

Note from the Soviet Commandant in Berlin to the Western Commandants on the construction of the Berlin Wall (18 August 1961)

Caption: On 18 August 1961, the Soviet Commandant in Berlin sends a note to his Western counterparts in which he justifies the construction of the Berlin Wall.

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Note from the Soviet Commandant in Berlin to the Western Commandants defending erection of the “Berlin Wall” (18 August 1961)

In reference to your letter of 15 August 1961, I was instructed to communicate the following:

As has already been repeatedly emphasized, the command of the Soviet garrison in Berlin does not interfere with the affairs of the capital of the German Democratic Republic. The matter which you referred to me lies entirely within the competence of the Government of the German Democratic Republic in the fulfillment of the normal rights of each sovereign nation to protect its legal interests. Every government establishes on its borders a regime which it considers necessary and fitting for the situation. Consequently your remarks pertaining to these measures are entirely out of place.

Of course, the Commandants of the U.S.A., English and French sectors in West Berlin are very well aware of the reasons that provoked the need for the introduction of effective controls on the West Berlin border. It has been pointed out many times that there are based in West Berlin under the cover of the occupation powers more than diversionist, undermining, and spying organizations which are conducting their activities against the G.D.R., U.S.S.R., and other socialist governments. Undoubtedly, the Commandants are familiar with such facts as the transportation in airplanes over the air corridors from the Federal Republic of Germany to West Berlin for the purpose of participating in rallies and manifestations of West German revanchists and militarists; they are also familiar with all possible attempts of the F.R.G. Government to include West Berlin within the sphere of its military preparations. It is very widely known what role has been assigned to West Berlin in the plans of the F.R.G. and NATO for undermining the economy of the G.D.R. and for the conduct of hostile and inciting propaganda against the countries of the socialist sphere of friendship. The politicians of the F.R.G. have openly named West Berlin “the front line city” and called upon it to interfere with the peaceful work in the G.D.R. and other socialist countries.

All this was done in spite of frequent serious warnings regarding the consequences of such hostile acts. The authorities of the U.S.A., England, and France have done nothing to put an end to the use of the territory of West Berlin for such intolerable international provocations.

It is quite natural that the G.D.R. was forced, in view of such provocative acts on the part of revanchist and militarist circles, to adopt measures for stopping these activities. The aim of these measures is to protect the interests of all countries in the socialist sphere of friendship, about which these countries informed the G.D.R. in their common appeal.

As has been pointed out in the declaration of these countries as the participants of the Warsaw agreement, the whole responsibility for the situation which has arisen and for the known inconveniences which a part of the population is experiencing in connection with these defensive measures, rests fully and completely on the revanchist-militaristic circles of the F.R.G. and also on the Western Powers which perform the occupation functions in West Berlin. Consequently this responsibility rests also on you, Mr. Commandant, as the man in charge of the occupation authority. Therefore, I decisively reject your pretensions as expressed in the letter of August 15 as devoid of any basis whatsoever.