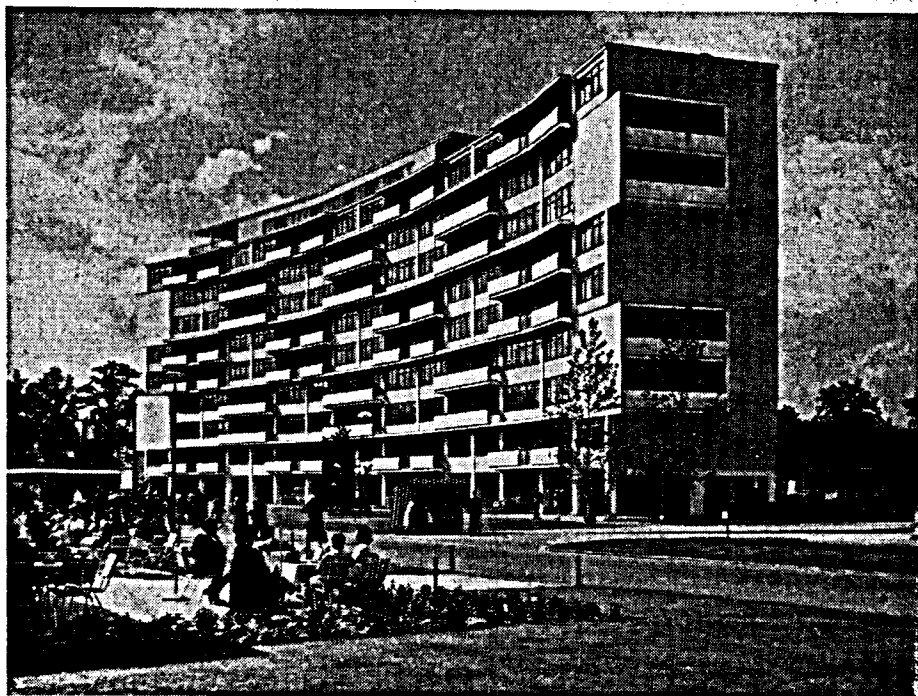


This threatening speech was followed by a seventeen day period of comparative quiet during which it appeared that the Soviet authorities might be having second thoughts. Then, in notes to the three Western occupying powers and the Federal Republic of Germany, the U.S.S.R. announced proposals to make West Berlin a demilitarized "free city". The notes offered negotiations but said there would be no point in them if the Western powers failed to accept the free city proposal. According to the U.S.S.R., six months should be adequate for such negotiations; if progress had not been made in that time, the U.S.S.R. would transfer to the GDR its responsibilities relating to Berlin. The Soviet Union declared the four-power agreements on Berlin to be "null and void".

At the same time the U.S.S.R. endeavoured to reassure the population of West Berlin. It promised that the city could have a government and economic system of its own choosing, and might enter into an agreement with the GDR concerning a guarantee of unhindered communication with the outside world. The U.S.S.R. promised to provide orders for goods manufactured in West Berlin and to supply the city with the necessary raw materials and food stuffs. It said it would "have no objections to the United Nations also sharing in one way or another in observing the free city status of West Berlin". For its part, West Berlin would have to commit itself not to tolerate on its territory any antagonistic activity directed against the Communist Bloc.

The Soviet note received a hostile reception in the West where the proposed free city status was regarded as the first step in a campaign to have West Berlin left defenseless in the face of Soviet economic, political and military pressure. The population of West Berlin had an opportunity to voice



*A typical modern housing unit in West Berlin.*