

**August 4, 1961**

**Excerpts from Khrushchev's Comments at  
Conference of First Secretaries of CC of Communist  
and Workers Parties of Socialist Countries**

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**Summary:**

Selected excerpts from Khrushchev's concluding speech at a conference of Warsaw Pact leader, focused on the building crisis over the status of Berlin.

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Russian

**Contents:**

Translation - English

The Conference of first secretaries of Central Committees of Communist and workers parties of socialist countries for the exchange of views on the questions related to preparation and conclusion of German peace treaty, 3- 5 August 1961

Second session. 4 August. Morning. Present on the Soviet side: Nikita S. Khrushchev, Frol Kozlov, Anastas Mikoyan, Andrei Gromyko. Foreign guests: Walter Ulbricht (GDR), Todor Zhivkov (Bulgaria), Janos Kadar (Hungary), Wladyslaw Gomulka (Poland), Antonin Novotny (Czechoslovakia), Georgi Georgu-Dej (Rumania).

[Excerpts from Khrushchev's comments:]

"Our delegation agrees completely with what Comrade Ulbricht has reported...We must wring this peace treaty...They [the Western powers] had hauled Germany into the Western bloc, and Germany became split into two parts. The peace treaty will give legitimacy to this split...it will weaken the West and, of course, the West will not agree with it. Their eviction from West Berlin will mean closing of the channels for their subversive activities against us." (p. 139)

"...I believe there are people in our countries who might argue: was it worth a cost to push this issue and let the heat and international tension rise... We have to explain to them that we have to wring this peace treaty, there is no other way... Every action produces counteraction, hence they resist fiercely..." (p. 140)

[There was always an understanding, Khrushchev continued, that the West] "would intimidate us, call out all spirits against us to test our courage, our acumen and our will." (p. 140) "As for me and my colleagues in the state and party leadership, we think that the adversary proved to be less staunch [zhestokii] than we had estimated...We expected there would be more blustering and...so far the worst spurt of intimidation was in the Kennedy speech [on 25 July 1961]...Kennedy spoke [to frighten us] and then got scared himself." (p. 141)

"Immediately after Kennedy delivered his speech I spoke with [U.S. envoy John J. McCloy]. We had a long conversation, talking about disarmament instead of talking, as we needed to, about Germany and conclusion of a peace treaty on West Berlin. So I suggested: come to my place [Black Sea resort in Pitsunda] tomorrow and we will continue our conversation." (p. 141)

"On the first day [in Pitsunda] before talking we followed a Roman rite by taking a swim in a pool. We got our picture taken, embraced together...I have no idea whom he is going to show this picture to, but I don't care to appear on one picture with a Wall Street representative in the Soviet pool."

"I said [to McCloy]: 'I don't understand what sort of disarmament we can talk about, when Kennedy in his speech declared war on us and set down his conditions. What can I say? Please tell your president that we accept his ultimatum and his terms and will respond in kind.'" (p. 142)

"He then said...[that] Kennedy did not mean it, he meant to negotiate. I responded: 'Mr. McCloy, but you said you did not read Kennedy's speech?' He faltered [zamialsia], for clearly he knew about the content of the speech." (p. 143)

"'You want to frighten us,' I went on [to McCloy]. 'You convinced yourself, that Khrushchev will never go to war... so you scare us [expecting] us to retreat. True, we will not declare war, but we will not withdraw either, if you push it on us. We will respond to your war in kind.'" (p. 143)

"I told him to let Kennedy know...that if he starts a war then he would probably become the last president of the United States of America. I know he reported it accurately. In America they are showing off vehemently, but yet people close to Kennedy are beginning to pour cold water like a fire-brigade." (p. 144)

[Khrushchev said he had met Italian Prime Minister Amintore Fanfani, who came to Moscow ostensibly at his own initiative, but in fact at Kennedy's prodding.] "How we could possibly have invited him in such a tense moment... We would have exposed our weakness immediately [and revealed] that we are seeking a way out, a surrender. How [could it be] you would ask, [that] Kennedy advised Fanfani to go to Moscow, and Rusk did not know about it...Why? Kennedy must be in a difficult situation, for Kennedy represents one party and Rusk another." (pp. 145-46)  
[Khrushchev reports that he told Fanfani:] "We have means [to retaliate]. Kennedy himself acknowledged, that there is equality of forces, i.e. the Soviet Union has as many hydrogen and atomic weapons as they have. I agree with that, [although] we did not crunch numbers. [But, if you recognize that] let us speak about equal opportunities. Instead they [Western leaders] behave as if they were a father dealing with a toddler: if it doesn't come their way, they threaten to pull our ears [natrepat' ushi]. (p. 148) We already passed that age, we wear long trousers, not short ones." (p. 149)

"I told Fanfani yesterday: '...I don't believe, though, there will be war. What am I counting on? I believe in your [Western leaders'] common sense. Do you know who will argue most against war? Adenauer. [Because, if the war starts] there will not be a single stone left in place in Germany...'" (p. 150)

[War between the USSR and the United States, Khrushchev allegedly told Fanfani, is] "hardly possible, because it would be a duel of ballistic intercontinental missiles. We are strong on that... American would be at a disadvantage to start a war with this weapon... They know it and admit it... America can unleash a war from its military bases they have on [Italian] territory. Consequently we consider you as our hostages." (p. 151)

[British Prime Minister Harold Macmillan visited Moscow in 1959 and told Khrushchev that war was impossible. Khrushchev presumes that Western leaders continue to act on that conviction.] "Macmillan could not have lost his mind since then. He considered war impossible then and, suddenly, now he changes his mind? No, no. The outcome of modern war will be decided by atomic weapons. Does it make sense if there is one more division or less? If the entire French army cannot cope with the Algerians, armed with knives, then how do they expect to scare us with a division? It is ludicrous, not frightening. [De Gaulle admitted to our Ambassador a couple of weeks ago, Khrushchev says, that he did not want the reunification of Germany.] He pays lip service to it [reunification] because it is in Adenauer's interests. Nobody wants reunification of Germany -neither France, nor England, nor Italy, nor America." (pp. 151- 52)

[Khrushchev said he told McCloy:] "Listen, why is it that you cannot shake hands with Ulbricht? I shook hands with Adenauer and I am ready to do it again. Do you believe that your Adenauer is better than our Ulbricht? We praise our commodity." (p. 153)

[If Western powers refuse to sign a treaty with the GDR, then, as Khrushchev said to McCloy:] "You will have no access [to West Berlin]. If you fly and violate [the aerial space over the GDR], we will down your planes, you must know it." (p. 155)

"Why we were so blunt? Comrades, we have to demonstrate to them our will and decisiveness...." (p. 156)

[What is the difference between the two parties of "monopoly capital," the Democrats and the Republicans? Khrushchev admitted that real difference is small ] "but some distinctive features exist, one cannot deny it, since otherwise we wouldn't have been politicians, but agitators, who say, that there is capitalism and working class, so one has to blame damned bourgeoisie and that's it. Only Albanians understand it this way...." (p. 156)

"Can we clash? Possibly...I told Fanfani, that [the American state] is a barely governed state... Kennedy himself hardly influences the direction and development of policies [politiki] in the American state...The American Senate and other [state] organizations are very similar to our Veche of Novgorod... One party there defeated the other when it tore off half of the beards of another party... They shouted, yelled, pulled each other beards, and in such a way resolved the question who was right." (pp. 156-57)

"Hence anything is possible in the United States. War is also possible. They can unleash it. There are more stable situations in England, France, Italy, Germany. I would even say that, when our 'friend' [John Foster] Dulles was alive, they had more stability [in the United States]. I told McCloy about it." (p. 157)

[Dulles was the enemy who] "resolved to bring us down to submission [sognut v baranii rog], but he was afraid of war. He would reach the brink, as he put it himself, but he would never leap over the brink, and [nevertheless] retained his credibility." (p. 158)

"If Kennedy says it, he will be called a coward. But Dulles had never been called this way, [and people believed when he said] it had not to be done in American interests. Who could suspect Dulles? The man was anything but a coward. As for Kennedy, he is rather an unknown quantity in politics. So I feel empathy with him in his situation, because he is too much of a light-weight both for the Republicans as well as for the Democrats. And the state is too big, the state is powerful, and it poses certain dangers."

"I think you will not suspect I am sympathetic to Dulles, only for the fact that he is no longer with us, so my sympathy cannot seek any goals." (p. 159)

"I understand, comrades, and share this state of mind, that our enthusiasm for peaceful construction acts as poison, weaken our muscles and our will." (p. 160)

"We got ourselves carried away with peaceful construction and, I believe, we are going too far. I will not name countries. This is the internal matter of each of the socialist states." [But the Soviet Union had had to bail out some of them in the past by] "taking gold out of its coffers." Khrushchev called all participants to live on principle, "Pay as you go." [Po odezhke protiyagivai nozhki], [and said a change of plans is necessary, a mobilization]. (pp. 160, 165-66)

"So I would consider us bad [statesmen] if we do not now make conclusions [to]...build up our defense...our military forces." (p. 160) "If we do not have these measures worked out, then Americans, British, French, who have their agencies among us, will say, that we, as they put it, are bluffing, and, consequently, will increase their pressure against us." (p. 161)

"On our side, we have already mapped out some measures. And we are considering more in the future, but short of provocations."

"I told McCloy, that if they deploy one division in Germany, we will respond with two

divisions, if they declare mobilization, we will do the same. If they mobilize such and such numbers, we will put out 150-200 divisions, as many as necessary. We are considering now... to deploy tanks defensively along the entire border [between the GDR and the FRG]. In short, we have to seal every weak spot they might look for." (p. 162).

[Khrushchev doubted that Western powers would risk to force their way to West Berlin, because it would surely mean war. (pp. 163-65) But he said that chances of economic blockade of the GDR and, perhaps, of the entire Eastern bloc were "fifty-fifty." That led him to comment ruefully on the dependence of socialist economies on Western trade and loans:]

"We have to help the GDR out...Everybody is guilty, and the GDR too. We let down our guards somewhat. Sixteen years passed and we did not alleviate pressures on the GDR...." (p. 167)

[Khrushchev praised Ulbricht for "heroic work since 1945" and approved his collectivization campaign. "You cannot build socialism without it." (p. 168) [He conceded that the GDR, if not helped, will collapse.] "What will it mean, if the GDR is liquidated? It will mean that the Bundeswehr will move to the Polish border,...to the borders with Czechoslovakia, ....closer to our Soviet border."

[He then addressed another point of criticism, why it was necessary to help the GDR to raise its living standard, already the highest among the countries in the Eastern bloc:] "If we level it [the GDR's living standard] down to our own, consequently, the government and the party of the GDR will fall down tumbling, consequently Adenauer will step in...Even if the GDR remains closed, one cannot rely on that and [let living standards decline]." (p. 170)

[Khrushchev admitted the GDR cost the Soviets much more than they needed for their own defense.] "Each division there costs us many times more, than if it had been located [on the Soviet territory]." "Some might say, why do we need the GDR, we are strong, we have armaments and all, and we will stand on our borders. This would have really been a narrow nationalist vision...."(p. 171)

"I wish we could lick the imperialism! You can imagine what satisfaction we'll get when we sign the peace treaty. Of course we're running a risk. But it is indispensable. Lenin took such a risk, when he said in 1917 that there was such a party that could seize power. Everybody just smirked and snorted then...World public opinion now is on our side not only in the neutral countries, but in America and in England." (p. 178)

[He returns again to Kennedy's dilemma.] "Presidential aide on mass media [Pierre] Salinger invited one day our journalists [to pay a visit to Kennedy]. He picked [Alexei] Adzhubei and [Mikhail] Kharlamov. [In presence of Adzhubei and the Soviet interpreter only, Kennedy admitted,] 'If I do what Khrushchev suggests, my senators will arrest [impeach?] me.' He is seeking my sympathy, isn't he? So that I will spare him that? He said it so that I understood and let you know that he is in a bind, because his good will and decision was not enough. The situation is very grave there. It looks as if I am a propagandist for Kennedy, to make you less stern about him....You might turn on me for that, but I will survive...." (p. 183)

"Summing up, our Central Committee and government believe, that now preparations are proceeding better, but there will be a thaw, and, more importantly, a cooling down...We have to work out our tactics now and perhaps it is already the right time." (p. 184)