Experts Look At Berlin Problem

By PHIL BARBER and BILL McGrath

The Berlin crisis and our attending confused foreign policy, all the more confused because inflexible, represent deeper issues standing behind the immediate events. What will be our position as we go into the proposed summit conference? First, we will have openly acknowledged that at Berlin we can be and have been pushed to the verge of all-out nuclear war (!) But we will have also shown that our willingness to fight is based on a more relevant moral issue than was the case without support of certain island bandits.

No Small War

The unfortunate situation in which we cannot fight a small war in Germany is due to an extraordinary complex of causes: the political experiences of World War II, Acheson's containment policy, Eisenhower and Dulles' threats of massive retaliation, the constantly threatening preponderance of Soviet land forces, and the growing menace of Soviet missile-rattling as Khrushchev gains the strength to force us to higher stakes.

Of course, it is at spots like Berlin where the Western and Soviet forces are in strained contact where we can be pushed, but the Berlin situation is only a manifestation of the large European problems of unification, neutralization, and co-existence.

What To Discuss?

Bearing this in mind, what should be talked about at the conference if, mercifully, it should take place? The position of neither side is really quite so clear-cut as we have been led to believe. The Germans appear to want reunification, and a final peace treaty; the French perhaps would like to see Germany divided, weak and at least economically united to Western Europe.

Basically, the US seems to be entrenched in the somewhat unrealistic policy of wanting Germany united, armed, and firmly fixed in the Western camp. The Russian policy is to keep the Western nations divided by using East Germany and Berlin as a wedge to exploit the already considerable differences and consequences of foreign policy.

Only Realistic Answers

The only realistic solution seems to be somewhat like the plan of Kapariksi, the Polish Communist foreign minister: to pull back both Western and Soviet land and missile forces from Germany, Czechoslovakia, and Poland and thus to create a broad neutral buffer zone stretching from Sweden and Finland in the Baltic through central Europe, Austria, Switzerland, and Yugoslavia to the Adriatic. The possibility of getting ourselves into embarrassing situations like the Berlin crisis where we are threatened with nuclear warfare would be considerably reduced.

It should be pointed out, however, that the real source of the confusion in Western policy lies in the basic contradiction between the mutually incompatible but nonetheless openly avowed aims of European unification as well as German reunification.

One Germany?

Do we really want one Germany, or would we be willing to settle for two at the bargaining table? One Germany in one Europe is impossible. The Russians, because of their memories of World War II, simply would not allow this. Undoubtedly the French would have their objections.

On the other hand, a united and neutralized Germany outside either camp would probably fall into the old German role of playing off East against West, although it would provide an admirable buffer to prevent such explosive situations as we have.

But if the West really wants Western Germany economically and militarily united into our camps, then it must reconcile itself to losing Berlin.

Editors Divided

On this point the Thresher political editors are divided. McGrath, covering his ears to the yell of "Francophile!" from the other half, prefers a divided Germany with Bonn integrated into the West. Barber, smiling at charges of being a Prussian militarist, prefers a united but militarily restricted Germany outside of either camp.