

Soviet Union to United States, France, Great Britain and West Germany, 10-11-1958

Soviet Union to United States, France, Great Britain and West Germany, 04-06-1961

After the end of the Second World War, Germany was divided in West Germany (*Bundesrepublik Deutschland*) and East Germany (*Deutsche Demokratische Republik*). Berlin, despite being located in East Germany, was similarly partitioned, first in four sectors (British, French, American and Soviet), and, after the Western states merged their sectors, in two: one Western and one Eastern. The German question, which included the issue of reunification of the two Germanies as well as the position of a unified Germany in the international alliance system, and the status of Berlin loomed large over relations between East and West. It had already caused the prolonged Berlin Blockade crisis in 1948-1949 when access to the city was shut off by the Soviet Union. Now, a decade later, the Soviet Union's leadership feared the risk of re-armament and the possible nuclearisation of West Germany. Its objective was to neutralise West Germany in the polarisation between the East and West, and turn Berlin into a free city. The Soviet Union had coordinated its position with its vassal state East Germany.¹ On October 27, 1958, the East German leader Walter Ulbricht asserted that the Western powers had 'undermined the legal basis for their presence in Berlin and forfeited all legal claim and every moral and political justification for continuing the occupation of Western Berlin.'² Soviet leader Nikita Khrushchev then declared in a speech in the Moscow Sports Palace on 10 November 1958 that the Soviet Union intended to transfer control over access to Berlin to East Germany. He asserted that it was time 'for the signatories of the Potsdam Agreement to renounce the remnants of the occupation regime in Berlin' and warned the Western powers, whom he accused of harboring aggressive ambitions, not to forget 'the geographical position of Western Germany which - with military techniques as they are today - would not survive a single day of modern warfare.'³ The West German government immediately condemned Soviet's plans as a violation of international law. The US government did not offer a high level response, other than that a spokesman of the Department of State rejected the Soviet proposal and declared US readiness to stand by Berlin. The Western powers did not publish a joint statement either.⁴ Meanwhile, in the days after the speech, Soviet forces stopped a U.S. military convoy moving from one sector to another for inspection. The US secretly put one battle group on high alert, but the confrontation did not escalate further, as the Soviet forces backed down after an eight-hour standoff. The incident did make an impression upon NATO's senior military commanders who recommended sending more

¹ As convincingly argued by many, see for instance Marc Trachtenberg, *A Constructed Peace: The Making of the European Settlement, 1945-1963* (Princeton University Press, 1999), 251–56. See also Manfred Wilke, *The Path to the Berlin Wall: Critical Stages in the History of Divided Germany* (Berghahn Books, 2014), 157–58. CWIHP (Cold War International History Project), Vladislav M. Zubok, and Cold War International History Project, eds., *Khrushchev and the Berlin Crisis (1958-1962)*, Working Paper, no. 6 (Washington, D.C: Cold War International History Project, Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars, 1993), 6–13. See also the note of the Soviet leadership to the United States, Government of the USSR, 'Soviet Note of November 27', in *Department of State Bulletin, No. 1021, Publication 6756*, vol. XL, 1959, <http://archive.org/details/departmentofstat401959unit>.

² Fabian Rueger, *Kennedy, Adenauer and the Making of the Berlin Wall, 1958-1961* (Stanford University, 2011), 39.

³ Rueger, 39–40. Wilke, *The Path to the Berlin Wall*, 154–55.

⁴ 'November--December 1958: U.S. Response to Soviet Threats to Transfer Its Functions in Berlin to the German Democratic Republic', *Foreign Relations of the United States*, 1960 1958, <http://digicoll.library.wisc.edu/cgi-bin/FRUS/FRUS-idx?type=div&did=FRUS.FRUS195860v08.i0009&isize=text>. Wilke, *The Path to the Berlin Wall*, 155.

reinforcements to Berlin.⁵ US President Eisenhower, however, considered it best 'to avoid overreacting'.⁶

On 27 November 1958, Krushchev followed up with an ultimatum to the Western powers (France, the UK, the US and the West Germany) spearheaded by the US. In an elaborate 28-page note, which was handed over by Foreign Minister Gromyko to US Ambassador Thompson, Berlin was compared to 'a smoldering fuse that has been connected to a powder keg' and the presence of the Western forces to 'foreign occupation'.⁷ The Western powers were accused of violating the terms of the Potsdam agreement as well as renegeing on its principles. It was asserted that the Western powers were intent on re-arming a dangerous 'militarist' West Germany, and providing it with 'atomic and rocket weapons'.⁸ Given the length of the communication it is not possible to report it in full here, but, in classic ultimatum style, the letter was couched in terms that legitimised the Soviet cause, put the blame for the situation at the feet of the Western powers, introduced a set of demands and a deadline, and then conveyed a military threat. Even if the military threat was purportedly framed in defensive terms, a change of the status quo was clearly demanded. A Western refusal to change the status quo, would trigger military action. The letter stated:

It is hardly possible seriously to believe that the Soviet Union will help the forces of aggression to develop subversive activities, much less to prepare an attack on Socialist countries. It should be clear for anybody with common sense that the Soviet Union cannot maintain a situation in West Berlin that is detrimental to its lawful interests, its security, and the security of other Socialist countries. [...]

In this connection, the Government of the USSR hereby notifies the United States Government that the Soviet Union regards as null and void the "Protocol of the Agreement between the Governments of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics, the United States of America, and the United Kingdom on the zones of occupation in Germany and on the administration of Greater Berlin," of September 12, 1944, and the related supplementary agreements. [...] The Soviet Government will enter into negotiations with the Government of the GDR at an appropriate time with a view to transferring to the German Democratic Republic the functions temporarily performed by the Soviet authorities by virtue of the above-mentioned Allied agreements and under the agreement between the USSR and the GDR of September 20, 1955.[...]

An independent solution to the Berlin problem must be found in the very near future since the Western Powers refuse to take part in the preparation of a peace treaty with Germany and the Government of the FRG, supported by the same powers, is pursuing a policy hampering the unification of Germany.[...]

In view of all these considerations, the Soviet Government on its part would consider it possible to solve the West Berlin question at the present time by the conversion of West Berlin into an independent political unit — a free city, without any state, including both existing German states, interfering in its life. Specifically, it might be possible to agree that the territory of the free city be demilitarized and that no armed forces be contained therein. The free city, West Berlin, could have its own government and run its own economic, administrative, and other affairs. [...]

It hopes that the Government of the USA will show a proper understanding of these motives and make a realistic approach to the Berlin question. At the same time, the Soviet

⁵ Rueger, *Kennedy, Adenauer and the Making of the Berlin Wall, 1958-1961*, 40. Aleksandr Fursenko and Timothy Naftali, *Khrushchev's Cold War: The Inside Story of an American Adversary* (W. W. Norton & Company, 2010), 200–201.

⁶ As cited in Marc Trachtenberg, *History and Strategy* (Princeton University Press, 1991), 195.

⁷ Government of the USSR, 'Soviet Note of November 27', 81.

⁸ Government of the USSR, 82.

Government is prepared to enter into negotiations with the governments of the United States of America and with those of the other states concerned on granting West Berlin the status of a demilitarized free city. In case this proposal is not acceptable to the government of the USA then there will no longer remain any topic for negotiations between the former occupying powers on the Berlin question.[..]

In view of this, the Soviet Government proposes to make no changes in the present procedure for military traffic of the USA, Great Britain, and France from West Berlin to the FRG for half a year. It regards such a period as fully sufficient to provide a sound basis for the solution of the questions connected with the change in Berlin's situation and to prevent a possibility of any complications, provided, naturally, that the governments of the Western powers do not deliberately seek such complications. During the above-mentioned period the parties will have an opportunity to prove in practice their desire to ease international tension by settling the Berlin question. If the above-mentioned period is not utilized to reach an adequate agreement, the Soviet Union will then carry out the planned measures through an agreement with the GDR. It is envisaged that the German Democratic Republic, like any other independent state, must fully deal with questions concerning its space, i.e., exercise its sovereignty on land, on water, and in the air. At the same time, there will terminate all contacts still maintained between representatives of the armed forces and other officials of the Soviet Union in Germany and corresponding representatives of the armed forces and other officials of the USA, Great Britain, and France on questions pertaining to Berlin. [..] Methods of blackmail and reckless threats of force will be least of all appropriate in solving such a problem as the Berlin question. Such methods will not help solve a single question, but can only bring the situation to the danger point. But only madmen can go to the length of unleashing another world war over the preservation of privileges of occupiers in West Berlin. If such madmen should really appear, there is no doubt that strait jackets could be found for them. If the statesmen responsible for the policy of the Western powers are guided by feelings of hatred for communism and the socialist countries in their approach to the Berlin question as well as other international problems, no good will come out of it. Neither the Soviet Union nor any other small socialist state can or will deny its existence precisely as a socialist state. That is why, having united in an unbreakable fraternal alliance, they firmly stand in defense of their rights and their state frontiers, acting according to the motto — one for all and all for one. Any violation of the frontiers of the German Democratic Republic, Poland, or Czechoslovakia, any aggressive action against any member state of the Warsaw Treaty will be regarded by all its participants as an act of aggression against them all and will immediately cause appropriate retaliation.⁹

In private conversations Khrushchev relayed both to his son and to his closest adviser that he was trying to force the issue to a head in order to start formal negotiations. He reportedly said that he would 'engage in battle and then see what happens' while emphasising that he did not expect anyone to start a war over Berlin.¹⁰ At the same time, both through official and unofficial channels, he also implicitly conveyed to the US that this expectation lay at the heart of his strategy.¹¹ In a meeting with a US senator he admitted as such although alternating this with threats about his seriousness.¹² The weeks and months that followed saw a series of exchanges. NATO issued a statement on 16 December in which it asserted that 'the Soviet Union would be responsible for any action which had the effect of hampering this free communication or endangering this freedom', at the same time as the Alliance communicated its readiness to enter into negotiations about the status

⁹ Government of the USSR, 84–87.

¹⁰ Frederick Kempe, *Berlin 1961: Kennedy, Khrushchev, and the Most Dangerous Place on Earth* (Penguin, 2011), 25.

¹¹ Wilke, *The Path to the Berlin Wall*, 155.

¹² Kempe, *Berlin 1961*, 26–27.

of Germany.¹³ The United States let it be known in an official reply on 31 December that it was always ready to engage in discussions about free 'all-German elections' but that it would not enter into these discussions under threat.¹⁴ The note read:

Public repudiation of solemn engagements, formally entered into and repeatedly reaffirmed, coupled with an ultimatum threatening unilateral action to implement that repudiation unless it be acquiesced in within six months, would afford no reasonable basis for negotiation between sovereign states. The Government of the United States could not embark on discussions with the Soviet Union upon these questions under menace or ultimatum. [...] Hence, it is assumed that this is not the purpose of the Soviet note of November 27 and that the Soviet Government, like itself, is ready to enter into discussions in an atmosphere devoid of coercion or threats.¹⁵

Anastas Mikoyan, First Deputy Chairman of the Council of Ministers of the Soviet Union, who came on an unofficial visit from 4 to 20 January, told the US president and secretary of state that the Soviet

note was not intended as an ultimatum, which the Secretary Dulles shared with the public on 13 January, as did the Soviet foreign ministry in its report of Mikoyan's trip to other ambassadors.¹⁶ The Soviet government presented a proposal to its Warsaw Pact allies and the Western powers in the second week of January, which was the subject of discussions in the following months.¹⁷ It proposed the recognition of the two German states with reunification being left to the two German states to decide, a state that would be a neutral state, that would not belong to any military alliance, and would not be a military power with constraints set upon the size of its armed forces and the type of weapons it could possess. In the meantime, Berlin would become a free and demilitarised city.¹⁸ The Western powers all held different views and positions on the proposal which,

also in the months that would follow, proved hard to reconcile.¹⁹ After a back and forth with the Western powers, a foreign ministers' conference was agreed to be held in Geneva at which the status of Berlin and Germany was to be discussed.²⁰ In a note of early March, in which it accepted the invitation for the conference, the Soviet Union indicated an extension of the deadline for a few months.²¹ The conference took place from May to August 1959. In the weeks prior to the start of the conference, military exercises were staged and both sides engaged in brash talk indicating their strong commitment to their mutual positions. A number of minor military incidents in which both sides tested each other resolve in Berlin air space and on the *Autobahn* to Berlin, did not escalate. While the US leadership had approved the use of limited force in such situations should it be necessary – unlike the British government who was fearful of escalation to war²² – President Eisenhower refused the demands of his senior military leadership to strongly reinforce the size of

¹³ Wilke, *The Path to the Berlin Wall*, 163.

¹⁴ Christian Bremen, *Die Eisenhower-Administration Und Die Zweite Berlinkrise 1958-1961* (Berlin ; New York: Walter De Gruyter Inc, 1998), 116–17.

¹⁵ 'U.S. Note of December 31', in *Department of State Bulletin, No.1021, Publication 6756*, vol. VOL. XL, 1919, 81, <http://archive.org/details/departmentofstat401959unit>.

¹⁶ Department of State Bulletin, 'Secretary Dulles' News Conference of January 13', in *Department of State Bulletin, No.1021, Publication 6756*, vol. VOL. XL, 1959, <http://archive.org/details/departmentofstat401959unit>. Wilke, *The Path to the Berlin Wall*, 166. Bremen, *Die Eisenhower-Administration Und Die Zweite Berlinkrise 1958-1961*, 119–20.

¹⁷ Wilke, *The Path to the Berlin Wall*, 166–73.

¹⁸ Bremen, *Die Eisenhower-Administration Und Die Zweite Berlinkrise 1958-1961*, 122.

¹⁹ Trachtenberg, *A Constructed Peace*, 256–82.

²⁰ Wilke, *The Path to the Berlin Wall*, 173.

²¹ Fursenko and Naftali, *Khrushchev's Cold War*, 216–22. Barry M. Blechman and Stephen S. Kaplan, *Force without War: U.S. Armed Forces as a Political Instrument* (Brookings Institution Press, 1978), 373.

²² Trachtenberg, *A Constructed Peace*, 263–67.

its forces in Berlin in light of the 'deadline crisis',²³ essentially trusting the deterrent force of the limited conventional forces already present and its nuclear arsenal.²⁴ A group of American, British, French military officials was set up to start preparing for a contingency over a crisis over Berlin, despite British reluctance.²⁵ At the same time, it was British Prime Minister MacMillan who had been pushing for negotiations, to begin prior to the expiration of the deadline for fear of escalation, who visited Khrushchev in Moscow in February.²⁶ Meanwhile, Khrushchev, again through unofficial channels, let it be known that he was interested in a meeting between the Soviet and US leadership in the Washington.²⁷ As the negotiations in Geneva commenced, neither did the Western powers reach a common position, nor did they agree with the Soviet Union to a solution to the status of Germany and West Berlin.²⁸ Meanwhile US Secretary of State Dulles had fallen ill and succumbed to cancer. His funeral, held on 27 May, led to an adjournment of the Conference. In the weeks following Soviet Foreign minister Gromyko extended the deadline by a year, while denying that the Soviet Union had in fact issued an ultimatum, something that other Soviet officials had repeatedly downplayed as well.²⁹ In July the US invited Khrushchev for an official visit to discuss the issue directly between the leaders of the two countries.³⁰ When the conference reconvened, the ministers did not manage to reach a solution, but the issue for the status of Germany was disentangled from the status of Berlin when the conference officially adjourned in August 1959.³¹

After prolonged negotiations during Khrushchev's visit to the US, from September 15 to September 27, Eisenhower and Khrushchev did not succeed in reaching a final solution either. They did agree to a future conference to be held in Paris on disarmament and the status of Berlin, in the understanding, in Eisenhower words of 27 September 1959, that 'these negotiations [about Berlin] should not be prolonged indefinitely (but that there would be no fixed time limit on them)', which was confirmed by Khrushchev the following day in Moscow.³²

The Paris summit, scheduled for May 1960, fell apart when shortly before it began, a US U2 spy plane was shot down who had been doing reconnaissance over Soviet territory. Khrushchev demanded an official US apology which was denied to him by Eisenhower. He then postponed the summit for six months until after the end of Eisenhower's presidency.³³ While the German and Berlin questions continued to linger, the Soviet Union seemed to have achieved, at least in the eyes of some US strategists and policymakers, strategic parity with the US after it had commenced a rearmament program in the second half of the 1950s. This in turn prompted anxiety about the potential existence of a missile gap with the USSR, which was partially fueled by Khrushchev boosts about Soviet advances in missile technology.³⁴ The transfer of power from President Eisenhower to President Kennedy brought a shift in US strategy which started putting far greater emphasis on the

²³ Blechman and Kaplan, *Force without War*, 375.

²⁴ Trachtenberg, *History and Strategy*, 194–96, 211–13. Blechman and Kaplan, *Force without War*, 367–77.

²⁵ Rueger, *Kennedy, Adenauer and the Making of the Berlin Wall, 1958-1961*, 48. Trachtenberg, *A Constructed Peace*, 264.

²⁶ Trachtenberg, *A Constructed Peace*, 264. Rueger, *Kennedy, Adenauer and the Making of the Berlin Wall, 1958-1961*, 48. Blechman and Kaplan, *Force without War*, 378, 369–71.

²⁷ CWIHP (Cold War International History Project), Zubok, and Cold War International History Project, *Khrushchev and the Berlin Crisis (1958-1962)*, 13.

²⁸ Rueger, *Kennedy, Adenauer and the Making of the Berlin Wall, 1958-1961*, 39–51. See again Trachtenberg, *A Constructed Peace*, 256–82.

²⁹ Wilke, *The Path to the Berlin Wall*, 174. Trachtenberg, *History and Strategy*, 193.

³⁰ Blechman and Kaplan, *Force without War*, 380–81.

³¹ Rueger, *Kennedy, Adenauer and the Making of the Berlin Wall, 1958-1961*, 53–54.

³² Rueger, 55. See also Bremen, *Die Eisenhower-Administration Und Die Zweite Berlinkrise 1958-1961*, 429, 430. Kempe, *Berlin 1961*, 31–32.

³³ Wilke, *The Path to the Berlin Wall*, 186–87. Kempe, *Berlin 1961*, 33–36.

³⁴ Lawrence Freedman, *The Evolution of Nuclear Strategy, Third Edition*, 3rd ed. (Hampshire: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003), 143–45. Blechman and Kaplan, *Force without War*, 390–94. Alexander L. George and Richard Smoke, *Deterrence in American Foreign Policy: Theory and Practice* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1974), 424–28.

importance of conventional defense capabilities, while at the same time also reinvesting in strategic nuclear capabilities.³⁵ In the months after Kennedy took the reins of power, contact was established and a meeting was set between Kennedy and Khrushchev for June 1961.³⁶ Meanwhile, the ever growing large numbers of high skilled Germans leaving Eastern Germany through East Berlin increased the pressure on the Eastern German leadership to put a stop to this brain drain. The brain drain also featured in the conversations between the East German and Soviet leadership.³⁷ In the lead up to Vienna, Khrushchev had already raised the Soviet intent to solve the West Berlin issue before the end of the year and to sign a treaty with East Germany with the US ambassador. The latter had responded by restating US opposition and commitment to West Berlin.³⁸ In the lead up to Vienna, Kennedy announced a number of rearmament initiatives and reports in the press circulated about US response plans should a contingency over Berlin come about.³⁹ The two leaders met in Vienna on 3 and 4 June. After talking in the morning of the fourth accompanied by their full teams, they met privately in the afternoon, with no one else present other than an interpreter.⁴⁰ Khrushchev once more stated the Soviet Union's plans and told Kennedy, in reference to West Berlin, that it was 'time to excise this thor, this ulcer', insisting on a change of its status and '...if the United States refused, the Soviet Union would sign the treaty alone..' which '...would end the state of war and cancel all existing commitments, including occupation rights, administrative institutions and rights of access.'⁴¹ Kennedy responded that the US 'would not accept an ultimatum' to which Khrushchev countered that 'no force in the world could stop the Soviet Union from signing the Treaty; no further delay was necessary or possible..' nor would he 'accept American rights in West Berlin after the treaty..', and 'if the President insisted on US rights after the signing of a peace treaty and that if the borders of the GDR - land, air, or sea borders - were violated, they would be defended. [...] Force would be met by force.'⁴² The USSR's decision to sign a peace treaty was 'irrevocable' and it was up to the US 'to decide on peace or war.'⁴³ He then handed over an *aide de mémoire* summarising the demands. The document is too long to cite in full but the relevant passages read:

The years-long delay in arriving at a peace settlement with Germany has largely predetermined the dangerous course of events in Europe in the post-war period. The major decisions of the Allies on the eradication of militarism in Germany, which once were considered by the Governments of the United States and the U.S.S.R. as the guarantee of stable peace, have been implemented only partially and now are actually not being observed in the greater part of German territory. Of the Governments of the two German States that

³⁵ Trachtenberg, *History and Strategy*, 223. Blechman and Kaplan, *Force without War*, 404–8.

³⁶ Kempe, *Berlin 1961*, 88, 136–37, 189–95. For the letters of correspondence between the two from November 1960 onwards, see Charles S. Sampson, *Foreign Relations of the United States, 1961–1963, Volume VI, Kennedy-Khrushchev Exchanges - Office of the Historian* (United States Government Printing Office, 1993), <https://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1961-63v06/compl>.

³⁷ Wilke, *The Path to the Berlin Wall*, 189–212.

³⁸ Rueger, *Kennedy, Adenauer and the Making of the Berlin Wall, 1958-1961*, 143–44.

³⁹ Rueger, 146–47.

⁴⁰ Charles S. Sampson, *Foreign Relations of the United States, 1961–1963, Volume XIV, Berlin Crisis, 1961–1962 - Office of the Historian*, 1996, n. Document 32, <https://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1961-63v14/d33>.

⁴¹ Arthur M. Schlesinger, *A Thousand Days: John F. Kennedy in the White House*, Illustrated edition (Black Dog & Leventhal Publishers Inc, 2005), 143.

⁴² Schlesinger, 143–44.

⁴³ Schlesinger, 144. See also Günter Bischof, Stefan Karner, and Barbara Stelzl-Marx, *The Vienna Summit and Its Importance in International History* (Lexington Books, 2013), 109. For the official American document, see Sampson, *Foreign Relations of the United States, 1961–1963, Volume XIV, Berlin Crisis, 1961–1962 - Office of the Historian*, n. Document 33. On the differences between the American and the Russian versions of the documents, see Rueger, *Kennedy, Adenauer and the Making of the Berlin Wall, 1958-1961*, 149–55. Fabian Rueger observes that the document as such did not actually specify a deadline for the US to withdraw its forces, rather that it stated a period of six months within which negotiations had to be concluded which would then culminate in the removal of foreign forces. The interim agreement that the US and other Western powers could enter into in the meanwhile had no such time limit.

were formed after the war, it is only the Government of the German Democratic Republic that recognizes and adheres to those agreements. The Government of the Federal Republic of Germany openly proclaims its negative attitude to those agreements, cultivates sabre-rattling militarism and advocates the review of the German frontiers and the results of the Second World War. It tries to establish a powerful military base for its aggressive plans, to kindle a dangerous hotbed of conflicts on German soil, and to set the former Allies in the anti-Hitler coalition against each other. [..]

The U.S.S.R. deems it necessary in the interests of consolidating peace formally to recognize the situation which has developed in Europe after the war, to legalize and to consolidate the inviolability of the existing German borders, to normalize the situation in West Berlin on the basis of reasonable consideration for the interests of all the parties concerned. In the interests of achieving agreement on a peace treaty the Soviet Union does not insist on the immediate withdrawal of the Federal Republic of Germany from NATO. Both German States could for a certain period, even after the conclusion of a peace treaty, remain in the military alliances to which they now belong. [..]

The Soviet Government proposes that a peace conference be called immediately, without delay, that a German peace treaty be concluded, and that the problem of West Berlin as a free city be solved in this way. [..]

To avoid delaying a peace settlement it is essential to fix a time limit within which the Germans should seek possible ways for agreements on problems within their internal competence. The Soviet Government considers that not more than 6 months are needed for such negotiations. [..]

But, if the United States does not show that it realizes the necessity of concluding a peace treaty, we shall deplore it because we shall be obliged to sign a peace treaty, which it would be impossible and dangerous to delay, not with all the States but only with those that wish to sign it. The peace treaty would specifically define the status of West Berlin as a free city and the Soviet Union, just as the other parties to the treaty, would of course observe it strictly; measures would also be taken to ensure that this status be respected by other countries as well. At the same time, this would mean putting an end to the occupation regime in West Berlin with all its implications. In particular, questions of using the means of communication by land, water or air within the territory of the G.D.R. would have to be settled solely by appropriate agreements with the G.D.R. That is but natural, since control over such means of communication is an inalienable right of every sovereign State.⁴⁴

Before and after the meeting Kennedy met with the leaders of France, Great Britain and Western Germany. At first Kennedy reported that no 'ultimatums' were given in an address to the nation following the meeting, but that changed when the aide mémoire was published by Soviet media on 10 June.⁴⁵ On 15 June, Khrushchev in a public speech on national television stated that he had set a deadline by the end of the year for a peace treaty to be concluded and the status of Berlin to be settled, followed up the same day by public statements of the East German leader Ulbricht demanding a change in the status of West Berlin, which he also repeated in statements in subsequent weeks.⁴⁶ The Western powers immediately reinvigorated their planning efforts for a contingency over Berlin through the Live Oaks working group. While the US government drafted the

⁴⁴ United States Department of State, *Documents on Germany, 1944-1985*, 4th ed. (Department of State, 1986), 729–32, <http://hdl.handle.net/2027/mdp.39015011724781>.

⁴⁵ 'Kennedy's Address to the Nation on His Talks in Europe', *New York Times*, 7 June 1961, <http://search.proquest.com/library3.webster.edu/hnpnewyorktimes/docview/115459443/abstract/13AEB13CD4D649473E3/92?accountid=14944#>; Rueger, *Kennedy, Adenauer and the Making of the Berlin Wall, 1958-1961*, 161.

⁴⁶ Rueger, *Kennedy, Adenauer and the Making of the Berlin Wall, 1958-1961*, 167–68, 180.

response and circulated it for discussion with its Western allies, it signaled its willingness to go to war over Berlin through various channels and military preparations were put in motion.⁴⁷ The US official answer came in a note on 17 July in which the US rejected the ultimatum and accused the Soviet Union of reckless and unlawful behavior asserting that

The Soviet Government thus threatens to violate its solemn international obligations, to determine unilaterally the fate of millions of Germans without their consent, and to use force against its World War II Allies if they do not voluntarily surrender their rights and vital positions. The Soviet Government must understand that such a course of action is not only unacceptable, but is a more serious menace to world peace, for which it bears full responsibility before all mankind.⁴⁸

In a televised address Kennedy on 25 July rejected the Soviet demands and announced his decision to increase defense spending, to speed up the process of armament, and to call up reserves.⁴⁹ Khrushchev in a speech he gave the first week of August did not announce similar measures. In fact, he was now backtracking, saying 'let us not create a war psychosis' declaring that 'we do not intend to infringe upon any lawful interests of the Western Power. Any barring of access to West Berlin, any blockade of West Berlin, is entirely out of the question.'⁵⁰ The refugee crisis from Eastern Germany was intensifying with the day already prompting speculation about closure of the border with West Berlin. On 13 August, overnight, the East German government built the wall, with the blessing of Khrushchev, which Kennedy took as a signal that the former no longer intended to render Berlin into a free city.⁵¹ The US subsequently sent an official letter of protest and dispatched Vice President Johnson to Berlin by air with a military convoy following over the autobahn under an elaborate set of rules of engagement, which entered Berlin after being inspected by border guards.⁵² While incidents would continue to flare up in the months and years afterwards over the border, the second Berlin deadline crisis was moving towards its end in late August and September when the two leaderships through unofficial and official channels communicated their willingness to find a solution. Foreign Minister Gromyko met with US Secretary of State Rusk and US President Kennedy in late September, where all indicated their willingness to re-initiate negotiations at some point in the future.⁵³ Meanwhile, Soviet Party Secretary Kozlov declared on 12 September that there no longer was a deadline, which was confirmed by Khrushchev in his address to the Soviet Party Congress on 17 October when he declared that the deadline had been rescinded.⁵⁴ In the end, Khrushchev and Ulbricht signed the Treaty of Friendship, Mutual Assistance and Cooperation in June 1964, which had nothing to say about Western presence or access.⁵⁵ The division of West and East Berlin, and West and East Germany, would persist until the end of the Cold War, over a quarter century later.

⁴⁷ Rueger, 171–78, 194–96. John C. Ausland, *Kennedy, Khrushchev, and the Berlin-Cuba Crisis, 1961-1964: The 1961-64 Wall* (Scandinavian University Press North America, 1996), 5–12. Trachtenberg, *History and Strategy*, 218, 223.

⁴⁸ United States Department of State, *Documents on Germany, 1944-1985*, 756.

⁴⁹ Schlesinger, *A Thousand Days*, 150. John F. Kennedy, 'Report to the Nation - Berlin Crisis, 25 July 1961', 25 July 1961, <http://www.jfklibrary.org/Asset-Viewer/Archives/TNC-258.aspx>.

⁵⁰ Trachtenberg, *History and Strategy*, 220, for the quote, see 219.

⁵¹ Rueger, *Kennedy, Adenauer and the Making of the Berlin Wall, 1958-1961*, 197, 209.

⁵² Rueger, 240. Ausland, *Kennedy, Khrushchev, and the Berlin-Cuba Crisis, 1961-1964*, 23–24, Appendix G, 133–34.

⁵³ Ausland, *Kennedy, Khrushchev, and the Berlin-Cuba Crisis, 1961-1964*, 32–34. George and Smoke, *Deterrence in American Foreign Policy: Theory and Practice*, 442–43.

⁵⁴ Ausland, *Kennedy, Khrushchev, and the Berlin-Cuba Crisis, 1961-1964*, 34. Rueger, *Kennedy, Adenauer and the Making of the Berlin Wall, 1958-1961*, 247; Schlesinger, *A Thousand Days*, 153.

⁵⁵ Ausland, *Kennedy, Khrushchev, and the Berlin-Cuba Crisis, 1961-1964*, 95.

