

## Berlin policy: State Department flouts Reagan

by Rainer Apel

On Aug. 12, President Reagan became the first ranking U.S. politician in office to state publicly that the Kennedy administration failed in August 1961, when it allowed the Soviets to build the infamous Berlin Wall. In a speech in Rosemont, Illinois, Reagan said: "I think this is a wall that should never have been built. They started with wire, barbed wire, instead of a wall. . . . If we had gone in there and had torn this wire down, there would be no wall today, I think, because I don't believe they [the Soviets] had really wanted to wage a war over this question."

Supporting not only President Reagan's statement but his courage in making it, U.S. Democratic presidential candidate Lyndon LaRouche said on Aug. 15, that "what the President did, was something which no President since 1961 had the courage to do earlier, to declassify the U.S.A.'s files on Kennedy administration actions during the Berlin Wall crisis, and to do so publicly."

LaRouche also called for the immediate resignation of the U.S. Mission Chief in Berlin, John Kornblum. On Aug. 13 Kornblum said, in a televised interview broadcast by the ZDF, the second network channel of the Federal Republic of Germany, that the President's words expressed "merely understandable rage," and bore no practical political content. Kornblum asserted that no President of the United States could have acted differently in 1961 than Kennedy did.

The day before his Rosemont speech, Reagan had stated in an interview to West Germany's largest daily, the million-run *Bildzeitung*, that he considered the Berlin Wall "an insult to the human mind."

"The wall recalls to our memory," continued Reagan in the interview, "that Europe, Germany, and Berlin are still partitioned. Leveling the wall would be an essential step towards improved relations between East and West. As long

as the wall stands, it is an aggravation of our relations to those regimes which built it." Reagan attacked Erich Honecker's regime in East Germany for treating the East Germans "like a prisoner." He added that he would bring the issue up in his next summit meeting with Soviet leader Mikhail Gorbachov.

Reagan's statements, and the efforts by State Department traitors like Kornblum to refute them, show that what many might have believed was a piece of the historical past, is a live and burning issue today. The policy-issues at stake in the Berlin Wall, require a review of what actually happened 25 years ago, when McGeorge Bundy successfully manipulated Kennedy into backing down before Khrushchov.

### Why the Wall was built

There were several East bloc motives to raise the Wall in 1961. First, it was to stop the stream of refugees leaving East Germany for the West, a continuous drain of labor force for the socialist puppet regime. Between 1945 and 1958, 2.5 million had fled from East Germany, and after the infamous Berlin Ultimatum of Soviet leader Nikita Khrushchov on Nov. 27, 1958, another 400,000 escaped west until January 1961.

Khrushchov had demanded that the Western allies leave Berlin, and that the whole city was to be turned over to Soviet dominance. He had threatened to sign a separate peace treaty with the East German regime of Walter Ulbricht—a step which would have sealed the remaining holes in the Iron Curtain, and put an abrupt end to all discussion on the eventual reunification of Germany. It would also have sealed the fence around this huge prison with 16 million captives, which the Soviet occupation regime had made of its zone between 1945 and 1958.

The German population in Soviet-occupied East Ger-

many knew what Khrushchov's ultimatum meant for them, and the stream of refugees became larger and larger. For most of the Germans who escaped through the hole in the Iron Curtain, which Berlin still was, this escape was the last desperate chance. The events of Aug. 13, 1961, proved their fears to be sound: Between January and August 1961, more than 150,000 were able to escape, after August, the figures went down to several hundreds and soon to the tens. From Aug. 13, 1961, on, the Iron Curtain was perfect.

The passivity of the three Western powers—the United Kingdom, France, and the United States—in this crisis of August 1961 had the most demoralizing effect not only upon the population of Berlin, but on all Germans, especially the 16 million in the East who had still hoped for some reunification-like settlement of the German question, had hoped for a return of political and private freedoms.

On Aug. 13, 1961, the Germans, and especially those who lived in Berlin, asked themselves why the three Western allies did not act, but let the Berlin Wall grow. Questions were posed, why neither President Kennedy, nor Britain's Prime Minister Harold MacMillan, nor France's President Charles de Gaulle thought it necessary to interrupt their vacationing on this Aug. 12-14 weekend. Even the American officers and diplomats on duty in Berlin posed the question, why the Department of State did not seem to be alarmed at the events.

Allan Lightner, the U.S. Mission Chief in Berlin in 1961, was interviewed for a special program on German television on the 25th anniversary of the Berlin Wall, and said he had always smelled a deal between East and West on Berlin. Also John Ausland, working with the Berlin Task Force at the State Department in 1961, revealed on the same program that there was no "emergency plan for this crisis." As he reported, the briefcase in his office, which was to contain emergency orders about Berlin, was "completely empty," when he opened it on Aug. 13, 1961.

### **The 'old Yalta' resurfacing**

The State Department was complicit in the crisis of this weekend in August 1961. Secretary Dean Rusk followed policy guidelines worked out at the National Security Council of President Kennedy, which was chaired by McGeorge Bundy.

The guidelines themselves had been pre-formulated during the crisis around the aforementioned ultimatum by Khrushchov in November 1958. The United States, faced with a crisis over Berlin and two others over Lebanon and Iraq, as well as a new confrontation between Red China and Taiwan over the Quemoy islands, should decide for a policy of "limited" show of force, but in the framework of appeasement toward the Soviet Union. The 1943 Yalta agreements with the Soviets, dividing the world into zones of influence, were not to be violated, but reaffirmed.

Aspects of this new policy, which was to the disadvantage

of the German nation, were related to the public by Wilhelm Grewe, Bonn's ambassador to Washington between 1958 and 1962. Addressing the appeasing climate in the United States in a speech at the National Press Club on Dec. 12, 1958—two weeks after Khrushchov's ultimatum on Berlin, Grewe warned: "I do not intend to over-emphasize our national German interests, on this occasion. I am firmly convinced that Berlin is no longer merely a national problem of the German people. After the blockade of 1948, and the uprising [of workers in East Germany] on June 17, 1953, Berlin has become a cause of the free world." Grewe continued: "That is why the West cannot sacrifice Berlin, without seriously demoralizing millions of human beings in Germany, as well as in other European countries and in Asia and Africa at the same time."

Many in the policy-making circles of Washington, D.C., who listened to such warnings by Grewe, considered him a nuisance. From inside the Dulles machine in the State Department, Germany's Chancellor Konrad Adenauer was given hints not to listen to his ambassador, but trust the stated U.S. commitment to defend Berlin and the interests of the German nation. It was through pressure from the same State Department circles, that Grewe's replacement by Bonn ambassador was finally achieved in 1962.

The policy of U.S. concessions, which Grewe and others had already warned of in 1958, became more visible during the presidential election campaign of 1960. The staff of advisers which Democratic Party candidate John F. Kennedy was to bring into the White House, was dominated by the appeasement group around Dean Rusk, McGeorge Bundy, Averell Harriman, John J. McCloy, and Martin Hillenbrand.

### **New President—new policy**

When Kennedy took office in January 1961, the new policy on Germany and Berlin became the official policy of the U.S. administration. On March 5, 1961, Kennedy's special envoy Averell Harriman arrived in Bonn, to assure Chancellor Adenauer of an "unchanged" U.S. policy, but also to prepare him for "changes." On March 8, Harriman revealed at a press conference that President Kennedy would "not continue the Berlin policy of the previous administrations," but have "a policy of his own."

The failed Bay of Pigs invasion of exile Cubans several weeks later made visible what Bonn's ambassador Grewe had warned of in 1958: Concessions on Berlin would mean concessions in other parts of the world. The debacle at the Bay of Pigs resulted in U.S. appeasement on Cuba, and its ties to the Soviet Union. This was a signal to Khrushchov that he would not meet a strong U.S. reaction, when he tightened the noose around Berlin. The Soviet approach on Berlin had already been discussed by the Warsaw Pact leaders at a Moscow meeting in March, but concrete actions were postponed to later that year.

Then, the summit meeting in Vienna between Kennedy

and Khrushchov (June 3-4) sealed the new policy. Khrushchov reiterated his 1958 ultimatum, threatening nuclear war on Germany and Europe, if Kennedy tried to block his way in Berlin. McGeorge Bundy, Harriman, and McCloy advised Kennedy to state three "essentials" on Berlin: 1) free access to and presence in Berlin of the Western allies, 2) free air transit between West Germany and West Berlin, and 3) economic and political safety of the population in West Berlin.

By stating his essentials valid only for West Berlin, Kennedy gave the Soviets and their socialist puppet regime in East Germany a free hand in the eastern part of the city. This was to underline that the West would not maintain its rights in East Berlin. The Vienna summit meeting between Kennedy and Khrushchov was the actual foundation stone for the Berlin Wall.

### **The last act of the drama**

After the Vienna summit, things developed fast: In early July, Kennedy authorized as the official U.S. position the formulation: "We will always defend West Berlin." No more mention of the Allied rights over all of Berlin. On July 30, Sen. J. W. Fulbright, then chairman of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, made headlines around the world, when he stated: "I don't understand why the East Germans don't close their borders. They got all the right to close them." On Aug. 3-5, the Warsaw Pact leaders met again, in Moscow, and gave East Germany's Walter Ulbricht the go-ahead for building the Wall. Khrushchov left Moscow for vacationing in Sochi, on the Black Sea. John J. McCloy arrived there, "unexpectedly," for talks with Khrushchov. This encounter is said to have given the Western go-ahead for the Wall, together with the warning not to "touch West Berlin."

The U.S. policy shift on Berlin also became visible in the treatment of Bonn's Chancellor Adenauer. He was not fully informed about the shift in Berlin policy. It is not clear how much Adenauer knew, but members of his staff reported later that he hesitated to react publicly on the events of Aug. 13, because he tried to consult with the three Western powers, first. MacMillan would not interrupt his weekend vacationing, nor would General de Gaulle, he learned. Nor would President Kennedy stop sailing at Hyannis Port, Adenauer heard from Washington, D.C.

Faced with this situation, Adenauer hesitated to fly to Berlin, because he recalled that during the last big Berlin crisis of June 1953, not even West Berlin's governing mayor, Ernst Reuter, who was abroad, was let into the city by the Allied powers. Obviously, Adenauer feared the same treatment, because air transit to Berlin was an Allied privilege.

The feared humiliation by the Allied powers, which Adenauer tried to avoid, came nevertheless, when he learned that Kennedy had ordered Vice President Lyndon B. Johnson to visit West Berlin on Aug. 19—almost one week after the construction of the wall. Chancellor Adenauer asked whether Johnson would take him to Berlin on his plane, but was told

the U.S. administration did "not intend to interfere with the ongoing election campaign in the Federal Republic," which had started at the beginning of August. The United States told Adenauer that by taking him to Berlin, Johnson would support one of the chancellor candidates in the elections. However, when Johnson arrived in West Berlin, he entered a motorcade with the city's Mayor Willy Brandt—the Social Democratic contender for chancellorship against Christian Democrat Adenauer!

Brandt had written a letter to Kennedy on Aug. 16, recommending a statement declaring a "three-power-status for West Berlin." Willy Brandt was fully in line with the State Department, as can be seen. This is why Johnson drove around with him in West Berlin. Adenauer only arrived three days later. The media blamed him for not having cared about Berlin, and praised Brandt as the "defender of the city." This did have an effect on the German elections, which took place in September: Adenauer lost confidence among many voters, and lost his absolute majority. Brandt did not win, but had opened the door to the chairmanship of the Social Democratic Party, which he took over in 1964. For him, this was the step into Bonn politics, and toward the chancellorship in 1969.

### **The Wall—a chair for appeasers**

The main protagonists of the East-West deals of August 1961, and all appeasers alike, have shaped official historiography on the Berlin Wall ever since: Appeasement in 1961 helped to prevent a war over the wall, they say.

For today's decouplers, this argument is most useful, because it seems to prove that one "cannot rely on the United States, when it comes to a point of decision."

This is the line put out now by the Social Democrats of party chairman Willy Brandt, who propagate "security partnership with the East," instead. Every German who would argue in favor of the alliance with the Americans, would be told: "See how they treated us in August 1961! You cannot rely on them. We have to talk to the Soviets, instead." One has to live with the Wall, for considerable time into the future, decouplers and appeasers tell the pro-American German. Instead of thinking about the wall, one has to proceed with détente, said Willy Brandt on Aug. 13, 1986. Thus, the Berlin Wall, which is a fruit of past appeasement, serves the appeasers even today.

It is the memory of this drastic change of U.S. policy on Germany under Kennedy that is one of the main tools for mind control in the hands of today's decouplers. When the current pro-decoupling U.S. ambassador to Bonn, Richard Burt, told an interviewer of *Stuttgarter Nachrichten* Aug. 5 that he could not rule out future U.S. troop withdrawal from Germany, he used the revealing formulation: "... I know no plans for a substantial withdrawal of American troops. But as you may know, there have always been political changes under the different [U.S.] Presidents, and eventually there will be such changes over the next decades."