

Chapter VIII

The Collapse of the Conference

I

The Diplomats Resume

Although there were sixty-eight meetings of the Geneva Conference on the Discontinuance of Nuclear Weapon Tests between May 27, when it reconvened after the collapse of the summit meeting, and December 5, 1960, when it recessed for the final time that year, and also for the final time during the Eisenhower Administration, little progress was made. The attempt to solve the differences between East and West relating to the technical aspects of a control system for a test ban had failed. Agreement had not been achieved, and the attempt to bridge the disagreement through political compromise and scientific research had collapsed.

American Policy: A Fixed Course

President Eisenhower—like many Americans—was greatly disheartened by the collapse of the summit meeting, and the obvious stalemate in the nuclear test ban talks. He virtually gave up hope of achieving a test ban treaty, and his views were shared by a number of American policy-makers. Nevertheless, Western, and more particularly American, policy seemed almost to have achieved a momentum of its own, and the policies established earlier in the negotiations were pursued with very little modification.

There were several reasons for this. The manner in which the United States, at the end of 1959, had phrased its decision to continue the moratorium meant that a positive decision would be required to resume testing, and that in the absence of such a decision, the moratorium would continue. There were a number of inhibitions against taking a positive decision to resume testing nuclear weapons. On May 28, Chairman Khrushchev warned that

the USSR would resume nuclear testing if the United States did.¹ Moreover, during the late spring and early summer the Administration wanted to avoid having the matter become involved in the politics of the presidential election. That it very nearly did become involved could be seen in the debate on the Republican platform in July.² The Administration felt that to do anything other than maintain the status quo would affect, and perhaps in a disadvantageous way, the chances of the Republican presidential candidate.

President Eisenhower decided, however, that if Richard Nixon won the presidential election, he, Eisenhower, would announce that the United States would resume nuclear testing. His purpose in doing this would be to spare his Republican successor the burden of taking this—in his view—unpopular step. When John F. Kennedy won the election, President Eisenhower felt that the decision should be left to him, particularly since Kennedy had stated on several occasions during the election that he favored continuing and intensifying the effort to achieve a nuclear test ban.

Another factor inhibiting the possibility of changing American policy concerning the nuclear test ban negotiations was that as the year went on East-West tension rose. On June 27, the USSR walked out of the Ten-Nation Disarmament Talks. The following month the Congo crisis erupted, and despite early unanimity, by late August the USSR and the United States were at loggerheads over their own and the UN's roles in these events. To take action such as resuming nuclear tests might jeopardize a remaining point of East-West contact and also further exacerbate relations between the two powers. Furthermore, these events tended to push other matters into the background and the attention of policy-makers was focused on them rather than on the test ban negotiations.

In another way also, American policy had a momentum which carried it ahead in the previously set direction. Project Vela was now underway, and it represented a large and continuing effort. Not only were funds and people committed at this point, but also the promise that scientific research might yield means of circumventing the perceived technical difficulties remained. For all of these reasons then, American policy continued virtually without change.

¹*New York Times*, May 29, 1960, p. 1.

²See *New York Times*, July 24, 1960, p. 38; July 26, 1960, p. 21; and July 27, 1960, p. 17.

Safeguards: Some Revolutionary Concepts

There were, however, some slight modifications in American policy. The original plan for the Vela Program had called for a series of underground nuclear explosions starting in the fall of 1960. As early as May 27, the USSR demanded precise information on the safeguards which would be established so that it could be certain that the experiments were not being used for weapons development purposes.³ The initial American proposal merely provided for: observation of the detonations; limitations on the instrumentation which could be used at the time of the detonation; and prior placement of the devices which were to be detonated in a depository which would be guarded jointly.⁴ Representatives of the other side could examine only the exterior of the devices.

The Soviet Union argued that this was insufficient and maintained that unless the Vela shots were carried out with appropriate safeguards, it would regard them as parts of a weapons development program, would consider that the moratorium had been broken, and would feel free to resume weapons testing itself.⁵ As Mr. Tsarapkin explained it, appropriate safeguards would involve full Soviet participation in the detonations, the right to inspect the internal structure of the devices used and to have a veto over the type of shots to be fired. He made it clear that the Soviet Union would not allow decoupled shots.

This was where matters stood in mid-summer, 1960. Meanwhile the United States had gone ahead with its plans for chemical explosions and had invited the Soviet Union and the United Kingdom to send observers for a shot planned for July 14, with the stipulation that American scientists should receive reciprocal privileges to observe chemical explosions in those two countries. On June 27, the USSR refused to agree to this in the absence of agreement on the overall research program, including the matter of safeguards, and Mr. Tsarapkin stated that the question of reciprocity therefore did not arise.⁶ The United States conducted the explosion with observers only from the United Kingdom.

On July 12, the United States introduced a new proposal on

³GEN/DNT/PV. 206, pp. 8-9.

⁴GEN/DNT/PV. 208, pp. 3-9.

⁵GEN/DNT/PV. 214, p. 7.

⁶GEN/DNT/PV. 220, p. 12.

safeguards. It suggested that all three powers should put a number of outmoded weapons in a pool which would be under joint surveillance and from which devices could be drawn for experimental detonations.⁷ All three parties could inspect the internal structures of these devices. The United States Administration promised to seek changes in the Atomic Energy legislation so that this would be possible. The Joint Committee on Atomic Energy had been consulted before the offer was made, and had given its tentative consent. Had the offer been accepted, and appropriate legislation adopted, a most interesting situation would have resulted, for the United States would have willingly revealed to its chief adversary in the Cold War secrets regarding nuclear weapons which it would not reveal to most of its allies. That policy-makers would even consider such action is an interesting commentary on the impact of nuclear weapons on international politics.

Although Mr. Tsarapkin allowed that the new American position was a step forward, he asserted that as the USSR did not plan to conduct any nuclear explosions, it would not contribute any devices to the pool and thus would not reveal any of its nuclear weapons to the United States. Since the United States would not create a pool unilaterally, an impasse resulted, and consequently the proposed nuclear explosions in the Vela Program were postponed.

One Agreement—Continuing Disagreements

Soviet policy also was rather static during this period. Some of the same factors that were operative in the American case may have affected the USSR too. To some degree both sides were reluctant to act during the closing days of the Eisenhower Administration. In addition, during this period Sino-Soviet tensions deepened,⁸ and opposition to Chairman Khrushchev's policies may well have increased within the Soviet elite. Khrushchev's views on security policy, particularly those which he expressed in his January 1960 speech concerning the composition of the Soviet armed forces, are known to have occasioned some controversy among Soviet

⁷GEN/DNT/PV. 227, pp. 3 ff.

⁸See Donald S. Zagoria, *The Sino-Soviet Conflict, 1956-1961*.

policy-makers.⁹ It is also possible that the Soviet leadership had already decided to resume nuclear testing, once preparations could be completed.

One technical matter was resolved by the Geneva Conference during 1960: on July 27 the three parties agreed on a precise definition of 4.75 seismic magnitude.¹⁰ In view of the previous disputes on this issue, and if 4.75 were to be a threshold in a treaty, this agreement was relatively important, but little other progress was made. There continued to be disagreement on the size of the quota of on-site inspections, although on July 26 the Soviet Union finally advanced a concrete figure, 3.¹¹ The criteria to be used for the initiation of on-site inspections and the degree of localization required were also in dispute.

In addition, it became apparent that East and West had quite different conceptions of how many control posts would be required on each other's territories. On May 12, the United States had submitted a proposal which provided that the network of control posts would be established in three overlapping phases, each lasting four years, so that within six years the entire system would be in operation.¹² The first phase provided for 21 posts in the Soviet Union, 1 in the United Kingdom, 11 in the United States, and 2 on ships and 12 on islands in the northern hemisphere.

The Soviet Union responded to this proposal on August 11. It protested that the proposal did not provide in the first phase for control posts in the southern hemisphere, where it was known that the Western powers had carried out weapon tests. The USSR also complained that the proposal provided for too many posts in the Soviet Union and too few in the United States.¹³ The Soviet counter-proposal envisaged the establishment in the first phase of 15 control posts in the Soviet Union, 11 in the United States, 1 in the United Kingdom, 7 in Australia, 20 on oceanic islands belonging to the United States and the United Kingdom, 2 in North America ex-

⁹See Thomas W. Wolfe, *Soviet Strategy at the Crossroads* (1964), especially pp. 31-37.

¹⁰GEN/DNT/PV. 235.

¹¹GEN/DNT/PV. 234, p. 15.

¹²GEN/DNT/22/Add. 1.

¹³GEN/DNT/PV. 241, pp. 12-19.

clusive of the United States, 2 in Africa, and 10 on ships.¹⁴ In total, there would be 68 control posts, rather than 47 as in the American proposal. With a touch of irony, Mr. Tsarapkin supported the Soviet proposal by citing portions of Richard Latter's testimony before the Joint Committee on Atomic Energy in April 1960, and pointed out that Dr. Latter had assumed that there would be 14 control posts in the United States, rather than 11 as the United States proposed.¹⁵ No progress was made toward resolving these difficulties during 1960.

In the discussion of the installation of the control-posts, another related difference became apparent. In November, Mr. Tsarapkin made it known that the Soviet Union would not allow any on-site inspections until the conclusion of the first phase in the installation of control posts, a process which in its view would take four years.¹⁶ The Western powers, on the other hand, envisaged the first phase as being divided into two two-year periods, and maintained that on-site inspections could and should begin at the end of the first period. This difference also remained unresolved.

The Acrimonious Fifteenth General Assembly

The deteriorating atmosphere of the Geneva Conference was evident in the conduct of the United States and the USSR in the fifteenth session of the General Assembly in the fall of 1960. Both gave detailed expositions and justifications of their positions.¹⁷ The debate was acrimonious. Poland submitted a resolution which would have placed the question of the cessation of nuclear tests before a special session of the General Assembly if agreement were not reached by April 1, 1961, and which would have requested the nuclear powers to maintain the moratorium on testing until an agreement had been achieved.¹⁸ The resolution also contained several provisions aimed at preventing the dispersion of nuclear weapons capability, some of which might have been construed as directed against NATO programs then in effect. Because of a pro-

¹⁴GEN/DNT/104.

¹⁵GEN/DNT/PV. 256, p. 10.

¹⁶GEN/DNT/PV. 270, pp. 11-12.

¹⁷UN, General Assembly, First Committee, *Official Records* (15th Session), pp. 190-92, 193-95.

¹⁸UN Document A/C. 1/L. 252.

cedural decision, this resolution was not put to the vote; however, three other resolutions relating more or less directly to the Geneva Conference were.

The first of these was a resolution submitted by Ireland concerning the prevention of the wider dissemination of nuclear weapons. The second was a resolution offered by Austria, India, and Sweden urging the states which were engaged in the test ban negotiations to press toward agreement and to continue their voluntary moratorium on testing. The third, sponsored by twenty-five African and Asian states and Venezuela, also made these same requests.¹⁹

The three resolutions were all adopted by large majorities: 68 to 9, with 26 abstentions; 72 to 0, with 5 abstentions; and 67 to 11, with 11 abstentions, respectively. The Soviet Union voted for all three resolutions, the United Kingdom abstained on the first, but voted for the second and third, and the United States abstained on all three. The position of the Western powers on the first resolution was determined by the French attitude. The French remained adamant in their determination to acquire a nuclear capability and detonated their third nuclear explosion on December 27, 1960. The United States abstained on the last two resolutions because it felt that the language of the three power draft implied that the unresolved issues in the Geneva Conference were unimportant, and because both asked for a continuation of the moratorium. As the votes indicate, the United States was as distant from the main-stream of majority sentiment in the United Nations concerning this issue as it ever had been, or would be, during the test ban negotiations.

Matters relating to these negotiations, however, were largely submerged in the broader issues that gripped the Assembly. The Soviet proposal for General and Complete Disarmament, a follow-up to Chairman Khrushchev's suggestion at the previous session of the Assembly, was debated heatedly and at length, but without resolution. Chairman Khrushchev's attack on Secretary General Hammarskjöld and demand for a reorganization of the upper levels of the Secretariat, a product of the Congo crisis, was also in the forefront, and this controversy carried over into the Geneva Conference.

¹⁹See General Assembly Resolutions 1576 (XV), 1577 (XV), and 1578 (XV).

II

The Kennedy Administration: A Renewed Effort

Reappraising of the American Position

On January 20, 1961, when the Kennedy Administration assumed power, American policy in the test ban negotiations seemed to have reached a dead end. The Geneva talks were clearly deadlocked, and, as evidenced by the voting on these issues in the fifteenth General Assembly, United States policy obviously commanded little worldwide support. Even the United Kingdom, America's partner in the Geneva negotiations, did not vote with the United States. These facts alone would have made a new administration reappraise past policies. Further, as a Senator and a presidential candidate, John F. Kennedy had been highly critical of the Eisenhower Administration's policies relating to disarmament and arms control.²⁰ During the presidential campaign, he had written a letter to Thomas E. Murray in which he had pledged that if he were elected, the United States would not be the first to begin atmospheric tests, and that if the Geneva Conference were still in progress when he assumed office, he would direct "vigorous negotiation . . . in the hope of concluding a realistic and effective agreement."²¹ He had also stated that he would direct the Atomic Energy Commission to prepare for underground testing, and if agreement were not reached within a reasonable period, he would order the resumption of underground testing.

Even before his inauguration, President Kennedy appointed John J. McCloy—a prominent Republican—as his adviser on disarmament. Five days after the inauguration, the United States Disarmament Administration, a unit within the Department of State created in September 1960, and the forerunner of the United States Arms Control and Disarmament Agency, announced the appointment of a panel headed by Dr. James B. Fisk, to study and review the technical aspects of the test ban negotiations.²² A few days

²⁰See, for example, his remarks at the University of New Hampshire, *Documents on Disarmament, 1960*, pp. 58-65. See also John F. Kennedy (Allan Nevins, ed.), *The Strategy of Peace* (New York: Harper, 1960), pp. 19-30.

²¹*Documents on Disarmament, 1960*, p. 289.

²²The other members of the panel were Dr. Hans A. Bethe; General Austin W. Betts, Division of Military Applications, Atomic Energy Commis-

later, the President named Arthur Dean—usually considered a Republican—as United States Representative to the Geneva Conference. Other personnel changes also resulted from the inauguration of the new Administration. From the point of view of the nuclear test ban negotiations, the most important of the new officials were: Dean Rusk, Secretary of State; Robert S. McNamara, Secretary of Defense; Glenn T. Seaborg, Chairman of the Atomic Energy Commission; and Jerome B. Wiesner, Special Assistant to the President for Science and Technology. Dr. Wiesner, in particular, was deeply worried about the nuclear arms race and committed to making every possible effort to obtain measures of arms control and disarmament. He had also been critical of past American policy. In an article published in the fall of 1960 he had stated that “. . . the West has always been suspicious of Soviet proposals, and furthermore has generally been ultraconservative in the inspection requirements it places upon any system.”²³

On balance, the new policy-makers probably contributed more to the reformulation of American policy than the technical review, which was after all conducted by the same scientists who had been active in the Eisenhower Administration. Moreover, at this date, early 1961, Project Vela had produced very little. Various close observers have noted how important the change in personnel at the top policy-making echelons was. Sir Michael Wright, the sometime British representative in the negotiations has asserted that President Kennedy took decisions on issues “. . . over which the previous administration had been hesitating, in some cases for

sion; Dr. Harold Brown, Lawrence Radiation Laboratory, Livermore, California; Spurgeon M. Keeny, Jr., Office of the Special Assistant to the President for Science and Technology; Dr. Richard Latter, the RAND Corporation; General Herbert B. Loper, Office of Secretary of Defense, Department of Defense; Dr. J. Carson Mark, Los Alamos Scientific Laboratories; Doyle Northrup, Air Force Technical Application Center, Department of Defense; Dr. Wolfgang K. H. Panofsky, High Energy Physics Laboratory, Stanford University; Dr. Frank Press, Seismological Laboratory, California Institute of Technology, Pasadena, California; General Alfred D. Starbird, Division of Military Applications, Atomic Energy Commission; and Dr. Herbert F. York, Defense Research and Engineering, Department of Defense. In addition, there were observers from interested government agencies and departments.

²³Jerome B. Wiesner, “Comprehensive Arms-Limitation Systems,” *Daedalus* (Fall 1960), pp. 915-50, at 917-18.

a year or even two years.”²⁴ And Earl H. Voss has written that with the inauguration of the Kennedy Administration, for the first time a United States administration “. . . agreed within its own house on a complete program for ending nuclear tests.”²⁵

To facilitate the review of American policy, President Kennedy requested that the resumption of the Geneva negotiations be delayed.

The new American position was approved by the President and discussed with the United Kingdom toward the end of February. When the Geneva Conference resumed on March 21, Ambassador Dean presented the broad outlines of the new position,²⁶ and, on April 18, jointly with the United Kingdom representative, he tabled a draft treaty embodying the new proposals.²⁷ This was the first time that the United States had tabled a complete treaty. As in the past, prior to their formal presentation, several aspects of the new American position were discussed in the Western press.

So far as technical matters were concerned, the changes in the United States position were not major. The United States still envisaged a threshold treaty which would not cover events of less than 4.75 seismic magnitude. It was, however, willing to ban all tests at high altitudes and in outer space. The United States urged the Soviet Union to reconsider its opposition to backscatter radar, but it proposed a control system based on the principal recommendations of Technical Working Group I. The United States' views on the length of the moratorium and on events not covered by the treaty were modified somewhat. It now proposed that the research program and the moratorium should be coterminous, each lasting three years from the date of the signature of the Treaty. The United States was also willing to accept the Soviet position on safeguards on research explosions; that is, it was willing to agree that, if the United States alone conducted nuclear explosions, Soviet scientists could examine American nuclear devices without the USSR's giving American scientists reciprocal privileges. Ambassador Dean stated that the President would request that the Atomic Energy Act be amended so that this could be implemented. In terms

²⁴*Disarm and Verify*, p. 127.

²⁵*Nuclear Ambush*, p. 459.

²⁶GEN/DNT/PV. 274, pp. 16-27.

²⁷GEN/DNT/110 and corr. 1.

of implications for traditional friend-foe relationships in world politics, this change made the American proposal even more extraordinary, and underscored again the impact of nuclear weapons on the nature of politics and relations among states. The American position continued to be that a quota of 20 on-site inspections would be necessary for the Soviet Union, but it was willing for quotas of 20 to be assigned to both of the Western powers. The United States was also willing to alter the proposed distribution of control posts in Asia, so that there would be a total of 19 control posts in the Soviet Union, rather than 21.

In sum, the United States sought to meet the Soviet position by offering various compromises on points to which the USSR had objected in the past. Much of this was the result of a careful study of the record of the negotiations through 1960 by Ambassador Dean and others. With respect to the basic technical issues which had divided the Conference, however, little modification was made in the Western position. The new Administration, like its predecessor, felt bound by the "facts" as they were then understood.

Soviet Disengagement: "Troika" and France

Much to the disappointment of the new Administration, the changes in the American position were without effect in terms of advancing the negotiations. Though it did little to soften the blow, this result was predicted even before the Geneva Conference resumed.²⁸ The Soviet attitude toward the test ban negotiations appears to have shifted significantly by this time, and apparently Chairman Khrushchev forecast this on March 9 in a lengthy interview with the American Ambassador in the USSR, Llewelyn E. Thompson.

Mr. Tsarapkin's opening speech in the Conference on March 21 dramatically demonstrated how much the Soviet position had changed.²⁹ After a bitter *ex parte* account of the negotiations, he stated that on the basis of the Soviet Union's experience in "other international organizations" the USSR now felt that "the single administrator of the control system should be replaced by a collective executive organ, in which the three main groups of States would

²⁸See *New York Times*, March 20, 1961, p. 1.

²⁹GEN/DNT/PV. 274, pp. 3-16.

be equally represented and invested with equal rights.”³⁰ In other words, Chairman Khrushchev’s suggestion for the reorganization of the upper levels of the Secretariat of the United Nations was now applied to the proposed control system. This was the first time that this issue had permeated the Geneva Conference.

In addition, Mr. Tsarapkin raised the question of the French tests of nuclear weapons. His exact words bear analysis, for they were certainly scrutinized with care by American policy-makers.

In conducting nuclear weapons tests, the French Government is actively spurring on the nuclear armaments race. If this development of events is not checked, the number of States possessing nuclear weapons will rapidly grow. In that case, it will be much more difficult to reach agreement on the discontinuance of nuclear tests, and all the more difficult to reach agreement on disarmament.

At the same time the French nuclear explosions reveal the true meaning of the position which the Governments of the United States and the United Kingdom have taken up at our Conference, namely, by endlessly dragging out the discussions on the discontinuance of nuclear weapon tests, they, that is the United States and the United Kingdom, have provided their NATO ally—France—with time in which to conduct further nuclear weapon tests. All this looks very much like what one might term a “division of labour” among the allies. We cannot ignore in our negotiations the fact that in conducting nuclear weapon tests, France as a member of NATO can, in line with her commitments to her allies within the NATO framework, carry out for other members of this military group—in other words on behalf of the United States and the United Kingdom—definite work in connexion with the improvement of nuclear weapons and perhaps even the creation of new types of weapons. Such activity by the Western countries, while the Soviet Union is honestly fulfilling its commitment not to conduct nuclear tests, cannot be viewed in any other way except as a desire by the Western Powers to obtain for themselves one-sided advantages. All this threatens to nullify the possibility of concluding a treaty and to render it pointless.³¹

³⁰*Ibid.*, p. 14.

³¹*Ibid.*, pp. 15-16.

It was difficult to know whether the USSR interjected this issue as a pretext to justify actions taken for other reasons or because of genuine concern. In one sense, the innuendo contained in the statement, that France was conducting nuclear weapons tests for the United Kingdom and the United States—which was subsequently turned into an outright allegation—was blatantly false and the Soviet Government clearly must have been aware of this. The French explosions were caused by technically simple devices, not the sophisticated mechanisms that the United Kingdom and the United States would be interested in testing, and the Soviet national monitoring system must have given Soviet leaders data that would indicate this fact.

If the statement were approached somewhat less literally, and a good case could be made for searching for allegorical meanings in Soviet statements, it perhaps had more significance. Even without elaborate inference, the meaning of the first paragraph is fairly clear and the proposition which it contains is almost axiomatic. Moreover, the development of a nuclear capability by France probably had implications for the dispersion of nuclear weapons capabilities within the Soviet bloc, and especially it may have fanned the desire of Communist China to acquire a nuclear capability. By this time, the USSR had refused to assist the Chinese in gaining an independent nuclear capability, and in mid-1960 all Soviet economic and military advisers and technicians had been withdrawn from China.³²

With respect to the second paragraph, although it was true that the Soviet Union should have been able to tell that the devices that France had detonated were unsophisticated, and therefore of little or no interest to the United Kingdom and the United States, as the French weapons program progressed, at some future point, such discrimination might not be as easy. Moreover, the mere fact that France was developing a nuclear weapons capability had implications for the overall strength of NATO in relation to the Warsaw Pact, regardless of the initial lack of sophistication of these weapons.

³²Alice Langley Hsieh, "The Sino-Soviet Nuclear Dialogue, 1963," *Journal of Conflict Resolution*, Vol. VIII, No. 2 (June 1964), pp. 99-115, at p. 113.

Thus it was quite plausible that the continued testing of nuclear weapons by France might be a matter of serious concern to the Soviet Union. If stopping the spread of nuclear weapons to "nth" countries was a motivating factor in Soviet policy with respect to the Geneva negotiations, the French action probably decreased the attractiveness of the negotiations, or of a test ban, for it indicated how weak an instrument these devices were and might be for controlling the spread. If the USSR were genuinely concerned about the French nuclear weapons development program, the fourth detonation in the program on April 25, 1961, probably served to heighten Soviet fears and to dramatize the fact that the United Kingdom and the United States could not or would not restrain the French.

Mr. Tsarapkin's speech signaled a sharp change in the Soviet conduct in the negotiations. From that point on the USSR was increasingly intransigent. The stalemate was obvious, but at this point the motivations for Soviet behavior were not. Were the concerns which Mr. Tsarapkin mentioned the explanation for Soviet conduct, or merely pretexts to cover courses chosen for other reasons? Did the USSR expect still further concessions, or was it seeking to provoke the West into breaking off the negotiations?³³ Within the United States, pressures to resume nuclear testing mounted.³⁴

For the time being, however, the Kennedy Administration stuck to its determination to try to achieve a test ban, and refused to accept the most pessimistic interpretations of Soviet behavior. On May 29, Ambassador Dean suggested a new approach to the problem of the quota for on-site inspections.³⁵ He proposed that the quota should be established on the basis of a sliding scale, and that the quota for the USSR should range from 12 to 20. The lower number would prevail if there were not more than sixty located seismic events of magnitude 4.75 or above during the year. The quota would rise by one for each five located seismic events of magnitude 4.75 or above; beyond 60, however, no more than 20 on-site inspections would be authorized under any circumstances. Even with the personnel of the new Administration, achieving con-

³³Earl H. Voss favors the latter interpretation; see *Nuclear Ambush*, p. 460.

³⁴See *ibid.*, pp. 462-63.

³⁵GEN/DNT/PV. 311, pp. 3-11.

sensus on this new position had been difficult, yet it and other Western concessions were ignored.

When President Kennedy and Chairman Khrushchev met in Vienna on June 3 and 4 for a general discussion of critical world problems, the test ban negotiations seemed to be completely deadlocked. The talks between the two leaders did not change this situation, in fact, at the conclusion of the discussions the chances of a test ban treaty seemed even more remote than they had previously. Khrushchev insisted that any more than three on-site inspections per year would constitute espionage and argued that the Congo crisis had demonstrated the necessity for a "troika" arrangement in the control organization.^{35a} Kennedy attempted to counter these points and stressed the dangers of nuclear proliferation. Khrushchev in return depreciated the importance of a test ban as an isolated measure of arms control. He did tell Kennedy, however, that the USSR would not resume nuclear testing until the United States did, and Gromyko said the same thing to Rusk.^{35b}

During the course of the conversations, Chairman Khrushchev handed President Kennedy an *aide mémoire* which reiterated the general Soviet position as enunciated in the Geneva Conference. It went on to suggest that the difficulties facing the negotiators could be eased, and implied that the Soviet proposal for a "troika" would be dropped, if the problems of a test ban and general and complete disarmament were solved simultaneously.³⁶ The Soviet Union seemed to be saying that the West could only obtain the controls which it argued were necessary for a test ban treaty in the context of general and complete disarmament. Subsequent questioning in Geneva and diplomatic correspondence brought out that this was indeed the Soviet position. In Geneva, the questions led to an acrimonious exchange. Now, in contrast to the situation prior to January 1959, it was the Soviet Union rather than the West which insisted that a test ban could only be considered in combination

^{35a}Detailed accounts of the Vienna meeting can be found in Arthur M. Schlesinger, Jr., *A Thousand Days: John F. Kennedy in the White House* (1965), pp. 369-72, and Theodore C. Sorenson, *Kennedy* (1965), pp. 549 and 617-18.

^{35b}Arthur M. Schlesinger, Jr., *A Thousand Days*, p. 398, and Theodore C. Sorenson, *Kennedy*, pp. 617-18.

³⁶*Geneva Conference*, pp. 538-42.

with other measures of disarmament. The circle was closed! As the talks dragged on in Geneva through the summer of 1961, Ambassador Dean became increasingly convinced that they were fruitless and that the USSR was preparing to resume nuclear testing. He cabled his views to the Department of State. Several policy-makers and observers shared his opinion.

To Test or Not To Test

In this atmosphere, further darkened by the developing Berlin crisis, the pressure in the United States for ending the moratorium on nuclear testing mounted, and this pressure was alluded to in the various exchanges. As early as February, the Joint Chiefs of Staff had urged the President to resume testing if agreement were not reached within sixty days of negotiations.^{36a} The Joint Chiefs favored atmospheric testing. The Department of Defense, though, would have limited the resumption to underground testing. There were also pressures from Congress, especially from the Joint Committee on Atomic Energy, from the press and from public opinion. A Gallup Poll in July 1961 showed more than two-to-one public support for the United States unilaterally resuming testing.

As a response to the pressure, and also to gain advice, on June 28, President Kennedy announced the formation through the President's Science Advisory Committee of an eleven-man *ad hoc* panel, headed by Wolfgang K. H. Panofsky, to review technical questions connected with the problem of nuclear testing.³⁷ Their mandate was to consider whether or not the Soviet Union could be conducting clandestine nuclear tests during the moratorium, and what progress the USSR could make through such tests. The group

^{36a}For accounts of these pressures see Arthur M. Schlesinger, Jr., *A Thousand Days*, pp. 454-58, and Theodore C. Sorenson, *Kennedy*, p. 618.

³⁷The other members of the panel were William O. Baker, Vice President, Bell Telephone Laboratories; Hans A. Bethe, Professor of Physics, Cornell University; Norris E. Bradbury, Director, Los Alamos Scientific Laboratory; James B. Fisk, President, Bell Telephone Laboratories; John S. Foster, Director, University of California Radiation Laboratory; George B. Kistiakowsky, Professor of Chemistry, Harvard University; Frank Press, Director, Seismological Laboratory, California Institute of Technology, Pasadena, California; Louis H. Roddis, President, Pennsylvania Electric Co.; John W. Tukey, Professor of Mathematics, Princeton University; Walter H. Zinn, Vice-President, Nuclear Division, Combustion Engineering, Inc.

was also asked to consider what progress the United States could make if it resumed nuclear testing, and what would happen if both sides resumed testing. In connection with the last question the panel was specifically asked to estimate the possibility of the Soviet Union's overcoming the United States' lead in nuclear weapons.

This panel did not complete its work until early August 1961. Meanwhile, no decision was taken to resume nuclear testing, nor were large-scale preparations made for such a contingency. When the Panofsky Panel reported to the President and the National Security Council it concluded that ". . . it was feasible for the Soviet Union to have conducted secret tests, that there was no evidence that it had done so (or had not done so), and that there was no urgent technical need for immediate resumption by the United States."^{37a} The Joint Chiefs of Staff filed a paper questioning the premises and the conclusions of the Panel's report. In the ensuing discussion, they and certain scientists, such as John S. Foster, the Director of the Lawrence Radiation Laboratory, argued for at least a limited resumption of nuclear testing underground. However, the President rejected their advice. During this period the Western position in the test ban negotiations seemed to enjoy considerable support among the governments of the world and in the world press, and the Administration decided that it should continue to attempt to capitalize on this. On July 15, the Western powers had requested that an item entitled "The Urgent Need for a Treaty to Ban Nuclear Weapons Tests Under Effective International Control" be inscribed on the agenda of the sixteenth session of the General Assembly.³⁸ For the United States to resume testing would obviously hamper Western efforts to muster support in the forthcoming Assembly. Moreover, the heads of state or government of twenty-five nonaligned states were scheduled to meet in Belgrade from September 1 through September 6. For the United States to decide to resume testing would risk condemnation by this group.

The United States not only did not decide to resume nuclear weapons testing, it did not even make preparations to do so. President Kennedy decided that in the relatively open conditions in which policy is formulated in the United States, one must decide

^{37a}Arthur M. Schlesinger, Jr., *A Thousand Days*, p. 456.

³⁸UN Document A/4799.

either to test or not to test. Preparations as extensive as those which would be required for a major test series could probably not be kept secret, and if they became known, he reasoned, they would surely be interpreted as indicating a decision to test, and the United States would suffer from all of the adverse consequences that it would have faced had it actually decided to resume nuclear testing. However, in mid-August, President Kennedy concluded that sometime later in the fall, the Atomic Energy Commission might announce contingency preparations for underground testing, although this would not mean that the United States had decided to resume tests.^{38a}

It is true that as a part of the Vela and peaceful uses programs some preparations were made for underground nuclear testing in Nevada. This work consisted principally of readying tunnels, and in Geneva the United States sought to negotiate safeguards to assure the Soviet Union that the projected detonations would not involve weapons development.

To prove that the United States was not preparing a weapons testing program, in the summer of 1961 Ambassador Dean and Mr. John J. McCloy, Special Advisor to the President on Disarmament, offered to allow a team of Soviet or neutral experts to examine American testing sites to determine the extent of American preparations for the resumption of testing, if any, provided that the USSR would give the United States reciprocal privileges.³⁹ On several occasions, the proposal was rejected as "impractical." The reasons for the suggestion's impracticality soon emerged.

Actually Chairman Khrushchev hinted at these reasons in his meeting with Mr. McCloy. He told Mr. McCloy "that Soviet scientists and military leaders were urging the testing of a 100-megaton bomb that could be carried in a rocket."⁴⁰ Mr. McCloy, of course, cabled these words to the President. They were another forewarning.

The only action that was taken in response to the warnings of Mr. McCloy, Ambassador Dean, and others was to step up

^{38a}Arthur M. Schlesinger, Jr., *A Thousand Days*, pp. 458-59.

³⁹See GEN/DNT/PV. 341, p. 75, and John J. McCloy, "Balance Sheet on Disarmament," *Foreign Affairs*, Vol. XL, No. 3 (April 1962), pp. 339-59, at 342, note 2.

⁴⁰Earl H. Voss, *Nuclear Ambush*, p. 467.

American surveillance of the Soviet Union, to the extent that this could be done.

In Geneva, at the negotiating table, the United States even offered new concessions. Ambassador Dean presented these to the Conference on August 28.⁴¹ He offered to eliminate the 4.75 seismic magnitude threshold in the treaty, if the Soviet Union would agree to increasing the number of manned or unmanned control posts or of on-site inspections. Alternatively, if the threshold were kept, he proposed that six months prior to the expiration of the moratorium, a panel composed of one scientist from each of the countries on the Control Commission should be convened to propose recommendations on improved instrumentation, and on lowering the threshold. As was no doubt expected, the USSR rebuffed these suggestions, arguing that the problems could only be solved in the context of general and complete disarmament.

III

The Coup de Grâce

The USSR Breaks the Moratorium

At 12:30 p.m. on Thursday, August 30, 1961, the three-hundred-and-thirty-eighth session of the Geneva Conference adjourned. Like countless meetings before it, it had produced no resolution of the stalemate. On the other hand, the three delegates gave no indication that their governments were about to break off or in any way disrupt the negotiations. The next meeting was scheduled for Friday, September 1. Thursday evening, however, the torporific atmosphere of the negotiations was broken when Moscow radio announced that the USSR had decided to resume the testing of nuclear weapons.⁴² The statement denigrated the importance of a test ban as a sole measure of arms control, and it cited the French nuclear tests and the tension surrounding the German and Berlin problems as the reasons for the Soviet resumption of nuclear testing. It disclosed that the USSR had worked out designs for creating a series of "superpowerful nuclear bombs" of from 20 to 100 megatons.

On September 1, 1961, the Soviet Union tested the first

⁴¹GEN/DNT/PV. 337, pp. 3-14.

⁴²U.S. Arms Control and Disarmament Agency, *Documents on Disarmament, 1961* (1962), pp. 337-43.

nuclear device in what was to become its most extensive series of tests, a series which would involve the largest nuclear detonations ever conducted, and which experts estimate must have taken a minimum of six months, and more likely a year or more to prepare. It is possible that the USSR began preparing for this test series shortly after the collapse of the summit meeting in late May 1960. Clearly preparations must have been underway by the time that the Kennedy Administration completed its reappraisal of the American position and tabled the new Western proposals, that is, by March 21, 1961. This is not to say, however, that the decision to conduct the test series must have been taken by then. That decision could well have been delayed until shortly before the first detonation in the series. Meanwhile, in sharp contrast to the situation in the United States, the preparations could be conducted in secret.

Little mention was made of the tests in the Soviet press. Significantly, the USSR also tested several intercontinental ballistic missiles during September 1961, which roused the suspicion that the two developments were related, that they were designed to perfect a new series of ballistic missiles and their warheads as Chairman Khrushchev's talk with Mr. McCloy had forewarned.

The Western Riposte

The Western response was swift. Shortly after the Soviet statement, the White House issued a statement condemning the USSR's decision to break the moratorium.

Although he was bitterly disappointed, and felt personally deceived, President Kennedy chose this course, and did not follow the advice of those, including apparently Secretary of State Rusk, who argued that the United States should immediately announce its intention to resume testing.^{42a} The rationale for the decision taken was that the United States should not do anything that might deflect the opprobrium of public opinion from the Soviet deed. Edward R. Murrow was the most articulate spokesman against precipitate action. Kennedy, and Vice-President Johnson too, felt that they could with-

^{42a}See Arthur M. Schlesinger, Jr., *A Thousand Days*, pp. 449-50, 459, and Theodore C. Sorenson, *Kennedy*, pp. 619-20.

stand for a while the pressure of those in the Senate and elsewhere who demanded a more belligerent course.

On September 3, President Kennedy and Prime Minister Macmillan proposed that the United States, the United Kingdom, and the USSR immediately agree not to conduct nuclear tests "which take place in the atmosphere and produce radioactive fallout."⁴³ This agreement would require no international control measures, and the Western leaders proposed that representatives of the three states meet in Geneva not later than September 9 to sign the agreement. This proposal was almost revolutionary in terms of past Western positions. For the first time, the West announced its willingness to accept a ban on testing in some environments, without the establishment of any international control machinery. Never before had the Western powers admitted that national detection systems would be sufficient. Whenever the Western powers discussed a partial ban previously, they always maintained that at least some international control machinery would be necessary. Some in the West, Senator Gore for instance, had argued against this position from the outset. While the Kennedy-Macmillan proposal won some immediate sympathy, it also served to undermine past Western positions, and would make it difficult for the Western powers to return—as they subsequently did—to the claim that international machinery would be necessary to control atmospheric testing. The proposal also meant that the Western powers were willing to allow the USSR to realize whatever gains it might achieve from its tests without attempting to match them through a counter-series.

The Kennedy-Macmillan proposal was formulated in Secretary of State Rusk's office by a small group of British and American policy-makers and advisers. Their prime objective was to embarrass the USSR. The proposal was a serious offer, which the participants in the sessions were willing to implement. Indeed, somewhat earlier, the American ambassador in Moscow, Llewellyn Thompson, had suggested that the West should try again for a limited ban, prohibiting tests in the atmosphere and under water, and President Kennedy had relayed this suggestion to Prime Minister Macmillan in a letter in early August.^{43a} On the other hand, none of those who formulated

⁴³*Documents on Disarmament, 1961*, p. 351.

^{43a}Arthur M. Schlesinger, Jr., *A Thousand Days*, p. 459.

the September 3 proposal seriously expected the USSR to accept it. Nor did any among them see much prospect for fruitful negotiation in the future. Although the effects of the proposal on past and possible future Western positions were discussed, because of the immediate objective and the expectations about the future, such effects were accorded little weight in the final decision.

Chairman Khrushchev scornfully rejected the Kennedy-Macmillan proposal on September 9. Following this, the Western powers asked for a recess in the Geneva Conference until the decisions of the sixteenth General Assembly were known.

On September 5, President Kennedy announced that he had "ordered the resumption of nuclear tests in the laboratory and underground, with no fallout."⁴⁴ The first American test since 1958 took place on September 15. The test series which followed was minor. The United States was not prepared to conduct major experiments! Indeed, it was not until November 2 that President Kennedy announced that atmospheric tests might be necessary and that preparations were being made. On April 24, 1962, after the Geneva Conference had ended, he announced that he had authorized atmospheric tests, and the first American atmospheric test was conducted the following day. The British did not resume nuclear tests until their underground shot on March 1, 1962.

Whether because of the quick United States decision to resume underground nuclear tests, or because of a feeling that the United States bore an equal or greater share of the blame for the fact that a test ban agreement had not been achieved (a feeling to which the Kennedy-Macmillan proposal for a nationally monitored atmospheric ban contributed in a curious way), or because of a more general reluctance to condemn one side, and especially the Soviet side in the Cold War, the neutral nations in Belgrade, while bemoaning the Soviet resumption of nuclear testing, were almost equally critical of the United States. This behavior angered President Kennedy.^{44a}

The Sixteenth General Assembly

The West was somewhat more successful in mustering support in the General Assembly of the United Nations. On October 27

⁴⁴*Documents on Disarmament, 1961*, p. 355.

^{44a}Theodore C. Sorenson, *Kennedy*, p. 538.

the Assembly adopted a resolution requesting the USSR to refrain from conducting a proposed atmospheric test of a nuclear device of 50 megatons or more.⁴⁵ Only the Soviet bloc and Cuba opposed this resolution, and Mali abstained, but all other UN Member States voted for it. Despite this, on October 30, the USSR carried out its test of the "superpowerful" bomb. Subsequent evaluations estimated its yield as 58 megatons, but Hans Bethe, who headed the AEC panel which evaluated the Soviet test series pointed out that had the fusion materials been encased in uranium rather than lead, its yield would have been 100 megatons or more.⁴⁶

The Assembly also adopted, by a vote of 71 to 11 (Soviet bloc and Cuba) with 15 abstentions, a resolution submitted by the United Kingdom and the United States entitled "The Urgent Need for a Treaty to Ban Nuclear Weapons Tests Under Effective International Control."⁴⁷ This resolution, in a sense, gave the Assembly's sanction to the Western position in the test ban negotiations. This was the first time that this had happened.

The United States and the United Kingdom voted for a resolution submitted by Ireland on the prevention of the dissemination of nuclear weapons.⁴⁸ This resolution was very similar to that which Ireland had submitted and which the Assembly had adopted the previous year, and on which the United States had abstained. The affirmative American vote at the sixteenth Assembly was another sign of the way in which the position of the Kennedy Administration on these matters differed from that of its predecessor.

Some of the Assembly's other actions in this general area were not as pleasing to the West, however. The two Western powers abstained from voting on a resolution which was submitted by several African states urging that states consider and respect the continent of Africa as a denuclearized zone,⁴⁹ since to favor such a resolution would implicitly condemn the French for their nuclear tests in the Sahara. This resolution was adopted by a vote of 55 to 0 with 44 abstentions.

⁴⁵General Assembly Resolution 1632 (XVI).

⁴⁶Speech delivered at Cornell University January 5, 1962. Reprinted in the *Congressional Record* (1962), pp. A1397-99. See also Ralph E. Lapp, *Kill and Overkill: The Strategy of Annihilation* (1962), pp. 36-37.

⁴⁷General Assembly Resolution 1649 (XVI).

⁴⁸General Assembly Resolution 1665 (XVI).

⁴⁹General Assembly Resolution 1653 (XVI).

The United Kingdom and the United States also voted against a resolution which had originally been submitted by India, but which was ultimately sponsored by several states, urging the states concerned to resume the moratorium on nuclear testing and to maintain it until the adoption of a test ban treaty.⁵⁰ The 20 states which voted against this resolution were a curious combination of the Soviet bloc and the West; 71 states voted for the resolution, while 8 abstained.

Finally, the United States and the United Kingdom voted against a far-reaching resolution which declared *inter alia* that:

- (a) The use of nuclear and thermo-nuclear weapons is contrary to the spirit, letter and aims of the United Nations and, as such, a direct violation of the Charter of the United Nations.
- (d) Any State using nuclear and thermo-nuclear weapons is to be considered as violating the Charter of the United Nations, as acting contrary to the laws of humanity and as committing a crime against mankind and civilization.⁵¹

The resolution, which had been submitted by several neutralist states, garnered 60 favorable votes, including those of the Soviet bloc. Sixteen states voted against it, and 25 abstained. In a sense, this resolution could be interpreted as a broad attack on the basic concepts underlying Western military policy.

Whether on balance the United States could be said to have achieved important gains in terms of mustering world support for its position and against that of the Soviet Union is difficult to say. Certainly the United States fared better in the sixteenth session than it had the year before in the fifteenth, but it was far from an unblemished victory. And it is worth noting that President Kennedy rejected the advice of Assistant Secretary of State Harlan Cleveland, who argued that the United States should bring the Soviet resumption of testing before the Security Council. His reasoning was that it would look hypocritical for the United States to take such action if it had already decided to resume testing itself.^{51a}

⁵⁰General Assembly Resolution 1648 (XVI).

⁵¹General Assembly Resolution 1653 (XVI).

^{51a}Arthur M. Schlesinger, Jr., *A Thousand Days*, p. 481.

The End of the Conference

After the passage of the Assembly resolutions on the test ban negotiations, the United States proposed that the Geneva negotiations be resumed, and the Soviet Union in due course agreed. The Conference therefore reconvened on November 28, 1961. Thirteen meetings were held between then and January 29, 1962, when the Geneva Conference finally recessed *sine die*.

The day before the Conference reconvened, the Soviet Government issued a statement, which was published in the world press and which Mr. Tsarapkin subsequently read into the record.⁵² The essence of this statement was that the situation had changed radically since the test ban negotiations had begun, and that if the negotiations were to continue, they would have to do so on a new basis. Consequently, the USSR proposed the immediate conclusion of an agreement "for the discontinuance of nuclear tests in the atmosphere, under water and in outer space," to be monitored by national detection systems. The statement cited the Western proposal of September 3 as evidence that national systems were adequate. In addition, the USSR proposed that there should be a moratorium on underground tests, "pending agreement on a system of control over underground explosions as a constituent part of an international system of control over the implementation of a programme of general and complete disarmament." The Soviet Union also insisted that France should be brought into the negotiations. The USSR proposed a treaty embodying these provisions. By implication the Soviet Union no longer accepted the report of the Conference of Experts as the basis for the negotiations. In fact, in arguing that an international control system was not necessary, the USSR reverted to the position that it had held prior to 1957 London negotiations.

The Western powers implicitly rejected the new Soviet proposal immediately, and after joint British-American consultations formally rejected it on January 16, 1962. They were willing to negotiate on the basis of the proposals which they had tabled previously, including the draft treaty of April 18, 1961, and subsequent modifications, but they insisted that an international control system was necessary. With respect to the Western proposal of September 3,

⁵²GEN/DNT/PV. 341, pp. 21-30.

Ambassador Dean pointed out that it was confined to the atmosphere, that it had been made in the hope of forestalling imminent Soviet tests which had been carried out, and that by its own terms it had expired on September 9, 1961.⁵³ At this point, among other things and perhaps above all, the Western powers wanted to retain the freedom to conduct their own nuclear tests if their evaluations of the current Soviet test series indicated that the relative military strength of the two sides had been significantly altered.

Because of this new shift in the Soviet position, the test ban talks were even more deeply deadlocked than they had been previously. Consequently, the Western powers proposed that the Conference should adjourn, and that the problem of a test ban should be referred to the Eighteen-Nation Disarmament Committee, a body which had been created by agreement between the Soviet Union and the United States during the sixteenth session of the General Assembly to consider the plans for general and complete disarmament and which was scheduled to have its first meeting on March 14, 1962. Since the Soviet Union would not agree to this, the Conference on the Discontinuance of Nuclear Weapon Tests simply adjourned on January 29, 1962. It even proved impossible to agree on a communique. When the Geneva Conference ended, the technical controversies which had divided it since January 1959 remained unsolved. The attempts both of a technical and a political nature to resolve these had been futile.

⁵³GEN/DNT/PV. 342, pp. 13-14.