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# A CITY TORN APART

## BUILDING OF THE BERLIN WALL

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## BUILDING <sup>OF</sup> <sub>THE</sub> BERLIN WALL

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*in conjunction with a symposium given on*

27 OCTOBER 2011

*at the*

NATIONAL ARCHIVES AND  
RECORDS ADMINISTRATION

WASHINGTON, DC

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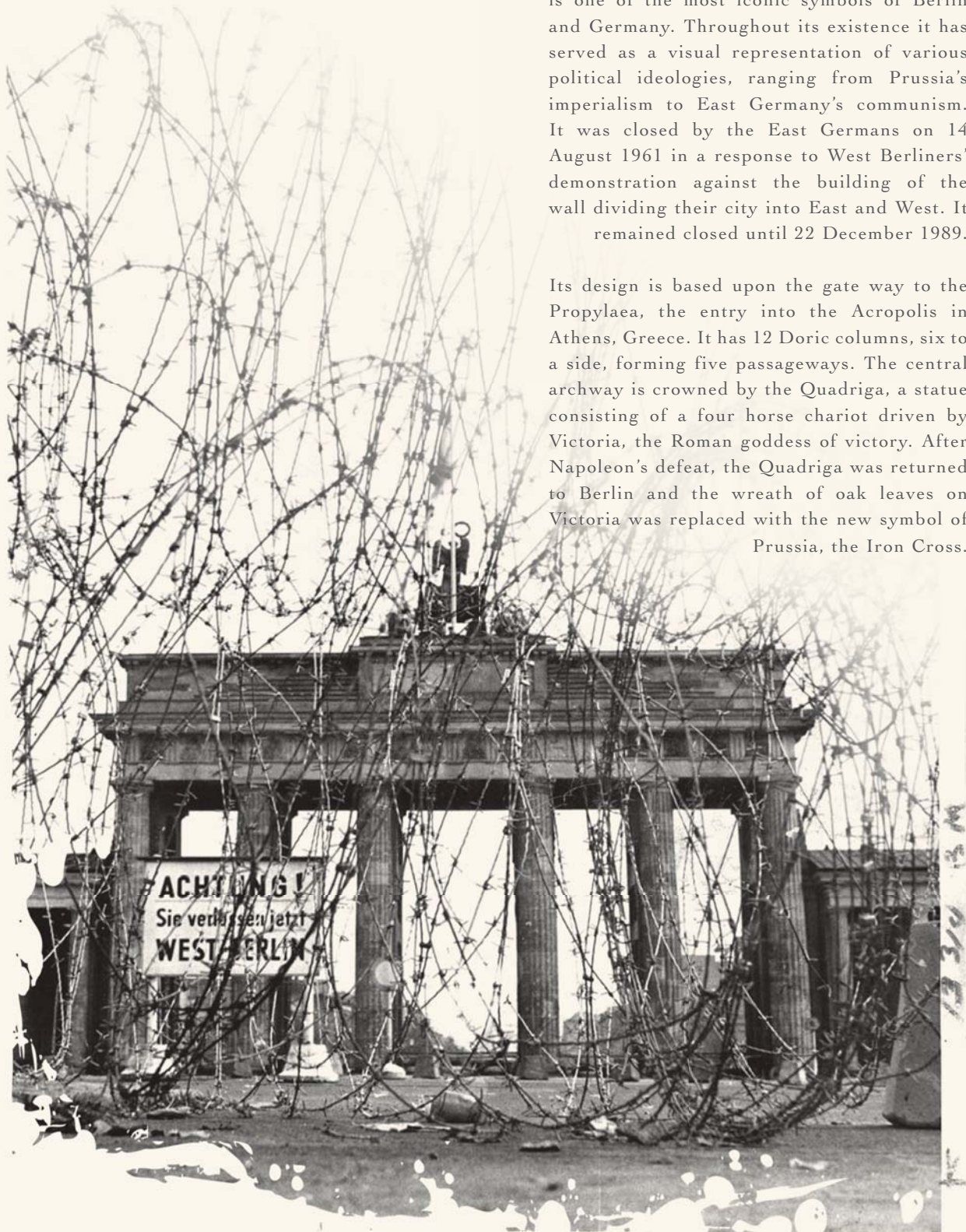
WASHINGTON, DC



## brandenburg gate

Built in 1791, standing 85 feet high, 215 feet long and 36 feet wide, this former city gate is one of the most iconic symbols of Berlin and Germany. Throughout its existence it has served as a visual representation of various political ideologies, ranging from Prussia's imperialism to East Germany's communism. It was closed by the East Germans on 14 August 1961 in a response to West Berliners' demonstration against the building of the wall dividing their city into East and West. It remained closed until 22 December 1989.

Its design is based upon the gate way to the Propylaea, the entry into the Acropolis in Athens, Greece. It has 12 Doric columns, six to a side, forming five passageways. The central archway is crowned by the Quadriga, a statue consisting of a four horse chariot driven by Victoria, the Roman goddess of victory. After Napoleon's defeat, the Quadriga was returned to Berlin and the wreath of oak leaves on Victoria was replaced with the new symbol of Prussia, the Iron Cross.



## a family divided



A couple from Berlin may never see each other again because they became separated by the newly formed Berlin Wall. On August 12th, one day before Ulbricht ordered West Berlin surrounded by barbed wire, a man flew into West Berlin. His wife was planning on following him several days later after their young son completed his holiday camp.

Several days after the "iron curtain" was drawn, the couple was able to meet at the fence. The guard indulgently allowed them time to talk. When the guard turned away and was not watching, the mother quickly hands their son over to his father and to freedom.



Having made her decision, the mother wipes away her tears of pain and sorrow, knowing that she may never see her son grow up.



With a goodbye bouquet and clinging hands, a man and a woman acknowledge that they might never see each other again and that a young boy may never really know who his mother was and the sacrifice she made to have him live in freedom.



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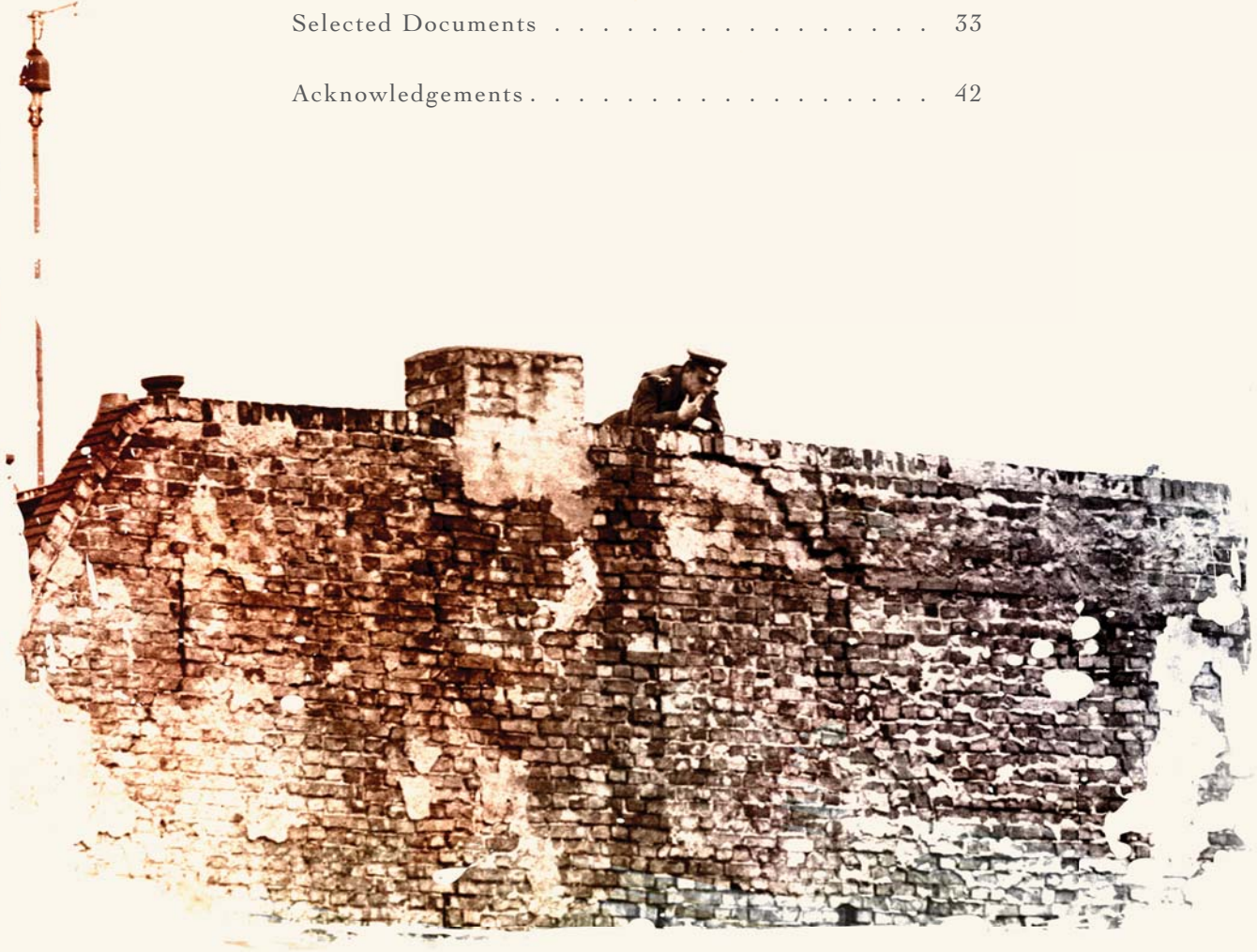
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## National Archives and Records Administration

As the nation's record keeper, it is our vision that all Americans will understand the vital role records play in a democracy, and their own personal stake in the National Archives. Our holdings and diverse programs will be available to more people than ever before through modern technology and dynamic partnerships. The stories of our nation and our people are told in the records and artifacts cared for in NARA facilities around the country. We want all Americans to be inspired to explore the records of their country.

The National Archives and Records Administration serves American democracy by safeguarding and preserving the records of our Government, ensuring that the people can discover, use, and learn from this documentary heritage. We ensure continuing access to the essential documentation of the rights of American citizens and the actions of their government. We support democracy, promote civic education, and facilitate historical understanding of our national experience.



The mission of the National Declassification Center (NDC) at the National Archives is to align people, processes, and technologies to advance the declassification and public release of historically valuable permanent records while maintaining national security. Located at the National Archives Building in College Park, MD, the Center was created as part of Executive Order #13526. It aims to be the world's preeminent declassification organization, responsive to all customers, committed to the free flow of information and the requirements of national security. Its current focus is:

- timely and appropriate processing of referrals between agencies for accessioned Federal records and transferred Presidential Records;
- general interagency declassification activities necessary to fulfill the requirements of sections 3.3 and 3.4 of the executive order;
- the exchange among agencies of detailed declassification guidance to support equity recognition;
- the development of effective, transparent, and standard declassification work processes, training, and quality assurance measures;
- the development of solutions to declassification challenges posed by electronic records, special media, and emerging technologies;
- the linkage and effective utilization of existing agency databases and the use of new technologies to support declassification activities under the purview of the Center.





## Historical Collections Division

The Historical Collections Division (HCD) of CIA's Information Management Services is responsible for executing the Agency's Historical Review Program. This program seeks to identify and declassify collections of documents that detail the Agency's analysis and activities relating to historically significant topics and events. HCD's goals include increasing the usability and accessibility of historical collections. HCD also develops release events and partnerships to highlight each collection and make it available to the broadest audience possible.

The mission of HCD is to:

- Promote an accurate, objective understanding of the information and intelligence that has helped shape major US foreign policy decisions.
- Broaden access to lessons-learned, presenting historical material that gives greater understanding to the scope and context of past actions.
- Improve current decision-making and analysis by facilitating reflection on the impacts and effects arising from past foreign policy decisions.
- Showcase CIA's contributions to national security and provide the American public with valuable insight into the workings of its government.
- Demonstrate the CIA's commitment to the Open Government Initiative and its three core values: Transparency, Participation, and Collaboration.

## agenda

- 9:00 am to 10:00 am    **Opening Ceremonies:**  
Neil C. Carmichael, Jr., National Declassification Center  
Mr. David S. Ferriero, Archivist of the United States  
Mr. Joe Lambert, Director Information Management Services, CIA  
**Guest Speaker:**  
Dr. William Richard Smyser, Adjunct Professor, BMW Center for  
German and European Studies at Georgetown University.
- 10:00 am to 10:15 am    Break
- 10:15 am to 12:00 pm    **Panel Discussion:** Berlin Crisis of 1961, Building the Wall  
**Historian Panel:** From Vienna to Check Point Charlie;
- 12:00 pm to 1:00 pm    *Private Reception for Panel and Speakers*





speakers

**David Ferriero**

Archivist of the United States

**Joseph Lambert**

Director, Information Management Services, Central Intelligence Agency

*Guest Speaker*

**Dr. William Richard Smyser**

Adjunct Professor, BMW Center for German and European Studies  
at Georgetown University

*Moderator of the Historian Panel*

**Dr. Donald P. Steury**

Central Intelligence Agency

*Members of the Historian Panel*

**Dr. Donald A. Carter**

U.S. Army Center of Military History

**Dr. Hope Harrison**

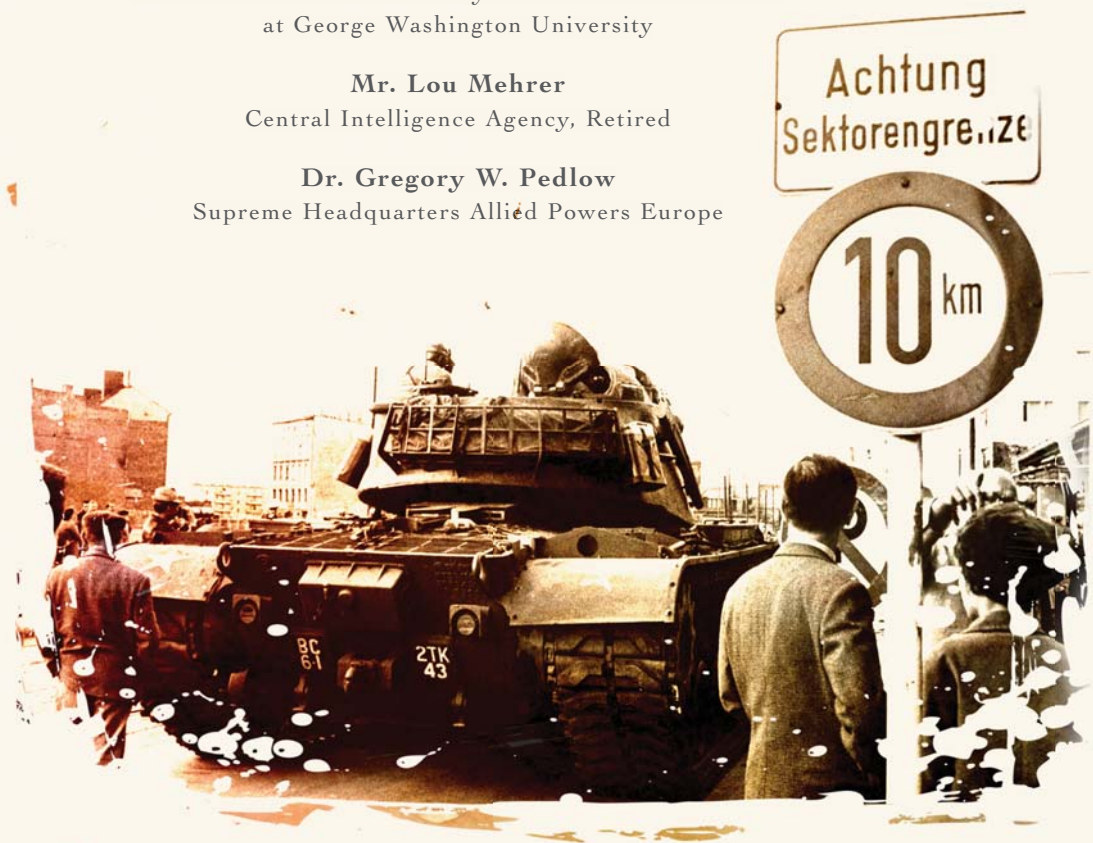
Associate Professor of History and International Affairs  
at George Washington University

**Mr. Lou Mehrer**

Central Intelligence Agency, Retired

**Dr. Gregory W. Pedlow**

Supreme Headquarters Allied Powers Europe



## speaker biographies

**William Richard Smyser** is the former Henry Alfred Kissinger Chair in Foreign Policy and International Relations at the Library of Congress; he is currently an adjunct professor at the BMW Center for German and European Studies at Georgetown University and also teaches at the U.S. Foreign Service Institute. An expert on the politics and economy of Europe, he has worked for the U.S. government, the United Nations, and in foundation management and academia. He served with U.S. forces in Germany in the 1950s, was a special assistant to General Lucius Clay, President Kennedy's personal representative, during the Berlin Crisis of 1961 and served as a political counselor at the American embassy in Bonn. Since then he has held a number of senior executive positions at the White House and was a senior member of Henry Kissinger's National Security Council staff. His books include: *The Humanitarian Conscience: Caring for Others in the Age of Terror* (2003), *How Germans Negotiate: Logical Goals, Practical Solutions* (2002), and *From Yalta to Berlin: the Cold War Struggle over Germany* (1999).

**Professor Hope M. Harrison** conducted extensive research in the archives in Moscow and Berlin on the decision to build the Berlin Wall. She has published books and articles on this in the U.S., Germany and elsewhere. Her 2003 book published by Princeton University Press, *Driving the Soviets Up the Wall, Soviet—East German Relations, 1955-1961*, won the 2004 Marshall Shulman Prize for the “best book on the international relations of the former Soviet bloc” of the American Association for the Advancement of Slavic Studies. An updated and expanded version of her book was published this year in Germany in time for the 50th anniversary of the building of the Berlin Wall: *Ulbrichts Mauer, Wie die SED Moskaus Widerstand gegen den Mauerbau Brach* (Propyläen Verlag, 2011). She has appeared on CNN, C-SPAN, the History Channel, Deutschlandradio, and Spiegel TV discussing the Berlin Wall. Her current research focuses on German debates about how to commemorate the Berlin Wall as a site of memory since 1989.

**Donald P. Steury** is a historian currently working in the National Declassification Center at the National Archives. He previously served as a Soviet military analyst and worked on the CIA History Staff from 1992 to 2007. He has written widely on intelligence history in World War II and the Cold War and his publications include two documentary histories, *On the Front Lines of the Cold War: the Intelligence War in Berlin, 1946-1961* and *Intentions and Capabilities: Estimates on Soviet Strategic Forces*. He has taught at the University of Southern California and the George Washington University and presently teaches at the University of Maryland University College. He also serves on the Wissenschaftlicher Beirat of the Alliierten Museum in Berlin. He has a doctorate in modern European history from the University of California, Irvine.



**Gregory W. Pedlow** has been Chief of the Historical Office at NATO's Supreme Headquarters Allied Powers Europe since 1989. Previous positions have included Staff Historian for the Central Intelligence Agency and Assistant Professor of History at the University of Nebraska. He received a Ph.D. in Modern European History from the Johns Hopkins University in 1979 and is the author of a number of books and articles on German history, NATO and the Cold War, and the Waterloo Campaign of 1815.

**Donald A. Carter** is currently serving as a historian for the U.S. Army Center of Military History. He has been an Assistant Professor and Instructor at the U.S. Military Academy at West Point, New York and the U.S. Army Field Artillery School, Fort Sill, Oklahoma. He is a graduate of the U. S. Military Academy and holds a doctorate from Ohio State University, Columbus, Ohio in Military History. He has written articles for a number of journals and military publications such as the *Journal of Military History*, *Army Review* and *Field Artillery*.

**Lou Mehrer** is a retired CIA Officer who served in senior assignments in Washington and abroad. Most recently, he was featured in the UK film production, *Spies Beneath Berlin*, the history of the Berlin Tunnel Operation, which is scheduled for commercial release later this summer. He holds a Bachelor of Arts, cum laude, in Modern European History and German Literature and continued his education as a Fulbright Scholar in Germany at the University of Frankfurt. Later as a Woodrow Wilson Fellow at Rutgers University, he earned a Master of Arts degree in History. He currently is a senior review officer for the CIA Declassification Center.



*Berlin, November 20, 1961*

New wall at the Brandenburg Gate shows the old barbed wire, a screen of fireboard, and the new wall erected by Communist labor battalions.





maps

*Berlin, August 1961*

U.S. tank and riflemen stand guard at the Friedrichstrasse crossing of the Divided City's sector border as West Berliners look on.



# MAPS OF BERLIN

## BUILDING OF THE BERLIN WALL

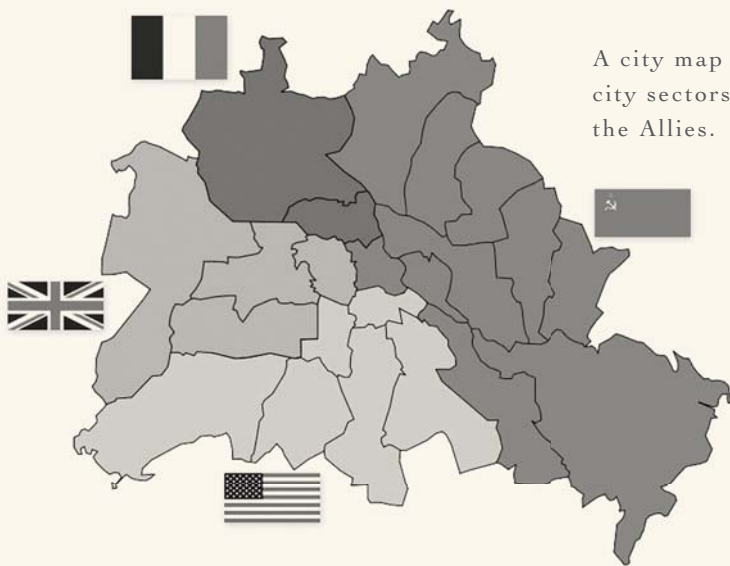
Map depicts the location of the watchtowers, tank traps, and minefields that surrounded West Berlin after the wall was constructed.



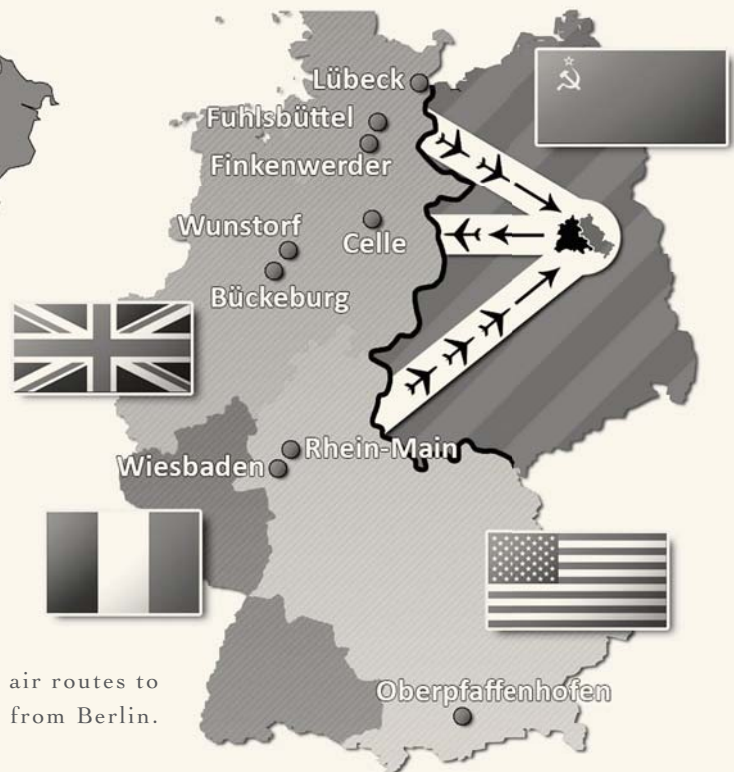


BUILDING OF THE BERLIN WALL

Map portrays pre- and post-war German borders as well as indicating how Germany and Berlin was divided by the Allies.



A city map of Berlin showing the city sectors controlled by each of the Allies.



Map indicates the air routes to and from Berlin.



*Berlin, late August, 1961*

An East German guard jumps to freedom.



essays



*Berlin 1961*

Faced with the success of one of their comrades in escaping the previous day, armed East German soldiers on their motorcycles and in their armored personnel carriers stand watch at the Brandenburg Gate.



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# A BRIEF HISTORY

## OF THE BERLIN CRISIS OF 1961

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NEIL C. CARMICHAEL, JR.

NATIONAL DECLASSIFICATION CENTER

NATIONAL RECORDS *and*  
ARCHIVES ADMINISTRATION

Autumn 2011 marks the 50th anniversary of the political crisis that resulted in the erection of the Berlin Wall which divided that German city for 28 years. The National Declassification Center of the National Archives and Records Administration and the Historical Collections Division of the Central Intelligence Agency have partnered to publish newly declassified documents that reveal intimate details of the five month Berlin Crisis of 1961.

Included in this joint publication are newly released documents that show behind-the-scenes security discussions and planning. The Department of State has added a contemporary 600-page report, never before disclosed, on the impact of the events surrounding the crisis and the deepening of the Cold War. Other documents explain the looming threat the crisis represented to the legal status and rights of the three Western Powers in Berlin: Britain, France and the United States, and provide a sense of the real-time spiral of statements, military acts, parry and feints, that led to international brinkmanship as the West went toe-to-toe with a USSR ready to annex or asphyxiate Berlin.

### EVENTS LEADING UP TO THE CRISIS 1958-1960

From the end of World War II in 1945, the question of Berlin's status 90 miles within the Deutsche Demokratische Republik (East Germany) and the Soviet Union's zone of occupation, along with the status of Germany among the community of nations, remained a source of tension between the East and West. Premier Khrushchev continued to

push President Eisenhower and the other Western leaders for resolution of the issue.

In November 1958, Khrushchev issued an ultimatum giving the Western Powers six months to agree to withdraw from Berlin and make it a free, demilitarized city. If the West did not come to agreement, Khrushchev declared that "the German Democratic Republic had scrupulously observed the stipulations of the Potsdam Agreement with regard to the eradication of militarism and liquidation of the monopolies while the Western Powers had permitted the revival of militarism and economic imperialism in the German Federal Republic" (State Department, 1962, p. 2). He further threatened to turn over to a thuggish East Germany, complete control of all lines of communication with West Berlin; the Western Powers then would have access to West Berlin only by permission of the obstinate East German government. These accusations from Khrushchev were nothing new, and the three Western Powers responded by rejecting the statements as continued Soviet propaganda, but the threat of turning over access to the DDR was something to be taken seriously and prepared for. In the end, the United States, United Kingdom, and France replied to the ultimatum by firmly asserting their determination to remain in, and to maintain their legal right of free access to, the entirety of Berlin.

In May 1959, the Soviet Union withdrew its deadline and met with the Western Powers in a Big Four foreign ministers' conference. The conference failed to bestow any important concessions by either East or West or reach any general agreements on



Berlin; however, it did lead to Khrushchev's visit to the United States in September with Eisenhower at Camp David. Eisenhower started the discussion on Berlin on September 26, explaining that Berlin was of deep concern not only for the US government but also US citizens. Eisenhower felt that once the tensions between the two countries over Berlin had been resolved, the US and Soviet Union could begin productive dialogue and progress on numerous other issues. He stated that the US did not want to continue to maintain an occupation force in Berlin forever and agreed that the existing situation should be corrected.

Khrushchev, for his part, specified that he was in general agreement with the President's statement but did not understand how the Soviets' proposal for a free city of West Berlin could affect United States security. Khrushchev emphasized that the Soviet's approach to the Berlin problem came from necessity; that is, ending the state of war and concluding a final peace treaty with Germany. He further charged the United States with maintaining an abnormal situation and a virtual state of war because of the position taken by Chancellor Adenauer, and that the US should not endorse the Adenauer policies. At the end of this visit, Khrushchev and Eisenhower jointly expressed that the most important world issue was general disarmament – including the problem of Berlin – and “all outstanding international questions should be settled, not by the application of force, but by peaceful means through negotiations.” Khrushchev believed that an agreement with the US over Berlin was possible and agreed to continue the dialogue at a summit in Paris in May, 1960. But the Paris Summit turned out to be ill-fated, cancelled in the fallout from the Soviet shoot down of an American U-2 reconnaissance plane and the capture of Gary Francis Powers on 1 May 1960.

#### NEW ADMINISTRATION: 1961 AND THE JUNE MEETING IN VIENNA

In the post-summit climate, the Kennedy-Nixon presidential race was not immune to the effects of increased Soviet propaganda, and numerous acts of physical harassment by the East German government turned into a belligerent display in support of Soviet policies on Berlin, reinforcing the East German regime's claim that Berlin was within the territory of the GDR. One writer characterized the post-summit conference phase of the Berlin problem as a “cold

war by proxy” (Speier, 1962, p. 114). However, the harassment against Berlin met with failure because of successful Western countermeasures and a general lack of interest on the part of Khrushchev to continue negotiating outstanding issues with the Eisenhower administration. Khrushchev would later call the election of Kennedy a “fundamental improvement” in Soviet-American relations (State Department, Feb. 1970, p.1).

On January 6, 1961, Khrushchev pronounced Soviet support for ongoing national wars of liberation and further stressed that the Western powers must end their “occupational regime” in West Berlin (State Department, Feb. 1970, p.1). This was the belligerent and threatening environment that existed on January 20, 1961, when John Kennedy took the oath of office as the 35th President of the United States. The new Kennedy administration initially made no strong policy statement in regards to Berlin, preferring to allow the Soviets to take the initiative in any provocative posturing. Previously the US, after consultation with its allies, would put forward proposals concerning Berlin that were then rejected by the Soviets. The Kennedy administration did, however, confirm the US commitment to the security of West Germany and the people of Berlin.

Over the next several months, the Kennedy administration met internally to discuss US contingency planning for any Soviet move on Berlin. The developing US or western policy was one of allowing the Soviets to make initial proposals in regards to Berlin and its status. The State Department issued instructions that diplomatic replies to the Soviets were to recognize the unsatisfactory nature of the situation in Germany but that changing the status of West Berlin into that of a free city or a similar scheme would merely “increase the abnormality of an already abnormal situation” (State Department, Feb. 1970, p. 3).

On June 4, 1961, Khrushchev and Kennedy met in Vienna in hopes that the two could exchange views in a personal meeting. Leading up to the summit, Khrushchev had welcomed a spirit of cooperation that was developing with the new administration and also expressed regret over the heated international atmosphere resulting from events in Cuba. During the summit, however, an emboldened Khrushchev demanded an immediate peace treaty to reunite Germany under Communist terms. That

failing, as it must, he vowed to sign a separate peace treaty with Communist East Germany which, by his way of thinking, would then be unleashed to cut off free-world access to West Berlin. If a peace treaty were signed “the state of war would cease and all commitments stemming from the German surrender would become invalid. This would apply to institutions, occupation rights, and access to Berlin, including the air corridors.” (State Department, Feb. 1970, p. 41). The three Western powers replied that no unilateral treaty could abrogate their responsibilities and rights in West Berlin, including the right of unobstructed access to the city. As the conversation over the status of Berlin grew more heated, Kennedy undercut his own bargaining position with the Soviet Premier when Kennedy conveyed US acquiescence to the permanent division of Berlin. This misstep in the negotiations made Kennedy’s later, more assertive public statements, less credible to the Soviets, who now saw him as indecisive and weak.

#### THE CITY DIVIDED: AUGUST 13/14, 1961

During the early part of August, the foreign ministers of three occupation countries (the United States, United Kingdom, and France) met to discuss “the diplomatic, propagandist and military aspects of the Berlin problem.” (State Dept, Feb. 1970, p. 51). The US believed that the West German government should be associated more closely with contingency planning and be full-fledged partners in the work of the Ambassadorial Steering Group in Washington regarding Berlin. Hurriedly, ministers, military leaders, and heads of state discussed Soviet motives and intentions, strengthening of the forces of the alliance, economic countermeasures, and Berlin contingency planning. The ultimate goal was to be able “to respond to any threat to Western access and at the same time deter the Soviet Union from creating such a threat as a result of a peace treaty with the GDR.” (State Dept, Feb. 1970, p. 51). In a final analysis, the Western Powers determined that the Soviets were unwilling to risk war and that any actions on their part would be more defensive in nature.

Khrushchev, through Andrei Gromyko, the Soviet Foreign Minister, reiterated to the Western Powers that if a treaty was not forthcoming, the Soviets would conclude a separate peace treaty with the GDR. The Soviets continued to apply pressure for resolution on the Berlin question. In his speeches

of August 7 and 11, Khrushchev conjured up the specter of nuclear war with the west if pushed by the United States. He “combined an aggressive stance with a posture of reasonableness” by publicly asking for multilateral conferences, but “he offered no new proposals for negotiations and merely continued to insist that, if the Western Powers persisted in their refusal to sign a German peace treaty, this problem would have to be settled without them.” (State Dept., April 1970, p.73).

On Saturday August 12, 1961, East Berlin mayor Walter Ulbricht signed an order to close the border and erect a Wall. The tide of East Germans flooding to the West through the many roads, canals, crossings, and trains, came to an abrupt end. It is estimated that 3.7 to 4 million East Germans escaped to the West. The daily flow of refugees in the beginning of August was roughly 1,500 East Germans, but after Khrushchev’s “bomb-rattling” speech, the daily number had rose to 1,926. On August 11, unbeknownst to all, the last 2,290 refugees seeking the freedoms of the west, entered the Marienfelde reception center in West Berlin. Overnight, in a swift, unexpected manner, the door to freedom closed, and was to remain so for 28 years.

On the night of 13-14 August 1961, East German police and military units sealed off all arteries leading to West Berlin. The communists pulled up train tracks and roads, erected barriers topped with barbed wire, completely isolating the Western sectors and preventing East Germans from escaping to the West. The fences and barricades completely surrounded the 97 miles around the three western sectors and 27 miles that cut through the heart of the city, dividing it. The Soviet Army moved three divisions closer to Berlin to discourage interference by the West and presumably to assist in the event of large-scale riots. From August 13-23, the Soviets and East Germans undertook a massive show of force in Berlin to stop the exodus of refugees to the West. In a direct response to Soviet and East German operations to cut off allied access to Berlin, at the end of August, Kennedy made a public show of ordering 148,000 National Guardsmen and Reservists to active duty.

#### THE STANDOFF AT CHECKPOINT CHARLIE, OCTOBER 27, 1961

During the end of summer and into the fall of 1961, the Soviets and East German governments continued

a general harassment of US forces traveling from Checkpoints Alpha and Bravo, which allowed access through East Germany, and a series of threats were made by Soviet leaders concerning unfettered access to air corridors as well. Military and Allied diplomats were also harassed moving across the borders of the divided city. On 22 October 1961, just two months after the construction of the wall, the US Chief of Mission in West Berlin, E. Allan Lightner, Jr. was stopped in his car (which had occupation forces license plates) while crossing at Checkpoint Charlie to go to a theater in East Berlin. This violated agreements made at the 1945 Potsdam Conference. It was at that point that General Lucius Clay, Special Advisor in West Berlin, decided to demonstrate American resolve.

The next day, Clay sent an American diplomat to test the East German border police. When the diplomat was stopped by East German transport police asking to see his passport, waiting US Military Police at the border recognized his diplomatic car, and rushed to escort him into East Berlin. The shaken GDR police moved out of the way. The car continued on and the soldiers returned to West Berlin. Over the next three days American and Soviet soldiers deployed at Checkpoint Charlie tested each country's resolve on how far each would go during these standoffs over Berlin. On October 24, 26 vehicles were stopped by East German police, only to have US military personnel escort the vehicles across the border and return back to the West.

On October 27, 1961, the provocative games took a serious turn as another probe prompted the Soviets to deploy 10 tanks on the Eastern side of Checkpoint Charlie. The US had been using tanks to support their escorts of vehicles into East Berlin, and now was met by equal force. The Soviet and American tanks stood a mere 100 yards apart from each other, and both sides readied for battle. The showdown of tanks at the wall became a visual emblem of the dangerous situation these world powers were locked into. The confrontation made headlines around the world, and it looked as if the Cold War was soon to become a hot, shooting war with grave consequences. It was only after more sanguine heads prevailed that Moscow and Washington mutually agreed to pull back from the standoff, and the confrontation eased.

## INTRODUCTION TO THE ESSAYS

The Berlin Crisis of 1961 was a major turning point during the Cold War and answered, for a time, the question of Berlin; but unintended results from the events re-defined the Cold War over the next 18 years.

The story can be viewed as an impatient, frustrated, older, and seasoned Soviet Premier Khrushchev, seeking resolution to the Berlin question, having to confront a new, young, popular but untested American President. An emboldened Khrushchev breaks off discussions with the former American President Eisenhower over the U2 incident, and is then further bolstered by Kennedy's public failure and embarrassment over the Cuban Bay of Pigs fiasco. It has the mark of not only the tension between two men – Khrushchev and Kennedy – but to competing economic and social systems in a global war over which system would triumph. We have in the Berlin Crisis – viewed through these newly released documents – a more precise look at the tensions between the military strategic thinking and reliance on the nuclear umbrella of US missile defense versus use of more conventional forces. This argument is revealed through countless internal documents and was a serious, highly debated issue when the West was forced into the review of contingency planning on Berlin. The West did not have sufficient forces for a conventional fight, and yet would not want to be seen – by the US or its Western Allies – as too ready to use nuclear weapons in response to Soviet or East German intervention of British, French, and US rights to travel to Berlin via the autobahn, trains, or designated air corridors. The use of the nuclear option would not be balanced and would exceed the actions taken by the Soviets, and would trigger the negative opinion of most non-aligned countries. The other conflict during the crisis was internal, bureaucratic wrangling between the NATO Secretary General Stikker, and the British, French, and United States Supreme Allied Commander, US General Nordstad.

The contributions on the Berlin Crisis from these authors highlight several contentious issues within the Western Alliance that, despite differences during this very crucial and critical time, did not vitiate the Allies' unified stance to counter



the USSR/GDR threat. The results of the 1961 crisis led the West to expend resources for closing the conventional force gap that existed between the Warsaw Pact and NATO. The West lacked sufficient conventional forces to support and sustain combat operations against overwhelming Warsaw Pact forces. This lack of conventional forces limited the Kennedy administration's actions on what it could accomplish in the face of quick, aggressive Soviet moves on Berlin outside of simple recognition. It allowed the West to continue their claim of access to the East and non-recognition of the East German government, and to force access to East Germany and East Berlin.

The three essays drafted for this publication, and the release of the Department of State's "Crisis over Berlin," shows the wide variance in the issues surrounding the events of 1961. Although we have used documents from as early as the 1946 period, our focus has been those events starting with the Vienna Summit between Khrushchev and Kennedy through the 1961 standoff between the US and Soviet tanks in October of that year. One should not let the talks on Berlin between Kennedy and Khrushchev, and the dangerous world power standoff in October, overshadow the concerns and fears of the people of Berlin caught in the middle of a confrontation between two super powers. Berlin had long been a source of friction between east and west, and Khrushchev continued to push for resolution on Berlin's legal status. Khrushchev's meeting with Kennedy and the passing of the now famous "aide-mémoires" only exacerbated the situation and renewed US and Soviet tensions over Berlin. Khrushchev's frustration with the slowness in Western response, and his own hot rhetoric, should come as no surprise, for each time Khrushchev spoke on the subject it resulted in an increase in East Germans heading West through Berlin. And those mass exoduses added to the tension.

For this publication, the Department of State declassified one of the most significant documents written on the Berlin Crisis of 1961. The eight-part study, covering the period November 1958-December 1962, in 600 pages presents a very detailed account of the events leading up to, and throughout, the 1961 Crisis. Titled "Crisis over Berlin" and drafted by the Department of State's Historical Office after the Wall was erected by the East Germans, captures the serious tension, and contemporary understanding of the Soviet

and GDR intentions on Berlin. Part VI covers the period from June through September cataloging the different events on the internal US discussions, international efforts with the British, French, Germans, and NATO, and US military planning. It provides great detail on the many issues of the day and took several years to complete. Martin Hillenbrand directed the study.

Dr. Pedlow's "NATO and the Berlin Crisis of 1961" discusses the NATO planning efforts during the crisis. During the previous years, the NATO alliance had come to rely on the US nuclear strategic umbrella in its military planning and as a potential response to the Soviets and Warsaw Pact in regards to West. The 1961 Crisis, and the Kennedy administration's efforts to move away from reliance on nuclear weapons, was coupled with a move to increase US and NATO conventional forces. The Crisis forced NATO military defense planning to reevaluate conventional force levels and led to an increase in defense spending, initiated by Kennedy. Dr. Pedlow captures the operational details, and discussions by the LIVE OAK contingency planning staff, established in 1958, for anticipating the Soviet intentions on Berlin. Along with the Washington Ambassadorial Group, these discussions created tension between the three Western Powers and NATO (Stikker) as to the military planning and acceptable allied response. The question was answered, in the end, that the NATO General Secretary would direct all military planning.

Dr. Don Carter's "The US Military Response to the 1960-1962 Berlin Crisis" details the US Army's role and, more specifically, the role of the 7th US Army Europe and that of the newly formed Berlin Brigade, during the Crisis. It describes the moves made by the Army in Berlin from patrols and their challenging of the Soviet attempts to halt US mission vehicles from entering the Eastern sectors which expected to pass without inspection, and the US diplomats' refusal to show their identification to anyone but Soviet military. The essay highlights the increased training by US troops in Berlin, defending or attacking, and planning to squash any Soviet-initiated rioting. The training balanced the dual military capability on riot-control drills and combat defense operations. The US military commanders were under pressure from local German officials to cut the wire, and knock down the barricades with US military bulldozers. The

Germans were concerned by – and suspicious of – the apparent lack of US force or any appearance of concern by US commanders in Berlin. US Army forces were increased both in Berlin and Germany as well as committed to NATO conventional forces. The arrival of the US troops on August 18th to Berlin – expecting to be stopped by Soviet and GDR troops – is a pivotal moment. When the Americans arrived in the city dressed in full field equipment, they received a hero's welcome and were paraded in front of Vice President Johnson and General Clay. The paper also nicely details the actual events leading up to and including the standoff at Checkpoint Charlie.

Dr. Steury's "Bitter Measures: Intelligence and Action in the Berlin Crisis, 1961" covers the US intelligence efforts to assist US civil and military policymakers with evaluations of Soviet and GRU intentions on the status of Berlin. The essay details the significant reports and studies produced by the CIA during the height of the Crisis, and we read the documentation by CIA analysts of the unfolding actions and counteractions. After the 1958 Crisis, CIA focused its attention on the Soviets' true intentions on undermining the US legal status in Berlin. The CIA also was directed to study Soviet responses to the various NATO plans and meetings. Dr. Steury accurately captures all three aspects of the Berlin Crisis from the Intelligence Community attempting to understand what was happening in real time, the US military responding to the GRU's blockading access, up to the new administration finding itself in a crisis that had been in the works before Kennedy had taken office.

#### THE NEWLY RELEASED DOCUMENTS

Since 1995, the United States government has reviewed 1.4 billion pages of classified information and exempted millions that original classification authorities believed needed further protection and were not released. Documents from the 1961 Berlin Crisis were among the many pages withheld from public disclosure and are now released through the coordination of the National Declassification Center and its Agency partners. Altogether, the NDC will release over 370+ documents, comprising almost 4,800+ pages of textual records, at this Berlin Crisis Conference.

The declassification of documents surrounding the Allied Contingency Planning on Berlin is an

ongoing process. NATO, through its Archives Committee, Germany, and the United States has systematically released – through consultation and review – many of the most sensitive documents. The latest releases of these Operation Live Oak and Contingency Planning documents continue to expand our understanding of what western civil and military leaders at the time were concerned with in regards to the Soviet intentions in Berlin. "How should Western Allies respond to Soviet or East German moves against Berlin? What level of force should be used to defend Western interests?" Throughout the summer of 1961 the story unfolded in dozens of documents, reports, meetings, and discussions on an Allied response that risked starting a nuclear war in the heart of Europe.

The release of these newly declassified documents provides a fascinating, detailed snapshot of those moments in the Crisis, and furthers our understanding of a significant and critical series of events during the Cold War. The Berlin Wall would stand for another 28 years before the people of East Germany would peacefully rise up and regain their freedom.

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# BITTER MEASURES:

## INTELLIGENCE AND ACTION IN THE BERLIN CRISIS, 1961

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DR. DONALD P. STEURY

CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY

*"All statements of fact, opinion, or analysis expressed are those of the author and do not reflect the official positions or views of the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) or any other U.S. Government agency. Nothing in the contents should be construed as asserting or implying U.S. Government authentication of information or CIA endorsement of the author's views. This material has been reviewed by CIA to prevent the disclosure of classified information."*

Just after midnight on the morning of 13 August 1961, East German soldiers pulled up in trucks at numerous locations in the center of Berlin. Working quickly, they pulled out rolls of barbed wire and, within a few hours, had established a barrier clean across the center of the city. Guards were posted every few yards, as necessary, and, within a matter of hours, Berlin was cut in two. The Berlin Wall had come into being.

Looking back, it is possible to see this as the turning point in the Cold War. No nation, no system, which can survive only by walling in its citizens can possibly hope to achieve credibility or permanency. The building of the Berlin Wall ensured that the German Democratic Republic would last only so long as the Wall remained. Its construction was an admission of defeat by the communist leadership. Once built, it was doomed, sooner or later, to come down.

It did not seem so at the time. The Berlin Wall was built in a period of soaring tension between the US and the USSR. It was the climax of nearly three years of crisis, precipitated in November 1958, when Soviet Premier Nikita Khrushchev threatened to sign a separate peace treaty with communist East Germany, thereby putting an end to the four-power regime in the city. In the end, no such treaty was ever signed and Khrushchev moderated his tone over 1959, even taking time off from the Cold War to engage in a triumphal tour of the United States. But, in May 1960, he walked

out of the Paris summit, following the shoot-down of Francis Gary Powers' U-2, and later that year conducted a stormy appearance at the United Nations, which produced his famous shoe-pounding episode. The specter of a peace treaty was raised again and Soviet-American tensions increased even as Khrushchev prepared to deal with the newly-elected President, John Fitzgerald Kennedy.

What was at stake, of course, were western rights to station troops in Berlin and maintain the freedom and independence of the western half of the city. These derived from four-power agreements negotiated at the end of World War II. Although a separate Soviet-GDR peace treaty might conceivably be little more than a political gesture, there was little doubt that, once having signed such an agreement, Khrushchev would use it as a lever to force the western allies, and especially the United States, out of Berlin.

Quite apart from the humanitarian cost of abandoning another million or so people to communist domination, this would have been catastrophic politically: Berlin was the symbol of America's commitment to the North Atlantic alliance, to the security of Western Europe, to the sovereignty of the Federal Republic. To abandon Berlin would be to make mockery of the commitments negotiated since the end of the war.

But Berlin was indefensible. The Soviet bloc might not actually be expected to take West Berlin by



force, but, a determined Soviet effort to isolate the western half of the city could only be met by evacuation, by hunkering down for a siege, or by efforts to force troops through to the city from West Germany. All of these actions carried with them the risk of war. There was a general fear that a military confrontation over Berlin would quickly escalate into general hostilities, in an era in which both sides were prepared to wage war with nuclear weapons. A crisis over Berlin, if it got out of control, could lead to Armageddon.

CIA analysts thus took very seriously any apparent attempts to undermine western treaty rights in Berlin. At the same time, it was believed that Moscow would make strenuous efforts to negotiate before carrying out Khrushchev's threats. Whatever the validity of this conclusion, it was, in a sense misleading. Since any negotiation along lines acceptable to the Soviets inevitably would involve compromising western treaty rights, no negotiated solution was really possible. The Berlin crisis thus took the form of a series of threatened ultimatums, which never quite came off, with western observers attempting to anticipate Soviet actions that were never taken.

But, although treaty issues often were at center stage, the dynamic factor in the Berlin situation was the refugee problem. So long as the sector border between East and West Berlin was open, West Berlin acted as an open conduit to the West. Moreover, its growing prosperity stood in sharp contrast to the drabness of life in the Soviet bloc. The result was that through Berlin, East Germany was depopulating itself at the rate of 200-300,000 people per year, more than 1.1 million since the founding of the communist state in 1949—and this from what was, after all, a small country with a population of fewer than 16 million.<sup>1</sup> In the summer of 1961, Khrushchev joked with the East German leader, Walter Ulbricht, that soon he would be the only person left in the country. Ulbricht was not amused.

Small wonder that the East German's relations with Khrushchev seem to have been dominated by increasingly frantic attempts to reach agreement

on some drastic measure to keep the population of East Germany from simply walking away down the Friedrichstraße. The importance of this has often been underestimated in western scholarship, which for years focused on Khrushchev and his policies. Thanks to the work of Hope Harrison we now know that the Wall was almost wholly an East German project, from beginning to end. Ulbricht was an unrepentant Stalinist and the East German regime the most hard-line communist in Eastern Europe. Their persistent efforts to reconstruct the East German economy along Stalinist lines caused widespread hardship and directly fed the outflux of refugees.

In the American intelligence community, the importance of what was termed the "refugee problem" as a destabilizing factor in the Berlin situation was recognized early on. The greatest concern was that East Berlin's inability to resolve the economic crisis they largely had created would undermine Khrushchev's political standing inside the Kremlin and force him into some kind of precipitate action. This concern grew as Khrushchev stepped up his pressure on the West: increased tensions worked directly to increase the flow of refugees, which in turn, fed the growing economic crisis in East Germany, thereby increasing pressure on Khrushchev to force through some kind of solution—and so on, in an escalating spiral of tension with increasingly dire consequences.

The possibility of some sort of Soviet action to restrict access to West Berlin—either as a repetition of the 1948 blockade, or as some other form of action—figured strongly in intelligence reporting throughout the last half of the 1950s. In November 1957, CIA's Office of Current Intelligence (OCI) warned that the Soviets might seal the sector borders between East and West Berlin as a means of applying pressure on the West.<sup>2</sup> On 28 May 1959, OCI warned that East Germany—not the Soviet Union—might restrict traffic at the border crossings, to reduce or eliminate uncontrolled access to West Berlin, force the West Berlin government to negotiate on issues of access, and reduce the labor shortage in East Germany.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Current Weekly Intelligence Summary: "Flight of Refugees from East Germany," 12 February 1959 (MORI: 45580) in Donald P. Steury (ed.), *On the Front Lines of the Cold War: Documents on the Intelligence War in Berlin, 1946-1961* (Washington, D.C. CIA History Staff, Center for the Study of Intelligence, 1999) p. 455-58.

<sup>2</sup>Memorandum for the DDI; Subject: "The Berlin Situation," 1 November 1957 (MORI: 44001 in *Ibid.*, pp. 536-37).

<sup>3</sup>Current Weekly Intelligence Summary: "East Germany May Move against East German Sector Border Crossings," 28 May 1959; *Ibid.*, pp. 493-94.

## DECIPHERING SOVIET INTENTIONS

Nonetheless, the Berlin crisis, when it came, was something of surprise. The mid-1950s had been a period of relative quiet in Berlin. Although it was taken for granted that Soviet long-term goals were to force the western allies out of the city, it was assumed that they were not willing to risk war and accepted a western presence for the time being.<sup>4</sup> It was known that the Soviets believed that long-term political and economic trends favored them. Moreover, as their nuclear capabilities improved, the Soviets would be more confident in their dealings with the West—and would be more willing to force their demands.<sup>5</sup>

Khrushchev's November 1958 pronouncement thus was seen as a sign that a period of Soviet resurgence was beginning. The intervening two years had seen considerable expansion of the Soviet long-range bomber force, deployment of large numbers of medium- and intermediate-range ballistic missiles in Eastern Europe and significant progress in their ICBM program. This did not mean that the Soviets would deliberately provoke a military confrontation, but that they were determined to force a discussion of the Berlin situation and that they would not back down. An NIE issued immediately after Khrushchev's November pronouncement forecast that the Soviets would seek a summit at a time and place of their own choosing, preferably under circumstances in which they had some hopes of splitting the western alliance.<sup>6</sup>

Another SNIE, issued two months later noted that the Soviets believed that their advances in nuclear weapons had considerably improved their negotiating position.<sup>7</sup> If the western powers refused to recognize the de facto position in Central Europe, another blockade of Berlin was possible. Analysts believed that, in contrast to 1948, the Soviets would not permit the resupply of the city, but they would allow supplies to be carried to the western garrisons. Western attempts to force open access to the city would be opposed, but the Soviets would otherwise avoid a military confrontation.<sup>8</sup>

NIEs issued over the next two years amplified, but did not back away from these conclusions.<sup>9</sup> Analysts nonetheless found Khrushchev's intentions and actions difficult to predict. Tensions remained high, but, given the uncompromising nature of his demands, Khrushchev was remarkably quiescent during the Berlin crisis as a whole. The caution he demonstrated often contrasted puzzlingly with his habitual bombast. In January 1959, Khrushchev sent clear signals that he would not go to war over Berlin, but also that he would not be part of an agreement that included the Bonn government—which then had as its Chancellor the Christian Democrat Konrad Adenauer. When the foreign ministers of the Soviet Union and the three Western Allies met in Geneva over May-June 1959, Khrushchev apparently sniffed the beginnings of a crack in the Western alliance—perhaps from a KGB report that Great Britain and France were considering reducing their troop commitments to West Berlin. Yet, when the United States vetoed the idea, Khrushchev responded only with an open letter to Eisenhower. Apparently eager to push for a solution at the beginning of the conference, he later was disposed to wait for a more opportune moment. “A year or a year and a half—this isn't a key issue for us,” he told the East German leader, Walter Ulbricht.<sup>10</sup> An SNIE issued during the conference concluded that Khrushchev probably did not seek a real solution there, but saw it as the first stage in a process by which the Western Allies would be eased gradually out of Berlin. “If the Soviets allow the Geneva meeting to end in stalemate, they will presumably do so on the calculation that a period of additional pressure on the Berlin problem will finally induce the Western Powers to make substantial concessions.” The Soviets still would shrink from a direct confrontation, but would be more likely, “to increase pressure on the Berlin issue gradually and only in such a degree as in their opinion would tend to induce the Western Powers to resume negotiations later . . .”<sup>11</sup> In the meantime,

<sup>4</sup>NIE 11-3-56 Probable Short-Term Communist Capabilities and Intentions Regarding Berlin; 28 February 1956, pp. 1-3. (www.FOIA.CIA.gov).

<sup>5</sup>NIE 11-4-56 Soviet Capabilities and Probable Course of Action Through 1961; 2 August 1956, p. 48. (www.FOIA.CIA.gov)

<sup>6</sup>SNIE 100-13-58 Soviet Objectives in the Berlin Crisis; 23 December 1958, Steury (ed.) op. cit. p. 431.

<sup>7</sup>SNIE 100-2-59 Probable Soviet Course of Action Regarding Berlin and Germany; 24 February 1959, p. 2 (www.FOIA.CIA.gov).

<sup>8</sup>Ibid. pp. 4-5.

<sup>9</sup>SNIE 100-2/1-59 The Berlin Crisis; 17 March 1959, passim (www.FOIA.CIA.gov).

<sup>10</sup>Aleksander Fursenko and Timothy Naftali, *Khrushchev's Cold War* (New York and London: WW Norton, 2006), pp. 224-25.

Khrushchev went off to the United States, to visit President Eisenhower.

The next opportune moment came a year later, at the Paris summit. Once again, Khrushchev failed to make use of the opportunity to push the Berlin issue. Although he later claimed that he had decided there was little point in dealing with the lame duck President Eisenhower,<sup>12</sup> he may also have decided after a preliminary meeting with De Gaulle that there was little hope of separating Great Britain and France from the US on the Berlin question.<sup>13</sup> At any rate, he showed up in Paris only to destroy the summit. Denouncing the U-2 flights over the Soviet Union (Francis Gary Powers had been shot down just two weeks previously) he demanded an apology and stormed out of the summit. An apology was not forthcoming, and the summit was at an end.

The winter of 1960-61 was one of anticipation, as well as discontent. In a review of the Berlin crisis prepared that Spring, CIA's Office of Current Intelligence observed that Khrushchev had alternated between offers to negotiate over Berlin and threats of unilateral action. Throughout, "Moscow" had, "aimed at liquidating Western rights to remain in Berlin without restrictions pending German unification." Since the West has no interest in negotiating away its rights, Moscow has used deadlines, either explicit or implicit to guarantee continuing Western interest in discussing the issue in order to avoid a crisis.

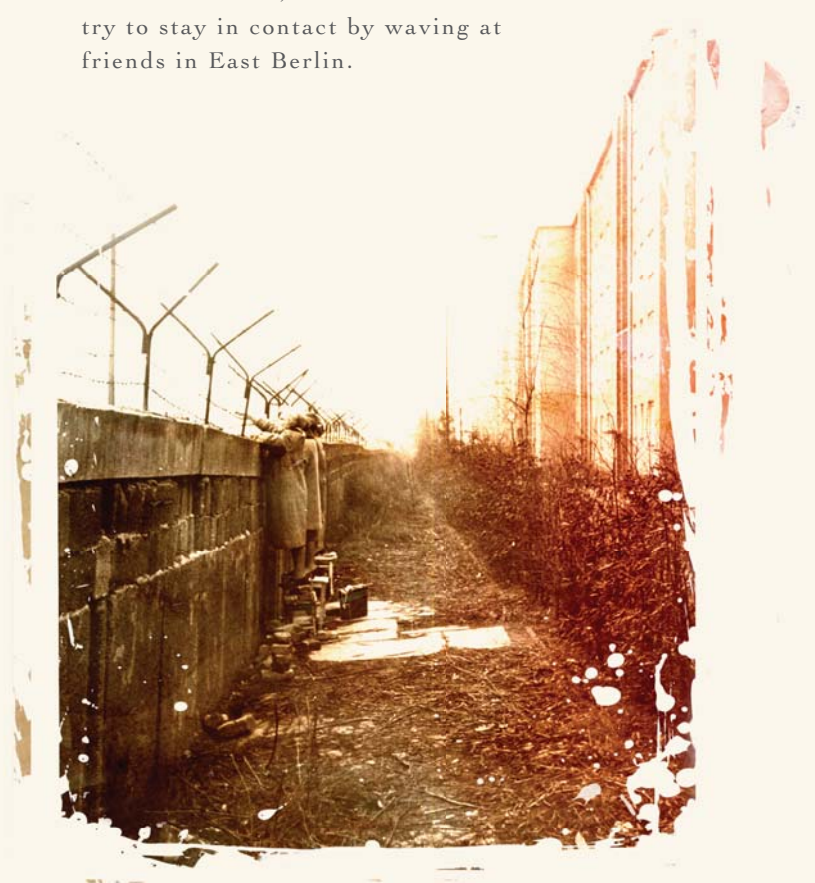
There was a clear sense, however, that some kind of decision was at hand: Moscow was still willing to negotiate, even to settle for some kind of interim agreement. However: If the West

refused to negotiate, Khrushchev would probably feel compelled to conclude a separate treaty. His long and continuing commitments to take this action probably act as a form of pressure either to demonstrate gains by negotiations or to carry out his repeated pledges to resolve the situation in Berlin by unilateral action. At any rate, Khrushchev has committed himself to a solution during 1961.<sup>14</sup>

TO READ THIS ARTICLE IN ITS ENTIRETY, PLEASE REFER TO THE DOCUMENTS FOLDER, ON THE DVD.

*Berlin, 30 November, 1961*

Before the start of the holiday season, on 30 November, West Berliners still try to stay in contact by waving at friends in East Berlin.



<sup>11</sup>SNIE 100-7-59 Soviet Tactics on Berlin; 11 June 1959 (www.FOIA.CIA.gov), pp. 1, 4.

<sup>12</sup>John Lewis Gaddis, *The Cold War* (London: Penguin, 2005), p. 73.

<sup>13</sup>Sherman Kent, "The Summit Conference of 1960: An Intelligence Officer's View," in Donald P. Steury (ed.), *Sherman Kent and the Board of National Estimates* (Washington, D.C.: Center for the Study of Intelligence, 1994), pp. 162-63.

<sup>14</sup>Current Intelligence Weekly Summary: "Soviet Policy on Berlin and Germany," 11 May 1961 Doc. Nr. 28202) in Steury (ed.) *On the Front Lines of the Cold War*, pp. 545-46.



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# THE U.S. MILITARY RESPONSE

## TO THE 1960 - 1962 BERLIN CRISIS

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DR. DONALD A. CARTER

THE U. S. ARMY CENTER OF MILITARY HISTORY

The election of a new U.S. president, John F. Kennedy, in November 1960 renewed the East-West tensions surrounding the city of Berlin that had simmered since the Allied occupation of Germany in 1945. Kennedy's first meeting with Soviet Premier Nikita S. Khrushchev in Vienna in June 1961 did nothing to diffuse the sense of confrontation. During their personal discussions, Khrushchev handed an aide-memoire to Kennedy that seemed to dare the president to oppose Soviet intentions. The missive accused the Federal Republic of Germany of cultivating "saber-rattling militarism" and of advocating revisions to the borders that had been established after World War II. Only a permanent peace treaty that recognized the sovereignty of both East and West Germany, as they had evolved, would guarantee that they would not again threaten the European peace. The conclusion of a German peace treaty, the document went on, would also solve the problem of normalizing the situation in West Berlin by making the city a demilitarized free zone registered with the United Nations. Naturally, the memorandum concluded, any treaty, whether the United States signed it or not, would terminate Western occupation rights.<sup>1</sup>

### KHRUSHCHEV'S ULTIMATUM

On 4 June 1961, Kennedy met privately with Soviet Premier Nikita Khrushchev to make one last effort to impress upon the Soviet leader the importance

the United States placed on its commitment to the people of West Berlin. Khrushchev replied that he appreciated the frankness of Kennedy's remarks, but if the U.S. insisted on maintaining its presence in Berlin after a treaty was signed, the Soviet Union would have no choice but to assist the German Democratic Republic in defending its borders. His decision to sign the treaty, he added, was irrevocable. The Soviet Union would sign it in December if the United States refused an interim agreement. As he departed, Kennedy closed the conversation saying it "would be a cold winter."<sup>2</sup>

Immediately after the conclusion of the Vienna summit, in an unprecedented fireside chat on Soviet television, Khrushchev repeated his demands, telling his people that the Soviets would sign a peace treaty whether the West was ready to do so or not. He added that the Soviet Union would oppose any and all violations of East Germany's sovereignty. The chairman of East Germany's council of state, Walter Ulbricht, also publicly warned the West to negotiate its use of access routes into Berlin with his country or risk "interruptions." He made it clear that the Communists wanted the Western Allies out of Berlin so that the city would no longer be a lure to refugees from the East.<sup>3</sup>

President Kennedy and his military advisers weighed their options in light of Khrushchev's increasing belligerence. Understanding that the

<sup>1</sup>Aide-Memoire, Soviet Union to the United States, Handed by Premier Khrushchev to President Kennedy at Vienna, 4 Jun 1961, in Documents on Germany, 1944-1961, Senate Committee on Foreign Relations, Dec 1961, pp. 642-46.

<sup>2</sup>Memorandum of Conversation, 4 Jun 1961, in Foreign Relations of the United States, 1961-1963 (cited hereafter as FRUS) (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1993), 14:96-98.

<sup>3</sup>"Khrushchev Demands 1961 Germany Pact," and "Ulbricht Gives Warning on Berlin Access Route," Stars and Stripes, European Edition, 16 Jun 1961.

Communists' initial actions would include cutting off Western access to Berlin, the Joint Chiefs of Staff began refining contingency plans for various military probes of the main roadway into West Berlin, an autobahn that ran 105 miles to the city from the town of Helmstedt on the West German border. Although they were prepared to mount an airlift similar to the one that had broken a Soviet blockade in 1949, they privately decried the lack of options available to them for dealing with the impending crisis. They informed the president and Secretary of Defense Robert S. McNamara that the Allies' lack of military strength in Europe allowed only limited ground probes, which, if turned back by superior Communist forces, would result in a choice between accepting humiliation or initiating nuclear war. To keep that from happening, they urged the president to build up U.S. military power in Europe and to encourage the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) allies to do the same.<sup>4</sup>

From Europe, the Supreme Allied Commander Europe [SACEUR], General Lauris Norstad, also lobbied for increasing the U.S. military presence in the theater. He praised the Seventh Army in Europe as the best peacetime force the United States had ever fielded and commended the dedication and commitment of NATO units, but he stressed the overwhelming number of Soviet tanks, aircraft, and men arrayed against those forces. He urged the president to call up additional reserve units and to deploy additional battle groups to Europe under the guise of training exercises. He also wanted the president and the Joint Chiefs to position additional U.S. naval and air forces where they could contribute to theater readiness, and he suggested that the Seventh Army should conduct more exercises that would require its divisions to move into their alert positions. Those steps, combined with an increase in U.S. military strength in Europe, would give the United States greater freedom of action, the general said, and provide alternatives short of nuclear war.<sup>5</sup>

After several weeks of discussions with his cabinet, the National Security Council, the Joint Chiefs of Staff, and a variety of other advisers, the president made his decision. At 2200 on 25 July, he addressed the nation on the situation in Berlin. After summarizing the course of events since his meeting with Khrushchev, he stated that the United States would never allow the Soviet Union to drive it out of Berlin, either gradually or by force. He then announced a series of steps that he was taking to increase military readiness. First, he would ask Congress for an immediate additional appropriation of \$5.2 billion for the armed forces, about half of which would go to the procurement of conventional ammunition, weapons, and equipment. A request would then follow, Kennedy said, to augment the total authorized strength of the Army from 875,000 to 1 million men, and increase the Navy and Air Force active-duty strength by 29,000 and 63,000, respectively. He also called for a doubling and tripling of draft calls in the coming months; the activation of some reservists and certain ready-reserve units; and the extension of tours of duty for soldiers, sailors, and airmen scheduled to leave the service in the near future. Finally, the president postponed programs to retire or mothball older ships and aircraft and delayed the deactivation of a number of B-47 bomber and aerial refueling wings. Shortly thereafter, Secretary of Defense McNamara announced that 50 percent of the Strategic Air Command's bomber wings would be placed on 15-minute ground alert and that three of the Army's divisions in the United States would be relieved of training duties and prepared for emergency deployment to Europe.<sup>6</sup>

## THE WALL

Meanwhile, the situation continued to deteriorate. Soviet and East German soldiers increased their harassment of U.S. vehicles and troop trains trying to enter the city, and Soviet authorities periodically renewed attempts to conduct unauthorized

<sup>4</sup>Memo, Joint Chiefs of Staff (JCS) for the President, 14 Jun 1961, sub: Supply Levels in Berlin, and Note by the Secretaries to the Joint Chiefs of Staff, Improved Position Anticipated from U.S. and Allied Build-up, 14 Jul 1961, both in Joint Chiefs of Staff, Central Decimal File, 1961, Record Group (RG) 218, National Archives, College Park, Md. (NACP).

<sup>5</sup>Telg, Supreme Allied Commander, Europe (Norstad), to JCS, 27 Jun 1961, in FRUS, 1961-1963, 14:136-38; Msg, U.S. Commander in Chief, Europe (USCINCEUR), to JCS, 2 Jun 1961, Msg no. ECJCO-9-88008, Joint Chiefs of Staff, Central Decimal File, 1961, RG 218, NACP; "Norstad Urges Quiet Buildup," Stars and Stripes, European Edition, 10 Jul 1961.

<sup>6</sup>Memo of Meeting on Berlin, 18 Jul 1961; Memo of Minutes of the National Security Council Meeting, 19 Jul 1961; and National Security Action Memorandum 62, 24 Jul 1961; all in FRUS, 1961-1963, 14:215-16, 219-22, and 225-26, respectively; Radio and Television Report to the American People on the Berlin Crisis, in Public Papers of the Presidents of the United States, John F. Kennedy, 1961 (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1962), pp. 533-40; "Kennedy Asks Power to Extend Terms of Servicemen Due Out in Next Year," Stars and Stripes, European Edition, 27 Jul 1961.

inspections of Allied vehicles as they crossed checkpoints into and out of Berlin. The Soviets also tried to institute new restrictions on flights approaching the city while allowing their fighters to buzz Allied aircraft flying through approved access corridors. In May 1960, Soviet fighter aircraft forced down an American C-47 transport that had strayed off-course on a flight from Copenhagen to Hamburg. Although the plane and its crew were released a few days later, the incident heightened the tension for pilots flying the Berlin routes. Border officials slowed barge traffic, as well, by implementing new inspections and controls.<sup>7</sup>

In response, the two battle groups of the U.S. Army's 6th Infantry that made up the bulk of the U.S. garrison in West Berlin increased their tempo of training and placed additional emphasis on riot-control drills and combat operations in the city. West Berlin's expansive Grunewald Park, the only open space in the sector where units could train, hosted a series of exercises where the troops tested their readiness to attack and defend. Companies donned civilian clothing and acted as rioters to test the ability of their compatriots to maintain order in the face of Communist-inspired civil disturbances. In some cases, U.S. commanders went out of their way to ensure that the Soviets knew exactly what they were doing. It was an essential element in the American effort to convince the Soviets that the United States would fight for West Berlin and that, while U.S. forces might not be able to hold the city, they would inflict unacceptable losses on the attacker. In response, the East Germans built an observation tower to get a better view of the training. One American lieutenant colonel commented that he did not mind the close observation. As a matter of fact, he said, "We want them to know that we're here to stay."<sup>8</sup>

For the Communists, however, time was apparently running out. Khrushchev's repeated threats to conclude a separate peace treaty with East Germany

spurred an increase in the already considerable number of refugees heading west. Since 1945, well over three million people fled from the East. German authorities recorded that more than half of those had come through West Berlin, making the city unmistakably the "escape hatch" from the Soviet zone. In 1960, manpower shortages reached a point where the German Democratic Republic experienced difficulties in completing winter planting and harvesting and admitted to a shortage of five hundred thousand workers of all types in East Berlin alone. By the end of the year, for example, only 380 dentists remained in the Soviet sector, as compared to 700 the year before. Complicating matters, some 20,000 of the 150,000 refugees who entered West Berlin were of military age, a serious loss in East German military manpower. The trend accelerated in 1961. During February, the exodus averaged 2,650 persons per week. By the end of May, this figure had risen to 3,200. In July, more than 30,000 refugees crossed over to the west, the largest monthly total since 1953. In an appeal broadcast to its own citizens, the East German government said that the mass migration was disrupting the economy, damaging the nation's standing abroad, and threatening its future.<sup>9</sup>

Communist efforts to stem the tide grew desperate. The East Germans employed more than 5,000 police to guard the borders around West Berlin. When that proved to be insufficient, they began drafting members of the "Free German Youth," a Communist political organization, to assist transportation police in checking buses and trains at crossing points. Party officials took steps to force East Berliners working in West Berlin to give up their jobs. Vigilante groups sanctioned by the Communist government turned in persons suspected of planning to flee the East or of helping others to do so. Increased propaganda meanwhile labeled refugees as traitors and accused the West of plotting to sabotage the East German economy through blackmail and a trade in slaves.<sup>10</sup>

<sup>7</sup>Robert P. Grathwol and Donita M. Moorhus. *American Forces in Berlin: Cold War Outpost* (Washington, D.C.: Department of Defense, 1994), p. 80; "Soviets Delay U.S. Train on Berlin Route," *Stars and Stripes*, European Edition, 27 Mar 1960; "Reds Say C47 Down in East Zone," *Stars and Stripes*, European Edition, 21 May 1960; "Russian Downed C47 Flies Out of East Zone," *Stars and Stripes*, European Edition, 26 May 1960; HQ, U.S. Army, Berlin, Annual Historical Report, 1961, pp. 32-35, Historians files, CMH.

<sup>8</sup>George Fielding Eliot, "Will Berlin Crisis Explode in 61?" *Army Times*, 21 Feb 1959; Ernie Weatherall, "Uniform of the Day: Rabble Rousing Clothes," *Stars and Stripes*, European Edition, 17 Sep 1960; "Berlin Units Wind Up Exercise Ever Ready," *Stars and Stripes*, European Edition, 15 Apr 1961; "Tough Training in West Berlin," *Stars and Stripes*, European Edition, 20 Apr 1961.

<sup>9</sup>The U.S. Army in Berlin, 1945-1961, HQ, U.S. Army, Europe (USAREUR), 1962, p. 31; HQ, U.S. Army, Berlin, Annual Historical Report, 1961, p. 40; "East Zone Pleads for Stop in Refugee Flow," *Stars and Stripes*, European Edition, 30 Jul 1961.

<sup>10</sup>*Ibid.*; U.S. Department of State, Berlin 1961, European and British Commonwealth Series no. 64, Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, n.d., p. 26; "Vigilantes Cut Refugee Flow, Russ Says Berlin Talk a Must," *Stars and Stripes*, European Edition, 3 Aug 1961; "Reds Increase Restrictions to Slow Refugee Flow," *Stars and Stripes*, European Edition, 5 Aug 1961; "New Restrictions Spur Exodus from East Zone to Another High," *Stars and Stripes*, European Edition, 10 Aug 1961.



On 12 August 1961, the East German regime announced that all but 13 of the 120 border-crossing points between East and West Berlin would be closed to both vehicular and pedestrian traffic. Then, in the predawn hours of 13 August, East German police, armored cars, and tanks were deployed along the entire border of the Soviet sector of the city. Workers set up barbed-wire barricades and began construction of permanent cement-block walls. In some places, sections of the cobblestone streets were removed. Although West Berliners and Allied personnel were still allowed in and out of East Berlin through a few well-guarded checkpoints, decrees from the East German government forbade its citizens from entering West Berlin. As a precaution against an internal uprising in East Berlin, it appeared that the Soviet 10th Guards Tank Division and 19th Motorized Rifle Division deployed to the north and south of the city, and Soviet tanks moved into East Berlin to take positions at various locations in the city. To western reporters and military personnel who could still move about East Berlin, the Soviets clearly wanted no uprisings of the sort that had occurred in Hungary in 1956 in response to the imposition of Soviet power.<sup>11</sup>

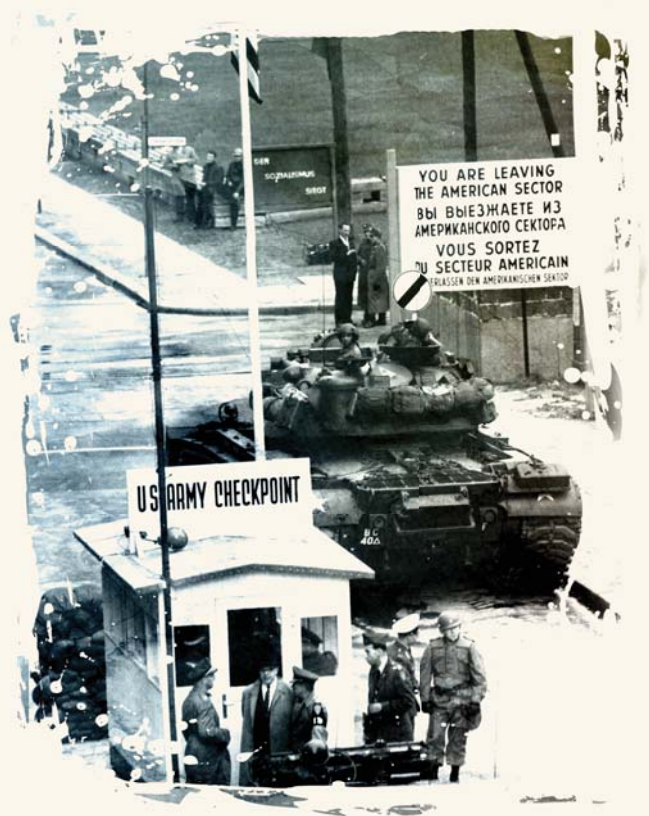
Over the course of the next several days, the East Germans worked to complete the isolation of West Berlin. They announced that train traffic would be reorganized so that there would no longer be direct service between the two parts of the city. In the future, travelers would have to change trains and submit to identity checks before entering the eastern sector. Trains from West Germany into West Berlin would pass normally, but they would no longer be allowed to continue into the Communist sector. Local commuter trains and buses from outside the city limits as well as those originating in East Berlin were also denied access

to West Berlin. Even the pleasure boats that transported tourists from lakes in East Berlin to the Havel River in the western sectors were terminated. Within a week, the East Germans designated a crossing point at Friedrichstrasse in the American sector as the only point of entry into East Berlin for the Allies and other foreign nationals. As East German police and workmen sealed off doors and windows in buildings that made up portions of the barricade and replaced barbed wire with concrete, the grim reality of a divided city began to sink in to citizens on both sides of the wall.<sup>12</sup>

TO READ THIS ARTICLE IN ITS ENTIRETY, PLEASE REFER TO THE DOCUMENTS FOLDER, ON THE DVD.

### *Berlin, October 1961*

American tanks were brought up to Friedrich Strasse on October 25 after two U.S. army buses were refused entry into East Berlin for a sightseeing tour.



<sup>11</sup>The U.S. Army in Berlin, 1945–1961, p. 32; U.S. Department of State, Berlin 1961, p. 26; “Reds Block East Germans from Entering West Berlin,” Stars and Stripes, European Edition, 14 Aug 1961; George Boulwood, “East German Guns Point East as Barbed Wire Barricades Rise,” Stars and Stripes, European Edition, 14 Aug 1961; HQ, U.S. Army, Berlin, Annual Historical Report, 1961, pp. 25–26.

<sup>12</sup>“East Berlin Keeps Peace with Tear Gas, Hoses,” Stars and Stripes, European Edition, 15 Aug 1961; “Angry Crowds Mass, Jeer at Berlin Border,” Stars and Stripes, European Edition, 14 Aug 1961.

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# NATO AND THE BERLIN CRISIS OF 1961: FACING THE SOVIETS WHILE MAINTAINING UNITY

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DR. GREGORY W. PEDLOW

SUPREME HEADQUARTERS ALLIED POWERS EUROPE

When East German border guards began stringing barbed wire on 13 August 1961 – the first step in constructing what soon became known as the Berlin Wall – NATO [North Atlantic Treaty Organization] and the West had already been confronted by an on-again, off-again crisis over Berlin since late 1958. On 27 November 1958, Soviet Premier Nikita Khrushchev had stated he would end the four-power occupation of Berlin and sign, within six months, a separate peace treaty with the German Democratic Republic, threatening the continued presence in West Berlin of British, French and U.S. forces. Soon afterward, at the NATO Ministerial Meeting of 16 December 1958, the Alliance's foreign ministers gave full support to the position of the three Western Allies in Berlin by declaring that "the denunciation of the inter-allied agreements on Berlin can in no way deprive the other parties of their rights or relieve the Soviet Union of its obligations."<sup>1</sup> But in terms of developing responses to possible Soviet moves against the Allies' position in Berlin, NATO was not actively involved prior to the summer of 1961. Instead, the three Western Allies preferred to deal with this crisis themselves, and established tripartite mechanisms to do so. The Washington Ambassadorial Group (WAG) – consisting of the British and French ambassadors

to the United States and Deputy Under Secretary of State Robert Murphy – became the senior forum for tripartite consultation in January 1959, and in April the three powers established the LIVE OAK contingency planning staff in Paris to prepare military responses to possible Soviet restrictions on Allied access to Berlin. General Lauris Norstad was the first "Commander LIVE OAK" as a third "hat" in additions to those he wore as NATO's Supreme Allied Commander Europe (SACEUR) and the US Commander-in-Chief Europe (USCINCEUR).<sup>2</sup>

In the autumn of 1959, tensions over Berlin eased as Khrushchev quietly dropped his ultimatum against the Western Allies. General Norstad therefore reduced the LIVE OAK planning staff in size but chose not to eliminate entirely this source of expertise for Berlin planning. LIVE OAK continued to produce various contingency plans to deal with Soviet threats to Western access to Berlin. For ground access, LIVE OAK had developed plans that included a small (company-sized) tripartite probe to test whether or not the Soviets actually were stopping all Allied access to Berlin, and a larger tripartite battalion effort to demonstrate the Allies' determination to reopen the access routes. To deal with threats to Allied use of the three air

<sup>1</sup>"Declaration on Berlin", attachment to North Atlantic Council [NAC] Ministerial Meeting of 16-18 December 1958, in NATO Information Service, Texts of Final Communiqués, 1949-1974, Issued by Ministerial Sessions of the North Atlantic Council, the Defence Planning Committee, and the Nuclear Planning Group (Brussels, n.d. [1975]), 123-124.

<sup>2</sup>For more information on LIVE OAK see Gregory W. Pedlow, "Allied Crisis Management for Berlin: The LIVE OAK Organization, 1959-1963," in William W. Epley (ed.), *International Cold War Military Records and History: Proceedings of the International Conference on Cold War Military Records and History Held in Washington, D.C., 21-26 March 1994* (Washington: Office of the Secretary of Defense, 1996), 87-116; Gregory W. Pedlow, "Three Hats for Berlin: Lauris Norstad and the Second Berlin Crisis, 1958-1962," in John P. S. Gearson and Kori Schake (eds.), *The Berlin Wall Crisis: Perspective on Cold War Alliances* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2002), 175-198. The official history of LIVE OAK that the author prepared at the time the organization closed in 1991 has been declassified and will be published in: Gregory W. Pedlow, *LIVE OAK TOP SECRET! Allied Cold War Planning for a Soviet Blockade of West Berlin, 1959-1989: The Official History* (forthcoming).

corridors to West Berlin, LIVE OAK also developed a series of air contingency plans. These plans did not, however, include plans for another airlift like the one of 1948-1949. Not wishing to rush immediately into another airlift without first testing Soviet intentions on the ground, the United States had ordered the removal of all airlift planning from LIVE OAK in January 1960.<sup>3</sup>

#### SOVIETS TEST METTLE OF NEW U.S. PRESIDENT

NATO's involvement in Berlin contingency planning did not come until the crisis reawakened in 1961, after Khrushchev decided to test the new U.S. administration of President John F. Kennedy by renewing his earlier threats against the Western presence in Berlin. Initial hints of such an action had already come in the early months of 1961, and Khrushchev's intentions became clear at a summit meeting with Kennedy in Vienna on 3-4 June 1961, when he again threatened to sign a separate peace with East Germany and said that Allied forces would have to depart from Berlin within six months after the signing.<sup>4</sup>

The renewed crisis over Berlin came at a time when NATO was in the midst of a substantial debate about the future direction of its military strategy, which was still officially one of heavy reliance on nuclear weapons to defend the Alliance's territory. After the new U.S. administration began calling for a considerable strengthening of NATO's conventional forces in order to postpone the start of nuclear conflict in the event of war, the European NATO members began to fear that the United States was moving away from the strategy set forth in MC 14/2, a strategy that is commonly called "massive retaliation" even though the actual strategy was not quite so inflexible as to launch all

the missiles and strategic bombers as soon as the first Soviet soldier crossed a NATO border.<sup>5</sup>

On 5 June 1961, one day after the Kennedy-Khrushchev summit in Vienna, U.S. Secretary of State Dean Rusk appeared before the North Atlantic Council to inform the nations about the Vienna meeting. He expressed the belief that the Soviets would force the Berlin issue before the end of the year.<sup>6</sup> Two days later the U.S. Permanent Representative to NATO,<sup>7</sup> Ambassador Thomas K. Finletter, informed his colleagues about the state of tripartite military contingency planning, the first such report to the Council since December 1959. He noted that in order to meet this "new threat" from the Soviet Union, additional multinational planning had become necessary, including work on economic countermeasures by NATO, and a tripartite plan for further non-military countermeasures.<sup>8</sup>

#### A DIVIDED, INDECISIVE, AND IRRESOLUTE NATO

What Ambassador Finletter did not say to the Council, however, was that the three Western Allies still held widely divergent views on their own military contingency plans. Thus even before President Kennedy met with Premier Khrushchev in Vienna, members of the Kennedy administration were already expressing dissatisfaction with the existing contingency plans for Berlin. On 5 May 1961 Secretary of Defense Robert S. McNamara had written to the President calling the existing military contingency plans for an access crisis over Berlin "deficient" and complaining that they could be stopped even by the East Germans acting alone. He therefore called it "mandatory, that in any military operation larger than a probe, we have at least the level of forces required to defeat any solely

<sup>3</sup>The Quadripartite Berlin Airlift (QBAL) plan by the three Western Allies and the Federal Republic of Germany continued to be updated, but this was now the responsibility of Headquarters, US European Command, not LIVE OAK. LO-TS-61-53, Memorandum for Record, Detailed LIVE OAK Activity Report, 24 March 1961, LIVE OAK Archives, Bundesarchiv-Militärarchiv.

<sup>4</sup>Memorandum of Conversation, Vienna, June 4, 1961, 3:15 p.m., Vienna Meeting Between the President and Chairman Khrushchev, in Foreign Relations of the United States (hereafter cited as FRUS) 1961-1963, vol. 14, Berlin Crisis 1961-1962, 96-98.

<sup>5</sup>The full texts of MC 14/2, "Overall Strategic Concept of the Defense of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization Area," 23 May 1957, and its accompanying military document known as MC 48/2, "Measures to Implement the Strategic Concept," 23 January 1957, can be found in Gregory W. Pedlow, ed., NATO Strategy Documents, 1949-1969 (Brussels: North Atlantic Treaty Organisation, 1997), 277-332.

<sup>6</sup>Joint Chiefs of Staff [hereafter cited as JCS], Joint Secretariat, Historical Division, Germany and the Berlin Question (Washington, D.C., 1961), 2:172. This declassified (with deletions) official history written during the Berlin Crisis can be found in the Berlin Project Files of the National Security Archive (hereafter cited as NSA BPF), a private organization in Washington, D.C., that collects declassified government documents.

<sup>7</sup>The North Atlantic Council normally meets in Permanent Session at ambassadorial level, and the member nations' ambassadors to NATO are also known as Permanent Representatives. The two terms will therefore be used interchangeably in this essay. The Council also meets occasionally in Ministerial Session, with nations represented by Foreign or Defense Ministers, depending on the topic to be discussed.

<sup>8</sup>JCS, Germany and the Berlin Question, 2:173.



Satellite force, without employing our nuclear response.”<sup>9</sup> In stark contrast to the growing belief in the Kennedy Administration that plans for much larger operations to restore access were needed, the United Kingdom Chiefs of Staff still believed that large-scale operations were “militarily unsound and, moreover, could not succeed in their object unless it was made clear that they were backed by the threat of nuclear striking power and that the West was in all respects prepared to go to war.”<sup>10</sup> The French also had their doubts about the quality of existing military plans for Berlin. Ministère des Armées Pierre Messmer told British Prime Minister Harold Macmillan in July 1961 that “LIVE OAK planning certainly did not seem very realistic.”<sup>11</sup>

General Norstad shared British concerns about the effectiveness of large-scale operations to restore access to Berlin. In a letter he wrote to McNamara as USCINCEUR on 29 May 1961, he stated that he was planning to order the development of a corps-level plan on a unilateral basis, but his letter gave only one possible justification for such a force – rescuing a probe – while pointing out many grave disadvantages: “A large probe, that is, one of several divisions, could be stopped almost as easily as a small one, perhaps even by the East Germans without Soviet assistance, and the greater the force used, the greater the embarrassment which would result from failure . . . We must also, in considering the size of the effort to be used, remember that nothing would impress the Soviets less than wasting in the corridor the forces that are known to be essential to our over-all defense.”<sup>12</sup>

#### DEFENDING BERLIN AIR CORRIDORS EXPOSES NATO VULNERABILITIES

This was the great dilemma of the larger military contingency plans for Berlin: they endangered the overall defense of the NATO area by placing substantial forces in a position that was completely untenable from a military point of view. For the Kennedy Administration, the only way out of this dilemma – which would otherwise force the early use of nuclear weapons in a Berlin access crisis – was to consider a major build-up

not only of the U.S. forces deployed in Europe but also those of the NATO allies. At the request of Secretary McNamara, the U.S. Joint Chiefs of Staff developed a “Requirement Plan for the Allies” listing measures that the NATO allies could take to increase their forces’ readiness. President Kennedy then issued a direct appeal to the NATO allies on 20 July 1961 to undertake such an immediate military build-up to meet the Soviet challenge over Berlin. This appeal took the form of personal letters to President de Gaulle, Prime Minister Macmillan and Chancellor Adenauer, plus directives to U.S. ambassadors in the other capitals to inform the foreign ministers of the proposed U.S. military build-up and the United States’ desire that the other NATO members make a comparable effort.<sup>15</sup>

As a follow-up, Secretary of State Rusk addressed a private meeting of the North Atlantic Council on 8 August 1961. He urged the Alliance to support the preparation of economic countermeasures and NATO coordination of “propaganda and political action in support of our position in Berlin.” He supported the need for a NATO military build-up, noting that “If there is any way, short of the actual use of force, by which the Soviets can be made to realize Western determination, it is by making our strength visibly larger.” He also stated that the build-up may “influence Soviet political decisions.” Secretary Rusk informed the Council that existing military contingency plans were being reviewed, “the military contingency planning group known as Live Oak is being brought into the SHAPE [Supreme Headquarters Allied Powers Europe] area, and we can expect close coordination of that planning with NATO as a whole.” He called for the West to have a “wide choice of courses of action after the first Soviet use of force,” even though some of these plans might never be executed and recognizing the fact that “planning implies no commitment to execute.” He also called for the NATO allies to bring their forces up to previously agreed forces levels and to make their first-echelon forces combat ready. In the economic field they should be prepared to impose a total embargo on the Communist bloc in the event Western access is blocked. Reaction in the Council to Rusk’s speech

<sup>9</sup>McNamara to Kennedy, 5 May 1961, FRUS 1961-1963, 14:61-63.

<sup>10</sup>Chiefs of Staff Committee, Confidential Annex to COS(61)38th Meeting Held on Tuesday, 20th June 1961, DEFE 4/136, UK National Archives.

<sup>11</sup>Cyril Buffet, “De Gaulle, the Bomb and Berlin: How to Use a Political Weapon,” in Gearson and Schake (eds.), *Berlin Wall Crisis*, 86.

<sup>12</sup>Norstad to McNamara, 29 May 1961, NSA BPF.

<sup>15</sup>JCS, Germany and the Berlin Question, 2:224. See also FRUS 1961-1963, 14:223-224.

was generally supportive, and the ambassadors agreed to meet again to consider their governments' preliminary reactions.<sup>14</sup>

Secretary Rusk's statement that LIVE OAK "was being brought into the SHAPE area" referred simply to the physical move of the staff from the USEUCOM compound to the SHAPE compound, a move for which General Norstad had requested authorization from the Tripartite Chiefs of Staff on 4 August 1961 in order to provide the British and French staffs at LIVE OAK access to their national secure communications facilities at SHAPE, to enable him to supervise the staff's work more closely, and to facilitate the transfer of control of operations to NATO if that proved necessary. However, there was some initial confusion about this statement at NATO Headquarters, with the head of defense planning in NATO's International Staff informing the Deputy Secretary-General that "the decision to transfer direction of LIVE OAK's operations to SHAPE confirms the intention of the United States, Great Britain, and France to put this matter under NATO, in particular into the hands of the military authorities of the Alliance."<sup>15</sup> In reality, LIVE OAK remained an independent organization until the end of its existence in 1990, but the move to SHAPE did symbolize the desire to create a closer relationship between quadripartite and NATO planning as well as to ensure a rapid transfer of control once operations to restore access to Berlin moved past the smaller LIVE OAK plans. In addition to the move to SHAPE, LIVE OAK underwent another key change on 9 August 1961, when a German liaison officer joined the staff. The

<sup>14</sup>Although the actual discussions of the private meeting of the NAC on 8 August 1961 have not yet been declassified, Rusk described to President Kennedy what he intended to say in a telegram on the previous day (FRUS, 1961-1963, 14:309-311), and the full text of his presentation on the military build-up is found in the United States Delegation, Memorandum on Statement to the North Atlantic Council in Private Session on Military Build-Up, Soviet Motives and Intentions, 8 August 1961, Military Planning for Berlin Emergency (1961-1968) [hereafter cited as MPBE], DEF 4-4-04 (1961-1), Sec. 1, Doc. 2, NATO Archives. NATO's recently declassified collection of documents related to the Second Berlin Crisis can be found on the Archives portion of the NATO website ([www.nato.int/archives/berlin](http://www.nato.int/archives/berlin)) with the title "Military Planning for Berlin Emergency (1961-1968)."

<sup>15</sup>JS.100/61, J. Sagne, Note Pour M. le Secrétaire General Delegué, Propositions américaines dans le domaine militaire à l'occasion de la crise de Berlin, 10 August 1961, MPBE, DEF 4-4-04 (1961-1), Sec. 3, Doc. 1. Mr. Sagne was Head of the Finance and Defence Planning Section of the Economics and Finance Division, which later became the Defence Plans and Policy Division.

<sup>16</sup>Norstad to Stikker, Actions to be Taken by NATO Countries for a Possible Berlin Crisis, 11 August 1961, MPBE, DEF 4-4-04 (1961-1), Sec. 3, Doc. 2, NATO Archives.

Washington Ambassadorial Group also became quadripartite through the addition of the German ambassador to the U.S. in late July. Although German military personnel and diplomats were now involved in the LIVE OAK planning and approval process, the Bundeswehr could not take part in any Allied military actions on the access routes or in the air corridors; these had to remain tripartite.

As a follow-on to Secretary Rusk's call for stronger conventional forces in the Alliance, SACEUR Norstad wrote to Secretary-General Dirk Stikker on 11 August outlining a series of "actions which could be taken by NATO countries to prepare for a possible Berlin crisis." He provided detailed tables of the current land, sea, and air forces for each NATO member, including their authorized versus actual periods of compulsory military service, and he made recommendations for specific measures to "improve the posture of the Alliance in the next few months."<sup>16</sup>

TO READ THIS ARTICLE IN ITS ENTIRETY, PLEASE REFER TO THE DOCUMENTS FOLDER, ON THE DVD.

### *Berlin, 1961*

Barbed wire is coiled underneath the sign announcing the end of the French sector of West Berlin. Behind the East German soldiers guarding the border, East Berlin civilians stand silently watching.



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# CRISIS OVER BERLIN

## A STUDY PRODUCED

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BY THE HISTORICAL OFFICE,  
UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF STATE<sup>1</sup>

Crisis over Berlin was produced by the Historical Office of the Department of State at the request of Martin J. Hillenbrand, a senior Foreign Service Officer and scholar of Germany. Hillenbrand requested the document in his capacity as Deputy Head of the Berlin Task Force (BTF), an interagency body charged with coordinating responses to the Berlin crisis. Hillenbrand's formal request of March 4, 1963 notes that the BTF found military histories of the crisis operationally helpful. Hillenbrand also hoped a State Department project focusing on the diplomatic aspects of the crisis would be, "useful in the future when the history of this particular foreign policy problem comes to be written."<sup>2</sup> The Historical Office accepted the tasking on March 22, 1963. Dr. Arthur Kogan was relieved of his other duties to fulfill Hillenbrand's request. In conversation with Kogan, Hillenbrand emphasized the historical import of the project, requesting a "thorough" account of "some length."<sup>3</sup> Kogan received extensive access to highly classified Department of State documents for the purpose of creating the most comprehensive possible account. To address Hillenbrand's request for a comprehensive account, Kogan designed an eight-part study covering the period November 1958-December 1962. Kogan transmitted the draft of Part I to Hillenbrand on August 21, 1964. Hillenbrand extensively involved himself in the project, critiquing Part I in detail. Kogan noted, "Your comments and suggestions regarding Part I were most helpful and they have been fully taken into account in the drafting of the final version."<sup>4</sup> While waiting for Hillenbrand's

comments on Part I, Kogan finished drafts of Parts II, III, and IV. Hillenbrand, newly appointed Minister to Bonn, brought Kogan to Berlin in June 1965 so he could take an aerial tour of the city and speak to key actors in the Berlin crisis. Soon after the completion of this trip, Kogan was appointed Chief of the Research Guidance and Review Branch of the Historical Office. Kogan's new duties prevented him from working extensively on the Berlin study; he noted regretfully on January 24, 1967 that Hillenbrand's revisions to Parts II, III, IV, and V had not been included and that his work on the draft of Part VI was incomplete. Kogan sent Part VI to Hillenbrand on June 14, 1967. Writing that he would not be able to undertake the final two sections of the study, he expressed his belief that the present study, extending to September 1961, was sufficiently detailed to accomplish Hillenbrand's goals. The final copy of Part II was sent to Hillenbrand on August 11, 1969. The transmission letter for Part II stated that Parts III, IV, V, and VI, "will be given the final treatment before many months."<sup>5</sup> In March and April of 1970, Hillenbrand, then serving as Assistant Secretary of State for European and Eurasian Affairs (EUR), sent final versions of the Parts I through VI to senior officials in EUR, the Executive Secretariat to the Secretary of State, the United States Embassy in Bonn, and the NSC. Hillenbrand's enduring fondness for the project led him to request declassification of the study, and in his memoir, *Fragments of Our Time: Memoirs of a Diplomat*, Hillenbrand praised Kogan's valuable and detailed work.<sup>6</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Department of State, Bureau of Public Affairs, Office of the Historian Records, Research Project 614, in six parts: Folder 614-A, Crisis Over Berlin: American Policy Concerning the Soviet Threats to Berlin, November 1958-December 1962: Part I: Renewed Soviet Threats Against Berlin and the Western Response, November 1958-April 1959, 126 pp., October 1966; Folder 614-B, Crisis Over Berlin: American Policy Concerning the Soviet Threats to Berlin, November 1958-December 1962: Part II: The Geneva Foreign Ministers Meeting, May-August 1959, 118 pp., July 1969; Folder 614-C, Crisis Over Berlin: American Policy Concerning the Soviet Threats to Berlin, November 1958-December 1962: Part III: From the End of the Geneva Foreign Ministers Meeting to the Abortive Summit Meeting, August 1958-May 1960, 127 pp., October 1969; Folder 614-D, Crisis Over Berlin: American Policy Concerning the Soviet Threats to Berlin, November 1958-December 1962: Part IV: Developments During the Final Phase of the Eisenhower Administration, June 1960-January 1961, 96 pp., February 1970; Folder 614-E, Crisis Over Berlin: American Policy Concerning the Soviet Threats to Berlin, November 1958-December 1962: Part V: Developments in the Early Phase of the Kennedy Administration and the Meeting with Khrushchev at Vienna, January-June 1961, 56 pp., February 1970; Folder 614-F, Crisis Over Berlin: American Policy Concerning the Soviet Threats to Berlin, November 1958-December 1962: Part VI: Deepening Crisis Over Berlin: Communist Challenges and Western Responses, June-September 1961, 143 pp., April 1970 (includes Documentary Appendix). An additional part, Folder 614, Crisis Over Berlin: American Policy Concerning the Soviet Threats to Berlin, November 1958-December 1962: Introduction, 17 pp., October 1966, is missing from this file.

<sup>2</sup>Hillenbrand to Assistant Secretary for Public Affairs Robert J. Manning, March 4, 1963, *ibid.*, Folder 614-A.

<sup>3</sup>Memorandum of Conversation between Hillenbrand, Kogan, and Edwin S. Costrell (P/HO), April 1, 1963, *ibid.*, Folder 614-A.

<sup>4</sup>Kogan to Hillenbrand, March 2, 1965, *ibid.*, Folder 614-A.

<sup>5</sup>Historical Office Deputy Director Richardson Dougall to Hillenbrand, August 11, 1969, *ibid.*, Folder 614-A.

<sup>6</sup>Hillenbrand, Martin J., *Fragments of Our Time: Memoirs of a Diplomat*, Athens GA: University of Georgia Press, 1998.



selected  
intelligence documents

*Berlin 1961*

Why? A child looks in wonderment at the wall built by the East German Communists.



15 August 1961

BERLIN SITUATION REPORT  
(as of 1630 hours)

1. The East German regime introduced new measures on 15 August designed to give it better control over the entry of West Berliners and West Germans into East Berlin. Press reports earlier today gave conflicting accounts on the new steps that have been taken. According to East German announcements, West Berliners will now be required to secure permits for their vehicles before entering East Berlin; West Germans can now secure permits for entry into East Berlin at only two sector crossing points (four were specified in the 13 August decrees).

The 15 August measures only specify West Berliners and West Germans in contrast to the 13 August decrees which also specified that they did not apply to the three Western Allies. Today's decrees violate, as do the 13 August decrees, the freedom of movement provisions guaranteed in the post-war Four Power agreements relating to Berlin.

2. The East German government warned on 15 August that agreements regulating traffic between West Germany and West Berlin might be affected if the West German government broke off the Interzonal Trade Agreement.

-2-

This threatening statement probably was made in response to West German Chancellor Adenauer's statement that Bonn was considering abrogating the 1961 Interzonal Trade Agreement if there is no solution for the Berlin situation. This latest East German threat would not affect Allied military travel between West Germany and West Berlin.

3. According to the latest information available from US officials in Berlin, telephone service between West Germany and East Germany, West Berlin and East Germany, West Berlin and East Berlin, and West Berlin via a third country to East Germany is not possible. Telegram and postal service, however, between these areas is normal.

25X1



## CURRENT INTELLIGENCE WEEKLY SUMMARY

### BERLIN

Since 15 October, the Ulbricht regime has made a systematic effort to force US officials to acknowledge the right of East German guards at the Friedrichstrasse checkpoint in East Berlin to exercise control over US-licensed vehicles driven by civilians. At the outset, Soviet authorities appear to have made an attempt to dissociate themselves from the East German actions; on 25 October, however, the USSR indicated that it was firmly backing the East German claims.

US officials maintain that US official license plates are in themselves sufficient identification as far as the East Germans are concerned. In accordance with long-established practice and US rights under the occupation agreements, the US takes the position that only Soviet officials may control movements of US personnel, whether uniformed or not. In contrast to the Americans and the French, the British have been in the habit for several years of flashing identification documents when requested, but they have never actually handed them over to the East German guards.

#### Sector Border Incidents

The first serious incidents occurred on 15 October, when East German guards on four occasions refused to pass US-licensed vehicles operated by civilians. In one case, they subsequently permitted one vehicle to pass the checkpoint after a uniformed driver took the wheel.

On 17 October, US political Adviser Howard Trivers called upon the Soviet political ad-

viser, Lt. Col. Lazarev, to protest the incidents and outline the US case. Lazarev, unusually courteous, said Soviet authorities lacked adequate descriptions of US official license plates. He thought everything would be all right if US authorities would supply complete sets of descriptions and photographs of plates currently in use by US personnel. He said he would undertake to see that facsimiles were provided to East German authorities at the Friedrichstrasse checkpoint as well as to Soviet officials at the Marienborn checkpoint on the Autobahn.

In the light of Lazarev's implicit recognition of Western rights of free circulation in Berlin, Trivers after the meeting immediately forwarded the necessary information on US license plates.

Despite Lazarev's assurances to Trivers, further incidents occurred in which East German sector border guards refused to permit US civilians to pass through the Friedrichstrasse checkpoint without showing identification.

On 22 October, the East Germans demanded identification from E. Allen Lightner, assistant chief of the US Mission in Berlin. After long delays and failure by the East German guards to summon a Soviet officer, as requested by Lightner, the American commandant in Berlin dispatched an armed escort of US military police to escort Lightner into East Berlin. Lightner and his escort twice went into the Soviet sector and withdrew.

Soon afterward, Lazarev arrived at the Friedrichstrasse

~~SECRET~~

CURRENT INTELLIGENCE WEEKLY SUMMARY

to pass only after showing their passports and claimed that "persons in civilian clothes" were trying to evade these regulations without "proving" membership in the Western occupation forces.

On 24 October, East German guards on two occasions turned back US-licensed vehicles driven by officials in civilian clothes. On the second occasion, the US provost marshal drove to the scene but was unable to induce East German police to let the automobile pass. The following day the East Germans again halted a US vehicle. When the US provost marshal demanded a Soviet officer be summoned immediately, the East German guard declared that the regime does not recognize US license plates.

Trivers then telephoned Soviet headquarters to demand a Soviet officer. A new Soviet political advisor, Col. Alekseyev, arrived, accompanied by Lazarev. Alekseyev took a belligerent tone with US officials from the outset. He told the US provost marshal that the East German government had made a decision not to recognize license plates of US forces and repeated this assertion to Trivers. Lazarev, moreover, denied he had given Trivers assurance on 17 October of no further difficulties. When the US provost marshal warned that an armed escort would be sent to shepherd the

American vehicle into Berlin, Alekseyev declared: "No, you won't!" Nevertheless, US military police escorted the car into East Berlin and back without interference.

Major General Watson, American commander in Berlin, saw Soviet commandant Solovyev that afternoon to protest the series of incidents. Solovyev strongly backed East Germany's claim to the right to exercise controls at the sector border and maintained that Soviet authorities cannot influence or interfere with East German actions there. He rejected General Watson's contention that the license plate was adequate identification and demanded that civilians henceforth show their identification documents.

While Watson was conferring with Solovyev, the East Germans halted two US Army sightseeing buses and demanded that the civilian occupants identify themselves. Although the East Germans heretofore have asked for identification from such clearly marked vehicles, they have not actually denied entry.

On 26 October, the East Germans again attempted to deny entry into East Berlin to a US-licensed vehicle, and again military police escorted the car from the Soviet sector.

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CURRENT INTELLIGENCE WEEKLY SUMMARY

Bloc Comment on Berlin

In contrast to the belligerent behavior of the Communists at the Berlin sector border, Soviet and bloc leaders have continued to follow Khrushchev's lead in avoiding extensive polemical treatment of Berlin and Germany pending further exploratory talks with the US in Moscow. In his speech to the party congress on 25 October, Foreign Minister Gromyko stressed that the Soviet Union would spare no efforts to "find a common language with the Western powers on the question of a German peace treaty." At the same time he warned that the bloc would conclude a peace treaty with East Germany if it proved impossible to reach agreement with the Western powers. His statements on Soviet policy also reflected the more moderate line toward the West which marked Khrushchev's initial address on 17 October.

Gromyko emphasized that Soviet foreign policy had been successful because of its "flexibility and desire to take into consideration the interests of partners in talks." He also claimed that the meeting between President Kennedy and Khrushchev in Vienna was "one of the most outstanding events of our time," and went to some lengths to point up "the great importance" the Soviet Government attached to the state of its relations with the US.

Both First Deputy Premier Mikoyan and East German party leader Ulbricht stressed the

urgency of a peace settlement with Germany but without mentioning a deadline. Like Khrushchev, Mikoyan and Ulbricht claimed that there had been some shifts in the position of the West, and Mikoyan attributed this to Khrushchev's efforts. Ulbricht stated that "it is a very good thing" that talks had begun between the US and USSR. He warned, however, that Paris and Bonn aimed at postponing negotiations in order to gain time for equipping West Germany with atomic weapons.

In line with the general de-emphasis of Berlin at the Soviet party congress, the Polish and Czech party leaders, Gomulka and Novotny, in their speeches mentioned these issues in a brief pro forma manner.

A Soviet official in Paris who returned from Moscow on 20 October told an American representative that the question of access to Berlin could easily be solved by a four-power agreement guaranteeing free access. He stressed that this was of minor importance to the "main interest" of the USSR in obtaining a peace treaty with both Germans, which would confirm the Oder-Neisse line and recognize the existing border between East and West Germany. While he noted the importance of an early four-power foreign ministers' conference, the Soviet spokesman also stated that the conference could not be called to deal only with Berlin but should have as its main purpose the preparation of a German peace conference.

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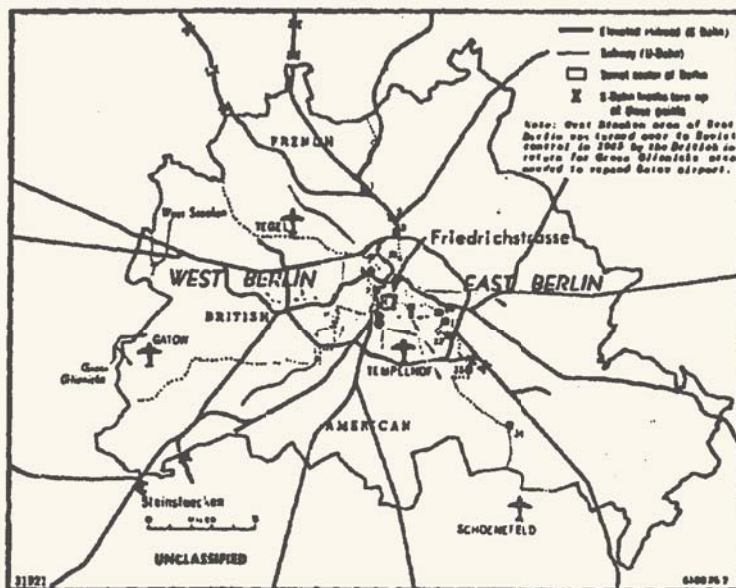
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SPECIAL ARTICLES

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CURRENT INTELLIGENCE WEEKLY SUMMARY



**AUTHORIZED BORDER CROSSING POINTS**

- |  |  |
|--|--|
| MEMBERS OF DIPLOMATIC CORPS AND OCCUPATION FORCES ONLY | ORIGINAL CROSSING POINTS OF 13 AUGUST NOW CLOSED |
| 8. Friedrichstrasse                                    | 1. Kopenhagenerstrasse                           |
| WEST GERMANS ONLY                                      | 2. Walloniestrasse                               |
| 3. Bornheimerstrasse                                   | 4. Brunnenstrasse                                |
| 9. Heinrich Heine Strasse                              | 7. Brandenburger Tor (Gate)                      |
| WEST BERLINERS ONLY                                    | 11. Puschkin Allee                               |
| 5. Chausseestrasse                                     | 12. Eisenstrasse                                 |
| 6. Invalidenstrasse                                    | 14. Rudowerstrasse                               |
| 10. Oberbaumbruecke                                    |  |
| 13. Sonnen Allee                                       |  |

Authorized East Germans and East Berliners presumably can cross at any Border Points still open.

checkpoint and conferred with the US provost marshal. Lazarev admitted that the East Germans had made a mistake and that it would be corrected. Lightner then drove his car across the sector border and returned, without escort or hindrance.

The following day the East German news agency carried an announcement of the Interior Ministry attacking US authorities for the incident of the preceding day. It stated that the regime's police are under instructions to permit foreigners

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G2 DIVISION, BERLIN COMMAND, INTELLIGENCE SUMMARY, 261600 Sep - 312400  
Oct 1961

by USAREUR Circular 604-8. Division chiefs concerned will be contacted to review current authorizations during the anniversary month of their original issue.

(2) EC Circular 380-5 has been revised and republished effective 1 October 1961. The new circular incorporates numerous pertinent changes in command policy for safeguarding official and classified defense information. All major unit commanders and chiefs of staff divisions are urged to lend their vigorous support to assure the overall effectiveness of this new directive, the "security bible" of Berlin Command.

G-2 Security Branch has presented briefings for the security control personnel of the command on the interpretation, implementation, and enforcement of the circular.

14. (C) MISCELLANEOUS:

a. Steinstuecken Exclave:

(1) US Army continues to maintain a 3-man armed patrol in the West Berlin exclave of Steinstuecken.

(2) 25 refugees have been airlifted out of the area.

(3) Guards around the area have been instructed not to fire on West Berlin Police or West Berlin residents, or on Allied personnel unless they step into East German territory. They were told to fire on East Germans who approached the border only after they have been called to halt and a warning shot was given. They have dispensed with warning shots for persons who are in the process of defecting. Guards were told not to fire on US Army helicopters and to watch closely the activities of the 3-man US Army patrol.

15. (C) SUMMARY OF SIGNIFICANT DEVELOPMENTS:

a. On 22 October, Mr. E. E. Lightner, USBER, drove his USAREUR licensed POV through the Friedrichstrasse crossing point into East Berlin and was denied entry by the East Germans unless he showed his identity documents, which he refused to do. After a delay, Mr. Lightner was escorted through the East German checkpoint by US Military Police in jeeps and on foot. Since this incident there have been 12 attempts by EC personnel dressed in civilian attire, driving POV owned vehicles to gain access to East Berlin through the Friedrichstrasse crossing point. All attempts but one have resulted in a Military Police escort.

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G2 DIVISION, BERLIN COMMAND, INTELLIGENCE SUMMARY, 261600 Sep - 312400 Oct 1961

b. During the period 262200 to 272400 Oct 61, the Russians moved 20 T-54 tanks into the Bebel's Platz area, and 20 into Installation 4154. Indications are that these tanks will remain in these locations for some time.

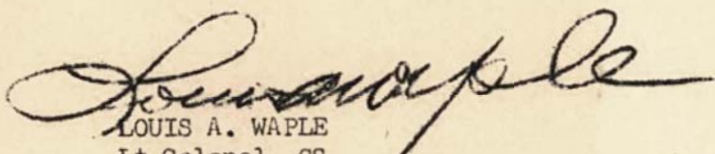
c. At 271655 Oct, a Soviet tank column, consisting of 10 T-54 tanks were deployed on Friedrichstrasse between Schutzen and Kreuzen Str, until 281050 Oct, at which time they were pulled out and returned to their Bebel's Platz staging area.

d. Since 26 Sep there has been 19 helicopter flights to Steinstuecken. These flights have evacuated 25 refugees, rotated MP patrols and have performed recon missions. All flights have been routine and no problems arose.

e. At 300600 Oct 61, the Military Police Assistance vehicle was not allowed to process through the Russian check point at Babelsburg. The Russian officer read a prepared message from the Soviet Commandant to the effect that the patrol would no longer be allowed.

f. At the present time, G-2, EC, is maintaining 1 recon patrol in East Berlin at all times, and is dispatching 7 staff visits a day to East Berlin.

1 Incl:  
Map, barriers/obstacles

  
LOUIS A. WAPLE  
Lt Colonel, GS  
G2, Berlin Command

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# A CITY TORN APART

## BUILDING OF THE BERLIN WALL

27 OCTOBER 2011

at the

NATIONAL ARCHIVES AND  
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WASHINGTON, DC



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Archivist of the United States

**Joseph Lambert**  
Director, Information Management Services, Central Intelligence Agency

**Dr. William Richard Smyser**, *guest speaker*  
Adjunct Professor, BMW Center for German and European Studies  
at Georgetown University

*members of the historian panel*

**Dr. Donald P. Steury**, *moderator*  
Central Intelligence Center

**Dr. Donald A. Carter**  
U. S. Army Center of Military History

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