imperative to maintain the bloc: if any Satellite were to break away, the Communist project for gradual world envelopment would be irreparably damaged. As a consequence, the Committee concluded, the Russians would have to maintain their military presence in Eastern Europe whilst they would be particularly sensitive to any Western attempts to interfere within their security perimeter. The carrot to encourage the satellite peoples would remain small, however: “only such concessions to popular opinion as may allay discontent without weakening the reality of their political dictatorship” should be expected.

¹¹³ JIC(57)13(Final)

In March, the JIC noted that a Soviet-GDR agreement had been signed confirming the “temporary presence” of Russian troops on German soil.¹¹⁴ This accord did not go as far as that drawn up between the Poles and Russians, since troop numbers and movements in Germany did not require the consent of the GDR government. A clause allowing the Soviet troops in Germany to deal with internal security threats, deduced the JIC, “constitute[d] no limitation on the Soviet High Commander’s complete freedom of action”.

The May assessment of the “Likelihood of global war and warning of attack” read more like earlier documents than those of 1956.¹¹⁵ War by “miscalculation” in Germany or the Middle East was a threat, as was war caused by Western support for either East German or other satellite secession from the Soviet bloc. The Committee also believed that the removal of the ultimate deterrent through a ban on nuclear weapons without concurrent reductions of conventional forces made war more likely. However, by July, the JIC suggested that the Russians were unlikely to offer any concessions on either disarmament or Europe.¹¹⁶ Because Molotov, Malenkov and others had finally been removed from power, the JIC thought that Khrushchev would rely more on the backing of the Marshals and their tougher policies. Furthermore, the First Secretary’s “impulsiveness” would now be unchecked by the Praesidium. The Foreign Secretary was somewhat at odds with this view though, since he told the Cabinet these moves “marked the elimination of the more reactionary forces”.¹¹⁷ He did agree, however, that these changes did not mean greater stability in the Kremlin regime.

As the JIC was expressing their view that disarmament was unlikely to move forward, potentially contradictory reports were being received that GSFG units were being withdrawn.¹¹⁸ Given this, the impending elections in West Germany and Khrushchev’s visit to the GDR planned for August, the JIC quickly produced an

¹¹⁴ CAB179/2, WRCI week ending 21 March 1957

¹¹⁵ CAB158/28, JIC(57)30(Final)(Revise), 27 May 1957

¹¹⁶ CAB179/2, WRCI week ending 11 July 1957

¹¹⁷ CAB128/31, CC(57)50th Conclusions, 9 July 1957

¹¹⁸ CAB159/27, JIC(57)62nd meeting, 11 July 1957

assessment of likely courses of Soviet action in Germany.¹¹⁹ The Committee preferred to see the changes within the GSFG as a reorganisation rather than disarmament; whilst some units were certainly leaving, this was “unlikely to diminish the military capability of GSFG”.¹²⁰ The introduction of tactical nuclear weapons to Germany was also predicted. The Committee fully expected the Russians to make maximum propaganda value from presenting the West with what they could claim was unilateral disarmament. Furthermore, the Soviets were likely to “blacken the record of the Federal Government in handling Russo-German relations”, without making any new serious proposals on solving the German question themselves, in a bid to prevent the re-election of Adenauer. The JIC thought that during Khrushchev and Bulganin’s visit to Berlin all efforts would be made to avoid undermining the credibility of the SED, so new concessions to the West were unlikely. East German proposals announced just before the trip included no surprises, suggesting an all-German council without free elections.¹²¹

Weekly intelligence reviews during August were full of analysis regarding the Soviet-GDR talks taking place in Berlin, but ultimately they reported nothing worrying or unexpected. East German boasting about the advent of Federal Union between the Soviet Union and the Satellites as a counter-balance to the Common Market in Western Europe was dismissed by the JIC as highly improbable self-deception.¹²² The final communiqué reiterated a “familiar Soviet position” on reunification, some new trade agreements and a promise of party unity.¹²³ The JIC concluded that the visit had, in fact, been more of an attempt to reassure the GDR government that recent changes in the Kremlin had not altered the direction of the USSR-GDR relations, rather than a bid to influence West German elections.

A JIC assessment examined the “Political outlook in the Federal German Republic” a month before the Federal elections, in an attempt to forecast trends that

¹¹⁹ CAB158/29. JIC(57)79(Final) “The likely course of Soviet policy towards Germany, as a whole, over the next few years”, 1 August 1957

¹²⁰ See later for details of the reorganisation

¹²¹ CAB179/3, WRCI week ending 1 August 1957

¹²² CAB179/3, WRCI week ending 8 August 1957

¹²³ CAB179/3, WRCI week ending 22 August 1957

would be seen after the event.¹²⁴ The Committee described their efforts as merely “a sketch [of] the various possible directions which German policy may take.” They concluded that there was a “good chance” that Adenauer would be able to form a third government, which would continue the policies of the previous eight years. If the elections forced a coalition, the JIC preferred to see a CDU dominated alliance rather than an SPD one, since they feared without Adenauer more “pressure for nationalism and neutralism” and a weaker Western position in reunification negotiations with the Russians would arise. The JIC realised that the Chancellor’s problem had been convincing the German voters that his strong alliance with the West was consistent with the aim of reunification. Some of the domestic opposition to remilitarisation had evaporated with the West German government’s decision to progress at a slower rate using fewer conscripts but there had been greater than anticipated resistance to suggestions of stationing nuclear weapons in Germany. The economy remained Adenauer’s strongest point, however, and the assessment suggested that economic prosperity would trump foreign policy criticism at the polls.

After a “resounding victory” for Adenauer in the September Federal elections, the JIC began to report a consistent pattern of events through to the end of the year: occasional Soviet notes and offers over the future of Germany, combined with increasingly testing events in Berlin.¹²⁵ Initially, after East German authorities had caused trouble about freight cars being attached to Allied trains, the JIC thought “there is at present no reason to suppose that this is the first step in a campaign to harass Allied communications with Berlin”.¹²⁶ By November, the Committee suggested “the situation... needs watching”.¹²⁷ The East-West Berlin border had been temporarily sealed during Eastern currency reform¹²⁸; after discovering propaganda material on board Allied trains, the Russians refused to allow mail vans in Allied trains; and Soviet authorities had made requests for clearance for East German aircraft to use one of the air

¹²⁴ CAB158/28, JIC(57)34(Final), 15 August 1957

¹²⁵ Of 497 Bundestag seats, the CDU won 270, the SPD 169 and others 58. CAB179/3, WRCIs weeks ending 19 September 1957; 12 November 1957; 17 December 1957

¹²⁶ CAB179/3, WRCI week ending 26 September 1957

¹²⁷ CAB179/3, WRCI week ending 5 November 1957

¹²⁸ Individuals were limited to banknotes worth 300 Ostmarks each.

corridors. The JIC warned, “although none of these incidents is in itself serious, any one of them could be used by the Russians, if they so wished, as a first step towards undermining the Allied position in Berlin”. The Committee believed the GDR government was certainly on a campaign to assert their “air sovereignty”.¹²⁹

Border controls between the two parts of Berlin did not return to normal after the currency reforms had been carried out, so rumours continued to spread that the GDR was going to introduce permanent control measures.¹³⁰ The CIA had evidence that temporary U-bahn stations were being set up just inside the Eastern sector of the city, which they thought suggested either some sort of customs barrier or permanent restriction on train travel between sectors.¹³¹ The JIC recognised that border controls remained tighter than before, but they concluded that there were “no indications that the East Germans intend to introduce more drastic controls in the near future”.¹³² Whilst there had been some attempts by the Russians to refer Allied requests to the GDR authorities concerning visas and flights, the Committee did not believe the Russians were ready for a show-down over the Allied position in Berlin. The Americans saw inconsistency in Soviet action, given the contrast between tight controls over the East Germans to prevent them violating Four Power agreement, but at the same time granting them limited freedom of action to interfere with the Allies in some ways.¹³³ The CIA saw all these events as probing for weakness.

The whole picture was made clearer, when the JIC reported in their last summary of the year that East German authorities had issued instructions that as of 1 January 1958, all Western travellers, excluding those members of the Allied garrisons, would have to obtain East German visas.¹³⁴ According to the Committee, such measures did not infringe rights established under the Four Power agreements, nor would their impact be a problem given the small number of people who fell outside the exception.

¹²⁹ CAB179/3, WRCI week ending 12 November 1957

¹³⁰ CAB179/3, WRCI week ending 19 November 1957

¹³¹ CAB159/28, JIC(57)99th meeting, 21 November 1957

¹³² CAB179/3, WRCI week ending 10 December 1957

¹³³ CAB159/28, JIC(57)104th meeting, 12 December 1957

¹³⁴ CAB179/3, WRCI week ending 31 December 1957

Nevertheless, it was clear that events in Berlin were beginning to move at a quicker pace than at any time since 1949.

Military assessments and disarmament

Observations of the Soviet forces in Europe as well as the developing East German indigenous army were given a slightly different focus during the events during and after the Geneva negotiations. The JIC was given a role to play in the ongoing international discussion about disarmament, assessing Soviet proposals for veracity as well as potential impact on military strength. Although such military intelligence was a relative strength at the time for British intelligence, achieving the level of accuracy required for meaningful reporting was a stern test.

In the first half of 1955, the JIC kept particular watch on the Soviet and East German forces for any military response to the signature of the Paris Agreements. All immediate indicators proved negative, however, with no increases of garrisons or training reported.¹³⁵ The JIC did report that East German industry appeared to be under development to cope with the demands of supporting an enlarged Army, in line with threats made by the GDR government.¹³⁶ The East Germans also announced an intensification of military training along with the formation of volunteer defence units of factory workers.¹³⁷ The JIC's overall assessment of the KVP's capability remained as low as it had for the previous years, however.¹³⁸ Recruitment appeared to be ineffective, although the introduction of conscription could have brought in up to 80,000 men a year, allowing the Army to grow from 86,000 to 326,000 strong over three years. Even then, the JIC believed the memories of the 1953 riots would mean the Soviets were unlikely to

¹³⁵ CAB158/19, JIC(55)8/4, 27 January 1955

¹³⁶ CAB159/18, JIC(55)12th meeting, 3 February 1955

¹³⁷ CAB158/19, JIC(55)8/14, 31 March 1955

¹³⁸ CAB176/52, JIC/235/55 "Formation of an East German National Army", 24 January 1955

give the East German forces any significant role in wartime. The CIA believed the KVP was even more poorly equipped than the British did.¹³⁹

A revised list of indicators of Soviet preparations for war was issued in February, with its characteristic “Red” and “Amber” categories.¹⁴⁰ As before, the redeployment and dispersal of air and ground forces in Eastern Germany were considered to be “essential preparations” for war. The reinforcement of GSFG units was in the lesser, “Amber” category. The introduction of MiG-17 fighters¹⁴¹ and large numbers of T54 tanks¹⁴² into East Germany in May did not cause undue alarm, since the JIC believed it to be part of the upgrading process rather than preparations for an attack.¹⁴³ By September, reports of normal annual training patterns had confirmed the lack of an immediate threat to the West.¹⁴⁴ At that time, the JIC estimated the GSFG to be 470,000 men strong and therefore not reduced in strength as the Soviet government had announced.¹⁴⁵

Assessments of forces in 1956 were dominated by the question of disarmament. The year began with the dissolution of the KVP and the formation of an East German Army (NVA), set to grow to 170,000 men, under the control of a new Ministry of Defence.¹⁴⁶ By July, however, the JIC reported announcements stating the Army would be reduced to only 90,000 men.¹⁴⁷ The Committee believed the underlying cause had been the Army’s inability to recruit enough volunteers to reach their initial aim, even though the announcements had hailed the move as a grand gesture of peace. In fact, intelligence reports suggested that the strength of the NVA was around 90,000, making the whole thing nothing more than hot air.

¹³⁹ CAB159/18, JIC(55)22nd meeting, 10 March 1955

¹⁴⁰ CAB158/19, JIC(55)9(Final) “Indications of preparations to bring operational units and facilities to immediate readiness for war”, 3 February 1955

¹⁴¹ In service from 1952, the MiG-17 was quicker and more manoeuvrable than the earlier MiG-15.

¹⁴² In service from 1949, the T54 had more firepower and better armour than the earlier T34.

¹⁴³ CAB158/19, JIC(55)8/15, 6 April 1955; JIC(55)8/20, 12 May 1955

¹⁴⁴ JIC(55)1/9

¹⁴⁵ CAB158/19, JIC(55)2/9 “Periodic intelligence summary for NATO commands – order of battle”, 21 Sept 1955; CAB158/22 JIC(55)73(Final) “Six-monthly intelligence digest for Ministry of Supply – period mid-May to mid-November 1955”, 8 December 1955

¹⁴⁶ CAB159/22, JIC(56)19th meeting, 23 February 1955

¹⁴⁷ CAB179/1, WRCI week ending 5 July 1956

The JIC took Soviet announcements more seriously. In May, the Kremlin proposed the demobilisation of 1.2 million men, reducing the Soviet Armed Forces by 25 percent over twelve months.¹⁴⁸ This included a drop in strength of the GSFG by 30,000. Reports of reorganisation in East Germany were already coming in, as well as indicators that initial assessments had been wrong, and that the GSFG had lost 20,000 men from border guard units during 1955. Any real weakening of the main order of battle was expected to be “noticeable”, however. By the first week of June, the JIC reported that it was possible 8,000 had left in May.¹⁴⁹ BRIXMIS attended departure ceremonies for some further units in mid-June and reported that not only had fewer men departed than first suggested – only 7,000, including families – but also it appeared that only Air Force units had been so far affected.¹⁵⁰ The might of GSFG had not yet been reduced, particularly given that more powerful weapons had been introduced at the same time.¹⁵¹

In July, the JIC carried out a study of how the reductions would affect the GSFG’s potential if they were carried out as announced.¹⁵² Firstly, they noted that the units so far affected had been reduced as part of the reorganisation and furthermore, these were not line divisions. A loss of 30,000, the JIC concluded, would “not significantly affect the fighting power of GSFG” because under the re-equipment programme taking place, the front line forces had “increased mobility and fire power” and were better equipped for nuclear warfare. In fact, the Committee warned that “the Soviet Land Forces in East Germany are today more powerful than at any time since 1946.” New, more sophisticated aircraft had been seen in East Germany too, indicating increased air power in both the Soviet and East German air forces.¹⁵³

¹⁴⁸ 4,750,000 to 3,550,000 men. CAB159/23, JIC(56)46th meeting, 17 May 1956

¹⁴⁹ CAB179/2, WRCI week ending 7 June 1956

¹⁵⁰ CAB179/2, WRCI week ending 27 June 1956

¹⁵¹ CAB158/25, JIC(56)63 “Six monthly intelligence digest for the Ministry of Supply”, 2 July 1956

¹⁵² CAB158/25, JIC(56)68(Final) “The potential of the Group of Soviet Forces in Germany in the light of announced reductions in Soviet armed forces”, 19 July 1956

¹⁵³ CAB179/1, WRCIs weeks ending 2 August 1956; 9 August 1956; 16 August 1956

The weekly summaries for the second half of 1956 suggest a good deal of confusion within the JIC over the exact strength of Soviet and East German forces. It seems likely that the sorts of detailed intelligence required to report accurately the movements in and out of Eastern Germany was not available. BRIXMIS witnessed more withdrawal ceremonies of air units in August and there were occasional East German press and rail-watching reports, but this was not sufficient evidence for precise reporting.¹⁵⁴ By September, the JIC wrote that the reductions in the GSFG were “probably taking place”, but they had no knowledge of forces inside the Soviet Union.¹⁵⁵ They were more certain that normal annual training, although on a smaller scale, and trooping were taking place.¹⁵⁶ In their last submission to NATO for 1956, the JIC put GSFG strength at 470,000, showing no drop at all from 1955, despite all of their earlier conclusions.¹⁵⁷

In early 1957, the JIC reported that normal winter exercises had taken place in East Germany, despite the problems caused by events in Hungary and Poland.¹⁵⁸ They also reaffirmed their conclusion that there had been no drop in strength from twenty two line divisions in the GSFG, such that Soviet forces could launch a westwards offensive without requiring reinforcements.¹⁵⁹ The crises within the Satellites had, however, reduced the value of the Hungarian, Polish and East German armies, so they had “no offensive value” and were even “of doubtful reliability for lines of communication duties”.¹⁶⁰ The GSFG had proved itself in the eyes of the JIC, however, during November 1956, because the forces had demonstrated their ability to “meet an unexpected eventuality with a high degree of readiness, mobility and efficiency.”¹⁶¹

¹⁵⁴ CAB179/1, WRCI week ending 23 August 1956

¹⁵⁵ CAB158/25, JIC(56)75(Final) “The announced reductions in the Soviet armed forces and the extent of their implementation”, 13 September 1956

¹⁵⁶ CAB179/1, WRCIs weeks ending 13 September 1956; 20 September 1956; 11 October 1956; CAB158/23 JIC(56)1/9 “Periodic intelligence summary for NATO commands – General”, 24 September 1956

¹⁵⁷ CAB158/23, JIC(56)2/9, “Periodic intelligence summary for NATO commands – order of battle”, 24 September 1956

¹⁵⁸ CAB179/2, WRCI week ending 7 February 1957

¹⁵⁹ CAB158/27, JIC(57)3(Final) “Sino-Soviet bloc war potential 1957-61”, 15 February 1957

¹⁶⁰ CAB158/27, JIC(57)5(Final) “Employment of the Soviet armed forces in Land Campaigns in the event of Global War, 1957-61”, 15 February 1957

¹⁶¹ CAB158/27, JIC(57)1/8 “Periodic intelligence summary for NATO commands”, 21 September 1957

By March, enough evidence concerning the development of the NVA was available for the JIC to make predictions about its final shape.¹⁶² They expected a final structure of two tank and five motorised infantry divisions. Attempts by BRIXMIS to observe NVA training had been frustrated though, so assessments of their standard were more difficult to make.¹⁶³ East German press reports made it clear that a great deal of emphasis was being placed on internal security duties, including within volunteer militia units.¹⁶⁴

The reorganisation of GSFG continued to appear in JIC weekly reports, right through 1957. The exact nature of the changes was still unknown in May, although assessments of force strength were finally reduced to 384,000 that summer.¹⁶⁵ Furthermore, the disruption to Soviet forces had been so great that the JIC believed the standard of training and operational capability of the GSFG had been reduced in the first months of the year.¹⁶⁶ CIA information roughly agreed with British intelligence, suggesting that rifle armies were being converted into mechanised armies, but the Americans too could not be sure.¹⁶⁷ By September, JIC weekly summaries were showing that GSFG training was back up to the usual level, involving many divisions in major exercises.¹⁶⁸ The late commencement of annual trooping caused some concern, because it meant a month with an extra 150,000 men in the Russian forces, but that was soon dispelled.¹⁶⁹ By the end of 1957, one concern did remain for the JIC and that was that the re-equipment programme within the GSFG left Soviet forces armed with weapons “markedly superior to that of Western forces in Europe.”¹⁷⁰ This, combined with the return to high training standards, made the GSFG an even greater opponent than before.

¹⁶² CAB179/2, WRCI week ending 7 March 1957

¹⁶³ CAB179/2, WRCI week ending 14 March 1957

¹⁶⁴ CAB179/2, WRCI week ending 17 April 1957

¹⁶⁵ CAB179/2, WRCI week ending 30 May 1957; CAB158/29, JIC(57)53(Final) “Military and economic strength of the Soviet Union”, 8 July 1957

¹⁶⁶ CAB179/3, WRCI week ending 25 July 1957

¹⁶⁷ CAB159/27, JIC(57)68th meeting, 25 July 1957

¹⁶⁸ CAB179/3, WRCI week ending 19 September 1957

¹⁶⁹ CAB179/3, WRCIs weeks ending 12 November 1957; 19 November 1957

¹⁷⁰ CAB179/3, WRCI week ending 26 November 1957

Moving intelligence closer to the centre

British intelligence developed a great deal during the first ten years of the Cold War. There was no other choice: at home and abroad every part of the machinery had to adapt to a new threat. Following on from Evill's report in 1947, scientific and technical intelligence was given a higher priority; recognition of the increasing significance of high technology to war-fighting power.¹⁷¹ The Security Service had been trying to get to grips with Communist penetration.¹⁷² GCHQ had gone from the successes of ULTRA to scraps of VENONA and peripheral military intelligence.¹⁷³ SIS had probably changed the least, despite some attempts at internal reorganisation, and they had certainly had very little success in gathering top-flight intelligence on the Soviet threat, thanks to the penetration of both their service and agent-networks.¹⁷⁴ Under the chairmanships of Hayter, Reilly and Dean, the JIC had adapted to managing their corner of the Cold War, but more importantly they had overseen the gradual rise in the Committee's stock within Whitehall. That the Committee had grown in significance within the government without any great amount of intelligence compared with wartime is testament to these shrewd bureaucratic magicians.

During the three year period from 1955 to 1957, the modern JIC was founded, in a form that with only one further moment of reorganisation in 1968, lasted well past the end of the Cold War.¹⁷⁵ The crux of this change was the move from under the Chiefs of Staff to the Cabinet Office.¹⁷⁶ This explicitly changed the *raison d'être* of the JIC from producing studies on "defence intelligence and security" for Britain's top military committee to serving the Cabinet on "intelligence and defence security". As the JIC had been distributing its material more widely than the Chiefs for some time, the significance lies within the recognition that intelligence had become something that

¹⁷¹ See above

¹⁷² Hennessy, *Secret State*, pp.77-100

¹⁷³ Aldrich, *Hidden Hand*, pp.249-251

¹⁷⁴ Davies, *MI6*, pp.175-235

¹⁷⁵ In 1968, the Cabinet Office Assessments Staff, the Intelligence Co-ordinator function and the short-lived JIC(B) economic intelligence committee were introduced. Cradock, *Know Your Enemy*, pp.265-267

¹⁷⁶ CAB158/28, JIC(57)40 "Joint Organisation for Intelligence", 5 April 1957

needed to permanently serve the highest committee in British government. Furthermore, the move licensed the JIC to produce political and economic as well as military assessments.

The lead-up to the 1957 move began two years earlier. In August 1955, a new JIC charter was suggested that recognised the wider scope of assessments being produced beyond merely those matters of particular defence interest.¹⁷⁷ The Committee's role as manager of the whole intelligence community remained the same. The membership was enlarged, giving the Colonial Office a permanent seat and the Commonwealth Relations Office (CRO) access to all papers and observer status at any full meetings they wished to attend.¹⁷⁸ The CRO was later made a full member in 1956.¹⁷⁹ Earlier in 1955, the alert procedure had also been re-vamped, making the system for dealing with current intelligence more regular.¹⁸⁰ Urgent intelligence indicating Soviet preparations for war was assessed immediately by the Heads of Sections, whether in or out of office hours. In times of increased tension, the Heads of Sections would be in permanent session.

The difficulties of presenting new and unexpected intelligence to the most senior readers were highlighted in July 1955, when Eden showed his irritation with JIC reporting. A report had unwisely noted that the numbers of all-weather fighters seen rehearsing for the Soviet Air Force Day had "come as a shock to the Air Ministry".¹⁸¹ The speed with which the Russians had produced these aircraft was "a surprise". Upon reading the assessment, Eden scrawled across it a terse note to the Minister of Defence: "No doubt you have seen this. It adds to my concern. I never like to read of Departments being surprised. It is their job not to be."

¹⁷⁷ CAB158/21, JIC(55)57(Final) "Charter for the Joint Intelligence Organisation", 26 August 1955

¹⁷⁸ CAB158/22, JIC(55)74 "Charter for the Joint Intelligence Committee", 16 November 1955

¹⁷⁹ CAB158/25, JIC(56)71 "Charter for the Joint Intelligence Committee", 14 June 1956

¹⁸⁰ CAB158/20, JIC(55)24 "Evaluation of indicators of Soviet preparations for early war", 22 February 1955

¹⁸¹ PREM11/1017, WSCI "Russian Air Force", 1 July 1955

Given Eden's view, it mattered even more whether British intelligence was well-placed to collect information on a Soviet attack to avoid the most critical surprise. In mid-1956, the JIC "expected to learn" of active preparations for war.¹⁸² They admitted, however, that there was "virtually no chance" of intercepting the communication of a decision to attack, so it was down to interpreting military moves. In the case of a surprise attack therefore, the JIC did not expect to obtain any forewarning: "the detection of those [attacking] aircraft on Allied radar screens would be the only warning... in the case of ballistic missiles, there would be no warning". Away from the very extreme edge of current intelligence, the Committee felt that collection had improved. Increased levels of overt and covert sources had improved knowledge of Russian scientific research and development.¹⁸³ Whilst the supply of German scientists returning to their homes after working on Russian guided weapons had virtually dried up, increased openness in the Kremlin's attitudes to scientific knowledge had filled the gap. STIB in Germany was relocated back to the JIB in London to help with the analysis of this information.

In February and March 1956, the Committee introduced a new format for presenting their weekly intelligence product. They decided that the weekly review was of "limited value".¹⁸⁴ The intention behind these summaries when they were first introduced in 1954 was to both give the Committee and their senior customers the chance to see weekly developments and emerging trends. The Committee agreed, however, that the practice of viewing intelligence in isolation each week had evolved and very little attention was paid to the question of trends. The solution that emerged was a three stage process: the Heads of Section would produce a document for the JIC's consideration and after the Committee's discussion two further papers would then be produced, one highly classified with a very limited distribution and the other "an expurgated version" for wider circulation.¹⁸⁵ These became known respectively as the "Weekly Survey of Intelligence" (WSI or "Red Book") and the "Weekly Review of

¹⁸² CAB158/24, JIC(56)21(Final) "Likelihood of global war and warning of attack", 1 May 1956

¹⁸³ CAB158/24, JIC(56)32(Final) "Russian research and development up to the end of 1955", 11 May 1956

¹⁸⁴ CAB159/22, JIC(56)19th meeting, 23 February 1956

¹⁸⁵ For more on Heads of Section meetings, see Cradock, *Know Your Enemy*, p.263

Current Intelligence” (WRCI or “Grey Book”).¹⁸⁶ The Red Book was supposed to be forward-looking and concise, but with factual content for the most senior few readers. A Weekly Situation Review for NATO Commands was also developed.¹⁸⁷ New paper and printing was also required to improve the look and feel of the documents. The introduction of the WSI was also used as a tool by Dean to help end the flow of weekly SIS “CX” reports to the Prime Minister on the grounds that a properly assessed, all-source digest would be more useful than a single service’s view.¹⁸⁸ This did not infringe on SIS’s right to send individual reports to Number 10, however, or indeed on C’s right of access.

The Chairman began the discussions about a large overhaul of the JIC in 1957.¹⁸⁹ Intelligence was now “of national concern spread over the political, economic and military fields between which there was seldom a clear-cut dividing line.”¹⁹⁰ The argument against making any further changes to the JIC was that procedures for producing political intelligence reports through ad hoc committees seemed to be working. This did not satisfy the Committee, however, because they believed they should be reporting to a wider “range of authorities”. The JIC wanted to reorganise so that their assessments would “make a greater impact where they would have most effect, i.e. on Ministers”. Dean put the argument in stark terms: “the Joint Intelligence Committee must either go forward or go back.” The proposal was that the JIC would come under the Cabinet Office, bringing the Secretariat and Staff with it, to produce reports to be circulated as Cabinet Office papers. It was hoped this would open up the interest in the JIC process to civilian departments and even prompt Ministers to commission assessments. Two unavowed, but significant aspects of the proposed move addressed recent problems: firstly, a stronger centre could exercise more control over the post-Crabb SIS; and secondly, after Burgess, Maclean, Philby and Suez, the British

¹⁸⁶ CAB159/22, JIC(56)24th meeting, 8 March 1956. This “Red Book” should not be confused with the “Red Book” which was the SIS document listing intelligence targets and their priorities.

¹⁸⁷ Cradock, *Know Your Enemy*, p.263

¹⁸⁸ PREM11/2082, Dean to Freddie Bishop, 10 August 1957

¹⁸⁹ CAB159/26, JIC(57)13th meeting, 7 February 1957

¹⁹⁰ CAB159/26, JIC(57)21st meeting, 26 February 1957

intelligence community needed to demonstrate change to win back American friends.¹⁹¹ The latter aim fitted perfectly into Macmillan's considerable efforts as Prime Minister to rebuild the UK-US relationship following Suez.¹⁹²

A short submission to the Chiefs and Ministers outlined the Committee's vision.¹⁹³ Macmillan quickly gave his approval.¹⁹⁴ Discussions within the JIC about implementing the plan and striking the right civilian-military balance within the new Staff and Secretariat were heated. Everyone was agreed, however, that high calibre people were needed under a very good Deputy Secretary "Editor-in-Chief" to produce the quality of reports the Committee hoped for. Raw intelligence was to be kept out of the weekly assessments wherever possible; references to earlier intelligence should be made when necessary to help foster continuity from one week to the next; and the Heads of Sections' drafts should only describe trends once they had become apparent, rather than attempting prediction.¹⁹⁵ The JIC decided that they "when appropriate, should venture a forward-looking view".

The transfer to the Cabinet Office took effect from 14 October 1957.¹⁹⁶ As a consequence of this boost to the JIC, the Foreign Office concluded that its Russia Committee was no longer required.¹⁹⁷ Hayter wrote the paper drawing their body to a close, commenting that the JIC was now "in a position to cover a wider field than in the past, including most of the subjects hitherto handled by the Russia Committee." Some of the papers, such as the "Trends of Communist Policy" continued, but as the responsibility of the FO's Northern Department. However, any special studies on Soviet bloc affairs would now be prepared by the JIC. As part of the process of psychologically cementing the new position of Joint Intelligence within the minds of Whitehall, the JIC produced a brief history on the subject, from its earliest conception in

¹⁹¹ Davies, *MI6*, pp.258-260; Cradock, *Know Your Enemy*, pp.128-9

¹⁹² Greenwood, *Britain and the Cold War*, p.141

¹⁹³ JIC(57)40

¹⁹⁴ CAB159/27, JIC(57)65th meeting, 18 July 1957

¹⁹⁵ CAB159/28, JIC(57)85th meeting, 3 October 1957

¹⁹⁶ CAB158/30, JIC(57)101 "Terms of reference for the Joint Intelligence Committee", 1 October 1957

¹⁹⁷ FO371/128994, NS 1022/16 "Russia Committee", 29 August 1957

1936 through to its rise to the pinnacle in 1957.¹⁹⁸ After three pages of history, the paper included seven pages explaining the new responsibilities and structure of the JIC. In November, the Cabinet were informed about the new services at their disposal.¹⁹⁹

The opportunity to improve the intelligence alert system was taken during the 1957 move. The Prime Minister and President Eisenhower had agreed during their Bermuda meeting in March that “an effective machinery should be established for the rapid exchange of intelligence between the Governments of the United States, Canada and the United Kingdom on any sudden threat of Soviet aggression”.²⁰⁰ The Tripartite Alert Procedure was developed by the JIC in consultation with their American and Canadian counterparts.²⁰¹ New communications links were established to cope with the requirements of rapid exchange of information.²⁰² The JIC was also forced to review its procedures in response to alerts, because both the Americans and Canadians believed they could assemble their teams of intelligence assessors within an hour. As a consequence, the British developed a system of nominated officers, allocated rooms and rules that was designed to deal with every possible scenario, from day to day routine through to sudden attack in the middle of the night.²⁰³

Conclusions

There is a great temptation for historians to over-emphasise given moments in their narrative. There is little doubt, nonetheless, that the 1957 reorganisation of the central intelligence machinery was of great significance within the development of the JIC. Cradock describes 1956 as “a low point in the history of responsible government”, so it seems that Dean’s drive to inject the JIC with extra power in 1957 was certainly

¹⁹⁸ CAB158/30, JIC(57)123 “History of the Joint Intelligence Organisation”, 29 November 1957

¹⁹⁹ CAB128/31, CC(57)82nd Conclusions, 28 November 1957

²⁰⁰ PREM11/1836, Macmillan to Eisenhower “Note on subjects mentioned”, 22 March 1957. Macmillan also agreed at this time to operational U2 flights, codenamed AQUATONE, from British bases.

²⁰¹ CAB159/27, JIC(57)40th meeting, 25 April 1957

²⁰² CAB159/28, JIC(57)88th meeting, 10 October 1957

²⁰³ CAB158/29, JIC(57)76(Final) “Notes on JIC operational procedure”, 18 November 1957

well timed.²⁰⁴ This was an administrative reorganisation, which gave the JIC more opportunity to influence policy-making and better defined procedures for dealing with emergencies. There was no great new influx of intelligence, the essential raw material from which the assessments were derived. This move to the Cabinet Office left the JIC with greater potential: they were better placed to make good use of intelligence, so that when collection improved, the Committee had the right audience for its assessments.

In some ways, during the Geneva Conferences, the JIC performed a role similar to that of 1947-9 when the Committee supported the CFM delegations. The JIC did not have any better specific insights into Soviet German policy and disarmament in 1955-7, than they did in the earlier years, but at least lesser intelligence and Cold War experience had been accumulating over time. Intelligence on the GSFG had built up over years, but the JIC still struggled with precise interpretation. In their attempts to make sense of post-Hungary Soviet bloc integrity, the Committee quite accurately predicted Soviet policy combining liberalisation and control. Despite the reduced tension of peaceful coexistence, the JIC often presented a view of the Cold War world without much hope of improvement. They settled on a generally pessimistic view of Khrushchev, using his actions as a guide in the absence of intelligence. The JIC understood Soviet attempts to boost the GDR and the impossibility of German reunification. They discounted the possibility of genuine disarmament. Soviet forces always seemed to be getting stronger. Using Dean's 1954 description of the role of the JIC, the background provided by intelligence for policy-making was grim.

²⁰⁴ Cradock, *Know Your Enemy*, p.134

Chapter Five: 1958 – 1961

A wall or a war?

I do not see how we can have a world war or take action which endangers peace on a point of this kind [whether the signature on passes granting access to Berlin was East German or Russian]... You can have a war about facts – about whether you are prevented from going to a play, but not about whether you buy a ticket from the theatre or from Keith Prowse.

- Harold Macmillan, 5 January 1959¹

The events of 13 August [the closing of the borders between East and West Berlin] were unexpected for the West... This is, without question, a defeat for Western intelligence.

- Erich Honecker, 18 September 1961²

A well-known story

There is already a great deal of useful published research that covers the events of the second Berlin crisis (1958-61).³ This comes as no surprise since, bundled with the Cuban Missile Crisis of 1962, the period marks the high point of tension during the early Cold War. Many of the intelligence aspects of 1958-61 have also been well described: Cradock has examined the JIC's perspective⁴; Maddrell has revealed how Western agencies prepared their agents for the closure of the Berlin border⁵; and Murphy *et al* have written up both the CIA's and KGB's appreciations of events⁶. The pre-existence of these works begs the question, what more is there to say about British policy, intelligence and Berlin?

¹ PREM11/2715, Note by Macmillan, 5 January 1959. Keith Prowse was a ticket agent.

² Quoted in Harrison, Hope M., *Driving the Soviets*, p.208

³ Harrison, *Driving the Soviets up the Wall* makes use of Russian and East German archives. Gearson, John P.S., *Harold Macmillan and the Berlin Wall* (London: Macmillan, 1998) tells the story from a British perspective. Beschloss, Michael R., *Kennedy and Khrushchev: The Crisis Years, 1960-1963* (London: Faber, 1991) provides an account of the superpower conflict.

⁴ Cradock, *Know Your Enemy*, pp.135-160

⁵ Maddrell, *Spying on Science*, pp.236-270

⁶ Murphy *et al*, *Battleground Berlin*, pp.305-395

There is value in tying together the general political with the specific intelligence history. This was the aim behind Cradock's work.⁷ For his chapter on Berlin 1958-61, Cradock analyses four of the significant JIC assessments written during the crisis, drawing them together with Macmillan's policies.⁸ One of his conclusions, echoing Erich Honecker, was that when the GDR sealed the Berlin border on 13 August 1961, they "achieved tactical surprise", even though the Western powers – and their intelligence machines – had long been aware that this was a possible outcome of the crisis.⁹ Through the use of the most recently-available archives, Maddrell and Harrison have both supported this assessment.¹⁰

The more interesting and independent of Cradock's findings was that there was little connection between JIC analysis of Soviet intentions regarding Berlin and Macmillan's "showy and ultimately ineffective" policies.¹¹ For Cradock, "the links between this showmanship and sober intelligence estimates were probably not very strong". Whilst the JIC assessments were "generally sound", the policies,

reflect[ed] the ambitions, fears and prejudices of one highly complex individual: the inflated view of Britain's position and influence; the over-fearful estimate of Khrushchev; at the same time the over-optimistic estimate of the chances of reaching a general settlement with him on tolerable terms; the strong Atlanticist bias; and the belated and in the end still incomplete conversion to Europe.

Cradock's evidence for this judgement was that "facing the same facts and reading similar estimates and predictions, the Americans drew different and rather sounder conclusions."

As described later, Cradock's tough appraisal of the relationship between intelligence and policy is difficult to contradict. It is perhaps unsurprising, even

⁷ Cradock, *Know Your Enemy*, p.1

⁸ JIC(59)17 "An assessment of Soviet policy regarding Berlin"; JIC(60)49 "Soviet intentions in the second half of 1960"; JIC(60)40 "Soviet and East German reactions to military measures foreseen in Berlin contingency planning"; JIC(61)42 "Soviet aims and intentions in Berlin"

⁹ Cradock, *Know Your Enemy*, p.156

¹⁰ Maddrell, *Spying on Science*, p.237; Harrison, *Driving the Soviets*, p.207

¹¹ Cradock, *Know Your Enemy*, p.160

understandable, that as tension mounted, leaders came to rely more on their basic tools of political instinct, combining hopeful vision and haunting memories, rather than on the crafted words of intelligence assessment: to do so is to be human. Cradock's view of the Prime Minister's policies, however, is not so inevitable, although the likes of Selwyn Lloyd held similar views.¹² The purpose of this research is not to judge specifically the merits of Macmillan's actions, but other historians have since, and some individuals at the time, viewed Macmillan's role in encouraging negotiation with the Russians in a more positive light, recognising that the final, successful Western approach to pressure on Berlin arose from the mix of inputs.¹³

There are more JIC papers on Berlin in the archive than the four Cradock used. Furthermore, there are the papers released since the publication of *Know Your Enemy*, including the minutes of Committee meetings as well as the WRCIs. Unfortunately this latter category is missing the 1960-1 papers since they were not kept by the Cabinet Office.¹⁴ It is worth exploring these extra documents to complete the existing research, focusing on the main questions of whether British intelligence was caught out on 13 August 1961 and whether the JIC did contribute to the formulation of the government's policies.

There are secondary questions, largely unexplored in any of the published research, that need addressing. For example, what role did the Committee have in contingency planning? As part of the story of the development of British intelligence, how did the JIC perform during 1958-61 relative to its performance in the 1948-9 blockade and 1953 riots? Had the feed of raw intelligence improved enough to make a difference to the quality of the assessments? How did the mechanics of the central intelligence apparatus perform during the prolonged crisis? Had the move from the Chiefs of Staff to the Cabinet Office had any noticeable effect on the Committee?

¹² Greenwood, *Britain and the Cold War*, p.151

¹³ Gaddis, *We Now Know*, pp.141-2; Harrison, *Driving the Soviets*, p.118; Horne, Alistair, *Macmillan 1957-1986: Volume II of the Official Biography* (London: Macmillan, 1989), pp.127-9

¹⁴ See note attached to the front of the 1962 WRCI file, CAB 179/8

The documents also expose more about the complex relationship between intelligence, events and politics. The oversight of both operations and internal security had come under extreme scrutiny, both public and private, as a result of revelations regarding the Berlin spy tunnel, the Crabb affair and the Cambridge spies. More than ever before, intelligence had moved away from being part of the unseen network of support for policy-making to a source of public, political pressure on the government. The shooting down of Gary Powers' U2 on 1 May 1960 and the consequent abandonment of the Summit meeting in Paris, was an extreme acceleration of this role for intelligence as part of international politics.¹⁵ When an RB-47 carrying out an elint "ferret" flight was shot down over the Barents Sea, on 1 July 1960, intelligence was once again reaffirmed as a source of tension rather than information.¹⁶

The JIC had its role to play in the governance of risky intelligence operations. Britain had been involved in either border, shallow or deep penetration flights of the Soviet bloc since 1948, for the purposes of gathering photo reconnaissance (PR), elint and communications intelligence (comint).¹⁷ As technology improved, so too did the British aerial campaign.¹⁸ Macmillan had given his permission for CIA U2s to fly from British bases in 1957, but by 1958 a small number of British pilots were being trained to fly missions themselves.¹⁹ Over-flights required senior ministerial, often Prime Ministerial, approval and the JIC was the conduit through which permission was sought. Improvements in Soviet air defence and the tension over Berlin did, ironically, reduce the number of U2 flights undertaken.²⁰ There was pressure to carry out other aerial surveillance, however, including from BRIXMIS in Berlin.²¹ Only Geraghty has mentioned, albeit briefly, the on-going operation throughout 1959-61 to gather intelligence on Soviet surface-to-air missile (SAM) installations.²² The JIC files unused

¹⁵ Lashmar, Paul, *Spyflights of the Cold War* (Stroud: Sutton, 1996), p.154; Harrison, *Driving the Soviets*, pp.135-6

¹⁶ Lashmar, *Spyflights*, pp.165-6

¹⁷ *Ibid*, p.65; Aldrich, *Hidden Hand*, p.215

¹⁸ Lashmar, *Spyflights*, pp.61-83, 121-128

¹⁹ Lashmar, *Spyflights*, p.149; Aldrich, *Hidden Hand*, pp.530-1

²⁰ *Ibid*, p.535

²¹ CAB 159/34, JIC(60)47th meeting, 15 September 1960

²² Geraghty, *BRIXMIS*, pp.90, 294

or unseen by Cradock allow an examination of the Committee's role in governing the use of aircraft in this operation.

The impact of intelligence on international events was not just limited to the air, however. Maddrell and Murphy *et al* in particular, and Harrison to a lesser extent, have emphasised the significance of intelligence agencies in the GDR government's need to seal off West from East Berlin.²³ There is little debate that the primary motivation behind the construction of the Wall was economic: cutting off the flow of refugees from East to West. Beyond that, however, both Khrushchev and Ulbricht described a requirement for improved security and an end to the free-flow from West to East of espionage and subversion. It is therefore necessary to investigate whether the JIC recognised this description of Berlin, explicitly or otherwise.

The JIC papers can reveal little on the human intelligence picture around the time of the crisis; a period marked by SIS's first notable Cold War achievements. Tales of intelligence collection always attract more attention than those of assessment or use. The U2 is perhaps the best known intelligence story of the time, but that of Oleg Vladimirovich Penkovsky cannot be far behind. A Lieutenant-Colonel in the GRU (Soviet military intelligence), Penkovsky was a run in a joint SIS-CIA operation that began in earnest in 1961.²⁴ He passed on some unique military and political intelligence, of value during both the Berlin and Cuban crises, until his arrest in October 1962. A couple of years earlier, the SIS had been successful in running their first significant agents behind the Iron Curtain. From late 1958, three members of the Polish security intelligence service had been passing over military, political and counter-intelligence material.²⁵ The CIA lost one of their most useful agents just as the Berlin

²³ Maddrell, *Spying on Science*, pp.15, 236-8; Murphy *et al*, *Battleground Berlin*, pp.311-2; Harrison, *Driving the Soviets*, pp.100-1

²⁴ Penkovsky is well covered in research elsewhere. Many of his case-notes have been released by the CIA under their Freedom of Information programme, to be found at <http://www.foia.cia.gov/penkovsky.asp>. See also, Schechter, Jerrold and Deriabin, Peter S., *The Spy Who Saved the World: How a Soviet Colonel changed the course of the Cold War* (Washington, DC: Brassey's, 1995); Penkovsky, Oleg, *The Penkovsky Papers: The Russian who spied for the West* (London: Collins, 1965)

²⁵ Dorril, Stephen, *MI6: Inside the Covert World of Her Majesty's Secret Intelligence Service* (New York: the Free Press, 2000), pp.703-4

crisis began, another GRU Lieutenant-Colonel, Pyotr Semyonovich Popov.²⁶ Having first made contact in late 1953, Popov began significant reporting in January 1956 whilst posted to the GDR, until his recall to Moscow and eventual arrest in late 1958.

With these successes came painful lessons. Without the safety nets of good agent-running tradecraft and internal agency compartmentalisation, agents were lost. One of the KGB officers that uncovered Penkovsky, Victor Cherkashin, put the exposure down to a combination of Penkovsky's bad luck and "sloppy British tradecraft".²⁷ Cherkashin thought the choices of location for dead letter boxes and meetings were unimaginative and using the SIS station chief's wife as a contact was hopeless. Such clumsiness had tragic consequences. The loss of an agent is the harshest form of instruction for any secret service.²⁸ The SIS thereafter had to develop less naive practices for running agents behind the Iron Curtain.²⁹

Popov's demise was due to an equally unfortunate combination of factors. The CIA believed it was thanks to George Blake that the KGB first learnt about Popov, although there is some dispute about this.³⁰ In September 1955, after a break, Popov re-established contact with the CIA via a BRIXMIS officer, who in turn passed on the message via the SIS Berlin station, which included Blake on its staff. An alternative version is that much like Penkovsky, it was chance and increased KGB surveillance of the GRU that prompted early interest.³¹ Irrespective of the Blake factor, it was the CIA who eventually gave the KGB proof of Popov's treachery, through careless tradecraft. After his recall to Moscow, the CIA sent a coded letter to Popov's home, which the KGB had little trouble in deciphering.³²

²⁶ Murphy *et al*, *Battleground Berlin*, pp.268-281

²⁷ Cherkashin, Victor, *Spy Handler: Memoirs of a KGB Officer: the true story of the man who recruited Robert Hanssen and Aldrich Ames* (New York: Basic Books, 2005), p.66

²⁸ Judd, Alan, *The Quest for C: Mansfield Cumming and the founding of the Secret Service* (London: Harper Collins, 1999), pp.116-7

²⁹ Private information

³⁰ Murphy *et al*, *Battleground Berlin*, p.268

³¹ *Ibid*, p.274

³² *Ibid*, p.278

Such operational information rarely appears in the JIC papers. Certainly, in the above cases there are no hints to be found. These successes and later failures are significant to understanding the JIC, however, because they help to provide the background. New, valuable sources would have been a welcome boost to SIS's position at the Committee table, after the embarrassments of preceding years, despite initial scepticism about their new contribution.³³ Furthermore, the impact of human agents was felt on the ground in Germany. As described above, BRIXMIS was occasionally unwittingly pulled into agent-running, but they also suffered from agents. During Blake's time in Berlin (1955-9), the RAF member of BRIXMIS was in an office six doors away from the KGB spy. Blake saw all BRIXMIS reports and knew about many of the planned tours. Only after his detention in 1961 did BRIXMIS realise why their tours during that time had been so regularly intercepted "by an enemy that seemed possessed of almost occult powers".³⁴

Build up to the ultimatum

Until Khrushchev's speeches on Berlin in November, for the British government, the Cold War in Germany was a lesser concern in 1958.³⁵ The Middle East, Cyprus, Europe and Chinese bombardment of Quemoy and Matsu all demanded Ministerial attention. Alistair Horne, Macmillan's official biographer, reports the Prime Minister's estimate that during 1958, "he spent more than half of his working time on foreign problems".³⁶

Trouble in the Middle East drew most focus away from the relative tranquillity of Europe. The decline of British influence in the region had quickened its pace since Suez. The joint SIS-CIA operation to foment a coup in Syria in 1957 came to nothing.³⁷

³³ Bower, *Perfect English Spy*, p.277

³⁴ Geraghty, *BRIXMIS*, p.92

³⁵ For details of the speeches, see later

³⁶ Horne, *Macmillan 1957-1986*, p.92

³⁷ Aldrich, *Hidden Hand*, p.584

The July 1958 overthrow of Nuri Said and the Iraqi monarchy appeared to represent a further blow to Western power in the Arab world.³⁸ As a consequence, US marines landed in Lebanon and British troops were dispatched to Jordan. This predominance of the Middle East in British minds can be seen in the JIC files. The WRCI, until June 1959 when it switched, was presented with Middle Eastern intelligence first with Europe taking a secondary position.³⁹

The Middle East aside, Berlin, Germany and the main Cold War theatre was never out of the JIC's survey. The first WRCI of 1958 described new movements on the Berlin sector boundary.⁴⁰ Over the New Year period, Soviet troops had been brought in to reinforce East German police, possibly as a response to the defection of Soviet personnel. The GDR frontier troops had been reorganised and given a more military character, whilst their check-point duties had been handed over to customs officials. Two weeks later, the JIC reported that the niggling interference with Allied access to Berlin was perhaps on the increase.⁴¹ On the 14-15 January, the Russians started to stamp individual travel documents of passengers on military trains, ensuring new documents were issued for each trip and suggesting they had the right to authorise who entered the city.⁴² After Allied protests, the practice ceased. The JIC concluded that, "the Russians seem anxious to avoid provoking a serious dispute about this".⁴³

By July, interference had become aggression. Supposedly in response to British troops arriving in the Middle East, on 18 July, "a carefully orchestrated riot" attacked the BRIXMIS compound in Potsdam.⁴⁴ Windows were smashed and staff received minor injuries. Thanks to a courageous officer who decided to address the crowd directly, a greater misfortune was avoided. The Russians did in fact pay compensation

³⁸ Mansfield, Peter, *The Arabs* (London: Penguin, third edition 1992), pp.258-263

³⁹ The positioning of items is a useful indicator of what the JIC thought mattered most to the customer.

"Western sector" intelligence finally regained the top spot on 23 June 1959 – WRCI week ending 23 June 1959, CAB179/6

⁴⁰ CAB179/4, WRCI week ending 7 January 1958

⁴¹ CAB179/4, WRCI week ending 21 January 1958

⁴² Murphy *et al*, *Battleground Berlin*, p.308

⁴³ WRCI w/e 21 January 1958

⁴⁴ Geraghty, *BRIXMIS*, pp.74-5

for the damage, but nevertheless, BRIXMIS moved to another more secure compound in Potsdam.

On 22 July, the WRCI reported on 9 US personnel whose helicopter had made a forced landing in the GDR in June.⁴⁵ They were finally released after weeks of negotiation. The Russians had tried to avoid all involvement in the issue, pushing the Americans towards direct dealings with the East Germans. It was the Red Cross that finally secured the captives' release, once the GDR realised "that they would be unable to extract recognition from the US authorities". The question of the legitimacy of the GDR in Western eyes was raised again in September, when the JIC noted that East German government proposals for a Four Power Commission on Germany included the East Germans as acknowledged participants.⁴⁶

The Committee felt that Soviet offers of Summits and Foreign Ministers' meetings were the result of their increased confidence after successes in 1957 with both Sputnik and their ICBM programme.⁴⁷ Such confidence ought to have had its limits, however, as the JIC did not believe the Russians yet had the capacity to deliver a knock-out blow against the US.⁴⁸ According to this 1958 analysis, that might have come by 1962. Current Soviet strength was sufficient, however, such that "the Soviet leaders are probably reasonably confident that the West will not carry out an unprovoked surprise attack". Reminders of Soviet nuclear development were found in the WRCI, when in March, May and October, the JIC reported Soviet nuclear tests.⁴⁹

The February 1958 assessment of Soviet intentions and strengths was more confused.⁵⁰ The JIC thought Khrushchev's position as leader had strengthened since the Hungarian rising, although problems still remained in relations with the Satellites (when

⁴⁵ CAB179/5, WRCI week ending 22 July 1958

⁴⁶ CAB179/5, WRCI week ending 9 September 1958

⁴⁷ CAB179/4, WRCI week ending 14 January 1958

⁴⁸ CAB158/31, JIC(58)4(Final) "Soviet strategy in Global War up to the end of 1962", 24 January 1958

⁴⁹ CAB179/4, WRCI weeks ending 18 March 1958, 25 March 1958, 13 May 1958; CAB179/5, WRCI weeks ending 14 October 1958, 21 October 1958.

⁵⁰ CAB158/31, JIC(58)12(Final) "Estimates of Soviet political and economic policies and capabilities from 1958-1962", 13 February 1958

in March, Khrushchev took over from Bulganin as Chairman of the Council of Ministers, this assertion was strengthened⁵¹). Reassurance followed in the judgement that, in general, the Russians were unlikely to risk war in a nuclear age, although the possibility of war through miscalculation remained. As a consequence, “the USSR will almost certainly seek to avoid courses of action which in its judgement would involve serious risk of war”. The Committee did not see that risk calculation as static, however, since as Russian nuclear capabilities increased, the West would be less likely to risk war. Here again, was the question of confidence: “consequently the Soviet leaders may believe that they can pursue certain risky courses of action with less danger of general war than would previously have been the case”. Recent research produced from Soviet archives agrees with the Committee’s judgement, arguing that confidence was one of the factors that led Khrushchev to his Berlin ultimatum.⁵² What the JIC seems to have missed here, but historians since have recognised is that the picture was not just one of increasing Russian strength, but also of growing fear in 1958. The December 1957 NATO decision to deploy Thor intermediate range ballistic missiles (IRBM) in Western Europe had yet again sparked the generations’ old Russian fear of German strength.

In July, when the JIC produced its digest for the Ministry of Supply, the issue of the IRBMs was highlighted: “the Soviet Union may... genuinely believe that the introduction of rocket-launching sites, particularly in Western Germany, and the more widespread deployment of tactical nuclear weapons by NATO forces may increase the danger of war by miscalculation”.⁵³ The Committee believed that the wider context for Soviet foreign policy was dominated by two issues: the hopes of a Summit and of disarmament. On 9 June, the WRCI had noted that amid one of Khrushchev’s letters to Eisenhower, there were trade proposals that might be a gesture towards fruitful talks.⁵⁴ The JIC had, however, agreed with a US assessment back in January, that with regards to Germany, there was little hope of agreement.⁵⁵ When the Cabinet discussed the

⁵¹ CAB179/4, WRCI week ending 31 March 1958

⁵² Harrison, *Driving the Soviets*, pp.111-2

⁵³ CAB158/32, JIC(58)54(Final) “Six monthly intelligence digest for the Ministry of Supply – period mid-November 1957 to mid-May 1958”, 9 July 1958

⁵⁴ CAB179/4, WRCI week ending 9 June 1958

⁵⁵ CAB159/29, JIC(58)7th meeting, 22 January 1958

chances of a Summit, they believed that US insistence on the inclusion of German reunification made any general Cold War progress less likely.⁵⁶

The JIC reported on the fifth SED party congress (10-16 July), which included an appearance by Khrushchev and seemed to confirm previous thinking on reunification.⁵⁷ There had been no change in GDR-Russian attitudes to the subject: it was a matter for the GDR and FRG to discuss once they had been joined in a confederation. The assessment also concluded that Ulbricht still enjoyed Khrushchev's support and that in order to improve the economic comparison of the GDR with the FRG, "energetic measures" were being taken, based largely on Soviet aid. By August at least, the Russians knew the extent of the growing refugee problem: there had been a 50 per cent rise from 1957.⁵⁸ As Gaddis writes, "Yuri Andropov, head of the Soviet Communist Party Central Committee's department on relations with socialist countries, warned... that 'the flight of the intelligentsia from the GDR has reached a particularly critical phase'". In September, the JIC noted that although numbers for the same period in 1957 were down, there had been an overall increase in those passing through West Berlin because of greater restrictions on travel across the internal German border.⁵⁹

Despite some political analysis, as in previous years, the vast bulk of JIC reporting concerning East Germany in 1958 was focused on military matters. On the 6 January, the Russians announced that as part of a wider force reduction, during 1958, 41,000 men would be withdrawn from Germany.⁶⁰ The JIC estimated there to be 400,000 men in the GSFG.⁶¹ As trains used in late 1957 for the annual trooping were still, unusually, together, the JIC thought the Russians might live up to their promise. The Americans had noticed fewer armoured vehicles being imported to East Germany

⁵⁶ CAB128/32, CC(58)20th Conclusions, 5 March 1958

⁵⁷ CAB179/5, WRCI week ending 15 July 1958

⁵⁸ Gaddis, *We Now Know*, p.139

⁵⁹ Figures are not given. CAB179/5, WRCI week ending 9 September 1958

⁶⁰ CAB179/4, WRCI week ending 7 January 1958

⁶¹ CAB179/4, WRCI week ending 21 January 1958

than previous years.⁶² Nevertheless, February JIC assessments still recorded twenty two line divisions in GSFG and one East German Army division.⁶³

The 25 February WRCI relayed an interview with General Zakharov, the Commander-in-Chief, GSFG, in which he had set out the changes that would take place.⁶⁴ The following would disband: two mechanised divisions, one anti-aircraft (AA) division, three artillery brigades and five independent AA units. The JIC concluded that the reduction would therefore affect line divisions, although newly strengthened tank divisions would compensate for the lost mechanised divisions and new artillery and AA weapons would not mean a decrease in firepower. News of press reports about farewell ceremonies and the gathering of 140 troop trains was sent back from Germany.⁶⁵

In March, the first Soviet departures were witnessed by the heads of the Western Military Missions at parades.⁶⁶ The Allied commanders were also invited to witness nine further occasions. Despite the disbandments, GSFG training continued to reach high levels.⁶⁷ The JIC found it difficult to assess how many troops were actually leaving. Soon after the last ceremony had taken place on 10 April, they estimated 22-25,000 had gone, although there had been sufficient departing trains to carry the full 41,000.⁶⁸ Before the end of April, the JIC estimate had increased to 30,000 and by February 1959, it had reached 32,000.⁶⁹

The assessment of the GSFG fighting potential remained high.⁷⁰ Despite the reductions in manpower, increased training levels, an altered training cycle⁷¹ and new

⁶² CAB159/29, JIC(58)8th meeting, 23 January 1958

⁶³ CAB158/31, JIC(58)3(Final) "Sino-Soviet Bloc War Potential 1958-62", 19 February 1958; JIC(58)5(Final) "Employment of the Soviet Armed Forces in land campaigns in the event of global war, 1958-62", 24 February 1958

⁶⁴ CAB179/4, WRCI week ending 25 February 1958

⁶⁵ CAB159/29, JIC(58)17th meeting, 27 February 1958

⁶⁶ CAB179/4, WRCI week ending 4 March 1958

⁶⁷ CAB179/4, WRCI week ending 11 March 1958; CAB159/29, JIC(58)19th meeting, 13 March 1958

⁶⁸ CAB179/4, WRCI week ending 15 April 1958; CAB159/29, JIC(58)26th meeting, 17 April 1958

⁶⁹ CAB179/4, WRCI weeks ending 22 April 1958, 29 April 1958; CAB179/6, WRCI week ending 3 February 1959

⁷⁰ CAB179/5, WRCI week ending 16 December 1958

⁷¹ CAB179/5, WRCI week ending 30 September 1958

equipment had “probably effected a further improvement in the efficiency and striking power of GSFG”.⁷² The troop numbers were, however, “considerably below those that would exist in war”, and in fact further withdrawals might force a decrease in active training.⁷³ More ominous news was that on 10 October, BRIXMIS had photographed a train of “unusual composition”, suspected to be a missile unit.⁷⁴

The JIC believed that they were receiving good intelligence on Soviet forces in Germany: “we have good evidence from trooping records, barracks occupation and covert source information of manning levels”.⁷⁵ When the Committee issued new indicator watch lists in May, they noted that their expectation that even in the case of a surprise attack, some intelligence might be received.⁷⁶ The JIC, however, had no illusions about the difficulty of the task and the limits of British intelligence:

We have virtually no chance of intercepting either the policy decision to go to war or the operational orders for the attack. We must therefore rely on the experience of the evaluators and the correct functioning of the intelligence machine in interpreting the significance of military activity or other preparations pointing to a decision having been taken; these activities and preparations are likely to vary according to the circumstances leading to the outbreak of war.⁷⁷

There might be seven days warning before an attack in the case of movement to forward bomber bases or submarine sightings, but only 24-48 hours in the case of increased activity in Soviet air defences or deployment of short-range missiles in East Germany or other satellites. Only radar images of bombers or missiles on radar would give warning of the precise moment of attack. The equivalent 1959 paper drew exactly the same conclusions.⁷⁸

⁷² CAB158/31, JIC(58)1/9 “Periodic intelligence summary for NATO Commands”, 23 September 1958; CAB179/5, WRCI week ending 7 October 1958

⁷³ CAB158/32, JIC(58)57(Final) “An estimate of the strength of Sino-Soviet bloc armed forces”, 28 August 1958

⁷⁴ CAB179/5, WRCI week ending 28 October 1958

⁷⁵ JIC(58)57(Final)

⁷⁶ CAB158/31, JIC(58)17(Final) “Indicators of Soviet preparations for Early War”, 2 May 1958

⁷⁷ CAB158/32, JIC(58)50(Final) “Warning of Soviet attack on the West in Global War up to the end of 1959”, 20 June 1958

⁷⁸ CAB158/36, JIC(59)33(Final)(Revise) “Warning and timing of Soviet attack on the West in Global War up to the end of 1960”, 15 September 1959

The crisis begins

Khrushchev's 10 November speech to a Soviet-Polish friendship meeting in Moscow launched the second Berlin crisis. In it, he accused the West of breaching the Four Power agreements on Germany by permitting remilitarisation; damaging the Eastern European states by using Berlin as a base for "subversive activities"; and doing all this without recognising the GDR.⁷⁹ As a result, the Premier warned, the Russians would "hand over to the sovereign German Democratic Republic the functions in Berlin that are still exercised by the Soviet agencies", including control of Western access.

Telegrams flew between the FO and Embassies, attempting to predict likely moves. Bonn was notified that, "although we must obviously take the developments seriously our impression from all reports available to us is that the Soviet Government are not contemplating any drastic action in the immediate future".⁸⁰ Sir Harold Caccia wrote from Washington that the Americans were taking the threat to Berlin seriously, but agreed that there was no need for radical action on the part of the Western Powers.⁸¹ The US view was that Khrushchev was at the same time testing the West and attempting to boost the GDR. The CIA heard from their agent Popov that Soviet officials in the GDR thought the speech marked a major turning point: sovereignty would be granted, forcing the West to deal with the East Germans.⁸²

The 18 November WRCI included the JIC's early assessment.⁸³ Khrushchev's statement was "stronger than anything which has been said previously" on the handing over of Soviet functions in Berlin. The Committee did note that in a speech on 27 October, Ulbricht had suggested that Western actions had forfeited all rights in Berlin. Khrushchev had not, however, said that the Allies must withdraw from the city. The JIC added their accurate analysis of Khrushchev's probable motives.⁸⁴ In a development of

⁷⁹ Translation from Harrison, *Driving the Soviets*, pp.105-6

⁸⁰ PREM11/2715, FO to Bonn, No. 2296, 13 November 1958

⁸¹ PREM11/2715, Washington to FO, No. 3096, 13 November 1958

⁸² Murphy *et al*, *Battleground Berlin*, p.306; this report was received during a 17 November agent meeting

⁸³ CAB179/5

⁸⁴ Harrison, *Driving the Soviets*, pp.113-6

their assessment of Soviet intentions, they recognised that this might be part of a campaign against the arming of the FRG with nuclear weapons, as well as a bid to win legitimacy for the GDR in Western eyes.⁸⁵ This view was shared by the Western Ambassadors in Moscow.⁸⁶ The Committee thought that whilst Khrushchev must reckon on the Western Powers being ready to use force to prevent their ejection from Berlin, he must also have calculated that “the Allies would rather recognise the GDR than force a passage to Berlin”.⁸⁷

Khrushchev’s judgement was right, at least as far as the British government was concerned. The Foreign Secretary, Selwyn Lloyd, outlined for the Cabinet the options open to the West, should the Russian threats be seriously meant: abandon Berlin, institute another airlift or agree access arrangements with the GDR.⁸⁸ Although he recommended strong demonstrations of Western commitment to Berlin and willingness to opt for the airlift, in his judgement, “the last course would be the most realistic”. The JIC advised that the West had to maintain both strength and restraint as part of the bid to avoid war; signs of weakness combined with growing Russian nuclear capability might be a disastrous mix.⁸⁹ The Allies’ position in Berlin was exposed, however, and each side knew it. The JIC did not, at this early stage, expect a full blockade of West Berlin, but they did suspect the Russians were “probably willing to contemplate an increase of tension in the area with the aim sooner or later of forcing Western recognition of the [GDR]”.⁹⁰ The CIA agreed that the long term aim was recognition of the GDR.⁹¹

Khrushchev’s note of 27 November went further than his 10 November speech. He proposed that, within six months, West Berlin become a demilitarised “free city” and that there be a peace treaty with Germany.⁹² He also included a warning that NATO

⁸⁵ Kastner, Jill, “The Berlin Crisis and the FRG, 1958-62” in Gearson, John and Schake, Kori (eds), *The Berlin Wall Crisis: Perspectives on Cold War Alliances* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2002), p.127

⁸⁶ PREM11/2715, Brooks Richards to Philip de Zulueta, 19 November 1958

⁸⁷ CAB179/5, WRCI week ending 18 November 1958

⁸⁸ CAB128/32, CC(58)81st Conclusions, 18 November 1958

⁸⁹ CAB158/34, JIC(58)99(Final) “The likelihood of global war between the Sino-Soviet bloc and the free world”, 20 November 1958

⁹⁰ CAB179/5, WRCI week ending 25 November 1958

⁹¹ CAB159/30, JIC(58)77th meeting, 27 November 1958

⁹² Harrison, *Driving the Soviets*, p.106

force would be met with Warsaw Pact force. Before the JIC had offered an updated assessment of Soviet intentions, Macmillan had written to Selwyn Lloyd, "The Berlin issue is, in fact an ultimatum with six months to run. We shall not be able to avoid negotiation."⁹³

The JIC's detailed analysis was produced on the 2 December.⁹⁴ They were unsure whether these new demands were a change of Russian minds and if so, whether Western reactions to 10 November had prompted that change. They inclined towards the belief that a firm reaction to the idea of access control being handed over immediately had forced the Russians to introduce a softer time limit. The ultimatum changed the Committee's view of the Soviet long-term aim: no longer did they believe the ultimate ambition was recognition of the GDR, but rather ejection of the West from Berlin. At the very least, it looked like the Russians were trying to force the Western Powers to the negotiating table to discuss the German question on their terms; an assessment shared by the CIA.⁹⁵ The JIC thought the six month delay was part of the strategy, since the Soviets would use this time to win over public opinion and exploit any differences between the Western Powers. The Committee did, however, estimate that the time limit was probably not quite as inflexible as the note had made out:

It is most unlikely that the Soviet Government really expect the Western Allies to leave Berlin at the end of the six-months' period, but they probably calculate that at the end of that time they will have weakened Western resolve sufficiently to enable them to increase the pressure on Berlin itself and its communications without risk of nuclear war.⁹⁶

The Western Allies were certainly split about how to tackle Khrushchev's challenge. The initial US view, championed by Secretary of State John Foster Dulles, was that the West should deal with the GDR as "agents" of the Soviet Union, since Berlin was not worth war.⁹⁷ Adenauer refused "to give an inch to Khrushchev and Ulbricht", warning the Americans that dealings with the GDR would jeopardise the

⁹³ PREM11/2715, Prime Minister to Foreign Secretary, 28 November 1958

⁹⁴ CAB179/5, WRCI week ending 2 December 1958

⁹⁵ CAB159/30, JIC(58)79th meeting, 4 December 1958

⁹⁶ WRCI w/e 2 December 1958

⁹⁷ Gaddis, *We Now Know*, p.141

FRG's alignment with the West.⁹⁸ As a consequence, Dulles dropped his approach. De Gaulle was roughly in line with Adenauer. Macmillan's desire to negotiate and even recognise the GDR left him misaligned with the other major players.

At a military level there were also differences of opinion. The British Chiefs of Staff examined the military options for maintaining access to Berlin in the event of a hand-over of control.⁹⁹ They concluded that keeping the autobahn open with troops "would involve a very considerable force". It might require "at least all British and US forces in Europe even if it did not lead to a world war". A limited land force would be too easily obstructed or trapped. Probing via the air was the Chiefs' preferred option, although even that could be made difficult by Soviet jamming, anti-aircraft fire or interference in the air corridors. Furthermore, to supply Berlin by air, RAF aircraft would have to be drawn from other operations.¹⁰⁰ There was even some doubt about the value of saving Berlin at all, since "the only valid military reason for maintaining a presence... was intelligence-gathering". There was disagreement from the other side of the Atlantic. The US favoured sending a land probe up the autobahn to test enemy intentions, which they believed, would reveal the Russian willingness to concede in the face of American nuclear supremacy.¹⁰¹

In January 1959, the Chiefs put in an urgent request for the JIC to examine the US plans and come up with an estimate of likely Russian and East German reactions.¹⁰² The paper was produced for 12 January.¹⁰³ It began with the gravest possible warning that supported the Chiefs' fears: "We conclude that the situation examined in this paper carries with it the possibility of global war resulting from a miscalculation by one side or

⁹⁸ Harrison, *Driving the Soviets*, p.118

⁹⁹ It was assumed that in the event of the control being given to the GDR, the Western Powers would refuse to deal with them. DEFE5/87, COS(58)295 "Views of the Commander-in-Chief (British Forces Germany) on the Berlin Situation", 29 December 1958; DEFE5/88, COS(59)2 "Contingency planning for the maintenance of allied access to Berlin", 1 January 1959

¹⁰⁰ DEFE4/114, COS(58)98th meeting, 2 December 1958

¹⁰¹ DEFE4/115, COS(59)1st meeting, 1 January 1959

¹⁰² CAB158/35, JIC(59)13(Terms of Reference) "Berlin", 7 January 1959; CAB159/31, JIC(59)4th meeting, 8 January 1959

¹⁰³ CAB158/35, JIC(59)13(Final) "Soviet and East German reactions to a land probe to maintain Allied access to Berlin", 12 January 1959

the other, and even of global war being deliberately launched by the Soviet Union". After that, the paper presented possible Soviet reactions, in order of likelihood. During Western preparations for the probe, the Russians would do one of three things: whip up such public opinion that the West might be forced to back down; launch a nuclear attack; or back down in the face of war. Once the mission had been launched, the Committee expected that it would be opposed, either by "passive measures" such as blocking the route – and therefore leaving the West with the problem of what to do next – or, in the extreme, by a nuclear attack. One of the greatest problems which the JIC foresaw was that in order to make the probe look serious, it would have to be backed with general NATO mobilisation, a move which in itself made the threat of war more likely since Warsaw Pact forces would do likewise.

During the Committee discussion of the paper, the FO suggested that it did not go far enough in presenting the dangers of a land probe.¹⁰⁴ They felt that the probe might be seen as a breach serious enough to invoke the Warsaw Pact Treaty and hence trigger war. If that were not the case, they were sure that once the convoy had been blocked, any further Allied action would be presented as aggression by the Russians and a hence a justification for war. When the paper was discussed by the Chiefs of Staff on 13 January, Dean pointed out that his Committee's conclusions were "diametrically opposed to those of the US State Department and the Pentagon".¹⁰⁵ The CIA he felt, however, "were impressed with the earnestness of Russian intentions and inclined more to our way of thinking". Some American assessments had already begun to point out the GDR could easily deal with the problem of refugees whilst the Allies remained in Berlin, by simply preventing East Germans from reaching West Berlin.¹⁰⁶

Whilst military contingency planning began, so too did preparations for managing the crisis within the intelligence community. The six month deadline was set to run out on 27 May 1959, so that was the initial working point for the JIC. Vice-Admiral Inglis (DNI) suggested in February, that in order to be properly prepared for

¹⁰⁴ CAB159/31, JIC(59)5th meeting, 12 January 1959

¹⁰⁵ DEFE4/115, COS(59)4th meeting, 13 January 1959

¹⁰⁶ CAB159/31, JIC(59)7th meeting, 21 January 1959

eventualities, the JIC should speed up the completion of the Joint Intelligence Room (JIR), the Committee's new operations centre, as well as begin to consider what instructions would have to be sent overseas in the case of an emergency.¹⁰⁷ In fact, the JIC Secretariat had already sent out a specific list of indicators to Berlin noting that any intelligence relevant to the crisis needed to be transmitted directly to the Cabinet Office and onto the JIR. Furthermore, the Secretariat suggested that a practice alert should be called in London, in order to check that the necessary staff reinforcements were able to arrive within the allotted one or two hours. Within weeks, the JIC had agreed their immediate courses of action: the JIR was to be completed by 15 April; a practice alert would be called once it was operational; a further practice would be used to rehearse the procedure for getting together the Heads of Section in an emergency; all intelligence from Germany would be routed to the JIR; the arrangements for rapid exchange of assessments with the Americans and Canadians would be checked¹⁰⁸; and the JIS would consider whether any particular intelligence targets ought to be raised to a higher priority.¹⁰⁹ In the end, the JIR became operational from 15 May.¹¹⁰

The JIC archives currently available do not include any discussion about the steps taken within the collecting agencies in reaction to the crisis. Some such information does appear in published research, although there is little specifically about British intelligence. Western agencies all faced the same problem of being cut off from their agents, so the methods employed to maintain communication were largely the same. Maddrell reveals that from November 1958 on, officers and their agents, including those run by the SIS, began to prepare dead letter boxes, one- or two-way radio communication and secret letter-writing techniques, including establishing the necessary cover addresses.¹¹¹ Murphy *et al* confirm the CIA's use of these methods.¹¹² Geraghty notes that BRIXMIS too were affected by the crisis, in that Khrushchev's hostility was taken by the security forces within the GDR as a signal to begin shooting at

¹⁰⁷ CAB159/31, JIC(59)13th meeting, 5 February 1959

¹⁰⁸ CAB159/31, JIC(59)19th meeting, 26 February 1959

¹⁰⁹ CAB159/31, JIC(59)20th meeting, 5 March 1959; JIC(59)21st meeting, 12th March 1959

¹¹⁰ CAB159/31, JIC(59)32nd meeting, 7 May 1959

¹¹¹ Maddrell, *Spying on Science*, pp.243-7

¹¹² Murphy *et al*, *Battleground Berlin*, pp.350-2

the Western Missions.¹¹³ Better co-ordinated tours between the Missions were devised to cut overlapping tours and hence, reduce risk.

The requirement for intelligence from Germany had to be measured against the financial cost; the familiar post-war story of rising Cold War pressures balanced with economic necessity continued. From February until October, the BSSO in Germany was under scrutiny by the JIC to see how it could better perform its security functions whilst reducing costs. A Security Service investigation concluded that both internal reorganisation within BSSO and closer contact with itself would improve the product from Germany.¹¹⁴ A civilian rather than military head was introduced.¹¹⁵ A cut in expenditure was achieved by reducing staff from 480 to 322, as well as by passing over some duties to the German intelligence services.¹¹⁶ The BSSO communications interception station in Hanover was saved only by the Americans' agreement to fund it completely.¹¹⁷ Finally, in 1961, the BSSO was placed under the responsibility of the C-in-C, Germany and tasks originating in London were given secondary priority.¹¹⁸

Towards Geneva

On 10 January 1959, the Soviet government proposed a conference to conclude a peace treaty with Germany.¹¹⁹ The initial scepticism that any good could come from negotiating remained but softened enough that by February, the US and France were willing to join the British in suggesting a CFM.¹²⁰ On 1 March, Khrushchev replied that he would far rather hold a heads-of-government meeting, but would nevertheless accept the offer. The Four Powers agreed on a CFM in Geneva beginning on 11 May.

¹¹³ Geraghty, *BRIXMIS*, pp.77-8

¹¹⁴ CAB159/31, JIC(59)17th meeting, 19 February 1959

¹¹⁵ CAB158/36, JIC(59)49 "Reorganisation of the British Services Security Organisation", 22 May 1959

¹¹⁶ CAB159/31, JIC(59)26th meeting, 9 April 1959; JIC(59)30th meeting, 23 April 1959

¹¹⁷ CAB159/32, JIC(59)60th meeting, 1 October 1959

¹¹⁸ DEFE5/113, COS(61)148 "Operational control of the British Services Security Organisation (BSSO)", 4 May 1961

¹¹⁹ Harrison, *Driving the Soviets*, p.117

¹²⁰ *Ibid*, p.119. The offer was sent on 16 February 1959 and accepted on 1st March 1959.

The JIC produced an assessment on 5 February of “Soviet policy regarding Berlin”.¹²¹ In it, they concluded that one of the main Russian aims was to force a Summit conference, during which they would want to “confirm the present political status quo in Europe”, as well as “prevent the armament of West Germany with nuclear and rocket weapons”. Beyond this more immediate aim, the Committee believed the Russians wanted “get the West out of Berlin”, although “they probably do not expect to achieve this in the foreseeable future”. In the meantime, however, the Russians were sure to “insist that Western access to Berlin is nominally controlled by the [GDR]”. The JIC also repeated that the Russians would “probably feel compelled” to oppose a land probe to Berlin, but may not “forcibly oppose” an airlift. They did expect the Soviets to hand over to the GDR their “rights and responsibilities” regarding Berlin, although the Committee thought the “free city” proposal had been more “for propaganda purposes” than serious discussion. A prescient estimate was that the Russians would “probably permit the DDR to seal off East Berlin from West Berlin to prevent the refugee exodus”. Finally, the JIC seemed to go some way towards supporting Macmillan’s early line that Western withdrawal from Berlin would be “a disastrous political defeat” but “direct dealings with the [GDR] over access” would only be “a sharp but temporary political setback”.

Largely, the JIC conclusions appear accurate. Cradock has appraised the paper, pointing out that in two key ways the assessment was incorrect: first, the Soviets were in fact extremely wary of handing over powers to the GDR in such sensitive circumstances; and second, “the paper... underestimates the serious implications at that time of direct Allied dealings with the East Germans”.¹²² Such conclusions are reasonable, but worthy of exploration. British intelligence did not have the sources that could have provided the information which would have revealed Khrushchev’s inner suspicions of the GDR government. If such thoughts could have been known at all, it would have taken a truly well-placed agent or a supreme level of communications interception. The West’s best

¹²¹ CAB158/35, JIC(59)17(Final) “An assessment of Soviet policy regarding Berlin”, 5 February 1959

¹²² Cradock, *Know Your Enemy*, p.143

agents at that time, such as Popov, were quite convinced that Khrushchev's threats had been genuine. Cradock's second criticism is more difficult to substantiate with any certainty. It requires counter-factual history to examine what might have happened in the case of Western dealings with the GDR. It is clear, however, that the Americans took Adenauer's warnings of the consequences of any relations with the GDR seriously. The American attitude to Khrushchev was certainly tougher than the British, as both the JIC and the Chiefs had recognised. The British fear of war was greater; the JIC seems to have agreed with the prevailing Whitehall view that the danger of war was serious enough for concessions to be the right option.

British and American assessments of the 21st Communist Party Congress, held 27 January – 5 February, were at odds over the prospects for talks with the Russians. The JIC estimated that Khrushchev was keen on a bilateral agreement with the US.¹²³ The American view was that Khrushchev had showed “no signs that the Soviet Union was willing to consider concessions in order to reach agreement with the US either on specific issues such as Berlin, Germany or nuclear tests, or on a general global basis”.¹²⁴ After meeting with Khrushchev during his February visit to Moscow, Macmillan disagreed. He told the Cabinet that the Russians seemed “willing to negotiate and compromise” and crucially, that there was likely to be some flexibility over the six month deadline.¹²⁵

The intelligence picture emerging from Germany during the first months of the crisis was hardly comforting. Until February and early March, there had been many unconfirmed reports of missile-like objects, launchers and missile-carrying trains in the GDR.¹²⁶ The WRCI on 23 March revealed that “a completely reliable source observed from close quarters a missile or missile-model”.¹²⁷ The dimensions matched those of the SS-1 Scud surface-to-surface missile and from its external appearance there was no telling whether it was a live or drill version. The JIC concluded that even if it was a drill

¹²³ CAB179/6, WRCI week ending 10 February 1959

¹²⁴ CAB159/31, JIC(59)15th meeting, 12 February 1959

¹²⁵ CAB128/33, CC(59)14th Conclusions, 4 March 1959

¹²⁶ CAB179/6, WRCI weeks ending 10 February 1959, 17 March 1959

¹²⁷ CAB179/6, WRCI week ending 23 March 1959

missile, such training was a likely indicator that live missiles were also present in Germany. The suspected arrival of such weapons fitted with the view in those pre-satellite and pre-Penkovsky times, that the Soviet Union was making significant strides across the military science and technology fields.¹²⁸

Both Harrison and Maddrell write about the first presence of Russian missiles in the GDR at about this time, which suggests that the WRCI may have included fairly accurate information. It was twelve SS-3 Shyster medium range missiles, rather than SS-1s, that first arrived in December 1958, followed in April 1959 by their atomic warheads.¹²⁹ After an early accident whilst moving one of the warheads and then problems with the liquid oxygen fuel, the missiles became operational during May. According to Harrison, the CIA never confirmed the deployment of the missiles, although they had deep suspicions. Maddrell concludes differently, writing that the Americans, British, West Germans and French all learnt about the missile deployment early on.¹³⁰ Both authors agree that the missiles were eventually withdrawn in August and September 1959.¹³¹

The presence, or even just suspected, presence of missiles in the GDR must have increased the pressure on the West during preparations for the CFM.¹³² In drawing up their position, the Western Powers agreed that they needed to find a compromise with the Soviets not only to avoid war, but also to secure their position in Berlin.¹³³ The disagreements over military contingency planning had been regularised with the formation of a tripartite planning group, codenamed LIVE OAK, under the direct command of General Lauris Norstad (SACEUR).¹³⁴ All plans were to be approved by all three governments, giving the British the hope of restraining the Americans.¹³⁵

¹²⁸ CAB158/37. JIC(59)51 "Soviet research and development 1958", 26 May 1959. Both satellite reconnaissance and Penkovsky helped explode the myth of a hugely-advanced Soviet missile programme. See Freedman, Lawrence, "Berlin and the Cold War", in Gearson and Schake, *Berlin Wall Crisis*, p.8

¹²⁹ Harrison, *Driving the Soviets*, pp.128-9

¹³⁰ Maddrell, *Spying on Science*, p.172

¹³¹ Harrison, *Driving the Soviets*, p.132

¹³² *Ibid*, pp.128-9

¹³³ *Ibid*, pp.120-1

¹³⁴ DEFE4/116, COS(59)15th meeting, 24 February 1959; DEFE4/117, COS(59)24th meeting, 7 April 1959. For more on LIVE OAK during the crisis, see Pedlow, Gregory W. "Three Hats for Berlin: General

Intelligence activities came into the planning for Geneva. As a response to Khrushchev's criticism of operations being run from Berlin, the Western Powers considered trying to come to an agreement with the Russians governing the activities of intelligence organisations.¹³⁶ Since the crisis had begun, the KGB had been developing a huge propaganda effort to show Berlin as an "espionage swamp".¹³⁷ In order to defend against the accusations, both the US and British negotiating teams requested studies on the subject from their respective intelligence organisations.¹³⁸ The JIC asked JIC(G) to produce a paper on the value of British activities as well as any American or German operations they knew about. The idea was to discover whether any operations were of low enough value that they could be negotiated away to secure the presence of essential operations in Berlin. The appraisal was sent by the JIC to the Foreign Secretary in Geneva.¹³⁹

In the event, significant negotiations about espionage never took place. In an informal meeting on 1 June with Gromyko, US Secretary of State Christian Herter read out a CIA report which catalogued the intelligence activities of both Russian and East German services in Berlin.¹⁴⁰ Gromyko, in response, "sat stony-faced", conceding once the embarrassment was over that "the questions of propaganda and subversion were not one of the principle questions to be considered". Once the press had the details of Herter's speech, the Russian's accusations about Western intelligence largely fell away.

The CFM lasted from 11 May to 16 August. The 27 May deadline passed without incident, but the first report back to the Cabinet from Geneva appeared to confirm the American pre-conference fears, suggesting that there was little common

Lauris Norstad and the Second Berlin Crisis, 1958-62" in Gearson and Schake, *The Berlin Wall Crisis*, pp.175-198

¹³⁵ CAB131/21, D(59)6th meeting, 9 June 1959

¹³⁶ CAB159/31, JIC(59)32nd meeting, 7 May 1959

¹³⁷ Murphy *et al*, *Battleground Berlin*, pp.311-2

¹³⁸ CAB159/31, JIC(59)32nd meeting, 7 May 1959; JIC(59)33rd meeting, 13 May 1959; Murphy *et al*, *Battleground Berlin*, p.325

¹³⁹ CAB159/31, JIC(59)34th meeting, 14 May 1959. The paper is not publicly available. The cover sheet can be found at CAB158/36, JIC(59)48 "Intelligence activities in Berlin", 20 May 1959.

¹⁴⁰ Murphy *et al*, *Battleground Berlin*, pp.325-6

ground with the Russians.¹⁴¹ The talks were blunt and were forced into a three-week adjournment in June.¹⁴² The more significant developments included the Western agreement to separate out the issue of Berlin from the wider problem of reunification, which at least made some meaningful negotiation more likely.¹⁴³ Proposals and counter-proposals about reducing troop numbers were traded, but came to little. Time was the significant reward for the West at Geneva: the Russians continued to talk tough about a peace treaty, but in this instance the limit set was one year. When, on 22 July, Khrushchev accepted an invitation to visit Eisenhower in the US later in the year, the CFM really became pointless.¹⁴⁴ Khrushchev had won his head-of-government talks and the West had bought a temporary reprieve.

The JIC had a minor reporting role to play during the CFM. It was a case of watching events away from Geneva for indications of Russian tactics. The WRCI on 9 June relayed that there were no signs of an imminent Soviet-GDR peace treaty or hand over of responsibilities in Berlin.¹⁴⁵ It did note, however, that an East German delegation had travelled to Moscow, probably to discuss policy in light of early exchanges at Geneva. Throughout June and July the overall assessment remained the same: no signs of a handover of control, although Khrushchev was trying to maintain pressure on the West with constant threats.¹⁴⁶ The JIC continued with their view that Khrushchev's ambition was to force a Summit meeting.¹⁴⁷ It was the Western Military Missions that frequently suffered as both East Germans and Russians vented their frustration through harassment and detention of the only Westerners within easy reach.¹⁴⁸

¹⁴¹ CAB128/33, CC(59)32nd meeting, 28 May 1959

¹⁴² Harrison, *Driving the Soviets*, p.127

¹⁴³ *Ibid*, p.121; CC(59)32nd meeting

¹⁴⁴ Harrison, *Driving the Soviets*, p.131

¹⁴⁵ CAB179/6, WRCI week ending 9 June 1959

¹⁴⁶ CAB179/6, WRCI weeks ending 16 June 1959, 23 June 1959, 30 June 1959; CAB179/7 WRCI weeks ending 7 July 1959, 14 July 1959

¹⁴⁷ CAB158/36, JIC(59)43(Final) "Six-monthly intelligence digest for the Ministry of Supply – period mid-November 1958 to mid-May 1959", 14 July 1959

¹⁴⁸ CAB179/7, WRCI week ending 14 July 1959

Once the Eisenhower-Khrushchev visit had been announced, in terms of the prospects for Berlin, the JIC thought matters had at least stabilised for the foreseeable future.¹⁴⁹ The Prime Minister had hopes that a longer period of stability, up to two years, could be agreed so that a permanent solution to the Berlin problem, including the withdrawal of troops might be found.¹⁵⁰ Playing for time, whilst avoiding significant developments, was the British tactic.¹⁵¹

The most noteworthy intelligence produced by the JIC during the talks, was concerning the Soviet missiles in the GDR. Every week there was new information that added to the uncertain picture. As discussed above, before Geneva, the JIC suspected the presence of surface-to-surface missiles. On 16 June, the WRCI reported the rapid development of potential SAM sites, in two locations close to Berlin, one of which was inside the South-West (Frankfurt-am-Main to Berlin) air corridor.¹⁵² By 30 June, 48 trains “with guided weapon carrying potential” had been seen in the GDR.¹⁵³ A week later, this number was revised to 82.¹⁵⁴ Reports of large numbers of liquid oxygen wagons suggested the import of surface-to-surface missile fuel, in increasingly large quantities.¹⁵⁵

Nearly a month after the first reports of possible SAM sites, the 14 July WRCI noted that probable SAM launchers and radar had been seen at one of the sites.¹⁵⁶ In early August, the JIC confirmed that these were SAM sites, similar to those seen around Moscow.¹⁵⁷ Yet another month on, sightings of transporters around Berlin made it likely that the missiles were SA-2 Guidelines, whilst the observed movements of the transporters suggested further sites.¹⁵⁸ The picture of rapidly improving air defence in

¹⁴⁹ CAB179/7, WRCI week ending 4 August 1959

¹⁵⁰ PREM11/2703, Macmillan to Philip de Zulueta, 15 August 1959

¹⁵¹ PREM11/2703, de Zulueta to Macmillan, 18 August 1959

¹⁵² CAB179/6, WRCI week ending 16 June 1959

¹⁵³ CAB179/6, WRCI week ending 30 June 1959

¹⁵⁴ CAB179/7, WRCI week ending 7 July 1959

¹⁵⁵ CAB179/7, WRCI weeks ending 14 July 1959, 4 August 1959, 11 August 1959

¹⁵⁶ WRCI w/e 14 July 1959

¹⁵⁷ CAB179/7, WRCI week ending 11 August 1959

¹⁵⁸ CAB179/7, WRCI week ending 8 September 1959

the GDR was filled out further by the first report of air-to-air missiles on MiG-19 aircraft stationed in East Germany.¹⁵⁹

The JIC brought their assessment relating to surface-to-surface missiles up to date in October 1959.¹⁶⁰ A “reliable source” had seen a military train in early September and had managed to photograph a large part of it. On board were both the tracked tugs and trailers for Shyster missiles, making this the first confirmed observation of this equipment in the GDR. The JIC had not received any trustworthy photography or sightings of the missiles themselves, although photographs taken in July that might have shown them were “still under examination”. This information had to be put together with all of the earlier intelligence, to come to a reasonable conclusion. The special railway cars capable of carrying missiles that had been reported previously, had not been long enough to carry Shyster missiles in one piece, although they were big enough for either Scuds or Guidelines. The liquid oxygen wagons would have carried fuel suitable for the Shyster or Scud, but not for the Guideline. From the number of wagons, the JIC deduced that there was enough fuel for 100 Shyster missiles, and furthermore no “tenable reason” other than missile fuel, had been found to explain their use. Finally, the WRCI noted their belief that since 1958, a missile with a 650 nautical mile range had been “available for operational use in considerable numbers”; the range of the Shyster was estimated at 700-800 miles.

The final conclusion on the missiles read:

Taking the confirmed report of the import of SHYSTER trailers with the background of other reported movements which could have been associated with SHYSTER it is concluded that these are indications of an intention to equip the Group of Soviet Forces Germany with SHYSTER surface-to-surface missiles.

In the light of Harrison and Maddrell’s research, the JIC had come close to an accurate assessment.¹⁶¹ The Committee had finally got the missile type right, although they were, in fact, predicting their deployment after they had been removed. There are signs of the

¹⁵⁹ CAB179/7, WRCI week ending 15 September 1959

¹⁶⁰ CAB179/7, WRCI week ending 20 October 1959

¹⁶¹ See above

confusion caused by this error: in October 1960, the JIC reported that there was still no evidence that the weapons had arrived¹⁶²; and in April 1961, they could still only assert that the missiles might be in Germany¹⁶³.

The spirit of Camp David

Eisenhower and Khrushchev met at Camp David between 25-27 September 1959. No material progress was made on Berlin, rather the two agreed that negotiations on the subject should reopen.¹⁶⁴ In their review of events, the JIC noticed that the final communiqué included reassurance: whilst Eisenhower had accepted that talks on Berlin “would not last indefinitely”, Khrushchev had agreed “no limit was attached to them”.¹⁶⁵ Macmillan had secured his aim, without being present at the meeting. The Prime Minister achieved even more of his preferred policy when he managed to persuade Eisenhower to turn the commitment to talks into a concrete offer for a Summit meeting in Paris in May 1960.¹⁶⁶ Macmillan and Eisenhower had also managed to smooth out some of the differences between their attitudes to LIVE OAK planning during a pre-Camp David meeting, although the British were still reluctant for anything more than quiet planning to take place.¹⁶⁷

The JIC produced a paper soon after a Summit meeting was agreed, in which they took stock of Soviet objectives.¹⁶⁸ The JIC estimated that the basic premisses of Russian policy had not changed: growing confidence; a desire to avoid nuclear war; and the omnipresent belief in the superiority of communism. From this, the assessment drew

¹⁶² CAB158/39, JIC(60)1/10 “Periodic intelligence summary for NATO Commands”, 20 October 1960

¹⁶³ CAB158/42, JIC(61)3(Final) “Sino-Soviet bloc war potential 1961-1965”, 26 April 1961

¹⁶⁴ Harrison, *Driving the Soviets*, p.132

¹⁶⁵ CAB179/7, WRCI week ending 29 September 1959

¹⁶⁶ CAB128/33, CC(59)54th meeting, 20 October 1959; Horne, *Macmillan, 1957-1986*, p.218

¹⁶⁷ At the September meeting, they agreed to begin some “quiet” preparations, such as the practice of alerts, the maintenance of Berlin stockpiles, increased military use of the autobahn and preparation of extra air navigation equipment. CAB131/21, D(59)10th meeting, 18 September 1959; D(59)12th meeting, 9 December 1959

¹⁶⁸ CAB158/38, JIC(59)86(Final) “Current Soviet objectives and their relevance to a Summit conference”, 5 November 1959

out the familiar likely long-term Soviet aims: strengthen their bloc; co-exist and compete with the West; spread communist influence throughout the world; and disrupt Western defence plans. Khrushchev's more immediate aims, however, as deduced from Russian statements during and after Camp David, were to reduce tension and risk of war, as well as moving the West towards an acceptance of the status quo in Eastern Europe.

Looking forward towards a Summit, the JIC believed that the Soviets would want to focus jointly on disarmament and Germany. The Committee anticipated no change from the desire to conclude a peace treaty and convert West Berlin into a free city. Furthermore, Russian propaganda would make every effort to present the West as the inhibitors of peace. More optimistically, however, the JIC thought some sort of interim agreement on Berlin might secure the Allied position in return for a reduction in the Western garrisons. The assessment finished on a mixed note, indicating that provocative action before the Summit was unlikely, although the exact ramifications of worsening Sino-Soviet relations were difficult to foresee.

The JIC reports on events in Germany produced during the last three months of 1959 gave little cause for concern. GDR government announcements focused on economic improvements backed up a new Soviet-East German trade agreement.¹⁶⁹ When the GDR threatened to raise their flag over those S-bahn buildings they controlled in West Berlin, as part of the October Revolution anniversary celebrations, the JIC suggested matters could get out of hand, given West German police had been instructed to remove any offending colours.¹⁷⁰ When 7 November passed without any GDR flags, the JIC put it down to "the reluctance of the Russians at present to see a disturbance of the atmosphere of détente".¹⁷¹ Having achieved his long-term aim of getting a Summit meeting, the Committee did not expect Khrushchev to allow any activities that would jeopardise its coming to fruition.¹⁷²

¹⁶⁹ CAB179/7, WRCI weeks ending 13 October 1959, 24 November 1959

¹⁷⁰ CAB179/7, WRCI week ending 3 November 1959

¹⁷¹ CAB179/7, WRCI week ending 10 November 1959

¹⁷² CAB158/38, JIC(59)96(Final) "Six-monthly intelligence digest – period mid-May to mid-November 1959", 11 February 1960

In an assessment of the "Possibility of hostilities short of global war up to 1970", the JIC concluded that Khrushchev's chosen methods were more likely to be peaceful than forceful.¹⁷³ His intention was not to use Soviet aggression, but to "create a climate of international opinion in which it will be increasingly difficult for the Western Powers to use force to defend their national interests". Certainly, there was no chance of a direct Soviet or East German attack on West Berlin. The paper included no useful conclusions about the likely chain of events following on from interference with Allied communication rights. The JIC continued to believe that miscalculation or misunderstanding were the most likely causes of war.¹⁷⁴

BRIXMIS bear the brunt

The relative calm in Berlin after the Camp David visit was interrupted in early 1960, when the Russians used the Western Military Missions as a test-bed of Western resolve. From the beginning of the crisis, East German security forces had been making increasing attempts to disrupt Mission tours.¹⁷⁵ In February 1960, the interference switched to more administrative means: the Soviets took away old passes and replaced them with some describing the touring area as the territory of the GDR. To have accepted the passes would have meant recognising the East German government.

The Allies' attitudes towards an appropriate response were varied. The Americans viewed the move as a deliberate attempt to force Western recognition of the GDR, whereas the FO in London did not believe it be a "test" but "merely, from the Soviet point of view, an overdue piece of administrative tidying up".¹⁷⁶ Although US authorities in Germany rated their Mission highly, the view in Washington was that the operation was expendable. The British Chiefs of Staff reiterated their view that

¹⁷³ CAB158/37, JIC(59)69(Final), 29 October 1959

¹⁷⁴ CAB158/38, JIC(59)80(Final)(Revise) "The likelihood of global war between the Sino-Soviet bloc and the free world", 6 January 1960

¹⁷⁵ Geraghty, *BRIXMIS*, pp.75-9

¹⁷⁶ DEFE4/124, COS(60)12th meeting, 18 February 1960

BRIXMIS was the “principal source of military intelligence on East Germany and on the Soviet forces stationed there”. The approach favoured in the US was to cast doubt on the future of the whole Mission system, by threatening to either restrict the movement of or expel altogether SOXMIS. The Chiefs were not willing to risk losing BRIXMIS.

During a meeting of the Cabinet’s Defence Committee, the Prime Minister made it clear he was unwilling to see the long-term future of the Mission compromised because of its potential role in disarmament inspection.¹⁷⁷ Nevertheless, for the sake of solidarity with the US, he had to agree to the restriction of the Soviet Mission should all else fail. For a month, there were no Mission tours in East Germany. The stand-off finally ended when the Russians backed down and reverted to issuing the old passes.¹⁷⁸

The status of BRIXMIS was raised during the preparations for the Paris Summit. As before the Geneva CFM, the JIC produced a paper on Western intelligence agencies in Berlin, their value and the alternatives should their continued existence be jeopardised.¹⁷⁹ In general, the assessment emphasised the huge loss that would be felt, were any of the Berlin-based operations to be curtailed.¹⁸⁰ The question was raised whether BRIXMIS should be included, given its explicit role as a liaison mission rather than an intelligence-gathering body. The conclusion was that the Russians were fully aware of BRIXMIS’s real function, as demonstrated by the attempts to restrict their activities. Furthermore, the JIC echoed earlier ideas when they suggested that the Missions’ value as potential disarmament inspection teams should be emphasised at the Summit.

As had become the norm, the JIC also produced a pre-Summit study, focusing on likely Soviet policy towards Germany and Berlin.¹⁸¹ The assessment read largely the same as those produced before: the Russians would not offer reunification on terms

¹⁷⁷ CAB131/23, D(60)2nd meeting, 9 March 1960

¹⁷⁸ CAB128/34, CC(60)17th conclusions, 15 March 1960

¹⁷⁹ As before, the paper is withheld from the archive. The terms of reference are in CAB158/40, JIC(60)27(Terms of Reference) “British Intelligence Agencies in Berlin”, 13 April 1960

¹⁸⁰ CAB159/33, JIC(60)20th meeting, 13 April 1960

¹⁸¹ The FO asked for this update of previous assessments. CAB158/39, JIC(60)15(Final) “Soviet policy regarding Germany and Berlin”, 31 March 1960

acceptable to the West; they would seek to weaken the FRG and the Western Alliance, even by seemingly sacrificing some of their troops in the area; the aim of removing the West from Berlin remained, so any progress along that route would be gladly taken; and, finally, their tactics would continue to involve the Soviet self-presentation “as an apostle of sweet reasonableness and light”, despite threats of unilateral action in the case of failure to reach agreement.

Of more interest is the Committee’s assessment of likely Soviet actions in the case of no agreement on Berlin. They had noted that Khrushchev had held his line that, in this event, the USSR would sign a peace treaty with the GDR. The JIC did not, however, believe this course would automatically be taken; rather there was some element of flexibility, meaning that Soviet decisions would depend on “the general situation at the time”. The paper also showed awareness that the GDR government was attempting to apply pressure on the Russians to carry out the threat of unilateral action, so that its needs could be met. The Committee recognised that even if Khrushchev were to sign a treaty, his aim would be to make the transition of authority “as ‘painless’ as possible” so that the West were not goaded into “drastic... counteraction”. When considered against Harrison’s research using Russian and East German archives, the JIC appear to have produced a fairly accurate forecast.¹⁸²

Amidst preparations for Paris, the JIC analysed the latest rounds of Soviet defence cuts as announced by Khrushchev on 14 January 1960. The Soviet Premier stated that Russian forces would be cut by 1.2 million men, down to 2.4 million. During the speech, Khrushchev gave the strength of Russian forces in 1948, 1955 and at that time.¹⁸³ As a consequence, the JIC was forced to carry out a review of their own estimates, as each of their relevant figures varied by over a million from those avowed.¹⁸⁴ In a March assessment of the reductions, the Committee noted that 1.2 million men could be demobilised without any significant weakening of Soviet

¹⁸² Harrison, *Driving the Soviets*, pp.121-138

¹⁸³ PREM11/3117, Anthony Acland to de Zulueta, 22 January 1960. In 1948 there were 2,874,000 men, in 1955 5,763,000 and in 1960 3,623,000.

¹⁸⁴ The JIC 1948 estimate was over 1.1 million too high and the 1955 estimate was over 1.7 million too low.

strength.¹⁸⁵ The GSFG could lose six line divisions and still match the strength of opposing NATO forces, whilst at the same time handing the Russians a political advantage. The paper relayed that Khrushchev had informed the West German Ambassador in Moscow that forces in East Germany were scheduled to go. The matter was significant enough that in a rare display of feedback, Macmillan's foreign affairs Private Secretary wrote, "Sir Pat Dean may like to know that the Prime Minister was interested in the JIC paper on the Reduction of Soviet Forces".¹⁸⁶

Shooting down the Summit

The story of the May 1960 Paris Summit is an infamous commonplace. On 1 May, a CIA U2 reconnaissance aircraft on a deep penetration over-flight of the USSR was shot down.¹⁸⁷ Between 5-11 May, the Russians slowly leaked out the news, first revealing the shoot-down, then that the pilot, Gary Powers, had been captured and finally announcing that Powers would be put on trial.¹⁸⁸ When instead of distancing himself from the U2 flights as Khrushchev had hoped, Eisenhower supported their use, the Summit never got off the ground. Still, even though the Russian delegation openly abandoned Paris, Khrushchev did not make as much of the event as he could have done.¹⁸⁹ He told the world he was willing to remain patient over Germany and Berlin, making it clear he would wait for the successor administration to Eisenhower's.¹⁹⁰

Macmillan was devastated that the Summit had failed.¹⁹¹ His hopes had been realistic, however: in a rather gloomy report to Cabinet on 20 May, he suggested that even if Khrushchev had not left, agreement would have been difficult.¹⁹² He was unsure

¹⁸⁵ CAB158/39, JIC(60)14(Final) "Reduction in Soviet forces". 3 March 1960

¹⁸⁶ PREM11/3117, de Zulueta to Michael Wilford (FO), 9 March 1960

¹⁸⁷ For a fuller picture of the U2 programme during 1960, see Lashmar, *Spyflights*, pp.153-6; Aldrich, *Hidden Hand*, pp.535-8

¹⁸⁸ Harrison, *Driving the Soviets*, pp.135-6

¹⁸⁹ Gaddis, *We Now Know*, pp.142-3

¹⁹⁰ *Ibid*, p.151

¹⁹¹ Horne, *Macmillan 1957-1986*, p.230

¹⁹² CAB128/34, CC(60)32nd Conclusion, 20 May 1960

whether the Russians would be willing to continue with negotiations and further delay action in Berlin. The Prime Minister warned that they had to be prepared for a peace treaty and interference with Western rights in Berlin. One of the few positives from Paris had been the closer alignment of the Allies' approach to Berlin. For the time being, there was to be a "softly, softly" attitude.

The JIC's initial reactions to the collapse of the Summit were unsurprising. On 19 May, they called the intelligence machinery up to Alert Stage 1, which put the Heads of Section groups on stand-by for emergency meetings.¹⁹³ Although no specific intelligence had been received that warranted such a measure, the Alert was considered "prudent". An updated indicator list was issued, although this was due anyway.¹⁹⁴ Intelligence-collection had also been affected, since in the wake of the U2's downing, the FO had demanded "restraint [be] placed on intelligence gathering activities".¹⁹⁵ The restrictions lasted over a month; JIC(G) asked for permission to resume "normal touring and photo reconnaissance flights in the Berlin Control Zone" in early June.¹⁹⁶ Permission was granted, with the following guidance: "the right policy was to aim at a steady return to normal intelligence gathering operations while taking all possible steps to avoid the risk of any embarrassment".

The longer-term impact of Paris was felt in two ways in the JIC. First, there was the continued imperative to produce assessments of Soviet intentions in support of policy-making. There was also the need to think more about the problems of intelligence in the wider context of the Cold War. The BRIXMIS passes and the U2 had dragged intelligence once again to the centre-stage of the international politics in the first half of 1960; in the second half of the year, an attack on BRIXMIS and a second shoot-down, this time of a US RB-47 elint aircraft over the Barents Sea, ensured that it could not escape the spotlight.¹⁹⁷

¹⁹³ CAB159/33, JIC(60)26th meeting, 19 May 1960

¹⁹⁴ CAB158/39, JIC(60)9(Final) "Indicators of Sino-Soviet bloc preparations for early war", 13 May 1960

¹⁹⁵ CAB159/33, JIC(60)30th meeting, 9 June 1960; Aldrich, *Hidden Hand*, p. 538

¹⁹⁶ JIC(60)30th meeting

¹⁹⁷ See later for more on these. Also, Geraghty, *BRIXMIS*, pp.79-80; Lashmar, *Spyflights*, pp.158-171

Political and military assessments

During July 1960, the JIC produced their first two significant post-Paris papers. One looked at likely Soviet reactions to LIVE OAK operations and the other at Kremlin policy in the round during the second half of 1960.¹⁹⁸ Cradock includes commentary on both assessments in his account of the crisis, concluding that, “[d]uring this period the JIC did not move far from its analysis of February 1959.”¹⁹⁹

The background to the LIVE OAK estimate mirrored many that had gone before: the Soviet aim was “to force the Allies into *de facto* dealing with the DDR”; they also wished to avoid global war; the Russians would “endeavour to remain in control of DDR action”; and they would attempt to sway world opinion.²⁰⁰ On the likely reaction to either land or air operations to force a passage to Berlin, the Committee was slightly more specific than it had been earlier. They anticipated that the Russians might act in a rather more cautious and calculated way than had been previously thought. They predicted that a land probe would be blocked first with physical obstacles and then by military force (probably East German), in each case acting rather passively in order to leave the Western force the decision as to whether they should initiate action. Allied air action would be more difficult to disrupt, but the JIC thought that the use of electronic countermeasures “could seriously hamper a full scale airlift”.

The assessment warned that the danger of war through miscalculation was ever present, but more predictably the Soviets were only likely to escalate matters if they were sure Western opinion viewed war over Berlin as unacceptable. The tone of the paper is not quite as dramatic as the January 1959 estimate, but the underlying message that LIVE OAK operations were fraught with danger remained. The Chiefs of Staff and Macmillan certainly agreed.²⁰¹ The JIC were also sure that Soviet intelligence would

¹⁹⁸ CAB158/40, JIC(60)40(Final) “Soviet and East German reactions to military measures foreseen in Berlin contingency planning”, 6 July 1960; JIC(60)49(Final) “Soviet intentions in the second half of 1960”, 14 July 1960

¹⁹⁹ Cradock, *Know Your Enemy*, pp.149-150

²⁰⁰ JIC(60)40(Final)

²⁰¹ DEFE4/128, COS(60)50th meeting, 9 August 1960; CAB131/23, D(60)11th meeting, 2 November 1960

have picked up the few preparations being made. This was both a blessing and a curse: the Russians would not be surprised by any Western action, and hence react without thought; however, foreknowledge of plans would make it easier for the probes to be hampered. According to Murphy *et al*, by July 1961 at the latest, the KGB knew about LIVE OAK planning thanks to their sources in Western governments and NATO.²⁰²

The second report produced in July 1960 contained nothing new.²⁰³ Its introduction was exactly the same as that produced in the November 1959 assessment of Soviet policy between the Geneva CFM and Summit.²⁰⁴ The addition in 1960 was a prediction that the Russians would seek to maximise Eisenhower's weakness as an end-of-term President through more aggressive propaganda and political warfare. On Berlin particularly, the JIC anticipated that threats of a peace treaty would continue although they were "most unlikely" to actually sign one. They also suggested that any Western provocative actions, such as holding meetings of the Bundestag as planned in Berlin, might prompt Soviet "counter action" of an unspecified nature.

In September, Ulbricht took Berlin matters into his own hands by first restricting access of West Germans to the East and then by forcing Western Ambassadors to show identification before entering East Berlin.²⁰⁵ The GDR government was growing impatient as the refugee exodus was reaching economic disaster point.²⁰⁶ These actions were not sanctioned by the Russians, who were as the JIC had predicted, trying to restrain the GDR from changing the border regime in East Berlin altogether.²⁰⁷ Unfortunately, there are no JIC documents in the archive that were produced in response to these events; the WRCI records for 1960-1 were not kept.²⁰⁸ This is unfortunate since it denies the opportunity to investigate the extent to which the JIC were aware of the

²⁰² Murphy *et al*, *Battleground Berlin*, pp.368-9

²⁰³ JIC(60)49(Final)

²⁰⁴ See above

²⁰⁵ Harrison, *Driving the Soviets*, pp.144-151

²⁰⁶ 9,803 fled in the months of February 1960, during May 1960 20,285 had gone. Overall in 1959, 120,230 left, in 1960 this rose to 182,278. Harrison, *Driving the Soviets*, pp.148, 158

²⁰⁷ *Ibid*, pp.149-153

²⁰⁸ The CIA and KGB assessments are discussed in Murphy *et al*, *Battleground Berlin*, pp.334-9

difficulties Khrushchev was having in holding back Ulbricht.²⁰⁹ When the Defence Committee discussed the first of these events – the restrictions on West Germans – they displayed no particular worry.²¹⁰

When the JIC carried out their December 1960 appraisal of the likelihood of war, they wrote that one of the likely causes of war by miscalculation was “if either side failed accurately to foresee the consequences of the policies being pursued by a third party with which it was associated”.²¹¹ In the section looking at Berlin, the Committee believed “it is not improbable that we shall be faced during the next twelve month with a Berlin crisis”, although they could not “foresee” what form it might take. Indicating that they were aware of some sort of gap between the Russians and East Germans, the JIC noted that “the possibility that the East German Government, either acting at the instigation of the Soviet Government or acting alone, may cut Allied... communications with Berlin cannot be ruled out”. The assessment suggested that the Russians might find themselves being dragged into difficult circumstances by the GDR government, because of German frustration with a lack of progress. In such a case, the JIC recommended moderation on the part of the Allies so that the Soviets could regain control of events and lead them away from war.

Intelligence collection after Paris

Aldrich writes that the loss of the U2 and RB-47 “led to a public outcry in Britain and endless questions in the House of Commons” about the use of British bases.²¹² The attention, focused largely on the question of authority behind operations, “served as a reprise of the Crabb Affair and cast a long shadow over other British intelligence operations”. The JIC held a special meeting after the second shoot-down to discuss the history of the ‘ferret’ flights, in order to produce a briefing for the Prime

²⁰⁹ Harrison, *Driving the Soviets*, pp.147-156

²¹⁰ CAB131/23, D(60)9th meeting, 16 September 1960

²¹¹ CAB158/41, JIC(60)77(Final) “The likelihood of war with the Soviet Union, either limited or global, up to 1965”, 15 December 1960

²¹² Aldrich, *Hidden Hand*, pp.536-8

Minister.²¹³ The Committee decided that an urgent meeting was required with the Americans to review both the intelligence and political aspects of the flights.²¹⁴ As part of the effort to head off any further embarrassment, the photographic flights in the Berlin air corridor which had been recently reinstated after the U2 incident were suspended once again.²¹⁵

An incident involving BRIXMIS on 21 June 1960 had brought further attention to intelligence-gathering. A tour including the Mission Chief, Brigadier John Packard, was stopped by the East German Stasi, the men were attacked and their cars were ransacked and destroyed.²¹⁶ Shortly after at a news conference, Ulbricht displayed maps and equipment taken from BRIXMIS, claiming that these were preparations for Western attacks. The Russians went on to claim that Packard's safety could no longer be guaranteed and the British were forced to withdraw him. When the JIC discussed Ulbricht's performance, they concluded that although BRIXMIS should perhaps not have taken the maps into East Germany, "hitherto we had relied on diplomatic immunity for protection against their exposure".²¹⁷ Macmillan took an interest, as he had done last time BRIXMIS made the headlines. In a letter to the Prime Minister, Christopher Soames, the Secretary of State for War, reiterated the high value of the Mission was such that "the present irritations and risks of further trouble should... therefore be accepted".²¹⁸

The FO asked the JIC to carry out an assessment of BRIXMIS in light of the increasing harassment.²¹⁹ In particular, they wanted to know whether the motivation behind the action was political or the prevention of intelligence-gathering, and whether

²¹³ CAB159/34, JIC(60)36th meeting, 13 July 1960. The Prime Minister asked for the material. See, PREM11/3324, Dean to Brook, 15 July 1960. The paper produced is not available in the archive.

²¹⁴ Hugh Stephenson, the new JIC Chairman, met with Macmillan in September to agree on the British approach to joint Anglo-American rules on ferret flights. See CAB159/34, JIC(60)48th meeting, 22 September 1960. As a consequence of the joint review, it became much harder to gain approval for intelligence flights. See Aldrich, *Hidden Hand*, pp.538-9

²¹⁵ See above; JIC(60)36th meeting

²¹⁶ Geraghty, *BRIXMIS*, pp.79-80

²¹⁷ CAB159/34, JIC(60)38th meeting, 21 July 1960

²¹⁸ PREM11/3008, Secretary of State for War to Prime Minister, 19 July 1960

²¹⁹ CAB158/40, JIC(60)48(Terms of Reference) "East German attitude towards BRIXMIS", 29 June 1960

there had been “a marked change in the East German attitude... immediately after the Summit”. Furthermore, the FO wanted estimates of what the effect of retaliatory measures against SOXMIS might be and how serious a loss of intelligence would be felt if the Missions were withdrawn.

The JIC was certain that the recent moves were political in nature; earlier non-violent harassment had been used to inhibit intelligence-collection.²²⁰ The problem with passes in February was to force *de facto* dealings with the GDR, whilst Ulbricht’s verbal attacks on the Missions had emphasised their connection with occupation. The Committee noted that the violence had begun after Khrushchev had left Paris and announced his willingness to be patient over Berlin. They were unsure whether the East German measures had been carried out with Russian foreknowledge, but were sure that the GDR government was now out of control. The assessment even suggested that the Germans were acting out of frustration at Khrushchev’s apparent passivity. As for the FO’s suggested solutions to the Mission equation, the JIC were unenthusiastic. Any limits imposed on SOXMIS would be reciprocated, hindering intelligence-gathering and withdrawing BRIXMIS altogether would mean losing an irreplaceable source. The paper recalled the conclusions made in their pre-Paris assessment of intelligence operations in Berlin: “if BRIXMIS were withdrawn, it would be impossible to obtain the same intelligence coverage either in quality, quantity or speed, by any other means”. The JIC agreed with Soames; suffer the harassment and maintain the Mission.

BRIXMIS were restricted in their touring until the end of the year. In order to avoid further incident, the Mission was ordered to obey forbidden-area signs. In September, General Rohan Delacombe, Commandant in Berlin, suggested these shackles be removed wherever the intelligence reward was worth the risk and that SOXMIS be further limited in their mobility.²²¹ JIC(G) asked at the same time that BRIXMIS be granted permission to make efforts to slip their tails “even at the risk of incident”. The FO gave a firm no to ignoring signs, but a hesitant yes to eluding

²²⁰ CAB158/40, JIC(60)48(Final) “East German attitude towards BRIXMIS”, 14 July 1960

²²¹ CAB159/34, JIC(60)45th meeting, 1 September 1960

“narks”. The JIC line remained unchanged, stating that the main aim was to preserve the Mission, so reprisals against SOXMIS were undesirable, and furthermore the intelligence being produced was still of value despite the restrictions. A second request to raise the limitations came in December, this time supported by the Service intelligence members of the JIC.²²² The Committee agreed to put the matter of authorising risky tours in the hands of the C-in-C Germany, but in the same signal they mentioned “Ministers’ continuing anxiety over anything liable to affect the situation in Berlin”. After visiting Germany in February 1961, Stephenson reassured the JIC that BRIXMIS operations “were intelligently planned and not needlessly provocative”.²²³

These scenes of intense pressure and scrutiny were those that welcomed Sir Hugh Stephenson when he took over from Dean as JIC Chairman in July 1960.²²⁴ One of the first papers produced under his reign was “Russian action against Western intelligence gathering”, which attempted to deduce whether the actions of the previous six months “could be construed as a deliberate plan or consists of opportunist moves to take advantage of the position following the U2 incident”.²²⁵ The paper considered the following events: the U2 and RB-47 shoot-downs; the expulsion of the US Air Attaché from Moscow; the increasing hostility towards Western visitors to Russia; the greater restriction of Western access to Soviet publications; more Russian protests about the “buzzing” and surveillance of their ships and aircraft; the harassment of BRIXMIS; and the defection of two NSA officials. The list was long and it could have gone back further.

The JIC concluded that there was a “deliberate Soviet policy to frighten the West from pursuing their former intelligence gathering activities”. Any success in doing so would only act as greater encouragement to persevere with the policy. The BRIXMIS incidents had a special political element to them and the nature of the NSA defections was unknown, but the other events had “served the two-fold purpose of furthering the

²²² CAB159/34, JIC(60)60th meeting, 1 December 1960

²²³ CAB159/35, JIC(61)9th meeting, 16 February 1961

²²⁴ Stephenson’s first meeting was 28 July. CAB159/34, JIC(60)40th meeting, 28 July 1960

²²⁵ CAB158/41, JIC(60)59(Final), 25 August 1960

Soviet propaganda campaign and discouraging intelligence gathering by the West". The U2 shoot-down in particular "must have alerted the Soviet authorities to the need for improved security in all possible fields and certainly contributed to the vigour with which the Russians have developed their propaganda campaign".

The paradoxical dangers of intelligence operations had been exposed. Whilst risky operations such as over-flights and BRIXMIS tours yielded great results, once the covert had become public and intelligence affected international politics, intelligence had to be reined in. Secret intelligence often has to be kept secret for two reasons: firstly, when the precise nature of an intelligence-gathering operation is revealed, it almost certainly gives the target the opportunity to either prevent or at least make more difficult the collection of information by that method; secondly, disclosure is likely to cause embarrassment for governments and damage relations, especially when the two sides are engaged in open diplomacy. Bodies managing intelligence in open societies, like the JIC, were, and still are, left with the need to constantly weigh up the balance between risk and reward.

A case-study in collection: over-flights in Berlin

From 1959 onwards, the Russians began to develop an air defence ring of SAMs around Berlin. As described above, from June 1959, the JIC reported with increasing certainty about the development of the sites. Geraghty writes that first ground photography and then an air sortie in BRIXMIS's Chipmunk light aircraft provided much of the early information.²²⁶ He also reports that the pictures were on Eisenhower's desk within a week. Photographic flights in and around Berlin were a regular source of valuable intelligence.²²⁷ All over-flights of Soviet territory, however, were banned after the RB-47 shoot-down, although the aircraft continued to fly in the Berlin air corridor with camera ports open "to maintain continuity", but with no cameras fitted.²²⁸ This was

²²⁶ Geraghty, *BRIXMIS*, pp.89-91

²²⁷ Maddrell, *Spying on Science*, p.101

²²⁸ CAB159/34, JIC(60)36th meeting, 13 July 1960

presumably for the benefit of deceiving the Russians into thinking that nothing had changed, whilst removing the risk of a crash revealing photographic equipment.

In September 1960, JIC(G) requested permission from the JIC to carry out an air photography flight in the Berlin corridors in order to get pictures of the SAM sites, before roofs were installed on the buildings. The JIC agreed to a single sortie in a Pembroke aircraft, although Stephenson doubted they would gain ministerial approval for the action, because of the sensitivity of Berlin.²²⁹ The Committee thought the intelligence benefit would be great, since in the context of the crisis, it would be vital to know when the SAM sites were operational and furthermore the risk of incident were small because weekly dummy flights had been taking place since the ban had been brought in.

The Prime Minister refused permission because of the proximity of the UN General Assembly meeting.²³⁰ Stephenson relayed to the JIC that the ban would be reviewed after the UN meeting, although to gain approval, flights would have to yield wider intelligence on the Soviet threat rather than on Berlin specifically, because Macmillan did not anticipate military action in Germany. At the same time, BRIXMIS had suggested they could carry out a Chipmunk flight with little risk of incident.²³¹

JIC(G) sent a further request in November, after the UN session had closed.²³² Stephenson doubted Ministerial approval would yet be forthcoming. Air Marshal Sidney Bufton (ACAS(Intelligence)), pointed out that the resumption of photographic sorties was important in terms of relations with the Americans, since the BRIXMIS Chipmunk gave the British a capability the US did not have. In order to meet Macmillan's requirement of a wider intelligence reward, the Committee agreed that pictures from Berlin would provide information about SAM sites throughout the Soviet

²²⁹ CAB159/34, JIC(60)47th meeting, 15 September 1960

²³⁰ CAB159/34, JIC(60)48th meeting, 22 September 1960

²³¹ CAB159/34, JIC(60)49th meeting, 29 September 1960

²³² CAB159/34, JIC(60)58th meeting, 24 November 1960

bloc.²³³ The problem was that the full value of the opportunity would only be gained if flights were flown over several months whilst the sites were completed, a commitment Ministers would never make. The JIC decided to submit a proposal to find out.

The proposal was detailed, specifying: the need for information on SAM missile and radar capabilities; the level of urgency due to the speed of construction; the photographic possibilities and performance offered by the Pembroke and Chipmunk; the priorities given to the five targets; the level of risk of a forced landing (zero for the Pembroke and “extremely remote” for the Chipmunk); the proposed cover story, which was a survey of RAF Gatow’s airfield; and the speed with which film could be destroyed, five minutes for the Pembroke, three for the Chipmunk.²³⁴ The paper concluded by referring to “a unique opportunity” and recommended two sorties for each aircraft type.

Authority was received and by the end of February 1961, the flights had been conducted.²³⁵ In order to make the most of each mission, they were only carried out in the best possible weather. In March, JIC(G) requested permission for both more flights and a transfer of authority over Chipmunk flights from ministers to Delacombe.²³⁶ Stephenson also thought it was time for the JIC to take back responsibility for all photographic flights. On the advice of the Cabinet Secretary, Sir Norman Brook, however, the proposals did not go forward to Ministers, presumably because of the continuing problems over Berlin.²³⁷ Nevertheless, JIC(G) requests for flights kept coming in.²³⁸

In May, Brook allowed the JIC to make its bid, although he doubted if it would be successful.²³⁹ By now, the JIC was asking for eight SAM flights, Delacombe’s

²³³ CAB159/34, JIC(60)60th meeting, 1 December 1960

²³⁴ CAB158/41, JIC(60)84(Final) “Air photography of surface to air guided weapons (SAGW) sites around Berlin”, 9 December 1960

²³⁵ CAB159/35, JIC(61)9th meeting, 16 February 1961

²³⁶ CAB159/35, JIC(61)11th meeting, 2 March 1961

²³⁷ CAB159/35, JIC(61)24th meeting, 11 May 1961

²³⁸ CAB159/35, JIC(61)23rd meeting, 4 May 1961

²³⁹ JIC(61)24th meeting

authority over Chipmunk flights and three more flights over GSFG equipment demonstrations. The Committee decided to drop the suggestion that they take back the right to approve further flights.

It becomes much more difficult to trace this story at this point. The JIC minutes referring to the matter after May 1961 are scarce and the relevant Prime Minister's files are not available in the archive. JIC(G) sought permission for both Pembroke and Chipmunk flights over a range of targets in August, September and October, all of which had to go up for the Prime Minister's consideration.²⁴⁰ In November and December, circumstances changed when the Soviet controller of the Berlin Air Safety Zone demanded that all local Western flights be limited to West Berlin.²⁴¹ As a consequence both the JIC and the FO agreed that Chipmunk photographic flights outside the West of the city should be suspended, although visual sorties without photographic equipment could continue. The JIC sought permission from Ministers for the use of small hand-held cameras on board the flights, once ordinary over-flights of East Berlin had proven to be trouble-free.²⁴² At exactly the same time, the JIC granted permission for Pembroke photographic flights to stray further from the centre line of the air corridors (up to 10 miles), in order to increase the range over which they could take pictures. By the end of December, Ministers had once again approved the use of Chipmunk photographic flights.²⁴³

Going to the Wall

Two new factors affected the development of the Berlin crisis as it rolled into 1961. East German patience had run out so that, as Gaddis puts it, "it was Ulbricht who drove the process, with Khrushchev scrambling to keep up".²⁴⁴ The Soviet Premier was

²⁴⁰ CAB159/36, JIC(61)44th meeting, 28 August 1961; JIC(61)51st meeting, 28 September 1961; JIC(61)55th meeting, 19 October 1961. Permission was granted for at least some of the flights.

²⁴¹ CAB159/36, JIC(61)59th meeting, 7 November 1961

²⁴² CAB159/36, JIC(61)62nd meeting, 16 November 1961

²⁴³ CAB159/36, JIC(61)69th meeting, 21 December 1961

²⁴⁴ Gaddis, *We Now Know*, p.143

forced into agreeing that should talks with the new US President John F. Kennedy fail, unilateral action would be taken.²⁴⁵ The second new variable was the young President himself: his attitudes to the crisis once in power had to be unveiled. By the time Macmillan first met Kennedy as President in late March, a US-USSR Summit had already been agreed for 3-4 June in Vienna.²⁴⁶ The Prime Minister's impressions of Kennedy's attitudes to Berlin were mixed: although the President seemed more willing to consider *de facto* dealings with the GDR, if access were blocked Kennedy felt a significant Western land force should be used to fully display commitment.²⁴⁷ Macmillan's confidence in Kennedy was not particularly shaken by the Bay of Pigs disaster, in which CIA-backed Cuban exiles failed to overthrow Castro.²⁴⁸

There is relatively little evidence of Berlin-related matters in the JIC files for early 1961. New indicator lists were issued that included the usual collection of military preparations in East Germany.²⁴⁹ Forward deployment of GSFG, increased readiness of missile artillery units and priority for military trains on the railways were all on the red list. Under amber was interference with civil and military flights in the Berlin air corridors. When in late April, intelligence sources picked up a change in the pattern of Soviet military communications in Germany, the JIC discussed the implications of the move.²⁵⁰ In general, however, the observations of both Soviet and East German forces suggested no great surprises: air defences were still improving, GSFG had received a new heavy tank and East German forces amounted to 135,000 men, including four motor rifle divisions and two tank divisions.²⁵¹ There were surprises at home, however. It was during April that the extent of George Blake's treachery was becoming known.²⁵²

²⁴⁵ Harrison, *Driving the Soviets*, pp.156, 166-7

²⁴⁶ Horne, *Macmillan 1957-1986*, p.296

²⁴⁷ CAB128/35, CC(61)22nd conclusions, 20 April 1961

²⁴⁸ Horne, *Macmillan 1957-1986*, p.300. For a description of this Cuban misadventure (17-20 April, 1961), see Andrew, Christopher, *For the President's Eyes Only: Secret Intelligence and the American Presidency for Washington to Bush* (London: HarperCollins, 1996), pp.257-267

²⁴⁹ CAB158/42, JIC(61)9(Final) "Indicators of Sino-Soviet bloc preparations for early war", 20 April 1961

²⁵⁰ Unfortunately, the details of the discussion are withheld from public view. CAB159/35, JIC(61)22nd meeting, 27 April 1961

²⁵¹ CAB158/42, JIC(61)3(Final) "Sino-Soviet bloc war potential 1961-1965", 26 April 1961

²⁵² Bower, *Perfect English Spy*, pp.255-271

In the build up to the Vienna Summit, the JIS prepared an up-to-date assessment of the GSFG and East German order of battle, their state of readiness and deployment, with particular attention on the missile units.²⁵³ The paper had been requested by SHAPE as part of their “comprehensive study” of the crisis.²⁵⁴ It was never issued, however.²⁵⁵ A further assessment, “Soviet aims and intentions in Berlin”, had been planned for before the Summit took place, but it too was not completed.²⁵⁶ The Cabinet was also being prepared for Vienna.²⁵⁷ They heard that the Western Powers had agreed that Kennedy would not make any new proposals for Berlin, partly because the FRG was unwilling to accept a solution recognising two Germanies. The more optimistic note was that both the Americans and West Germans had agreed that the question of whose signature was on a pass was not worth military action. On the matter of contingency planning, however, the British were still trying to persuade the Americans that an airlift was the right option.²⁵⁸

Vienna came to nothing, as neither side offered concessions.²⁵⁹ Kennedy firmly warned Khrushchev of his commitment to Berlin.²⁶⁰ Khrushchev blasted Kennedy with threats of a peace treaty before December. In a private moment immediately after, Macmillan comforted a shaken President.²⁶¹ Kennedy was interested to read later, courtesy of Penkovsky, the Russian impressions of the Summit which played up Khrushchev’s determination.²⁶² The Prime Minister mused with his Cabinet in the days following Vienna whether it was time to allow the peace treaty to go ahead and accept East German control of access, whilst trying not to appear like the West was conceding defeat.²⁶³ After returning to Washington, however, Kennedy with Dean Acheson as his

²⁵³ CAB158/43, JIC(61)37(Terms of Reference) “Posture of Soviet and East German forces in East Germany”, 5 May 1961

²⁵⁴ CAB159/35, JIC(61)26th meeting, 17 May 1961

²⁵⁵ Report withdrawn 7 July 1961

²⁵⁶ CAB159/35, JIC(61)28th meeting, 1 June 1961. The assessment was produced after the Summit, see below.

²⁵⁷ CAB128/35, CC(61)27th conclusions, 11 May 1961

²⁵⁸ CAB131/26, D(61)31 “Berlin Contingency Planning”, 30 May 1961

²⁵⁹ Gaddis, *We Now Know*, p.145

²⁶⁰ Harrison, *Driving the Soviets*, pp.175-7

²⁶¹ Horne, *Macmillan 1957-1986*, pp.303-5

²⁶² Andrew, *For the President’s Eyes Only*, pp.268-9

²⁶³ CAB128/35, CC(61)30th conclusions, 6 June 1961

main Berlin adviser began to prepare for war.²⁶⁴ The CIA, when asked to make preparations to incite instability in the East, had to advise that they did not have the necessary capability.²⁶⁵ The British Cabinet Defence Committee realised they would have to work harder to persuade the Americans that an airlift was the only sensible military action if the crisis came to head.²⁶⁶

Berlin was first on the JIC's order of business after Vienna. Major-General Richard Lloyd (DMI) raised the matter of public opinion in relation to the crisis.²⁶⁷ He recalled that Khrushchev had claimed the West was not willing to go to war over Berlin and hence, the DMI suggested that in order to make good assessments of Soviet intentions, an understanding of the popular view as the Russians saw it would be needed. General Strong opined that after the Bay of Pigs, the American people were not "prepared to accept another blow to their prestige". So as to stay properly informed, the JIC decided to ask the Washington Embassy to provide their analysis of US public opinion.

On 12 June, the JIC held a special meeting on the crisis, in which they considered their post-Vienna paper "Soviet aims and intentions in Berlin".²⁶⁸ Stephenson's comment on the report is fascinating:

The Chairman said that the Committee was somewhat inhibited in making this assessment, in that they were unable to postulate what action the West was likely to take and could not therefore suggest what the subsequent Russian reactions might be.

Stephenson had described one of the enduring problems of top-level intelligence assessment: if were not hard enough trying to make realistic forecasts about the actions of another state or group of individuals, in many cases there is also the constant variable of the impact of your own government's policy decisions.

²⁶⁴ Schake, Kori, "A Broader Range of Choice? US Policy in the 1958 and 1961 Berlin Crises" in Gearson and Schake, *The Berlin Wall Crisis*, p.32

²⁶⁵ Murphy *et al*, *Battleground Berlin*, pp.365-7

²⁶⁶ CAB131/26, D(61)35 "Berlin Contingency Planning", 12 June 1961

²⁶⁷ CAB159/35, JIC(61)29th meeting, 8 June 1961

²⁶⁸ CAB159/35, JIC(61)30th meeting, 12 June 1961

The assessment began with a few sentences on this problem, indicating that the JIC had not examined likely Soviet reactions to Western moves in Berlin, because the West had not yet agreed what those moves might be.²⁶⁹ Rather the paper described long- and short-term Russian objectives, as well as their probable tactics. In two appendices, the Committee included order of battle intelligence on GSFG and East German forces and a “brief résumé” of economic circumstances in Berlin and the GDR.²⁷⁰

Cradock examines the paper, reasonably concluding that it was “probably an accurate picture of likely Soviet tactics and of Ulbricht’s pressing need to deal with the refugee exodus”.²⁷¹ The JIC expected an autumn peak for the crisis, as the Russians pushed the West into a decision between *de facto* dealings with the GDR or “exceptional measures to support its rights”. The Committee anticipated the West taking the first option, which would in turn leave the GDR “more free to take the measures urgently necessary to control the flow of refugees through Berlin to the West”. Cradock points out that the assessment recognised the “tensions” between Khrushchev and Ulbricht, by suggesting that the Russians were perhaps not prepared to sign a treaty and hand over the delicate question of Allied communications with Berlin to the GDR government. The Committee thought that the Russians had “probably not yet decided exactly how they will proceed”.

Although the JIC had written that the Soviets had probably not yet decided on their course of action, the Foreign Secretary, by now Lord Home, told the Cabinet on 20 June that the Russians no longer looked willing to negotiate.²⁷² He did, however, agree that autumn would be the likely time for movement on Berlin, most probably a peace treaty. It seems likely that Home was responding both to Khrushchev’s unequivocal speech on 15 June and, on the same day, Ulbricht’s press conference at which he asserted first that a peace treaty would mean GDR control of Allied access to Berlin and

²⁶⁹ CAB158/44, JIC(61)42(Final) “Soviet aims and intentions in Berlin”, 15 June 1961

²⁷⁰ The military appendix is not present in the archive.

²⁷¹ Cradock, *Know Your Enemy*, p.151

²⁷² CAB128/35, CC(61)34th conclusions, 20 June 1961

second that there was no plan to build a wall.²⁷³ The East German response to the press conference was a further increase in the numbers of refugees fleeing.²⁷⁴ Macmillan was aware enough of the exodus that he asked the FO for their estimate of the figures.²⁷⁵ The Prime Minister was more concerned, however, with the economic impact of the crisis. He wrote on 24 June, “I still think we are more likely to be bankrupted than to be blown up, though of course it would not be any comfort in being blown up to know that one was bankrupt”.²⁷⁶

There was an effort to co-ordinate thinking about Berlin around Whitehall. The Chiefs of Staff heard from Sir Frank Roberts, Ambassador in Moscow, and Sir Christopher “Kit” Steel, Ambassador in Bonn, on 20 June.²⁷⁷ Roberts’ assessment of Soviet intentions was very similar to that produced by the JIC. The Chiefs also met with Sir Evelyn Shuckburgh, Deputy Under-Secretary in charge of the FO Western Department; all agreed that there was still so much work to be done on contingency planning that only a high-level military meeting with the US, French, Germans and Norstad would do. The Defence Committee shared the view that planning was in a mess.²⁷⁸ The JIC were joined by Edward Tomkins, head of the FO Western Department, at their 22 June meeting, who reported disagreement between the British, Americans, French and Germans on both interpretation of Russian moves and contingency planning.²⁷⁹ The British had at least decided on their chosen course of action: if a peace treaty were signed and the GDR took over traffic supervision, the West should accept it; but if traffic were interfered with, a small land probe should be dispatched whilst non-

²⁷³ Harrison, *Driving the Soviets*, pp.178-181

²⁷⁴ “17,791 East Germans had fled in May, 19,198 fled in June, and 12,578 in the first two weeks of July”, Harrison, p.178. In July and early August, the refugees numbered over 1,000 a day.

²⁷⁵ PREM11/3365, de Zulueta to Ian Samuel (FO), 23 June 1961. The reply sent on 30 June gave the following figures – for 1960, a total of 199,188 refugees, in January 1961 16,697, February 13,576, March 16,803, April 19,803 and May 17,791

²⁷⁶ PREM11/3348, Macmillan to Freddie Bishop “Berlin”, 24 June 1961. In his reply, Bishop pointed out the interconnectivity between Britain’s application to join the EEC, Berlin and the UK’s economic position, see Bishop to Macmillan including “UK International Policies in the light of the UK economic position”, 26 June 1961

²⁷⁷ DEFE4/136, COS(61)38th meeting, 20 June 1961

²⁷⁸ CAB131/26, D(61)40 “Berlin Contingency Planning”, 28 June 1961

²⁷⁹ CAB159/35, JIC(61)32nd meeting, 22 June 1961

military countermeasures²⁸⁰ would be employed. Once the probe had been held, an airlift should be the next move. Macmillan did want planning attention paid to steps beyond, however, where preparations for war might be needed.²⁸¹

On 19 July, Home warned the Cabinet that the crisis was worsening and that negotiations appeared to be going nowhere.²⁸² Unknown to the West, Khrushchev had already yielded to Ulbricht's pressure and granted permission for a border closure.²⁸³ Kennedy warned Macmillan on 20 July that although they had not given up on negotiations, the Americans were about to begin a military build-up; he was going to ask Congress for an extra \$3.5 billion to strengthen forces in Europe, call up reserves and improve civil defence at home.²⁸⁴ Kennedy announced the request, whilst making a forceful commitment to Berlin in a broadcast on the 25 July.²⁸⁵ Khrushchev responded in kind; he announced an increase in the Soviet defence budget as well as an end to the self-imposed 1958 ban on nuclear testing. Included within Kennedy's address, however, had been the first of a number of hints that the crisis did not have to end in war; he had committed the US to West Berlin only, leaving the option of sealing the border.²⁸⁶ Preparations for just that had been underway since 15 July.

Despite the alarm of Kennedy's speech, Earl Mountbatten, Chief of the Defence Staff, reported to the Chiefs of Staff that the Americans had come a long way towards sharing the British view of contingency planning; they seemed to be willing to accept a small land probe and an airlift as well as non-military measures.²⁸⁷ The US, however, expected the British to increase the strength of their forces in Europe too. This went against the measures to reduce forces in Germany, outlined in the post-Suez review of

²⁸⁰ Such as an appeal to the UN, economic sanctions, interference with Soviet aircraft elsewhere and a naval blockade. Brook set up a Cabinet Committee to consider these plans, PREM11/3348, PM/61/86 Home to Macmillan, 23 June 1961

²⁸¹ D(61)40

²⁸² CAB129/105, C(61)97 "East-West Relations", 19 July 1961

²⁸³ Harrison, *Driving the Soviets*, pp.184-6

²⁸⁴ PREM11/3348, Kennedy to Macmillan, 20 July 1961

²⁸⁵ Gaddis, *We Now Know*, pp.146-8

²⁸⁶ Harrison, *Driving the Soviets*, pp.187-192

²⁸⁷ DEFE4/137, COS(61)47th meeting, 25 July 1961

defence by Duncan Sandys.²⁸⁸ In 1958, the British had wanted to reduce the BAOR from 55,000 to 45,000 men, but after US protests and an offer of over \$11 million in financial assistance, the reduction was held off.²⁸⁹ By early 1961, however, manpower shortages left the BAOR at 51,000, whilst the Government warned NATO that it could only maintain 48,000 men over the 1961-3 period and furthermore, it would have to withdraw three fighter squadrons from Germany unless the Germans agreed to pay their costs.²⁹⁰ After Kennedy's 25 July speech, the Americans expected the BAOR to be brought back up to 55,000.²⁹¹ The British were only able to muster an extra 2,000 men, however, although the strategic reserve forces in the UK were reinforced.²⁹²

On the 27 July, the JIC produced "An assessment of the overall balance of military power insofar as it affects the Berlin situation" from the Soviet perspective.²⁹³ In terms of conventional forces, the Committee were sure that the Russians would be confident in their superiority. Concurrent with that realisation, however, would be the recognition that the West would use tactical nuclear weapons in response to aggression by overwhelming conventional forces and hence, would lead to global nuclear war. The JIC thought that "the risk of escalation will, therefore, for varying reasons deter both sides from opening conventional hostilities". The paper echoed much that the Committee had written before when it described the unique problem the West faced over Berlin: the Soviets could raise difficulties by cutting off land access "without initiating hostilities". The paper's final paragraphs were on strategic nuclear attack; the JIC showed that they believed that the Soviets' certainty of their own destruction through Western retaliation would prevent them launching a first strike, unless the Russians were utterly convinced that a Western attack was coming regardless. In an unusual move, the Committee decided not to forward the paper to Ministers since "parts of the report, and particularly those paragraphs relating to escalation, might be open to misinterpretation if

²⁸⁸ Greenwood, *Britain and the Cold War*, p.145

²⁸⁹ PREM11/2325, Sir Frank Roberts to FO, No. 265 Saving, 9 September 1958. The Germans were also paying towards the upkeep of the BAOR: £12 million a year, the early repayment of £22.5 million of debt and a £50 million deposit for defence orders. CAB128/32, CC(58)34th conclusions, 24 April 1958

²⁹⁰ CAB131/25, D(61)6th meeting, 3 May 1961; D(61)7th meeting, 17 May 1961

²⁹¹ CAB129/106, C(61)118 "Berlin: military aspects", 27 July 1961

²⁹² CAB131/26, D(61)54 "Berlin – military preparations", 1 August 1961

²⁹³ CAB158/44, JIC(61)57, 27 July 1961

read in isolation”.²⁹⁴ Instead they forwarded the assessment to officials for use in briefing Ministers. It was used in informal discussions between Shuckburgh and Strong on Khrushchev’s likely actions.

The Wall goes up

At 1600 on 12 August, Ulbricht signed the order to seal the Berlin border.²⁹⁵ At midnight on 12-13 August, the operation began. First, barbed wire was used to create the physical barrier, but within days, concrete blocks were added. Gaddis writes of the “sheer brutality” of this action that, in the end, not only divided the city for nearly thirty years but also brought some sort of a solution to the German question.²⁹⁶ Harrison describes how the Western nations were taken completely by surprise, so much so that their official response took 48 hours to come.²⁹⁷ Certainly the Cabinet minutes from 28 July show that the British government’s thinking was in line with the JIC’s view of an October peak to the crisis.²⁹⁸ The news that reached London on the 13 August from Germany was composed, however. Once Delacombe had heard the announcement of the closure, he reassured Whitehall that the target of the action was the refugee flow rather than Western access to the West Berlin.²⁹⁹ Steel followed by reporting that an uprising in East Germany seemed “unlikely” and urged a cautious Western response.³⁰⁰ His wishes were quickly met: Britain and America decided on negotiation and left LIVE OAK at the planning level, although a 1,500-man US battle group did arrive in Berlin on 20 August.³⁰¹

²⁹⁴ CAB159/35, JIC(61)39th meeting, 27 July 1961

²⁹⁵ Harrison, *Driving the Soviets*, pp.205-6

²⁹⁶ Gaddis, *We Now Know*, p.148

²⁹⁷ Harrison, *Driving the Soviets*, p.207

²⁹⁸ CAB128/35, CC(61)45th conclusions, 28 July 1961

²⁹⁹ PREM11/3349, Delacombe to FO, No. 271, 13 August 1961

³⁰⁰ PREM11/3349, Steel to FO, No. 775, 13 August 1961

³⁰¹ Harrison, *Driving the Soviets*, p.209; Cradock, *Know Your Enemy*, p.157; PREM11/3349, Macmillan to Home “Germany and Berlin”, 17 August 1961; Caccia to FO, No. 1961, 17 August 1961. LIVE OAK was discussed a great deal in the weeks after the Wall by an Ambassadorial Group in Washington, but it was largely a question of planning, rather than any genuine physical preparation. See throughout PREM11/3350.

Erich Honecker's claim, quoted at the beginning of this chapter, that the Wall represented a "defeat for Western intelligence" certainly appears to be valid. Although the missing WRCIs might tell a different story, the JIC papers and minutes show no specific indication that British intelligence expected a border closure in August. Murphy *et al* write that the CIA had no inkling either.³⁰² The East German planning circle had been so tight that the opportunities to gather the crucial information were very slim. Penkovsky learnt of the plans four days in advance, but had no means of getting the information to the West.³⁰³ In 1948 for the blockade and in 1953 for the riots, British and American intelligence did not have the sources to predict events; in 1961, the source existed, but the mechanics of espionage which involved the agent collecting and relaying information safely followed by assessment, source-protection and distribution procedures, made it impossible to get the intelligence to the policy-makers in time.³⁰⁴ BRIXMIS reported on events as they happened, through Chipmunk flights as well as ground observation, but the Mission does not appear to have provided any forewarning.³⁰⁵ Two BRIXMIS wives were in fact used satisfactorily by Delacombe to test the continuity of Western military access to East Berlin, as he sent them East to buy opera tickets.

When the Wall went up, the JIC were in the middle of producing an assessment on the chances of an East German uprising over the Berlin crisis.³⁰⁶ The first two meetings after the 13 August, however, were more focused on the practicalities of intelligence. The flow of material from London to JIC(G) was discussed and thought to be adequate.³⁰⁷ Lloyd (DMI) travelled to Germany to check on supply of intelligence on GSFG to the British forces.³⁰⁸ He reported that "our covert cover of East Germany was not good although that of the West Germans was a little better". The JIC agreed to focus effort on improving the communication of information from the

³⁰² Murphy *et al*, *Battleground Berlin*, p.377

³⁰³ Schecter and Deriabin, *The Spy who saved the World*, p.226

³⁰⁴ Murphy *et al*, *Battleground Berlin*, p.377

³⁰⁵ Geraghty, *BRIXMIS*, pp.108-114

³⁰⁶ CAB159/36, JIC(61)40th meeting, 3 August 1961

³⁰⁷ CAB159/36, JIC(61)42nd meeting, 17 August 1961

³⁰⁸ CAB159/36, JIC(61)43rd meeting, 24 August 1961

Bundesnachrichtendienst (BND), as Gehlen's organisation was now known, by providing another teleprinter line. The pressure of an international crisis, however, did not provide release from the grip of the Treasury; on the 17 August, the JIC was informed that there would be a ten percent cut in intelligence expenditure for the 1962-3 year.³⁰⁹

The JIC paper on an East German uprising became the JIC's early thoughts on the crisis after the Wall.³¹⁰ The paper reported that despite strong personal reactions to the border closure amongst East Germans, there were no signs of unrest. Nor did the Committee expect any organised resistance. Local disturbances were more likely, with attempts to escape along the borders. The JIC judged that the East German forces, backed up by the GSFG would be more than capable of dealing with any trouble and would do so free from the fear of Western reaction. On the crisis as a whole, the assessment claimed that the Russians might now be more likely to negotiate with the West, because the immediate problem of refugees had been dealt with. Certainly, the need to interfere with Western access to West Berlin appeared to have lessened from the Eastern perspective.

Intelligence after the Wall

It was far from clear at the time that the Wall had effectively ended the Berlin crisis. During September 1961, the Cabinet continued to discuss Germany.³¹¹ Macmillan became increasingly concerned that the economic sanctions being discussed as an alternative to LIVE OAK operations were more likely to harm West than East.³¹²

³⁰⁹ JIC(61)42nd meeting

³¹⁰ CAB158/44, JIC(61)62(Final) "East Germany in relation to the Berlin Crisis", 24 August 1961

³¹¹ CAB128/35, CC(61)49th conclusions, 5 September 1961; CC(61)50th conclusions, 19 September 1961; CC(61)52nd conclusions, 28 September 1961

³¹² PREM11/3351, Norman Brook to Macmillan "Berlin", 4 September 1961; Anthony Acland to Jim Bligh, 29 September 1961

Adding to the apprehension, Penkovsky supplied information indicating that October would bring massive Soviet military exercises and a peace treaty.³¹³

The JIC faced a busy time. The Committee Secretary requested an extra officer to support the single Duty Intelligence Officer, even though the alert level had not yet been raised to Stage Two.³¹⁴ A working party was formed in Germany to review the list of intelligence indicators relating to the crisis. In response to a request from the British LIVE OAK staff, the JIC agreed to send on collated photographic intelligence, elint and visual reports from the Berlin air corridor and Zonal frontier.³¹⁵ The Committee also produced another survey of likely Soviet reactions to LIVE OAK and other Western operations.³¹⁶ The JIC's view of the response to either land or air probes was the same as it always was.³¹⁷ In the case of the Allies using non-nuclear air power to force an air passage through to Berlin, the assessment suggested the Soviets would meet like with like rather than escalating to the nuclear-level. In the same way, the paper anticipated that the Russians would use only conventional but overwhelming forces to repulse a Western large-scale conventional land operation. If the Allies made selective use of nuclear weapons, the JIC found it "impossible to estimate" whether the Russians would back down or retaliate at either a tactical or strategic nuclear level.³¹⁸

Into October, the demand for the JIC's assessments remained high. Both the Chiefs of Staff and Ministers received the Committee's product.³¹⁹ When the Political Adviser to Delacombe, William Ledwidge, came back to London, he attended a JIC meeting during which he expressed a view on the chances of unrest in East Germany

³¹³ Schechter and Deriabin. *The Spy who saved the World*, p.230

³¹⁴ Stage two would normally have brought in extra staff. CAB159/36, JIC(61)46th meeting, 7 September 1961

³¹⁵ CAB159/36, JIC(61)51st meeting, 28 September 1961

³¹⁶ CAB158/44, JIC(61)69(Final) "Soviet reactions to military measures foreseen in Berlin contingency planning", 2 October 1961

³¹⁷ By now LIVE OAK plans were as follows: Operation FREE STYLE was a 15 vehicle, 56 men probe of Soviet intentions; TRADE WIND was a battalion-sized force using the autobahn; JUNE BALL was a one division force; JACK PINE was an airlift. The British and Americans agreed the following order for attempts to reach Berlin: FREE STYLE, JACK PINE, TRADE WIND then JUNE BALL. CAB131/26, D(61)73 "Berlin Contingency Planning", 24 November 1961

³¹⁸ The last seven paragraphs discussing a worldwide naval blockade of the Soviet bloc have been withheld from public view.

³¹⁹ CAB159/36, JIC(61)53rd meeting, 5 October 1961

that matched the Committee's.³²⁰ There was also minor organisational change within the British intelligence community in Germany, although it is not clear from the archive whether this was a response to the crisis or a planned move. A Communications Security Committee was set up to co-ordinate security in Germany as directed by London as well as direct local monitoring and monitoring analysis intelligence.³²¹

The Cabinet minutes show that from October to the end of 1961, the majority of the government's focus was on the opportunities of negotiating a Berlin settlement with the Russians.³²² Khrushchev had announced on 17 October that he was not necessarily sticking to the idea of a peace treaty before the end of the year.³²³ He later abandoned the idea altogether, on the basis that it was too risky to put the matter of Western access into East German hands.³²⁴ The standoff between Russian and American tanks at Checkpoint Charlie from 22-27 October proved both that the Berlin crisis was still dangerous, but also that talking, albeit through the back channel of Robert Kennedy and Georgi Bolshakov, a Soviet intelligence officer, could avoid military action.³²⁵ The episode was sparked when East German border guards refused to let a US diplomat cross into East Berlin without showing identification. The Americans sent military forces to emphasise that this was unacceptable. The Russians responded in kind. The incident proved that East German unilateral action could still spark super-power aggression. Unfortunately there are no JIC papers available that discuss those events.

On 8 November, Home wrote to Macmillan that "signs are multiplying that the Russians are easing the pressure a little over Berlin for the time being".³²⁶ Talks looked likely. The JIC were very keen that any negotiations secured the future of BRIXMIS, especially if a USSR-GDR peace treaty threatened to bring all of wartime measures to

³²⁰ CAB159/36, JIC(61)54th meeting, 12 October 1961

³²¹ DEF5/118, COS(61)375 "Communications Security Committee (British Forces Germany)", 13 October 1961

³²² CAB128/35, CC(61)53rd conclusions, 5 October 1961; and following

³²³ Harrison, *Driving the Soviets*, p.210

³²⁴ *Ibid*, pp.212, 215-8

³²⁵ For a full description of the incident, see Harrison, *Driving the Soviets*, pp.213-4; Cradock, *Know Your Enemy*, p.157

³²⁶ PREM11/3353, Home to Macmillan, 8 November 1961

an end.³²⁷ The Committee also continued to plan for the worst, where a further flare-up in the crisis might result in such severe Soviet security that intelligence collection became even more difficult.³²⁸ The Wall had made it hard enough. Maddrell writes that the closure of the border had cut Western officers off from both their agents and the valuable source of refugee information.³²⁹ Identifying, recruiting and communicating with agents had become harder and more risky. Murphy *et al* reveal that because of the reduction in case work for the CIA in Berlin, staff numbers were cut.³³⁰

Towards the end of 1961, the JIC got slightly caught up in a different aspect of the German question, one which took them back to the 1940s. On 23 November, all three of the service members of the JIC as well as Strong, drew attention to an increasing number of “signs of a revival of militarism in certain West German circles”.³³¹ They were concerned by reports of German advocacy of massive NATO land forces, discussions about setting up a High Command and the Defence Ministry’s desire to acquire nuclear weapons. Strong warned that although the military view was not dominant in Germany at the moment, “he believed that there was a chance of it reaching a dangerous pitch in three to five years’ time”.

Matters concerning the FRG had previously arisen in the JIC during the Berlin crisis, but usually in the familiar form of security in West Germany. In 1958, the Committee agreed to more intelligence being shared with the FRG Defence Ministry, but warned that most of it would end up in Russian hands as a consequence.³³² In November 1960, an assessment was issued to all relevant departments that warned that security in West Germany was as poor as ever.³³³ Whilst the Committee realised that a reduction in the exchange of information would be politically unacceptable, they urged

³²⁷ CAB159/36, JIC(61)58th meeting, 2 November 1961; JIC(61)64th meeting, 30 November 1961

³²⁸ Unfortunately the details of this matter are not available to the public.

³²⁹ Maddrell, *Spying on Science*, pp.247-267

³³⁰ Murphy *et al*, *Battleground Berlin*, p.387

³³¹ CAB159/36, JIC(61)63rd meeting, 23 November 1961

³³² CAB159/29, JIC(58)20th meeting, 19 March 1958

³³³ CAB158/41, JIC(60)78 “Security in the Federal German Republic”, 7 November 1960

Whitehall officials to encourage their counterparts to deal with the problem. Stephenson also raised the issue on a visit to NATO.³³⁴

The matter of German military strength had been discussed within the British government before it got to the JIC. In response to the 1958 NATO plans for tactical nuclear missiles in West German hands, the Defence Committee aired their concerns.³³⁵ They noted that West German influence in Europe was increasing whilst their army would soon be the largest in Europe. Above all, the government feared a German independent nuclear capacity. The Defence Committee concluded, however, that risks had to be accepted because of the desire to keep Germany “in the Western family as an equal”. The British offered their uneasy consent to the amendment of the Brussels Treaty in 1959, so that the Germans could undertake production of SAMs.³³⁶ When the FRG wanted the treaty amended again in 1960, this time to allow the construction of larger ships and mines, the Cabinet described the British conundrum: “it was in our interest to encourage Germany to bear a greater share of the burden of defence of Western Europe, but at the same time it had to be recognised that the British people had a natural dislike of German rearmament”.³³⁷

In August 1960, the FO asked the JIC to produce an assessment of the “economic and military outlook for Western Germany”.³³⁸ The paper reported “a rate of economic expansion which compares well with that of France and extremely favourably with that of the United Kingdom”.³³⁹ The Committee noted that the large labour reserves and the small defence burden in the FRG had assisted the “remarkable recovery”. They doubted, however, “that present boom conditions... can last much longer”, especially as the Common Market, which had come into being on 1 January 1958, might bring trade instability. The prediction for the German defence industry was not alarming: it would

³³⁴ CAB159/34, JIC(60)64th meeting, 22 December 1960

³³⁵ CAB131/20, D(58)54 “Germany and nuclear weapons”, 3 November 1958

³³⁶ CAB128/33, CC(59)26th conclusions, 28 April 1959

³³⁷ CAB128/34, CC(60)3rd conclusion, 26 January 1960

³³⁸ CAB158/40, JIC(60)41(Final) “The economic and military outlook for Western Germany”, 22 August 1960

³³⁹ Gross National Product per person employed increased in 1959 by 4.2 percent in the FRG and by 2.7 percent in the UK (figures not given for France).

remain small and any large-scale projects would be undertaken jointly with NATO allies. The FRG's atomic energy programme remained small with no signs of an ambition to create nuclear weapons. The assessment finished by examining the West German armed forces. The German Army was thought not to be battle-worthy because of poor logistic support for front-line divisions, but would by 1965 or earlier be "the most powerful land force in the NATO area of Western Europe". The Navy was "becoming an effective force though not up to NATO standard in general training". The Air Force would be a "strong tactical air force" by 1964-5 if the planned build-up were completed.

The November 1961 JIC concerns about West German militarism were taken seriously. Tomkins (FO) joined the Committee for their discussion of the issue.³⁴⁰ His office had also seen reports of militaristic talk, although upon investigation it proved there was no immediate cause for concern. Tomkins thought the matter warranted close observation, however. The JIC as a whole concluded that the German people were moving in the direction of European integration rather than militarism. Furthermore, there was no evidence of a German military atomic programme. The only concern was that the few West Germans who were advocating greater military strength would win support from those in the Pentagon whose ambitions involved frightening the Russians. Lloyd noted that intelligence coverage of West Germany was "small" and therefore might require more effort. The Committee agreed and instructed departments to make the required extra effort, paying particular attention to the formation of a High Command and Franco-German nuclear collaboration.

Conclusions

Cradock's belief that during the second Berlin crisis, the JIC assessments had little influence on British policy seems fair, but this research suggests this was so for

³⁴⁰ CAB159/36, JIC(61)64th meeting, 30 November 1961

slightly different reasons to those he asserts.³⁴¹ Whereas Cradock describes a gulf between the JIC and policy-makers in appreciation of the circumstances, the course of events described here gives the impression more that assessments simply arrived too late to influence major policy decisions. The Committee's papers were often accurate in terms of analysing Soviet motives and intentions, but policy in two key areas had been largely decided before they were produced: Macmillan had already decided to negotiate with the Russians; and the Chiefs were set against land action to keep access to Berlin open. The JIC wrote assessments that, in fact, seemed to support these choices, and may therefore have firmed up the zeal for the policies in the face of international opposition, but it is impossible to argue that the JIC's work sparked anything new. Macmillan's actions were consistent with JIC estimates. Throughout the crisis, they argued that one of Khrushchev's aims was negotiations, that his deadlines were flexible, that Soviet policy was indefinite and that there were no military moves indicating immediate aggression. That Macmillan chose to talk does not seem illogical, based on those indicators.

The question raised by these observations is a serious one: was the JIC guilty of telling their customers what they wanted to hear or were the assessments a genuine interpretation of the information they had, which happened to confirm previous policy-decisions? It is very difficult to produce a full answer to this question from the archives. All that can be reasonably offered is that the assessments produced were consistent in their view of Soviet intentions and the risks of war with those that had been written before the crisis began. It is clear that on many of the issues surrounding Berlin there was a prevailing Whitehall view; the JIC certainly did not stand out with dissenting opinions.

Clearly the JIC failed to predict the Berlin Wall. They had recognised the option of sealing the border early on, but they did not have the specific intelligence of East German plans in time to issue a warning. In this sense, the Committee looks to have performed in much the same way as it did in 1948, when they recognised the possibility

³⁴¹ See above

of a blockade, but lacked the crucial piece of information to make a precise forecast. Of course, in 1961, the fact that British intelligence had a source like Penkovsky who was in a position to learn of the plans was a vast improvement on 1948. In 1953, the JIC had been unaware of the difficulties in the USSR-GDR relationship which led to the June riots. By late 1959, however, the Committee's view was developed enough that they gave warnings of the possible consequences of Ulbricht's impatience with Khrushchev.

An equally important, but nevertheless easily overlooked, advance in terms of British intelligence during the crisis was the question of authorisation and control of operations. Of course, before the crisis began, Crabb's adventure had highlighted the problem of oversight, but over Berlin, the JIC had a chance to prove that it was coming to terms with the potential for intelligence to cause international friction. The restrictions placed on BRIXMIS and Berlin over-flights during the crisis demonstrated a sensible level of sensitivity to tension and Ministerial anxiety. The system was far from perfect, but thanks to good chairmanship of the Committee and, perhaps, the JIC's new proximity to the centre of government in the Cabinet Office, a difficult period was successfully managed.

There is little doubt that Western intelligence in general suffered a significant set-back when the Berlin Wall was erected. A valuable gap in the Iron Curtain had been closed, cutting off some sources altogether and making others a more risky proposition. The Wall clearly affected human intelligence the most; the barrier could only prevent the flow of people. Maddrell makes a tempting case for viewing the Wall as a symbolic end to a humint age that had begun in the earliest days of the Cold War.³⁴² Certainly this seems correct in terms of the sorts of mass exploitation of scientists, agents, deserters and defectors which he writes about. The fact that a Corona reconnaissance satellite was first successfully used by the Americans in August 1960, rendering even some of the manned over-flights redundant, adds to the feeling of a new age of high technology espionage.³⁴³ It is easy to go too far, however, particularly in the case of British

³⁴² Maddrell, *Spying on Science*, pp.297-8

³⁴³ Aldrich, *Hidden Hand*, p.540; Lashmar, *Spyflights*, pp.181-189

intelligence. For the SIS the 1958-61 period yielded their first real successes in terms of agent-running within the Soviet bloc and even then, these were still learning experiences. Although the SIS was certainly finished with mass operations and networks, humint was far from useless, especially since no overhead photograph could yield the thoughts of a senior Soviet politician or official. Where satellite technology could begin to slowly make a real difference though was first of all in revealing Soviet capabilities and second in performing the sort of early warning role that either BRIXMIS or rail-watching agents in the GDR or Poland had once fulfilled.³⁴⁴

³⁴⁴ Herman. *Intelligence Power*, pp.74-8

Conclusions: a JIC assessment

The JIC's contribution to policy

The Joint Intelligence Committee's contribution to policy needs to be judged against the two sets of criteria set out for it during the early Cold War: in 1947, the Chiefs of Staff wanted intelligence to provide "adequate and timely warning" of crises; and, in 1954, Patrick Dean described a role for intelligence as providing an enduring information backdrop for policy-makers. In addition, judgements on the accuracy of the JIC's contribution to policy are part of the analysis as an historical measure of its performance and how valuable that contribution should have been.

It makes sense to take Dean's metric first, to give a sense of the usual pattern of affairs, away from the crises. Simply put, the backdrop provided by the JIC was, more often than not, worrying. In particular, the view through the German intelligence window gave Ministers and officials little relief. That vision was of a magnitude of Soviet threat to Western Germany and Western Europe more widely, that disengagement from questions surrounding both Berlin and Germany's future was impossible.

From the earliest years covered by this thesis, the JIC described for its customers the significance of Germany to the security of the United Kingdom and therefore, the essential requirement of preventing the total economic and military potential of Germany falling into Soviet hands. To answer Hennessy's question about what it was in JIC assessments that led a war-weary and bankrupt nation to invest so heavily in defence¹, the basic answer is fear. Even though assessments were rarely alarmist in describing imminent danger to European security, the repeated reports of hundreds of thousands of Soviet troops in East Germany, developing indigenous forces and an underlying Soviet desire to dominate Germany as a whole, forced successive British governments into pouring national resources into conventional and, increasingly, nuclear

¹ See introduction

forces. John Young suggests that, “[i]ndeed, after its wartime success, JIC’s advice was, perhaps, over-relied upon in the early post-war period.”² In one way, an understanding of the enduring tone of JIC assessments hints at the value of this thesis: it allows the reader a degree of empathy with early Cold War British decision-makers. Knowing something of the bad news and worst case scenarios surrounding Ministers and officials, allows the historian to make further sense of the choices made at the time. Reading the JIC’s descriptions of overwhelming Soviet power also makes it easier to recognise that policy-makers knew that the next war was one Britain was unlikely to survive and therefore, really could not afford to fight.

Military assessments dominated the early Cold War JIC production line. The target lists for intelligence collection focused on Soviet military preparations for war: troop numbers, their equipment, location and readiness. The available sources of intelligence – BRIXMIS, low-level agents, line-crossers and later over-flights – were more suited to gathering this sort of information. From the first months of its development, the *Bereitschaften* was given significant attention by the JIC.

The January 1951 assessment in which the Committee openly advocated rearmament went further than before, bringing together threat assessments with clear policy recommendation. Even as the numbers of Russian troops stationed in East Germany gradually reduced during the 1950s, the JIC reported that the military capability of the GSFGR was increasing. The reports of chaotic scenes as Russian forces prepared to enter East Berlin in June 1953, did not leave a lasting residue of doubt about the capabilities of the Red Army. When the intelligence picture of Soviet strength was at its most confused during the early 1950s, the consistent message was, whatever the numbers of troops, the Russians are strong enough to present a threat. The arrival of surface-to-surface and surface-to-air missiles in East Germany during the 1958-61 crisis led the JIC to maintain a daunting assessment of Soviet strength.

² Young, *Britain and the World in the Twentieth Century*, p.150

Building up knowledge of Soviet capabilities was a first order priority from the earliest years of the Cold War. Intelligence is often intimately linked with war-fighting and developing a picture of military threat. Evill noted serious deficiencies in 1947; through to 1961, British intelligence addressed this requirement, in terms of collection, organisation and presentation. Besides that question of Soviet capability, however, lay the matter of intent. As others such as Cradock and Hennessy have argued, the JIC's ability to report an absence of intelligence that the Russians were preparing to use their forces in an aggressive move westwards was a fundamental contribution to policy.³ As this thesis sets out, negative indicators and assessments gave policy-makers room to operate during crises from the Berlin blockade, through the Korean War, preparations for the Bonn and EDC treaties, the 1953 Berlin riots and Suez to the end of the 1958-61 crisis. Where the JIC did warn that Western moves might increase the risk of war, as in 1950-1 when assessments suggested that West German rearmament might quicken the journey to war, British policy was reined in.

In the realms of political intelligence, however, the JIC had less to offer because of an absence of sources. Although reports assuring that there were no signs of impending attack were valuable assessments of immediate Soviet intentions, such information was not the basis of long-term, in-depth understanding of an adversary. Away from the very near horizon, JIC assessments were more general, more often than not giving accurate (and grim) predictions of Cold War mood, rather than the specifics of forthcoming crises or high-level internal Soviet bloc politics. British intelligence did not have the hugely insightful sources that could reveal the inner workings of the Kremlin or East German government, instead there was a gradual process of building up Cold War knowledge and lower-level information to provide a basis for analysing newer intelligence. On occasion, the assessments pointed out the blindingly obvious trends; although such observations were clearly correct, it is doubtful whether they had great utility for already well-informed customers. Some moments of valuable insight do stand out, however, when held against historical research, such as the assessments produced

³ Cradock, *Know Your Enemy*, p.52; Hennessy, *Secret State*, p.12

before the 1960 Paris Summit, concerning Khrushchev's desire not to push the West too far over Berlin.

In Germany, the path from normality to crisis was so short because troops were already stationed there. As a consequence, the number of opportunities to pick up on indicators was reduced. Fulfilling the Chiefs' requirement for warning was a very difficult task in Germany. The JIC failed to make specific, accurate forecasts of the blockade in 1948 or the Wall in 1961, although assessments were clear about the high tension before the incidents. The efforts made to improve levels of intelligence in months before the 1948 blockade were focused on picking up indicators of Soviet military preparations near the border, rather than on political decisions that foreshadowed the blockade. It was not really until the 1958-61 crisis that the Committee had gained enough knowledge and experience of the Communist bloc to begin to recognise the complexities of intra-bloc relations that could drive events. During the second Berlin crisis, the JIC was in a position to provide largely accurate appreciations, but they missed being as useful as they could have been because they lacked timeliness. Before the June 1953 riots, the Committee did not seem to have the imagination to comprehend the possibility of significant dissent behind the Iron Curtain. Neither individuals nor the GDR government was credited with enough power to significantly alter the realities of their existence. The 1953 rioting, however, was a good example of where, once a crisis was underway, the intelligence picture provided in Whitehall was accurate. This appears to indicate, that the JIC was capable of producing sensible, well-informed interpretations and analysis on the Soviet bloc, albeit shortly after rather than before crises took place.

To expect the JIC to have provided perfect assessments of Soviet intentions and capabilities is unrealistic, however. Military capabilities were ultimately knowable – secrets rather than mysteries – but still, as the members of BRIXMIS knew only too well, information was very hard and dangerous to come by in a restrictive, police state. Soviet intentions were even more difficult to discover, if not impossible; the highest level sources may not have revealed all, even if British intelligence had possessed them

consistently and in some numbers.⁴ Unless an intelligence service has access to the inner-most thoughts of a foreign leader, it is not necessarily better placed to make predictions about future events than a good diplomat, journalist, academic or other commentator. The descriptor *secret* of intelligence does not automatically confer on bodies like the JIC extraordinary crystal-ball gazing abilities. Furthermore, as seen during the 1958-61 Berlin crisis, effective forecasting is always complicated when your own government's actions and those of its allies have an impact on the outcome of events.

The Committee constantly strove to improve the range of sources, and therefore raw intelligence, available to it, with some success. Aerial reconnaissance and BRIXMIS, in particular, stand out as an increasingly valuable. In other arenas, especially human intelligence, no matter how much an intelligence service works at its own recruiting methods, it is still often a matter of luck when circumstances bring a high-value source to the door. Despite the efforts made, by the early 1960s, there were still not the human or technical sources available to the British that could have enabled the JIC to carry out an accurate and specific forecasting function. JIC papers were, therefore, poor assessments based on poor intelligence – not poor assessments written despite good intelligence. Young is highly critical of the contribution intelligence made to foreign policy outcomes: “clashes between parts of the intelligence-gathering machine, duplication of work and mis-reading of information was inevitable and, although the intelligence services became an important part of the British state, with their own international links and a larger budget than the FO, they could not prevent crises and humiliation abroad.”⁵

Yet it is impossible to ignore another gauge of the Committee's general contribution: the way that the intelligence apparatus was treated during the early years of the Cold War. In particular, it is unlikely that the 1957 move to the Cabinet Office would have been accepted by the key departments had there not been a perceived need

⁴ Strong, Sir Kenneth, *Men of Intelligence: A study of the roles and decisions of Chiefs of Intelligence from World War I to the present day* (London: Cassell & Co, 1970), p.154

⁵ Young, *Britain and the World in the Twentieth Century*, p.151

for the JIC to serve Cabinet and value in the Committee doing so. The FO's Russia Committee brought together senior diplomats and military officers to harmonise foreign and defence policy.⁶ That the JIC took over from that Committee as the focus for Soviet analysis is a sign of its value in terms of contribution to policy. Although the JIC had not performed well against the Chiefs of Staff 1947 criteria which looked to intelligence to provide warning of events, the wider Whitehall community by 1957 must have recognised the significant role intelligence had to play in contributing to policy, as described by Dean in September 1954. The assessments were good enough and the setbacks not so serious to prevent a gradual rise in the Committee's stock. Intelligence analysis at the centre, run on an all-source basis, was clearly seen as a rational use of resources.

Tuning the machine

The British intelligence organisation as a whole was not static during the early Cold War. Failures in crises and scandal spurred change. The Berlin blockade brought the first methodical system of weekly reviews of Soviet preparations for war – a step towards a more consistent and streamlined intelligence assessment production line. Reilly's internal audit after Korea, recognised that problems stemmed from both a lack of raw intelligence upon which to base analysis and a style of writing assessments that was so general it avoided useful conclusions. It is not so clear that these deficiencies were rectified instantly, but certainly in the case of collection, matters gradually improved. Dean's ambition for the JIC saw a clearer definition of the Committee's role, the move to the Cabinet Office and new modes of weekly distribution to give the customer a more relevant and digestible product. Under Stephenson, a decade of scandal and revelation was brought to a close with stricter control over intelligence operations.

⁶ Greenwood, *Britain and the Cold War*, p.71

The JIC's development was designed to provide the customer with a more reliable and focused service, with better understanding and control of risk. Blunders were dealt with through greater accountability and oversight of the individual agencies through the JIC. Operations had to be conducted cognisant of the limitations of Government policy. The Committee had some successes in this field, such as watching over the campaign to encourage defectors, restraining liberation operations in Europe and directing aerial reconnaissance over Berlin during the 1958-61 crisis. John Bruce Lockhart, former Deputy Chief of SIS, wrote that "trust between the policy-makers, the national evaluating committee, and the senior producers is vital".⁷ These developments were all steps towards building that trust. Exceptionally, intelligence can provide startling break-through information, but more often the process is one of a gradual building of understanding through corroboration and judgement. If Ministers were to accept the news brought by the JIC, especially if it that news did not fit with the Ministers' current world view, such trust had to exist. Whereas the Service departments and Foreign Office had had hundreds of years to develop their long-term relationships with the centre of government, the JIC by 1947 had had a little over ten.

Of course, the intelligence community had its unique place within the UK-US relationship. Sharing Cold War operations and assessments represented, as post-Cold War it still represents, an extraordinary level of trust between nations that first developed in wartime. Even the greatest moments of disagreement, such as Suez, had relatively little impact on co-operation. Whereas Aldrich often writes in *Hidden Hand* of tension within the relationship, the day-to-day records of the JIC, especially those concerning Germany, demonstrate efforts to reach a common understanding of a common threat. It is because of this enduring collaboration with the US intelligence community that, as Britain's global power and influence has declined since the Second World War, her abilities as a global intelligence power have developed.

⁷ Lockhart, John Bruce, "Intelligence: a British View" in Robertson, K. G. (ed), *British and American Approaches to Intelligence* (London: Macmillan Press, 1987), p.51

On the ground

The local intelligence organisation in Germany had to adapt to the realities of Britain and Germany during the early Cold War. Initially, financial restrictions had to be balanced with clearer requirements to produce the necessary information on East Germany and the Soviet forces stationed there. Later, the handover of power to the West Germans brought the specific challenges of building new liaison relationships whilst securing the necessary flow of information. These developments were not often smooth, but they did take place without major interruption of intelligence production.

BRIXMIS was a microcosm of the emerging Cold War intelligence battle. The Mission's official liaison duties were put aside early as the officers and men turned their hands to the less comfortable tasks of intelligence-gathering. Techniques had to become more inventive as the restrictions tightened; all whilst the demands for more and better information coming from the central customers grew. BRIXMIS operated beyond the front-line of the intelligence war and suffered for it. Those who served, however, should know that during the early Cold War at least, at the JIC table and higher, their irreplaceable contribution to the understanding of forces in East Germany was fully recognised and valued.

Flaws in intelligence

The Joint Intelligence Committee of 1947-61 was not the powerful Committee that Percy Cradock knew personally as Chief of the Assessments Staff in the 1970s and then as Chairman at the end of the Cold War.⁸ In terms of organisation, product and raw intelligence supply-feed, the early Cold War Committee had plenty of growing left to do. Before 1957, the JIC was part of the military establishment and defence intelligence dominated its product. Cradock himself notes that it was not until the 1968 reforms,

⁸ Cradock, Percy, *In Pursuit of British Interests: Reflections on Foreign Policy under Margaret Thatcher and John Major* (London: John Murray, 1997), pp.37-47

“that a sufficiently strong unit was established there [in the JIC] to ensure a view of events which would prevail against departmental interpretations.” As JIC Chairman from 1985-92, Cradock was also Margaret Thatcher’s Foreign Policy Adviser; a considerable step beyond the position that even Dean held as Chairman.⁹ In Cradock’s combined role “intelligence and policy were as closely linked as they have ever been in British government”. Lord Butler’s review in 2004, revealed that in the run-up to the 2003 Iraq War, intelligence and politics were too closely interwoven.¹⁰

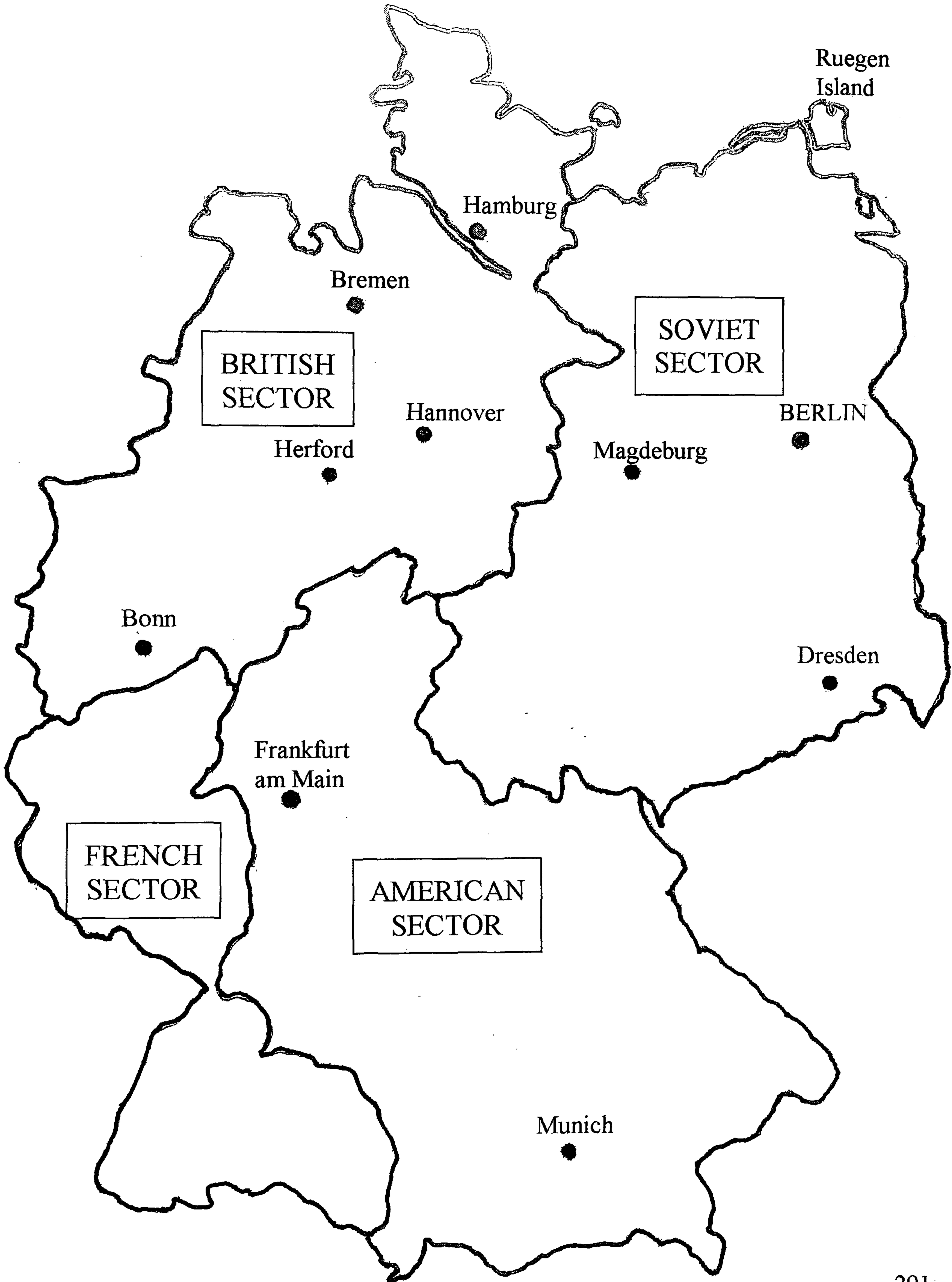
Those casting around for a golden age of intelligence should beware. The 1947-61 period certainly could not be considered one. It is highly unlikely that any such age ever existed, for two reasons. Firstly, organisations such as the JIC do not operate in a vacuum; rather they exist on a dynamic front where government requirements and international affairs fluctuate. Secondly, at the root of every aspect of intelligence practice is human judgement. Even the most technical of collection operations relies on humans to task the operation, produce the assessments and above all, make use of the intelligence. Kenneth Strong wrote, “The criteria for judging the relevance and importance of given items of intelligence are stored in the experience of the Intelligence Officer.”¹¹ At every stage of the process there is the prospect of ill-judgement, whether conscious or otherwise. It is one of greatest disappointments of studying British intelligence history that, because of the restrictions on records, it is extremely hard to develop an understanding of many key individuals, their values and attitudes. The British intelligence machine, with the JIC at its apex, is a necessary part of government, constantly facing a hugely challenging task. It has developed through experience as a means of reducing errors and providing the most useful service to its customers. But ultimately those involved in any system requiring human input, especially around the uncertainties of threat, must be always be aware of that system’s flaws.

⁹ Cradock was the first combined JIC Chairman and Foreign Policy Adviser. Sir Rodric Braithwaite also held the combined post (1992-4), but it did not survive thereafter.

¹⁰ *Review of Intelligence on Weapons of Mass Destruction*, paragraphs 463-8

¹¹ Strong, *Men of Intelligence*, p.153

Appendix A: Map



Appendix B: Chronology

1947

March	10	Moscow Council of Foreign Ministers (CFM) begins
	12	Truman describes his doctrine for the first time
April	24	Moscow CFM ends
June	5	Marshall announces aid package for Europe
November	6	Evill reports on the structure of British intelligence
	25	London CFM begins
December	15	London CFM ends

1948

February	23	Western nations talks on Germany begin in London
March	17	Brussels Treaty signed
	20	Russians walk out of Allied Control Council
April	5	Soviet fighter and British airliner en route to Berlin collide
June	1	London talks on Germany end
	24	Berlin blockade begins

1949

April	4	NATO Treaty signed
	25	West German Basic Law agreed
May	12	Berlin blockade ends
	23	FRG founded
	23	Paris CFM begins
June	20	Paris CFM ends
October	7	GDR founded
November	22	Petersburg Agreement signed

1950

May	11	Schuman proposes his plan for the European Coal and Steel Community to the UK government
June	25	Korean War begins

1951		
May	25	Burgess and Maclean disappear
July	9	State of war terminated between Germany and UK
October	26	Churchill becomes Prime Minister
1952		
May	25- 26 27	Treaty ending occupation in FRG (“Contractual Agreements” or “Bonn Treaty”) signed EDC Treaty signed
August	10	European Coal and Steel Community comes into being
1953		
January	20	Eisenhower becomes President
March	5	Stalin dies
May	28	Soviet Control Commission replaced with a High Commission
June	17	Rioting in East Berlin begins
September	7	Khrushchev becomes First Secretary of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union
1954		
January	25	Four-power conference on Germany in Berlin begins
February	18	Berlin conference ends
October	23	Paris Treaties signed
1955		
April	5	Eden becomes Prime Minister
May	8 14	FRG joins NATO Warsaw Pact signed
July	18- 23	Geneva Summit
September	20	GDR granted sovereignty from USSR
October	27	Geneva CFM begins

November	16	Geneva CFM ends
1956		
February	14- 25	20 th Communist Party Congress in Moscow
April	19 22	Buster Crabb disappears whilst diving on the <i>Ordzhonikidze</i> Berlin tunnel “discovered”
October	29	British, French and Israeli invasion of Suez begins
November	4	Soviet invasion of Hungary begins
1957		
January	10	Macmillan becomes Prime Minister
October	4 14	USSR launches Sputnik JIC moves from Chiefs of Staff to the Cabinet Office
1958		
March	27	Khrushchev becomes Soviet Premier
July	18	BRIXMIS compound attacked
November	10 27	Khrushchev speech launches second Berlin crisis Khrushchev’s note proposes a peace treaty with Germany and gives a six-month deadline for progress
1959		
May	11 27	Geneva CFM begins Khrushchev’s six-month deadline
August	16	Geneva CFM ends
September	25- 27	Khrushchev meets Eisenhower at Camp David
1960		
May	1 16	Gary Powers’ U2 shot down over USSR Abortive Paris Summit
July	1	RB-47 shot down over Barents Sea
1961		
January	20	Kennedy becomes President

April	17- 20	Failed CIA-backed invasion of Cuba at the Bay of Pigs
June	3-4	Vienna Summit
July	25	Kennedy announces military build-up
August	13	Border closed between East and West Berlin
October	22- 27	Standoff at Checkpoint Charlie

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