

## The implications of German neutrality (1952–1956)

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[Commentary] For 12 years, there was a plethora of conferences held in Berlin, Paris and Geneva. The ‘German question’ was the focus of the discussions. Many plans to resolve it were proposed, one of these being the proposal that became known as the 1952 ‘Stalin Note’, delivered shortly before the signing of the *Deutschlandvertrag*, or Germany Treaty. The note provided for the neutralisation of Germany and for the country to be restructured, as Stalin described it, according to ‘democratic principles’.

[Wilhelm Grewe] Even today, there is divided opinion as to whether the Stalin Note of spring 1952 was purely and simply a diversionary tactic by the Russians or whether it was more than that. There is much to support the view that it was merely such a manoeuvre aimed at preventing the signing of the Treaties. As we have no access to Russian records, this question must remain open until written proof can be found. However, even if this note had been more than just a diversionary tactic, if it had been a genuine offer, then this offer would have amounted to the establishment of a neutralised Germany. Yet, none of the Western Powers wanted a neutralised Germany and neither did the Federal Republic of Germany. Adenauer did not want it but neither did the SPD Opposition. The oft-repeated accusation that the note should have been sounded out was therefore completely pointless because what, exactly, was to have been sounded out?

[Erich Mende] Looking back, I have to say to you now that, if we had have agreed to the Stalin Note, namely to a neutralised Germany between the Oder-Neiße line and Aachen subject to the conditions that Stalin had laid down for us, then this would have signalled the end of liberal democracy and Germany would have ended up being a people’s democracy today, much like the GDR. At the time, Adenauer realised this but, back then, we did not.

[Konrad Adenauer] The words and deeds of the Federal Government must make clear that the German people will never settle for a divided Germany and will never accept the existence of two independent German states. There is only one Germany. We shall never rest content until Germany is reunited in peace and freedom.

[Franz Josef Strauss] Konrad Adenauer was naturally in favour of reunification, but he left no doubt that reunification under a Marxist-Leninist system, namely in a Communist state under the domination of the Soviet Union, should be prevented at all costs. The freedom of the Federal Republic of Germany was more important to him than unity under the wrong sign. However, Adenauer believed that freedom could not be achieved for the whole of Germany in the foreseeable future.

[Konrad Adenauer] NATO must become stronger, ladies and gentlemen, for Soviet Russia never negotiates with the weak. Soviet Russia negotiates only with the strong, ladies and gentlemen.