

September 28, 1961 Letter from Khrushchev to Ulbricht Regarding the Situation in Berlin

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Summary:

Khrushchev response to Ulbricht's 15 September letter regarding the closing of the border between east and west Berlin. He notes that since the Western powers were tending toward negotiation rather than confrontation over the crisis, "such steps which could exacerbate the situation, especially in Berlin, should be avoided."

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Contents:

- English Translation

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We have noted your letter of September 15 with great interest and thank you for the detailed information on the measures for the strengthening and control of the GDR borders with West Berlin.

We share your assessment of the significance which these measures have for the GDR and for all socialist countries, and we congratulate the SED CC very warmly on their successful implementation. Through this our position has been strengthened on the questions of concluding a German peace treaty and on the normalization of the situation in West Berlin on this basis. The governments of the Western powers, under public pressure, recently have been supporting negotiations on the German question more definitely. Many representatives of the Western powers have begun to assess the situation in Berlin more soberly, although the extreme reactionary circles still are trying to complicate the situation in Central Europe. It is also significant that many neutral countries support our proposals for the conclusion of a German peace treaty and recognize the fact of the existence of two German states.

It is necessary to emphasize that we agree with your view on taking measures for further strengthening the economic and domestic political situation in the GDR. We also think it is correct that the question of the air connections to and from West Berlin must be decided with the conclusion of a peace treaty and that this resolution must take account of the sovereignty of the GDR and common international practice. We also do not object to the commandant of the garrison of Soviet troops in Berlin avoiding contact with the West Berlin military commandants of the USA, England, and France on issues which belong to the competence of the GDR. Our commandant already has received the corresponding instructions for his detachments. Under the present circumstances, since the measures for the safeguarding and control of the GDR borders with West Berlin have been implemented successfully, since the Western powers are tending towards negotiations and contacts between the USSR and the US have already been made in New York, such steps which could exacerbate the situation, especially in Berlin, should be avoided. In this connection, it is especially appropriate to abstain from new measures which would change the control order set up by the GDR government on the border with West Berlin.

The CPSU CC Presidium has examined your invitation to a Soviet delegation to the celebrations of the 12th anniversary of the GDR and has accepted this invitation. We will report to you especially on the composition of the delegation. You know, dear Comrade Ulbricht, that I myself also would like to visit your very hospitable country again. You, yourself, however, remarked correctly that due to the preparations for the 22nd CPSU Party Congress, we are deprived of this delightful opportunity. However, we will see each other soon in Moscow and can discuss personally all questions of interest.

I wish you and all SED CC Politburo members health and further success in their work.