THE REAL ISSUE IN BERLIN CRISIS

Wartime Director of the OSS Says the Scuttling of ERP
Is Soviet Russia's Real Aim in Blockading the City

By William J. (Wild Bill) Donovan

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The Soviets have defined the issue. The issue is not as they pretend, that the Allies have introduced currency reform into western Germany. Nor even the right of the western Allies to remain in Berlin. The real issue is whether the European Recovery Program is to be stopped at the outset, thus determining whether Europe shall be helped to economic recovery or whether it is to be left to economic chaos, political disintegration and eventual Soviet domination.

The blockade of Berlin is a menacing and dangerous tactic designed to test the will and resolve of the western Allies to achieve economic recovery for western Europe. General Lucius D. Clay (US Military Governor) has met the challenge of the blockade with boldness and resolution. The dramatic success of "Operation Vittles" which has maintained Berlin's food supply despite the siege of the city, was completely unexpected by the Soviets.

General Clay's firm and decisive action has regained the initiative for the western Allies. To strengthen this position he must receive effective and immediate support of the United States. If the people of our country are accurately informed, I believe they will promptly and unreservedly insist that our government take the necessary measures to support General Clay as the surest way of preventing war.

However, we should not delude ourselves. The maintenance of the food supply of Berlin by air, even though indefinitely continued, will postpone but will not resolve the basic issue. And on the basic issue—which is really war or peace—we shall gain nothing were we to yield Berlin to the Soviets now. The tactics of economic strangulation employed in Berlin today can be repeated tomorrow or a week from now in Vienna, or anywhere else.

If the Soviets have any genuine intention of participating in the reconstruction of Europe or any desire to relieve the hardships on the German population, they can show their good faith now by lifting the blockade. If, on the other hand, the Soviets intend war—war will not be avoided by the surrender of Berlin by the western Allies to the Soviets. If she is only bluffing, now is the time to call the bluff.

Whatever Soviet intentions may be, the surest way to find out is for the western Allies, led by the United States, to take a firm stand on Berlin now.

If we pursue any other course we surrender our hard-won initiative, we destroy our present strong moral position with the Allies, the German people and before the world. Our prestige would be dissipated and our leadership discredited. Even if we abandoned Berlin it would weaken, not improve, our physical and military position, and there would be no guarantee that Russia would act any differently than heretofore, and the Soviets would be the first to exploit our weakness. They would intensify their pressure to drive us progressively to weaker positions until finally our retreat would become a disorganized rout, or to trap us into an overt act of war.

Common sense dictates that no amount of appeasement will fully unmask Russian intention, and on the other hand, firmness and purposeful action are the only measures that can prevent war.

What are the means that America can and should employ to support the Allied position in Berlin? As an ordinary citizen I do not know of all the political and economic means that our country can apply to support our stand in Berlin.

But I do know that there are many citizens like myself who recognize that the issue presented here goes far beyond Berlin or even Europe. For what happens in Berlin has its repercussions in every area where our country and the Soviet Union face each other, whether in Europe or the Middle East or the Far East.

Therefore I believe the United States, together with its Allies, can and should impose economic sanctions against her in other parts of the world.

However and wherever that can be done, I think our Government should

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General Donovan made this statement during his visit to Berlin in mid-July on a brief inspection trip in Germany.

During World War II General Donovan organized and directed the highly successful Office of Strategic Services. In the first world war, as a colonel in the old 69th New York Infantry, he was wounded three times, received the Congressional Medal of Honor and 10 other decorations, and earned the nickname of "Wild Bill."