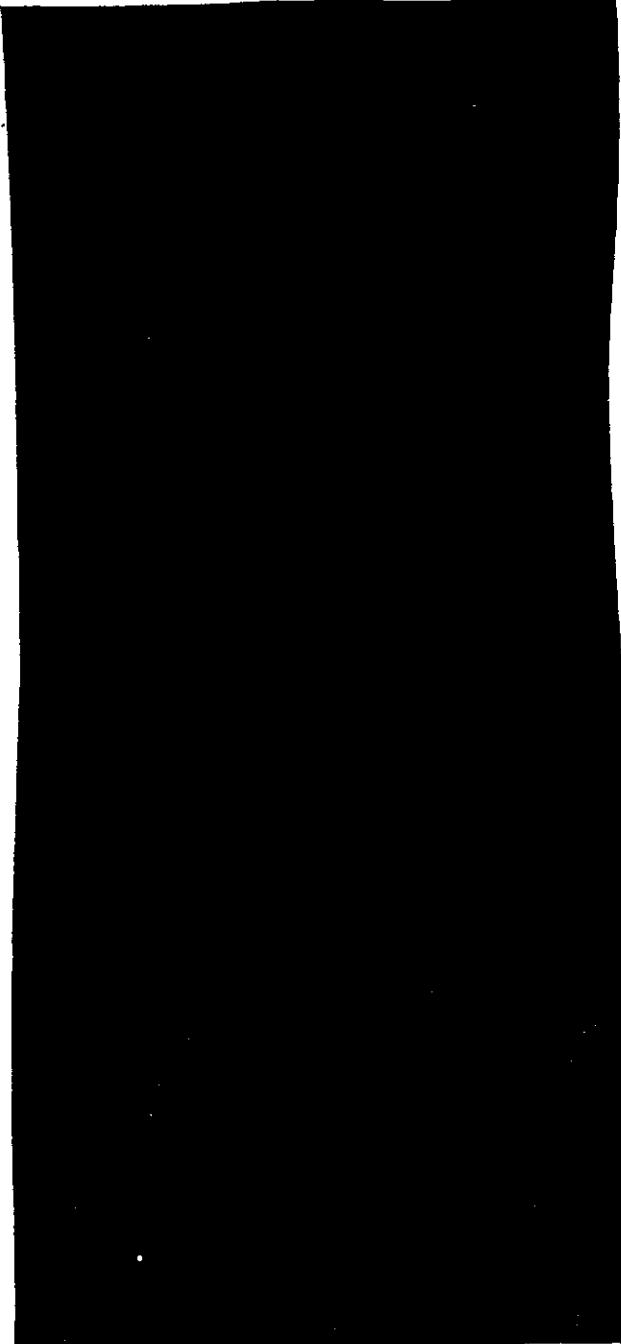


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questions and indicated further Soviet support for the East German regime.

On the political side, the communiqué stated only that "an exchange of opinions" occurred on the conclusion of "the German peace treaty and the normalization of the situation in West Berlin on its basis." While this formula contains no sense of urgency and avoids any question of timing, it is likely that the Soviets and East Germans have used the meeting to coordinate a tactical line on these questions for the coming months. This meeting, in the wake of more aggressive actions affecting access to Berlin, also suggests that the bloc will begin to press forward on Berlin.

While Moscow has backed away from any showdown over Allied access, it has not abandoned its maneuvering to undermine the four-power basis for air access to Berlin. After a four-day respite, coinciding with a Soviet holiday, the USSR resumed flights in the air corridors and continued filing specific flight plans. Employment of this tactic, rather than a return to the blanket reservations used earlier, suggests that for the present Moscow is mainly interested in keeping its position intact by periodically asserting a right to use the corridors at times and places of its own choosing.

Berlin

The summit campaign has tended to overshadow the Berlin question, but the USSR may have reached new decisions in this area. Almost immediately after his return to Moscow, Khrushchev met for two days with an East German delegation headed by party First Secretary Walter Ulbricht. The short communiqué issued on 28 February dealt mainly with economic

Coincident with Bonn's reply to the Soviet memorandum of 27 December, the Soviets dispatched new notes to the three Western powers on 26 February protesting that the West German customs law of 1 January provided for inclusion of West Berlin in the Federal Republic customs system. This was labeled a "provocation" designed to create new difficulties in "normalizing the

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situation in West Berlin on the basis of conclusion of a German peace treaty." The note included the standard claim that the extension of West German legislation to West Berlin was "absolutely illegal and beyond the competence of the Federal Republic." The timing of these protests, after almost two months' delay, suggests that it is a further step toward driving a wedge between Bonn and its allies by raising the issue of the incompatibility of the occupation status with West German ties to Berlin.

Simultaneously, Soviet diplomats in Vienna have inspired reports in the Western press that Khrushchev is prepared to make far-reaching concessions to Adenauer if bilateral talks are arranged. The Soviet concessions would include incorporating West Berlin into the Federal Republic, establishing a corridor for access, removing Ulbricht, and eliminating the wall; in return, Bonn would sign a peace treaty, recognize East Germany, and accept the division of Berlin. Such rumors are doubtless intended to provide an incentive for Bonn to explore Soviet intentions in private talks. In the meantime, the Soviets apparently will allow the talks with Ambassador Thompson to stagnate.

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