A CITY TORN APART
BUILDING OF THE BERLIN WALL

27 OCTOBER 2011
at the
NATIONAL ARCHIVES AND RECORDS ADMINISTRATION
WASHINGTON, DC

featuring speakers

David Ferriero
Archivist of the United States
Joseph Lambert
Director, Information Management Services, Central Intelligence Agency

Dr. William Richard Smyser, guest speaker
Adjunct Professor, BMW Center for German and European Studies
at Georgetown University

members of the historian panel

Dr. Donald P. Steury, moderator
Central Intelligence Center

Dr. Donald A. Carter
U.S. Army Center of Military History

Dr. Hope Harrison
Associate Professor of History and International Affairs
at George Washington University

Mr. Lon Mehrer
Central Intelligence Agency, Retired

Dr. Gregory W. Pedlow
Supreme Headquarters Allied Powers Europe
NATIONAL ARCHIVES AND
RECORDS ADMINISTRATION

NARA poster series

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The BERLIN CRISIS of 1961
BUILDING the WALL
FROM VIENNA TO CHECKPOINT CHARLIE

Thursday October 27, 2011
9 A.M.
McGowan Theater

ARCHIVIST OF THE UNITED STATES
David Ferriero

DIRECTOR, INFORMATION MANAGEMENT SERVICES, CIA
Joseph Lambert

KEYNOTE SPEAKER
(pending confirmation)

SPECIAL GUEST SPEAKER
Dr. William Richard Smyser,
Adjunct Professor, BMW Center for German and
European Studies at Georgetown University

MODERATOR OF HISTORIAN PANEL
Dr. Donald P. Steury
Historian, Central Intelligence Agency

Dr. Don Carter — U.S. Army Center of Military History
Dr. Gregg Pedlow — Supreme Headquarters Allied Powers Europe
Dr. Hope Harrison — Associate Professor of History and
International Affairs at George Washington University
Mr. Lou Mehrer — Central Intelligence Agency

For conference registration and all inquiries berlin.1961crisis@nara.gov
Confrontation at Checkpoint Charlie

THE BERLIN CRISIS OF 1961

US Army Intelligence Summary of 31 Oct–9 Nov 1961. ISUM #13a; pg. 1; Berlin Brigade; Intelligence Reports, 1954–1962; Records of United States Army, Europe; Record Group 549; National Archives at College Park, College Park, MD.

Description of observed Soviet forces movements within and around East Berlin. The Soviets appeared to be digging in so as to see out the border control dispute to the end.

US Army Intelligence Summary of 26 Sept–31 Oct 1961. ISUM #13; pg. 11; Berlin Brigade; Intelligence Reports, 1954–1962; Records of United States Army, Europe; Record Group 549; National Archives at College Park, College Park, MD.

The movement of the Soviet tanks in East Berlin is recorded in an Intelligence Summary. In what was actually the October 27th standoff between Soviet and U.S. forces at Checkpoint Charlie, the concurrent movements of U.S. forces are not mentioned.

BC Op Plan 3–7; pg. 1; Berlin Command Ops Plans 1961; Berlin Brigade; Operations Planning Files, 1954–1965; Records of United States Army, Europe; Record Group 549; National Archives at College Park, College Park, MD.

An Operations Plan from November 1961 shows the intention of the Allied forces to react with force should the Communists close off all access to East Berlin.

ALL DOCUMENTS DECLASSIFIED PER E.O. 13526
Interview with Ambassadors Kennan and Thompson, August 11; Berlin Germany Group 1961; Policy Planning Council; Subject Files, 1954-1962; General Records of the Department of State; Record Group 59; National Archives at College Park, College Park, MD.

Interview with George Kennan, former Ambassador to Soviet Union, who questioned the underlying assumptions of most U.S. policy on Berlin. He thought that the USSR had been goaded into action over Berlin because of GDR weakness in the face of strong, nuclear West.

Memo of Conversation re: Berlin Contingency Planning and Related Matters, 4/13/1961; Policy Planning Council; Subject Files, 1954-1962; General Records of the Department of State; Record Group 59; National Archives at College Park, College Park, MD.

Memo of conversation with Kennedy and German Chancellor Adenauer showing Kennedy’s concern over the gap between Berlin contingency planning on paper and the actual commitments that each nation had understood to have taken on.

The Wall Goes Up

The Berlin Crisis of 1961

A description of the first phase of the Berlin Wall, including the beginnings of the infamous “Death Strip.” The description comes from “A handbook on the Berlin problem” created by the CIA in December 1961.

Summary of Reports Given by Refugees During the Period September 28–October 5, 1961; Bureau of European Affairs, Country Director for Germany; Records Relating to Berlin and East German Affairs, 1957-1968; Lot 70D4; General Records of the Department of State; Record Group 59;

(iibd.)

National Archives at College Park, College Park, MD.

Refugees from the Soviet sector of Berlin as well as the rest of East Germany told of their experiences crossing into West Berlin. Some border-crossers were helped by East German police, while others were harassed and arrested. While the Wall was a new phenomenon, attitudes towards its enforcement were varied.