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Basic Documents

CHRONOLOGY OF SELECTED DEVELOPMENTS PERTAINING TO BERLIN

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- May 1, 1976 East German Army troops again march in May Day parade, violating Four-Power wartime agreements. Allies protest.
- May 22 Konrad Naumann, First Secretary of the East Berlin party district, promoted to full membership of the East German politburo.
- Spring East German Party Chief Honecker appeals to Brezhnev to permit direct election of East Berlin Volkskammer representatives. Brezhnev reportedly turns him down, but consents to other East German actions to assert their authority in East Berlin as long as Soviet rights are not affected.
- June 24 New East German electoral law drops use of term "representative" for East Berlin members to Volkskammer.
- August 13 East Germans turn back several bus loads of West German Christian Democratic Party (CDU) youth attempting to visit West Berlin on the anniversary of the erection of the Berlin Wall.
- August 18 Self-immolation of East German Evangelical pastor Oskar Bruesewitz to protest the East German regime's church policies.
- August 26 Allies lodge a protest regarding the August 13 bus incident with the Soviet ambassador to East Berlin.
- October Discontinuance of special identification cards used by East Berlin members of the Volkskammer.
- November 8 GDR announces that tariffs would be increased on February 1, 1977 for hauling Allied trains between West Germany and West Berlin.

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November 11 Director General of GDR Foreign Office complains about Allied patrols to US Charge in East Berlin.

November 17 East Germans expel dissident writer Wolf Biermann.

November 20 Honecker orders district secretaries to "deny unequivocally" all emigration applications based on the Helsinki Final Act.

December 2 East German police at Berlin Wall are issued armbands reading "Border Troops of the GDR."

mid-December East Germans begin controlling access of East German citizens to West German mission in East Berlin.

December 23 East Germans expel West German correspondent for "slandering the GDR."

December 30 East Germany announces new visa regulations effective January 1; third-country nationals coming from West Berlin must purchase one-day visas to visit East Berlin. New regulation does not affect Allied personnel.

January 1, 1977 Border control posts between East Berlin and East Germany removed. Signs marking boundaries of East Berlin are changed to conform with international signs.

January 1-2 Neues Deutschland, the East German Communist Party newspaper, prints two articles defending new visa requirements. Foreign Ministry claims East Berlin is an integral part of the GDR and that "four-power status" of East Berlin has not existed since the founding of the GDR in 1949. Furthermore, the Quadripartite Agreement does not apply to East Berlin.

January 3 East Berlin lawyer Wolfgang Vogel claims that the new visa regulation should be viewed as part of a gradual effort to undermine the four-power status of Berlin.

January 6

Horst Mahle of the West Berlin communist party (SEW) claims that the recent East German measures on visas and control points are intended largely for the GDR populace to show them that the government is working to integrate East Berlin into East Germany.

January 7

Soviets and East Germans in Paris protest West German Foreign Minister Genscher's plan to accompany French foreign minister during the latter's visit to West Berlin. They charge this is improper and incompatible with the Quadripartite Agreement because West Berlin is not part of West Germany.

January 11

Access by East Germans to the West German mission in East Berlin is blocked by GDR security personnel for 24 hours.

Allies deliver protest regarding the new visa regulations and changes in control points to the Soviets in Moscow. Foreign Ministry official Bondarenko reaffirms the Soviet position that the Quadripartite Agreement does not apply to East Berlin. Bondarenko tells French and British that "Greater Berlin" no longer exists.

Allies in Moscow have the impression, shared by the US embassy in Paris, that the Soviets are in effect responding to the fact that West Berlin plans to have delegates in the European Parliament.

January 13

The Soviet second secretary in East Berlin claims the Soviets were "surprised" by the East German move against the West German mission in East Berlin.

An East German academician tells a US embassy officer that East Germany may have to tighten up on West German visitors. He says East-West German relations are at a critical stage.

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January 13

West Berlin Communist party newspaper reports that East Germany has decided to discontinue publication of the legal gazette (Verordnungsblatt), in which East Berlin formally adopts East German laws; journal has not appeared since September.

January 15

An unofficial East German spokesman, citing unrest in the GDR, says the East Germans might have to crack down on West German access to East Germany. Claims the Soviets share East German concern about the effect of West German visitors on the East German populace, and agree that the GDR must do everything possible to assure control.

January 15-16

West Berlin press reports that large number of West Germans, who had previously lived in the GDR, have been refused permission to visit East Berlin.

January 17

A Soviet diplomat in East Berlin comments that Moscow wants to negotiate new agreement on Berlin that reflects disappearance of four-power status in East Berlin while recognizing continuing four-power status of West Berlin, according to the West German intelligence service. Source refers to Spandau and Berlin Air Safety Center and new agreement on air access. West German foreign Office informs Allies of report on January 28.

January 18

Press spokesman for East Berlin city government refuses to speak on the issue of whether the Verordnungsblatt has been discontinued.

French in West Berlin report rumor that East Germany plans to create a new East Berlin district including land now in the GDR. Cites various articles in Neues Deutschland and West German intelligence reports.

- January 19 Soviet ambassador (Abrsimov) complains to British ambassador (Wright) that the Allies are abusing their rights to enter East Berlin; protest the number of US patrols and the frequent observation and photographing of the Soviet embassy in East Berlin. He also says that Western allies have no rights, only responsibilities, in East Berlin and defends recent East German actions.
- January 21 Two Soviet embassy officials in Washington call on State Department officers and remark that now is not the time for problems in Berlin.
- January 21-24 Increase in the number of persons denied entrance to East Berlin.
- January 25 Neues Deutschland reprints article from Hungarian party paper that says Verordnungsblatt has been abolished because it is superfluous.
- January 27 East German foreign minister hands West German mission aide memoire warning West Germans to "desist immediately" from interfering in East German internal affairs--encouraging East Germans to emigrate.
- January 28 Allies make demarche to the Soviets in East Berlin on Verordnungsblatt. A Soviet embassy spokesman responds in standard fashion, claims East Germany is within its rights, and the Quadripartite Agreement does not apply to East Germany.
- January 30 Pravda attacks West German Foreign Minister Genscher for accompanying Vice President Mondale to West Berlin.

- February 21 East Germany publishes air regulations controlling overflights by foreign military supplies and equipment and prohibiting reconnaissance by these aircraft. GDR gives verbal assurance to the Allies that the regulations are designed for north-south flights to south by Scandinavian aircraft.
- February 22 Public East German confirmation of discontinuance of the Berlin Verordnungsblatt.
- February 25 East Germany imposes road tax on non-allied drivers entering East Berlin effective March 1; similar requirement already exists in East Germany, thereby removing another distinction between East Berlin and East Germany.
- March 9 East German border guards attempt to confer with commander of US freight train during a two-hour delay at Potsdam.
- March 10 Soviet ambassador Abrasimov at a press conference in East Berlin says that the Quadripartite Agreement is relevant only to West Berlin and that military rights of three Western powers do not exist in the eastern part of the city. Moscow claimed subsequently that the ambassador was misquoted, and that he had said only that a special eastern sector of Berlin did not exist.
- March 11 French troop train detained because of East German demands for paperwork which train commander refuses to present.
- March 29-30 Numerous aircraft penetrate the Berlin Control Zone. Soviets admitted a navigational error on March 29, but denied the plans were Soviet on the following day.

- April 9 East German Foreign Minister Fischer discussed Berlin with Soviet counterpart Gromyko during Moscow visit. They reached "complete agreement" on all issues discussed, including "strict observance and implementation of the Quadripartite Agreement."
- April 14 Two separate US flag patrol incidents take place in East Berlin. GDR troops strike one car with rifle butts.
- April 15 Demarches delivered to the US, UK, and France on the cessation of Allied flag patrols in East Berlin.
- April 16 Soviet party official Kapitonov and GDR representative Grueneberg declare at the West Berlin Socialist Unity (Communist) Party congress that the Quadripartite Agreement has eased tension in Berlin, but it must be strictly observed.
- Soviets delay a French convoy at the Marienborn Autobahn checkpoint. They complain of irregularities in the French convoy, despite the convoy's being constituted according to longstanding French practice.
- April 18 Soviet Consul General in West Berlin, Bykov, tells CDU Bundestag deputy Alois Mertes that it was his "personal opinion" that it would be "very dangerous" if the CDU came to power in West Berlin.
- Unidentified helicopter from East Germany penetrates air space over American sector of West Berlin.
- April 19 US Mission Berlin reports that East Germans have recently enlarged the automobile control area at their control point opposite Checkpoint Charlie. Significance of this may be that it is easier to separate and isolate Allied military traffic in the event of an incident in the checkpoint area without delaying the flow of other traffic.

April 25

Soviet spring troop rotation airlift begins.

A Soviet Novosti journalist of German affairs, who knew his remarks would reach the US government, stated that the status of Berlin must be seen within overall US-USSR relations. If a SALT agreement is not reached, the journalist continued, Moscow would "close off East Berlin." The Soviet later stated that these remarks were based on talks he had with other Soviet newspapermen, and had not been authoritatively inspired.

April 26

Neues Deutschland announces that traditional May Day military parade will now be held on October 7, the GDR national holiday. A non-military parade is still scheduled for May Day.

East German ambassador in Washington delivers note from GDR foreign minister stating all outstanding humanitarian cases between the US and the GDR have been acted upon favorably by the GDR.

British Lieutenant on BRIXMIS tour in GDR detained near Treuen-Brietzen, in area where military exercise underway.

April 29

Unidentified helicopter penetrates the air safety zone and possibly the British Sector in West Berlin in violation of four-power flight rules.

May 1

May Day celebrations in East Berlin proceed without incident. The National People's Army does not participate, but industrial militia brigades do.

May 3

The three Allies deliver their response to the Soviets April 15 demarche on flag patrols. Dobrynin tells Secretary Vance that the Soviets agree the Quadripartite Agreement must be adhered to fully and indicates the Soviets had not meant to make "a big thing" out of their demarche.

May 4

An Allied flag patrol vehicle is temporarily blocked by a Peoples' Police (VOPO) sedan inside East Berlin. The vehicle is later subjected to about 35 minutes of surveillance by a VOPO motorcycle prior to returning to West Berlin.

May 6

GDR Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA) USA Division Chief Geyer raises issues of "unpleasant" incidents involving passengers in an Allied vehicle on March 19 and 24. Geyer is reminded that the embassy had on May 2 already informed the Deputy Chief of Protocol that neither the US embassy nor the GDR MFA were appropriate channels to raise such matters.

Neues Deutschland article complains that "the competent authorities in West Berlin should immediately see to it that the noise disturbance caused by aircraft taking off and landing in West Berlin is stopped."

May 7

During V-E day ceremonies, Chief of Staff of the GSFG General Grinkevich complains to a British liaison officer about increasing numbers of US and British soldiers in East Berlin and suggests the Soviets may have to send more into West Berlin.

A British flag tour vehicle parked in East Berlin is photographed by an East German soldier. The vehicle is then blocked by an East German civilian vehicle. Another East German soldier joins the first in taking photos. Both then are driven away in a People's Police car.

May 8

French flag tour is stopped by a People's Police patrolman, who spits on vehicle and insults its occupants. He is then restrained by his colleagues. French also report incidents in first week in May involving a French military bus and a flag tour car. The bus driver was shown a bundle of bank notes by an East German male who asked to be hidden aboard vehicle.

- May 9 Four-power leaders issue a declaration on Berlin.
- Soviet Ambassador to East Germany Abrasimov welcomes publicly the election of Stobbe as new governing mayor of West Berlin.
- May 10 Two Soviet diplomats in West Berlin criticize "in a mild way" the Allied London declaration on Berlin. They note recent absence of Soviet embassy protests to the US mission in Berlin and lessening of "questionable" FRG activities in Berlin.
- May 11 SED leader Erich Honecker attacks the Allied declaration on Berlin in public remarks. Honecker criticizes the Allies for citing "joint rights in the whole of Berlin." He notes that the Quadripartite Agreement only applies to the Western sector of Berlin.
- Soviet Ambassador Falin publicly criticizes London Berlin declaration regarding ties between West Berlin and the FRG.
- A. army recreation services tour bus in East Berlin is subjected to minor Peoples' Police harassment while parking.
- May 12 Soviet radio commentator A. Yuriyev broadcasts to West Germany in German critical commentary on the May 9 London declaration on Berlin.
- May 15 Pravda runs a commentary on page five dated West Berlin on the London four-power declaration on Berlin. The article puts forth two main themes: 1) The West Germans are striving to integrate West Berlin in direct conflict with the Quadripartite Agreement of 1971. 2) There are no longer four occupied sectors in Berlin; there are three West sectors and East Berlin, a sovereign part of East Germany.

May 16

West German Chancellor Helmut Schmidt speaks out at a workers' rally in West Berlin against Erich Honecker's Berlin Wall policy. Schmidt calls the policy inhumane and describes Honecker's regime as politically unsuccessful.

May 16-17

Helmut Schmidt telephones GDR leader Erich Honecker from West Berlin to underscore West German interest in beginning bilateral talks. During the conversation Honecker expresses his irritation at Schmidt's criticism of his Berlin policy and indicates he will have to respond.

May 17

GDR leader Erich Honecker speaking at the Ninth Congress of East German Trade Unions singles out Helmut Schmidt as being responsible for an inhumane and unsuccessful policy towards Berlin and East Germany. He remarks that Bonn should give up its claims to the fiction that the Quadripartite Agreement applies to all of Berlin.

May 18

Soviet Ambassador Falin tells Ambassador Stoessel that the US has misunderstood the Soviet position on Allied patrols in East Berlin. The Soviets were not attempting to affect Allied rights but thought that it would be desirable if the patrols were quickly phased out. Falin hints that the Soviets might step up Soviet patrols in the Western sectors as a first step; thereafter, they might begin to make greater use of the air corridors for Soviet flights to the West.

Chancellor Schmidt tells journalists "off the record" that the Soviets had made recent demarches to the Allies asking that the patrols be stopped.

May 19

GDR Foreign Ministry protests violation of its air space by a private aircraft which strayed into East Germany from the FRG. The aircraft entered East German airspace near Sonneberg and left near Kreuzberg.

- May 19 Pravda publishes a story on Honecker's trade union congress speech of the 17th repeating Honecker's warning that normalization of inter-German relations depends on dropping the "fiction" that the Quadripartite Agreement applies to all of Berlin.
- May 20 East Germany renames two East Berlin governmental authorities. Signs at the entrance to the East Berlin city administration and the East Berlin city courts now carry the inscriptions "...of Berlin, Capital of the GDR," instead of "...of Greater Berlin."
- Hamburg newspaper Die Welt publishes a short article on the Soviet demarche on an inside page.
- May 26 Governing Mayor Stobbe reads the policy declaration of the new Berlin Senat to the Berlin Parliament. In contrast to similar statements by his predecessors, Stobbe deemphasized the international aspects of Berlin policy.
- May 30 Soviet Ambassador Abrasimov tells Ambassador Stoessel that the Allies and the Soviets would have to agree to disagree on the subject of flag patrols, but emphasizes that the Soviets in no way concede the right of the Allies to conduct what he termed "military patrols" through the "capital of the GDR."
- May 31 A near miss occurs between an inbound British Airways airliner and a Soviet aircraft a few miles west of the Berlin Control Zone in the Center Air Corridor. The British aircraft descended below the long-standing Soviet definition of the bottom of the corridor.