EISENHOWER’S “CORRESPONDENCE DIPLOMACY” WITH THE KREMLIN—CASE STUDY IN SUMMIT DIPLOMATICS

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When President Washington sent a personal message to the Sultan of Morocco on December 1, 1789, only seven months after the birth of the new Republic, he scarcely could have realized the important diplomatic precedent he was setting, or the degree to which his successors would be communicating personally with the ranking leaders of the world. Addressing his eighteenth century diplomatic note to “[our] Great and Magnanimous Friend,” he expressed appreciation for securing the release of United States seamen held by the Barbary pirates. In closing, he added with a flourish: “... [I] shall esteem myself happy in every Occasion of convincing your Majesty of the high Sense (which in common with the whole Nation) I entertain of the Magnanimity, Wisdom, and Benevolence of your Majesty. . . .”

On August 1, 1958, at the peak of his remarkable series of summit communications with the leaders of the Kremlin, President Eisenhower acknowledged: “For several centuries personal correspondence between Heads of Government and Heads of State has been an extremely valuable channel of communication when the normal diplomatic channels seemed unable to carry the full burden.”

By virtue of his legal power to appoint diplomatic representatives and to receive foreign envoys, together with his constitutional responsibility for the negotiation of treaties, the President has plenary authority over diplomatic communications. Although this power is not formally ascribed to him by the Constitution, it is not contested

by Congress or the courts. Since the very outset, however, messages normally have been sent by conventional diplomatic channels, and only on special occasions has the President been involved personally in the preparation or transmittal and reception of such exchanges. Nevertheless, the use of presidential communications in the conduct of foreign affairs is a well-established practice of the United States, it has been increasingly employed since the outbreak of World War II, and, as may well be expected, certain presidents become more involved than do others.

Analysis of past presidential summit communication indicates that written messages fall into the following general categories: 1. formal and ceremonial communications, such as certain diplomatic credentials and letters or telegrams of greeting, appreciation, congratulation, and condolence; 2. mediatory messages, by which the good offices of the United States are proffered to resolve international disputes; and 3. communications concerned with the protection of United States interests and the promotion of national policy abroad. Certain presidential diplomatic exchanges stand out in history and, in more recent times, these include the extensive correspondence President Franklin D. Roosevelt maintained during World War II with Prime Minister Winston Churchill and Marshal Joseph V. Stalin, the exchange of five communications by President John F. Kennedy and Premier Nikita S. Khrushchev at the peak of the Cuban missile crisis, and the comprehensive Eisenhower-Kremlin diplomatic colloquy. All three of these exchanges are historically important, each for different reasons, and each constitutes a case study in summit diplomacy worthy of serious study.

The Eisenhower-Kremlin exchange was launched by Soviet Premier Nikolai A. Bulganin on September 19, 1955, as an extension of the summit discussions at the Geneva Heads of Government Conference, held three months earlier. Considered as a group, these exchanges also were preluded by an earlier series of communications the President exchanged with Marshal Grigori Zhukov, information con-
communications were unorthodox in several ways. Quantitatively, they were less numerous than the Roosevelt-Truman World War II exchanges with the British and Soviet leaders, but often they were surprisingly lengthy and detailed. While generally concerned with important questions of public policy, including most (but not all) of the pressing issues of the moment, often they dealt with the kind of details that are handled by ordinary, quiet diplomatic channels. Because they were deliberately published at the time of, or shortly after, transmission, as a group they tended to take on characteristics of "speechmaking" rather than instruments of consultation and negotiation. As a result, they became an element of "public enlightenment" if not of outright Cold War propaganda. It is not surprising, therefore, that they produced little diplomatic understanding and virtually no significant negotiated results.

This series consists of seventy-two communications over a five year period. Forty-one were sent by the Soviet leaders (seventeen by Bulganin, twenty-two by Khrushchev after he took over, and two New Year's greetings by President Klimenti E. Voroshilov). President Eisenhower transmitted thirty-one replies. (See Table 1.)

Copies of Bulganin's initial letter were sent not only to the President, but also to the other 1955 Geneva summit conference participants, Prime Minister Anthony Eden of Great Britain and

cerning which was revealed by the President at his news conference on April 27, 1955. Eisenhower and Zhukov had been commanders on the Western and Eastern fronts of Europe during World War II, where they had come to respect and admire each other. After the war Eisenhower wrote: "But so far as the friendly association between Marshal Zhukov and myself was concerned, it continued to grow until the moment I left Europe in November 1945. That friendship was a personal and individual thing and unfortunately was not representative of a general attitude." See his Crusade in Europe (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday, 1948), p. 438. Although considerable publicity was devoted to this exchange, the texts of the communications were not released on the grounds that they were of a personal nature. Nevertheless, they may have served to probe the President's disposition to engage in the Kremlin-White House exchange that followed.

The texts of these letters generally can be found in such basic sources as White House news releases and the Department of State Bulletin. Many also are given in Department of State, Heads of Government Conference, op. cit.; Department of State, American Foreign Policy, Current Documents, annually for years 1955 to 1960 (Wash.: GPO, serially) hereinafter referred to as American Foreign Policy with the appropriate year; and Department of State, Documents on Disarmament, 1945-1959 in 2 Vols., and separate Vol. for 1960 (Wash.: GPO, 1960 and 1961), hereinafter cited as Documents of Disarmament.
### Table 1

Eisenhower-Kremlin Communications, 1955-1960

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<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Soviet President</th>
<th>Bulganin</th>
<th>Khrushchev</th>
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<tr>
<td>1956</td>
<td>10*</td>
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<td>17</td>
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<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
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TOTAL 2 17 22 31 72

*One letter sent jointly by Bulganin and Khrushchev.

Premier Edgar Faure of France. In his opening paragraphs, the Soviet Premier stated that he was concerned because, "In the course of our memorable meetings in Geneva we agreed to work jointly for elaboration of an acceptable system of disarmament," and the subcommittee of the United Nations Disarmament Commission, in which negotiations were conducted, had not "produced those results for which you and I were fully entitled to hope." 6

The sending of a summit-level letter under these circumstances was not out of the ordinary. However, for the Head of Government to deal with the problem in substantial detail (amounting to six pages in its printed version) was, perhaps, exceptional. President Eisenhower doubtless felt that he could not properly ignore the letter. Yet, had he responded in a general way and relegated the preparation of a detailed reply to the Department of State, to be sent through normal channels of diplomatic communication, the summit series might never have materialized. The President could readily have done this, because he suffered a heart attack on September 24, and his first contribution to the series, dated October 11, simply acknowledged appreciation for the Soviet letter and indicated that he would not be able to respond "until the doctors let me do more than at present." 7 Nevertheless, perhaps not wishing to inhibit exchanges on such an important matter as disarmament,


7Ibid., p. 24.
eventually he replied at some length on March 1 the following year.\(^8\)

In the meantime, on January 23, 1956, Bulganin sent another letter, proposing methods for the “lessening of international tension,” to which he appended a draft twenty-year “Treaty of Friendship and Cooperation” prepared by the Soviet government. The treaty required recognition of mutual respect for state sovereignty, and provided for non-interference in internal affairs and for the settlement of international disputes by peaceful means.\(^9\) The President replied to this Soviet letter only five days later. He indicated that such a treaty was unnecessary, in his view, because both countries already were bound by the obligations of the United Nations Charter. Evidencing an overt negativism, he added: “I wonder whether again going through a treaty-making procedure, and this time on a bilateral basis only, might indeed work against the cause of peace by creating the illusion that a stroke of a pen had achieved a result which in fact can be obtained only by a change of spirit.”\(^10\) The texts of both letters were released by the White House on January 28, the very date of Eisenhower’s response—and this extraordinary venture in open diplomacy at the summit was under way.

From the very outset, certain characteristics of this exchange became readily apparent. With few exceptions, the Soviet Premier assumed the initiative, and President Eisenhower apparently became the reluctant, often negativistic, respondent. At times, the Soviet Premier sent a second letter dealing with a new topic before the President replied to the first. The text of the letters was made available to the public press within days, or hours, generally by the White House. The failure of the President to discourage the exchange, or—to use the term so popular in government circles—to “de-escalate” them to lower levels of diplomacy, tended to set the pattern for the years to follow.

“The United States is always ready to participate with the Soviet Union in serious discussion”—
Eisenhower (State of the Union Message, 1960)

The topics broached in these letters covered a broad spectrum of important questions in the relations of the United States and the

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\(^8\)Ibid., pp. 65-67.
\(^9\)Ibid., pp. 56-62.
Soviet Union. Generally, they may be grouped in the following categories: maintaining the peace, lessening international tension, arms control, convening a summit conference, improving trade relations, and a number of specific geographic issues, including the German problem. (See Table 2.) The Soviet Premier introduced

Table 2
Eisenhower-Kremlin Communications, 1955-1960
Principal Subjects of Exchanges

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<td>72</td>
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*Two of these also dealt with disarmament.

proposals for peaceful coexistence, the conclusion of a non-aggression pact between the members of the North Atlantic Alliance and the Warsaw Pact Powers, and the negotiation of a bilateral treaty of friendship and cooperation. As a package the Kremlin letters became a massive polemic for peace. At one point, addressing himself to the matter of the oft-repeated, nebulous Soviet appeal for the preservation of peace, President Eisenhower said:

"Peace and good will among men have been the heartfelt desire of peoples since time immemorial. But professions of peace by governmental leaders have not always been a dependable guide to their actual intentions. Moreover, it seems to me to be profitless for us to debate the question of which of our two governments wants peace the more. . . . The heart of the matter becomes the determination of the terms on which the maintenance of peace can be assured, and the confidence that each of us can justifiably feel that these terms will be respected."

The President failed to reply to Bulganin's first proposal of an East-West non-aggression pact, and, when the Soviet Premier raised it again a year later, Eisenhower rejected it on the grounds

12Letter of Bulganin, Nov. 17, 1956, transmitting Soviet declaration of policy, in ibid., pp. 90-95. For the President's reply, Dec. 31, 1956, see ibid., pp. 95-96.
that most of the countries concerned, as members of the United Nations, had already subscribed to the principle of non-aggression. However, when Khrushchev suggested taking steps to develop augmented trade relations, the President assumed a somewhat less negative position. He replied that he favored "the expansion of peaceful trade with the Soviet Union," but he made no positive proposals for doing so and inhibited further consideration by adding that, because the export and import trade of the United States is carried on by individual private business firms, there is no need for governments to take action respecting the matter.

The six territorial issues raised in these exchanges were the Hungarian revolt, the Suez and Lebanese crises, the Formosa Straits problem, the political status of the East European satellites, and the German question. Four of these involved critical situations. The first—the Hungarian uprising—was one of the few topics introduced in the series by President Eisenhower. In a letter to Bulganin on November 4, 1956, he expressed shock at the resort to Soviet force in embattled Hungary, and he assumed an interpositionary posture, urging "in the name of humanity and in the cause of peace that the Soviet Union take action to withdraw Soviet forces from Hungary immediately." As was to be expected, and the White House must have anticipated it, the Soviet Government refused.

On the following day, November 5, Bulganin wrote the President that their governments should intervene forcibly in the Middle East to estop the Anglo-Franco-Israeli attack on Egypt. He proposed that the naval and air forces of the two great powers be employed as United Nations agents "to put an end to aggression." While the concept of great power stabilization on behalf of the United

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Nations suggests some interesting possibilities—could the powers ever agree on objectives, methods, and the details of such an enterprise—and while the United States generally favored United Nations action in this crisis, the President refused to accept the Kremlin proposal. He did not formally respond to the Bulganin letter, but the White House issued a statement the same day, rejecting the idea of Soviet-American military intervention, supporting United Nations action, and seeking to divert attention to the Hungarian issue.\textsuperscript{17}

It appears that the Kremlin endeavored to bait the United States into using military force against its allies and friends, and that the President was seeking a diplomatic forum in which to negotiate the termination of hostilities and avert the spread of war while, at the same time, establishing an arrangement that provided adequate face-saving safeguards. Resort to the United Nations had the merit of attributing the onus of responsibility, as well as such credit as might ensue, for halting Anglo-Franco-Israeli military action, to the world organization rather than to the United States, and the White House, presumably, appreciated the subtlety of the advantage to be derived from this maneuver, as against the actual and propagandistic risks that were bound to result from accepting the Soviet proposal for more forcible and direct intervention. In any case, these White House-Kremlin communications contributed little to the settlement of the Middle East crisis, and negotiations concerning it were conducted at the diplomatic level, primarily in the United Nations.

In July and again in September, 1958, Khrushchev objected to United States military intervention in Lebanon (and British interposition in Jordan), and introduced the Taiwan Straits question into the exchanges, contending that peace was impossible until United States military power was withdrawn from these areas. President Eisenhower naturally could not have simply acquiesced in such Kremlin assertions. The same was true, however, with respect to the President's insistence on Soviet withdrawal from Eastern Europe and his demand that the Communist satellite countries be permitted to choose their own form of government, an issue on which, experience indicates, the Soviet government refuses to negotiate.

\textsuperscript{17}American Foreign Policy, 1956, pp. 665-666.
These exchanges concerning territorial questions which involved important national interests could scarcely have been expected to resolve the issues raised. Such territorial matters were not likely to be settled by public debate at the summit. The attitude “what is mine is mine, and what is yours is negotiable” applied to both sides. At best, these, therefore, were probes to test negotiability; at worst, they were propaganda ploys.

While the German question was the most protracted and in some ways the thorniest territorial issue in the relations of the two governments after World War II, it is surprising that it was not treated more fully in the Eisenhower-Kremlin exchanges. The concluding of a German peace treaty, West German membership in the North Atlantic Alliance together with its military revival and nuclear status, and the problem of German reunification were raised, but these matters were not pervasive in the communications and they were simultaneously treated more comprehensively in other diplomatic channels. As far as substantive issues are concerned, it is most surprising that the Berlin question was not even seriously introduced. As a matter of fact, when Khrushchev promulgated his “ultimatum” respecting the beleaguered German metropolis in an address on November 10, 1958, the matter was not referred to in these summit letters, and, it may be interesting to note, they then were suspended for several months.

Among the principal reasons why the German and Berlin questions were not treated comprehensively in these summit exchanges are that so much consideration had been devoted to them in so many forums, including the Geneva Summit Conference of 1955, with such disappointingly unproductive results, that the positions of the two major powers had become highly frozen respecting them, that important changes in the power structure of Europe had rendered their resolution less negotiable than had previously been the case, and, perhaps, that the major powers were becoming resigned to living with a divided Germany. Moreover, the vital interests of Britain, France, and Germany were involved, and the Eisenhower administration was determined not to become committed to broad scale, bipartite Soviet-American negotiations concerning German affairs. The United States preferred to discuss these issues with the Soviet Union in multipartite forums, especially the conferences of Foreign Ministers, because, in terms of diplomatic power, within
them it stood firmly united with Britain and France against the Kremlin. Yet, it is worthy of note, the private conversations of President Eisenhower and Premier Khrushchev at Camp David in 1959 served to ameliorate the intensity of the impasse over the Berlin ultimatum and, according to Eisenhower's memoirs, to return the matter to "the status quo ante," thereby rendering the Berlin issue "a proper subject for negotiation" rather than "unilateral action."

The two subjects dealt with most comprehensively were the convening of a summit conference and the matter of arms control. The first of these was the principal subject of twenty letters. In all cases the consideration of a summit meeting was initiated by the Soviet Premier, except for that following the Camp David meeting of Eisenhower and Khrushchev, which ultimately paved the way for the convening of the Paris Heads of Government Conference in 1960.

Negotiations pertaining to a summit conference clearly were within the purview of the Eisenhower-Kremlin communications. However, the resolution of differences relating to acceptable Western and Soviet conference preconditions, and the achievement of a state of willingness to return to an East-West summit conference, required major shifts in basic attitudes concerning the value of such a meeting. Ultimately, when these matters were resolved, the forum in which details respecting it were to be negotiated became relatively unimportant. As it turned out, all other summit techniques having failed, only after the leaders of the major powers resorted to a series of exchange personal visits in 1959 and early 1960—involving eight such face-to-face visits, by which each of the four leaders consulted privately with all of the others—supplemented by a preconference Western summit meeting, had they traversed the tortuous route to the East-West Paris Summit Conference of May, 1960.

Arms control was the central theme of nearly thirty of the Eisenhower-Kremlin letters, beginning with Bulganin's first letter of September 19, 1955, and concluding with Khrushchev's post-Paris Summit Conference letters of June 2 and 27, 1960, the last in the series. Virtually all major aspects of disarmament were introduced at some point, ranging from the desirability and methods of reducing conventional forces to restricting the use of outer space to peaceful
purposes. The principal issue was nuclear warfare, including the development of nuclear weapons, the suspension of nuclear testing, the establishment of a nuclear free zone, and the prevention of a surprise nuclear attack.

While some progress was made during the Eisenhower-Kremlin exchange in clarifying policy positions, eliciting new proposals, giving new direction, and peeling off elements for more definitive treatment at other diplomatic levels, these summit communications were not well suited to the serious negotiation of an accommodation on such a complex and sensitive matter as disarmament. It is not surprising, therefore, that the interchange failed to resolve differences on major substantive issues and, at best, did little more than identify those elements that could be considered more fully elsewhere. In any case, because the Foreign Ministers and diplomats had been negotiating on disarmament issues throughout the period covered by these exchanges, the letters emanating from the summit merely supplemented the main negotiatory thrust and, because they were so comprehensive, so detailed, and so open, they were destined to be abortive.

"Words, words, words"

At the outset, the Eisenhower-Kremlin exchanges were relatively infrequent. There were only eleven in twelve months, but the tempo was intensified between September 11 and the end of 1956. During these three and one-half months, nine summit letters flowed between Washington and Moscow, including those dealing with the Hungarian and Suez crises. In part, perhaps, because President Eisenhower disagreed with Bulganin respecting several matters and indicated that the government of the United States preferred to discuss arms control in the United Nations subcommittee (thus relegating the matter to the traditional diplomatic level), and, in part, because of the power struggle then being waged in Moscow, there was a lapse in the series during most of 1957.

The most concerted exchange was begun by Bulganin on December 10, 1957, and in the following nine months some thirty letters were dispatched. Even Khrushchev’s succession to the Premiership during this period scarcely inhibited the flow. A peak was reached in July, 1958, when there was an average of two letters per week. The colloquy was suspended for six months, October, 1958, to April, 1959, when, except for the traditional New Year's greetings, none
were exchanged. This reflected a deterioration in Soviet-American diplomatic relations. Khrushchev's letter of September 19, 1958, was rejected by the President on the grounds that it was unacceptable. Using unusually strong language, the White House reported: "This communication is replete with false accusations; it is couched in language that is abusive and intemperate; it indulges in personalities; it contains inadmissible threats. All of this renders the communication unacceptable under established international practice." Moreover, shortly thereafter, on November 10, Khrushchev levied his ultimatum on Berlin.

In view of these circumstances, one may wonder why the President revived the correspondence with his letter to Khrushchev of April 13 of the following year. In effect, President Eisenhower thereby initiated a new series of summit exchanges on disarmament at the very moment that, following a recess, diplomatic negotiations on the subject were being resumed at the Geneva Conference on the Discontinuance of Nuclear Weapon Tests. It appears from the documents that he wished to attribute greater currency to the new United States proposals being introduced through the American Ambassador at Geneva by elevating attention to the summit level. While this was unquestionably an appropriate function of the Eisenhower-Kremlin exchanges, it had the effect of reestablishing parallelism in the diplomatic consideration of arms control matters, and of reintroducing the subject into the public arena. It is difficult to determine whether this was the intent of the White House, or whether it was simply a byproduct of the venture.

Except for two brief periods of exchanges in the spring and in December of 1959, the remaining communications in the series were more sporadic. Thus, only two letters were exchanged from mid-May to December 21, when, following his trip to Europe to consult personally with Chancellor Konrad Adenauer, Prime Minister Harold Macmillan, and President Charles de Gaulle, President Eisenhower invited Khrushchev to the four-Power East-West Summit Conference at Paris the following spring. There were no further communications in 1960, except for New Year's greetings, an exchange by

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which the Soviet government thanked the United States for rescuing four Soviet soldiers adrift in a disabled landing craft in the North Pacific, and two final Khrushchev letters following the Paris Summit Conference by which he sought to revive the correspondence, but which remained unanswered by the President. 20

Except in time of grave crisis, or when for other reasons they are conveyed by special emissary, diplomatic communications, even when sent by a head of government or a chief of state, are normally transmitted through ordinary diplomatic channels. Thus, usually Kremlin summit communications are delivered to the Department of State by the Soviet Ambassador or they are conveyed to the American Ambassador in Moscow by the Soviet Foreign Ministry, and the President's letters are delivered by the Department of State either to the Soviet Embassy in Washington or via the United States Ambassador to the Soviet Foreign Ministry in Moscow. In this fashion they flow to and from the summit through the Department of State.

This procedure was used for most of the White House-Kremlin correspondence, but Bulganin's letter of January 23, 1956, which included the draft Treaty of Friendship and Cooperation, was delivered to the President by Soviet Ambassador Georgi N. Zaroubin in person. He read the lengthy text in Russian to President Eisenhower and Secretary of State John Foster Dulles in the presidential office, and a Department of State interpreter then translated it for the Chief Executive. This was the first time since World War II that a Soviet Ambassador made such a call on the White House. Naturally, this arrangement assured maximum world-wide publicity for the Soviet offer of a twenty-year bilateral treaty, which, an American columnist commented, was "not considered here [in the United States] as the way to conduct serious negotiations." 21 Moreover, this procedure obviously was designed to give the Kremlin proposal the greatest emphasis possible, short of presentation to the President by the Soviet chief of government personally. In any event, the Soviet Government rapidly returned to more normal methods of delivery.

20 A note was sent by the Department of State through normal diplomatic channels, dated July 2, 1960, in response to Khrushchev's letter to the President of June 27; the Department thus transferred the level of consideration of arms control matters to lower diplomatic forums. See American Foreign Policy, 1960, pp. 703-704, 709; Documents on Disarmament, 1960, pp. 140-142.

Another important feature of diplomacy, made quite apparent by this exchange, is the timing of communications. The Soviet leaders appear often to have planned their timing carefully, and because most initiatives were exercised by them, they held an important advantage in this respect. For example, Bulganin's note conveying the draft Treaty of Friendship and Cooperation was delivered to the White House just a few days prior to Prime Minister Anthony Eden's visit to Washington to discuss joint policy developments and Cold War strategy with the President.

Such timing doubtless was intended to weaken or confuse the Anglo-American discussions, or at least to distract attention from them. However, the Kremlin maneuver failed to achieve these purposes. The President and the British Prime Minister were not distracted from the course they had fixed. As a matter of fact, they produced more forceful published end products than those which normally follow a summit visit. They reaffirmed identical policy respecting Germany, Berlin, the Middle East, South and Southeast Asia, the Far East, and nuclear energy matters. In addition to issuing a joint communiqué at the conclusion of their deliberations, which is normal procedure, they also proclaimed the eight-paragraph "Declaration of Washington," which, in some respects, comprised the Western response to the Soviet proposal.

Shortly before the presidential election of 1956, on October 17 Bulganin sent a letter to President Eisenhower in which he contended that Secretary of State Dulles was misrepresenting Soviet foreign policy. Nuclear fallout and testing was a political issue in the presidential campaign, and the Soviet Premier intervened by supporting "the opinion recently expressed by certain prominent public figures in the United States concerning the necessity and the possibility of concluding an agreement on the matter of prohibiting atomic weapons tests." Irritated nearly to the point of returning "your letter to your Embassy," the President found the Soviet statement concerning Secretary Dulles to be "not only unwarranted, but ... personally offensive to me," and added that "the sending of your note in the midst of a national election campaign . . . constitutes an interference by a foreign nation in our internal affairs of a kind which, if indulged in by an Ambassador, would lead to his being declared persona non grata in accordance with long-

established custom." In his memoirs, President Eisenhower later said that, on rereading this letter, "I find nothing that I would change."

Another of Bulganin's notes, which dealt with disarmament and peaceful coexistence and proposed an East-West summit conference to end the Cold War, was timed to distract attention, perhaps abroad more than within the United States, from the President's January, 1958, state of the union message in which he called for increased United States military strength. The Soviet communication not only was timed to take advantage of the Kremlin's enhanced prestige, resulting from the successful launching of the first two Sputniks in October and November, 1957, but it also arrived at a time when the Eisenhower administration was confronted with what the President called the spirit of "defeatism evident in many newspaper columns" in the United States. To offset these matters, in his message to Congress, President Eisenhower concentrated heavily on the question of United States power, especially scientific and military strength. In the arena of world opinion, therefore, the Soviet Union gained an important propaganda advantage by posing as the agent of peace at the very moment the United States was wrestling with the intensification of military might. Although the President also dealt with the promotion of peace in his message, he couched his conceptualization in generalities, whereas the Soviet communication conveyed the impression of greater preciseness.

In any case, the Kremlin achieved its objective of distracting popular attention abroad from President Eisenhower's policy message, and where it failed in this, it offered a more attractive proposition. Therefore, while one Washington newspaper epitomized the situation by proclaiming that Bulganin "stole the show," an editorial in another Washington newspaper concluded that the Soviet proposal better "told the people what they wanted to hear."

The preceding month, the Soviet Premier had proposed an East-West summit meeting and, although a year had elapsed between communications (except for a courtesy exchange respecting the President's health), he timed it to arrive only a few days prior to the convening of the heads of government and Foreign Ministers of

"Letter of Oct. 21, 1956, in ibid., p. 697. The policy and language of the President's response are reminiscent of the case of Lord Sackville-West, British Minister, who was dismissed by the United States government for alleged interference in the presidential election of 1888.
the North Atlantic Alliance in Paris. Soviet scheduling doubtless was motivated by the hope of drawing world attention away from the North Atlantic meeting, of introducing a subject on which to divide the Atlantic allies and thwart the arming of Western Europe with American-made missiles and nuclear weapons, and of weakening the prestige of the West in the uncommitted areas of the world. While the Soviet note failed to undermine the deliberations of the Atlantic Alliance, it had the residual advantage of directing some attention away from the fifteen heads of government who convened in Paris. Such timing became so well recognized as to cause The Economist of London to comment: "Marshal Bulganin’s world-wide reputation for epistolary zeal is such that the heads of government of the NATO countries could rely on getting letters from him on the eve of the Paris conference with almost as much certainty as greeting cards are expected on the eve of Christmas. . . ." 24

Another characteristic of these exchanges is their verbosity. All told, they aggregated over 100,000 words—that is to say, they would fill a volume of two to three hundred pages. Individually, the letters varied from simple statements running only a dozen lines to comprehensive disquisitions averaging eight to ten pages. Bulganin paced the matter of detail in his first letters, each of which exceeded two thousand words. Whereas President Eisenhower’s communications usually were shorter than those of the Kremlin, in the spring of 1958 some of his ran from three to five thousand words. The longest of the series was Bulganin’s letter of June 11, 1958, which, with its annex, runs twenty-two pages in print. As far as summit diplomacy is concerned, the matter of length and detail, therefore, would by itself render these communications exceptional.

"Open covenants . . . openly arrived at"

The most unusual aspect of this exchange, however, is the manner in which the communications were made public. Ordinarily, if intentions are serious, the texts of diplomatic communications are not released until publication is no longer likely to inhibit the objectives of the negotiation, until publication will enhance the achievement of such objectives, or until the negotiation has produced agreed end products, such as understandings and agreements. In this exchange, on the other hand, not only were the letters

generally made public within a few days after receipt—which in itself is extraordinarily premature—but not infrequently their texts were released on the very date of transmission. Eventually, this produced a questionable race for revelation.

Initially, the arrangement in this exchange was to permit a few days to elapse between the transmission of a letter and its publication, allowing for its receipt and translation, and sometimes for the drafting of a reply. Thus, an incoming message from the Kremlin leader would be translated and, if deemed appropriate, a public statement would be issued by the United States with the text of the communication.

Sometimes publication was deferred until a reply was sent, and then both communications were released simultaneously by the White House. For example, Bulganin dispatched his proposal for a twenty-year Treaty of Friendship and Cooperation on January 23, 1956, to which President Eisenhower responded five days later, and the texts of both were made public on the date of the reply, so that they appeared in the American press the following day. This procedure had the advantage for the United States of bringing both communications into proper context, but it also reduced attention on the Soviet proposal and concentrated public interest on the President’s response.

There was little deviation from these general practices at the outset of the series, a short but reasonable period of from two to six days usually elapsing between transmission and publication. Ordinarily, because the Soviet government initiated these exchanges and President Eisenhower responded, this time period was shorter for the release of the American reply, and the advantages flowing from the timing of revelation accrued to the United States.

In the fall of 1956, however, the text of a Soviet note was made public by the Kremlin immediately after delivery to the Department of State. In his letter of October 21, President Eisenhower, giving vent to irritation at a number of matters concerning Bulganin’s most recent message, also objected to what the White House regarded as premature Soviet publication. The President stated that he had received the Soviet Premier’s letter of the seventeenth “which your Embassy handed me through Secretary Dulles on October nineteenth,” and he complained that “having delivered a

*White House news release, Jan. 28, 1956.*
lengthy communication in the Russian language, you have published it before it could be carefully translated and delivered to me.\textsuperscript{26}\textsuperscript{26} It is not certain from this statement whether the letter was delivered by the Soviet Embassy to the Secretary of State prior to the nineteenth and was delayed in being transmitted to the President, or whether it was delivered and presented to him on the same day.

Examination reveals that the Soviet letter was published in Moscow on October 20, and excerpts also appeared in the London press on the same date, presumably based on a Moscow broadcast of the nineteenth or twentieth. The existence but not the text of the letter was referred to in the press of the United States as early as October 19. While the situation is not entirely clear, it appears that the Soviet government broadcast a summary of the text of the letter on the date it was delivered to the Department of State and published its text the following day. Apparently this preceded the President's receipt of the translation which, it seems, was not delivered to him until October 21, which, strangely, is the very date of his reply. There appears to have been considerable delay on the part of the Department of State in getting the translation to the President, who happened to be on the West Coast, but surely he must have been informed earlier of the general content of the message. In any case, the release by the Kremlin following receipt of the communication by the United States government was no more premature than had been the case with White House release of the Eisenhower letters from the very outset of the exchange.

Nevertheless, in retaliation, President Eisenhower concluded in his letter of October 21: "Because of this, and of the necessity of placing the facts accurately before the public, I am compelled to release this reply immediately," and its text appeared in the American press the following day. Thereafter, each letter generally was made publicly available a day or two after it was transmitted. As a matter of fact, in May, 1958, the White House alerted the press in advance that it would release an Eisenhower letter to the Kremlin the following day. Consequently, the world knew of the letter even before it was transmitted, and the press had its text the very day of its receipt by the Soviet government. Five months later, the press reported that the Kremlin made public the text of one of Khrushchev's letters before Eisenhower knew that it had been sent

\textsuperscript{26}Documents on Disarmament, 1945-1959, Vol. 1, p. 697.
to him. The President happened to be away on vacation, but the Department of State knew of the letter the day of its transmittal. The note had been delivered to the United States Embassy in Moscow, and, ostensibly, some delay was caused by the time taken to translate it there.

To say the least, the practice of early if not premature revelation by both governments suggests the intention to sermonize the public rather than to exchange governmental views or to negotiate. While, in general, only minimum international propriety was observed respecting public release, each government desired to time publication to its own advantage, and one government was upset if "scooped" by the other. Moreover, the well-established international procedure of prior publication clearance by the respondent was not observed in this exchange.

On the matter of secrecy in diplomacy, a very real distinction exists with respect to openness as far as the texts of treaties, agreements, and other end products of negotiation are concerned, on the one hand, and negotiations, on the other. It is realized by the more responsible political leaders that a certain amount of secret negotiation is not necessarily suspect, dishonest, or nefarious, and that it actually may be essential to diplomatic success. If momentary secrecy helps to prevent or resolve a crisis, it generally is deemed to be justifiable. Roused public sentiment may require assuagement, which rarely is achieved by aligning peoples against one another during public debate while negotiations are in progress. That is why the professional diplomats, the Secretary General of the United Nations, serious analysts of the diplomatic process, and the President have argued for more quiet diplomacy. In a major foreign policy address delivered at the American Legion convention in August, 1954, President Eisenhower declared:

> Of course, it is obvious that much of the diplomatic work, particularly those efforts that are classed as preparatory toward the reaching of agreements, be conducted in confidence. ... premature disclosures of positions and arguments could very well bar the attainment of any reasonable solution.²⁷

If this was his view, one may wonder why President Eisenhower was constrained to ignore his own counsel in this venture in personal

diplomacy with the Kremlin, and why he did not engage in less openness. Perhaps he regarded his exchanges with the Kremlin more in the nature of public pronouncements—issued for all the world to see and hear—than in the guise of diplomatic communications. Or, perhaps, to avoid such criticism as had been made of President Roosevelt’s participation in the wartime summit conferences and his communications with Churchill and Stalin, President Eisenhower simply overreacted against quiet diplomacy. In any case, genuine progress could only be aborted by the fashion in which the matter of revelation was handled in this diplomatic colloquy.

* * *

This highly publicized, potentially significant series of written exchanges between the leaders of the two most powerful countries in the world, at the very center of the Cold War, is one of the most remarkable experiences in modern diplomatics. It appears that, initially both parties were seriously seeking to cope with important issues of public policy to their respective advantage, which is to be expected in international politics. Yet, many aspects of the manner in which these communications were handled indicate that, in the course of time, neither side really expected much from them which could not as readily have been achieved by traditional diplomatic exchanges, and both governments tended to regard them—and to use them—largely for propaganda purposes. On February 15, 1958, President Eisenhower abandoned the polite niceties of diplomacy and gave vent to impatience not only with Soviet policy and actions, but also with the very exchange itself, when he wrote: “I begin to wonder . . . whether we shall get anywhere by continuing to write speeches to each other? . . . I cannot avoid the feeling that if our two countries are to move ahead to the establishment of better relations, we must find some ways other than mere prolongation of repetitive public debate. . . .”

It is strange, therefore, that his administration did not seek more resolutely to consign the exchange to the foreign ministries and the professional diplomats. In view of President Eisenhower’s regard for summit exchanges as “an extremely valuable channel of communication,” quoted earlier, and in view of President John F. Kennedy’s subsequent extensive correspondence with a number of

world leaders including those in the Kremlin without retrograding it to the arena of public debate, it also is surprising that President Eisenhower did not endeavor to benefit by such advantage as may have been derived from a less public exchange. In all likelihood he preferred the limelight and feared being held culpable of "secret diplomacy," which had been so vociferously denounced during the McCarthy era. It is not difficult to conclude, however, that the revelation permeating this exchange was bound to transfer it from the confines of diplomacy to the realm of open colloquy.

Nevertheless, there is little question that communications at the summit are being employed more and more frequently, and that they have become a widely accepted instrument of contemporary diplomacy. As influenced by their personal persuasions, the counsel of their staffs, their interpretation of their constitutional powers and governmental responsibilities, their sensitivity to historicity, and the specific events of their times—Presidents will vary in the nature and degree of their participation in this practice. The two Roosevelts and Presidents Kennedy and Johnson seem to have enjoyed such personal involvement, Woodrow Wilson apparently assumed the role as his official responsibility but without being sparked by an inner pervading enthusiasm, a number of Presidents have refrained from becoming highly involved, and President Eisenhower appears to have been the unhappy respondent in what may be regarded as one of the most widely read, comprehensive diplomatic duologues in history.

Important consequences could very well flow from direct White House-Kremlin communications, if both parties are sincere and anxious really to exchange views or to negotiate. Most of the issues broached in the Eisenhower-Kremlin exchange could have been discussed by the Foreign Ministers or the professional diplomats, and many already were under negotiation in other forums, but consideration at the summit was by no means precluded. Perhaps the summit

29"Despite President Eisenhower's statement to the American Legion in 1954, quoted above, and the fact that he engaged in quiet diplomacy in various forums with other world leaders, it seems that he labored under an aberrant fear of being held guilty of secret diplomacy with the Soviet government. This is illustrated by the fact that, in his radio-television address of July 25, 1955, reviewing the results of the Geneva Summit Conference, President Eisenhower proclaimed: "In any event, I can assure you of one thing: There were no secret agreements made, either understood agreements or written ones. . . ." See The Geneva Conference of Heads of Government, op. cit., p. 85.
was used either to engage those who speak for their countries with greatest authority, which Premier Khrushchev often stressed as being essential to East-West diplomacy, or to render this exchange as dramatic as possible by according it maximum global attention, or both, in the hope that negotiation of a détente would ensue.

Whatever the intent, for summit communication to be useful as a negotiating device, a number of guidelines need to be observed. It is virtually axiomatic that a prudent nation never makes an important policy move in public, particularly if its proposal requires concession or accommodation at the summit by other nations, nor does it give the appearance of negotiating from weakness in a global public forum. The participants must be sincere and convince their correspondents that they are personally trustworthy and earnestly desire to exchange views or negotiate purposefully. They, as well as what they have to convey, must be credible. Invective, strong and intemperate language, obvious polemics, and pettiness must be avoided, summit exchanges must not degenerate into a "talking war," and such propaganda as may accrue must be a by-product rather than a primary objective. The participants must perceive certain common goals or basic purposes, they must be willing not only to proffer but also to accept constructive proposals for consideration, and they must be prepared to limit their presentations to the reasonable and deal seriously with those matters they hold to be negotiable. They contribute little to progress and may tarnish their own image by persisting in deliberate and overt negativism. If they are not able to approach one another on the basis of friendship, at least they must respect each other and the governments they represent. The diplomatic methods employed should be selected to serve as tools, and not be permitted to become ends in themselves. Many of these factors are characteristic of all diplomacy, but without them direct communication among the world's leaders will be meaningless.

By these tests, President Eisenhower's exchanges with the Kremlin—as a venture in summit diplomacy—were a dismal failure. This judgment questions neither the policy for which the President stood

"On several occasions the Kremlin leader and the President decried the polemical nature of the exchange. In his letter of February 15, 1958, for example, President Eisenhower wrote: "'Polemics' will not, I fear, advance us along the path of better relations which is my nation's goal." See Heads of Government Conference, p. 165."
nor of summit exchanges as a general technique of diplomacy. Rather, it questions whether President Eisenhower was the right person to utilize this method with respect to the issues at hand in dealing with the Kremlin leaders under the circumstances pertaining at the time. Certainly, it is a question of the fashion in which the Eisenhower administration employed the technique.

Moreover, it is obvious that the politico-diplomatic risks were very great for the President and the United States in the Eisenhower-Kremlin exchange. By “negotiating” in the open on so many details of so many important issues, President Eisenhower tended to freeze the negotiating posture of the government, and concession, even on details, became difficult without loss of face abroad and public disenchantment if not political opposition at home. It is imprudent, simply by revelation, to relinquish tactical flexibility for maneuver and accommodation in any serious negotiation. By quiet diplomacy one may accentuate the positive, whereas by open diplomacy with the Kremlin, one may stress the negative. Furthermore, whenever the President is personally involved in a major diplomatic endeavor, expectations are high, and when negotiation at the summit appears to be under way for years, anticipation becomes exaggerated. Therefore, if results of consequence are not forthcoming from this forum, disillusionment is likely to be equally magnified. It is virtually impossible to camouflage the failure of highly publicized summit communications.

In diplomacy, as in many matters, there is no substitute for professionalism—whether the negotiator be career diplomat, presidential appointee, Secretary of State, or the President himself. Only consummate ability, with intelligence applied equally to matters of procedure—selecting the forum, applying measured diplomatic power, managing timing, and the like—as well as of policy, can produce effective results with this diplomatic technique when employed by great powers embroiled in Cold War, and even then only if the subjects are considered negotiable by both sides. Unless these conditions pertain, the risks are bound to outweigh the potentiality of success. This is the lesson that should be conveyed by the Eisenhower venture in open diplomacy through summit communications with the Kremlin.