

University of Montana

## ScholarWorks at University of Montana

---

Mike Mansfield Speeches, Statements and Interviews

Mike Mansfield Papers

---

6-14-1961

### A Third Way on Berlin

Mike Mansfield 1903-2001

Follow this and additional works at: [https://scholarworks.umt.edu/mansfield\\_speeches](https://scholarworks.umt.edu/mansfield_speeches)

**Let us know how access to this document benefits you.**

---

#### Recommended Citation

Mansfield, Mike 1903-2001, "A Third Way on Berlin" (1961). *Mike Mansfield Speeches, Statements and Interviews*. 437.

[https://scholarworks.umt.edu/mansfield\\_speeches/437](https://scholarworks.umt.edu/mansfield_speeches/437)

This Speech is brought to you for free and open access by the Mike Mansfield Papers at ScholarWorks at University of Montana. It has been accepted for inclusion in Mike Mansfield Speeches, Statements and Interviews by an authorized administrator of ScholarWorks at University of Montana. For more information, please contact [scholarworks@mso.umt.edu](mailto:scholarworks@mso.umt.edu).

STATEMENT OF SENATOR MIKE MANSFIELD (D., MONTANA)

*extra  
copies  
in office  
in books*

A THIRD WAY ON BERLIN

HOLD FOR RELEASE

THU JUN 15 1961 AM

Mr. President:

As anticipated by the President, the talks in Vienna did not produce any significant change in the situation at Berlin. Strip the newspaper accounts of their sensationalism and one thing is clear: The situation in Berlin is where it was in the fall of 1958. It is unchanged despite the Geneva Conference of Foreign Ministers in 1959. It is unchanged despite the friendly meeting at Camp David in 1959 and the furious meeting in Paris in the aftermath of the U-2 incident. There were no spirits at Vienna, only the hard facts exchanged without embellishment. There was only a high degree of soberness coupled with the personal courtesy of leaders, without which nations cannot hope to find a way to peace, today, any better than when diplomacy first began.

In this sense the Vienna talks were useful. They swept away the chaff. They revealed to both Mr. Khrushchev and Mr. Kennedy the hard kernel of the problem. They revealed, too, that the problem confronts us in substantially the same form as it did when it first appeared more than two years ago.

I suppose, Mr. President, we may regard the fact that the situation in Berlin is unchanged after two years, that the crisis has been postponed for two years, as some sort of achievement. In early 1959, a military showdown appeared imminent to me, as it did to most observers, unless the policies and attitudes of a decade and a half would begin to change. The showdown did not take place. It was forestalled by an almost continuous

round of sub-summit and summit conferences and visitings back and forth and hither and yon. The crisis has stirred again from time to time during the past two years but it has not erupted. Because it has not does not mean that it will not. If the present positions of the parties concerned remain unchanged, sooner or later, this crisis postponed, this crisis avoided will cease to lie dormant.

What is involved at Berlin is not some obscure situation, distant from our concern or the concern of the Soviet Union. Berlin is at the core of these concerns. Berlin is the lever which may ease Europe towards a more durable security or push the Western nations and the Soviet Union into a new vortex of irrationality at whose center lies the graveyard of humanity.

In these circumstances, we owe it to ourselves to examine the position which we have assumed with respect to Berlin. The leaders of the Soviet Union are obligated to do the same. Both sides owe it to the people of the world. The responsibility which we have, Mr. President, and which the Soviet Union has, is not merely to reassert positions already assumed and which are obviously irreconcilable. The responsibility is to seek to determine whether or not there is a third way on Berlin which corresponds more accurately to the needs of Germany today, Europe today and the world today--indeed, a third way which meets more fully the contemporary needs of both the Soviet Union and ourselves.

We can make this exploration only if we see clearly what the present positions are and what they imply.

Together with Britain and France this nation is pledged to maintain an allied presence in West Berlin and to defend the people of that half-city. The other members of N.A.T.O. have endorsed this position.

I do not think there is any misunderstanding of what we are pledged to do, either at home or abroad. Nevertheless, let us restate the position to be certain that it is not misunderstood either at home or abroad. Let us restate it without provocation, without bombast. Let us restate it, as I am sure the President did at Vienna, in all soberness: We will not be driven, pushed or barred from fulfilling our responsibilities to ourselves and to freedom in Berlin by any nation, half-nation, group of nations or whatever. Such measures as may be necessary to assert that responsibility will be taken.

This is what we say in the phrase: Stand firm at Berlin. The full implications of these four words had better be understood in this Senate, in this Congress and throughout the nation. They had better be understood now. The range of this commitment extends from a beginning of words of firmness, to a midpoint of expenditure of immense resources and enormous taxes and other sacrifices, to a final pledge of the lives and fortunes of every man, woman and child in the nation. We are not engaged at Berlin with the fast draw and wax bullets of television anymore than the Russians are engaged in a harmless game of chess. In the last analysis we are engaged now, as we have been at Berlin, with the whole future of the United States. In this day and age and in this situation, the words, standing firm, carry no other than this ultimate implication.

I say this, Mr. President, with no desire to disturb the serenity of the Senate. I say it only that we may be clear on the meaning of the words we use. I say it in order that we may comprehend more accurately the immense burden which rests on the shoulders of the President of the United States. He will make the decisions and he must make them in this

awesome context. I trust and I am confident that those of us with public responsibilities--in government and out and particularly the press and other news media--will remain cognizant of this burden during the next few months.

Let me set forth next, Mr. President, my understanding of the position to which the Soviet Union adheres in the Berlin situation. It is, so far as I am aware, unchanged as is ours, except in time-schedule since it was first announced in November 1958. I should like to state that position in substance, without sensationalism and as objectively as I can delineate it from the accounts which have appeared in the press. The Soviet Union intends to withdraw from its World War II occupational responsibilities in East Berlin and it insists that the Western powers must do the same in West Berlin. It proposes to turn over East Berlin to the East German authorities, presumably as part of a separate peace treaty with the East German government. It offers to join in a guarantee of a new status for West Berlin as a free city within that state. And if I am not mistaken, Mr. Khrushchev has added to this position a further contention that the Soviet Union will come to the military aid of the East German authorities in the event that the Western powers refuse to accept this change and continue to assert their present responsibilities in West Berlin in opposition to the wishes of those authorities.

These two positions, then, form the substance of the Berlin crisis now dormant but which, at any time, may become active. We insist, in effect, on the continuance of the status quo in Berlin for the present and, presumably until such time as Germany is unified. The Russians are

intent upon changing the status quo in a particular fashion in the near future, regardless of the eventual solution of the question of German unification.

I know that we intend to maintain our position. I do not lightly assume that the Soviet Premier does not mean what he says with respect to the position of the Soviet Union, despite the postponements of the actual act of Soviet withdrawal during the months and years since November 1959.

My own view of this situation, however, is not one which depends on whether the Soviet Premier means what he says or does not mean what he says. It is based upon my personal estimate of the changing situation in Europe and the world and it is based upon what I believe to be the rational interests of this nation in the light of those changes.

I have long questioned and I continue to question a status quo which places us in the position, in effect, of pleading with or urging the Russians not to withdraw their military forces from the Westernmost point of penetration which they reached in Europe in the wake of World War II; yet, our present position on Berlin requires that we do precisely that. Further, Mr. President, I do not think we can safeguard most effectively our own interests or advance the interests of peace when we insist upon remaining directly under a communist sword of Damocles, as is now the case in Berlin, if a rational alternative may be found to that position through diplomacy. Further, Mr. President, I have long questioned and I continue to question a position on Berlin which was assumed immediately after World War II and has been maintained unchanged despite the enormous changes which have occurred in both parts of Germany and in Europe since that time. Finally, I question, as I have long questioned, a position

which, through subordinate irresponsibility, error or provocation on either side invites the precipitation of a nuclear conflict.

We prove our courage, our steadfastness, our determination when we insist, as insist we must with all that insistence implies, that we shall not permit the Russians or anyone else to dictate unilaterally the terms under which this nation and its allies shall discharge the responsibilities which were assumed in Berlin in the wake of World War II. We would prove little more than the inertia of Western leadership, however, if we insist that the status quo in Berlin is sacrosanct. We prove little more than the sterility of our diplomacy if we insist that the status quo at Berlin cannot be changed even by mutual agreement leading to a new situation, which is neither that which now exists nor the alternative which the Soviet Union propounds. It seems to me, Mr. President, that if we are to be not merely courageous but intelligently courageous that is precisely the course we must pursue. We must seek a third way in Berlin which may better serve the interests of all the parties concerned--of the German people no less than other Europeans, of the United States no less than the Soviet Union and of that great stretch of the world with its hundreds of millions of people to whom Berlin is but a name if it is even that.

I would not wish to preclude, Mr. President, any proposals to this end which may originate in any quarter. Indeed, it would be helpful, in my opinion, if the Senate discussed this matter at length. I suggest, moreover, that this discussion might profitably begin now before the relatively dormant crisis in Berlin comes alive once again. We can think now of its many implications with a measure of detachment and deliberation. If we wait for the moment of heat, it may be too late to think at all.

I repeat, Mr. President, I do not wish to preclude any ideas or proposals, regardless of their source, which may promise a rational solution of the problem of Berlin. For my part, however, I believe that the third way lies in an honest recognition of the fact that it is too late in the game to expect that Germany will be reunified in peace by fiat of the United States, France, Great Britain and Soviet Russia as was expected 15 years ago. Yet, this assumption continues to underlie our position with respect to Berlin. If the assumption is invalid, then the continued garrisoning of Berlin by the forces of these four nations loses much of its significance as a temporary occupational measure which was all it was intended to be when these garrisons were established a decade and a half ago.

However, Berlin--not just West Berlin but all Berlin--does not lose its significance in terms of ultimate German unification. Berlin remains the symbolic hope of that unification and I do not think it is unreasonable to assume that it will one day again be the actual capital of a unified Germany. It seems to me that the German people will have the best opportunity to find the way to unification in peace and the outside powers will make a significant contribution to the search, if they will act now to remove Berlin--all Berlin--from the clashes of the cold war into which it has been driven by the events of the post-war years. If we must live, as it now seems likely, for an indefinite period with a divided Germany, then, peace requires that Berlin--all Berlin--be held in peace and in trust until the day of unification. Its status must be reconstituted so that Berlin will be the hope for peaceful German unification rather than the prize for German unification by other means which it has now become.



This conversion of Berlin will not occur under Mr. Khrushchev's proposal to turn only West Berlin into a free city. Even if the rights of the Western presence to that half-city were insured beyond a shadow of doubt, even if guarantees of the safety of the Western enclave were inviolate, it does not seem to me that this arrangement would be satisfactory. For it would reduce this enclave to a sleepy quasi-foreign anachronism and it would leave Berlin--symbolic Berlin, unifying Berlin, Capital Berlin, German Berlin--in the hands of a militant German minority. It would give an enormous and inadmissible amplification throughout Germany to the present small voice of the East German minority government at Pankow. It would invite German nationalism throughout Germany to adhere to the German communist standard flying in East Berlin. That is a handicap which freedom cannot allow. It is a concession which does not accord with the needs of peace in Germany or the essentials of peaceful competition between communism and freedom.

I do not believe, Mr. President, that the way to peace can be found either in the maintenance of the status quo in Berlin or in the change which Mr. Khrushchev proposes. A third Way may lie in the creation of a free city not in West Berlin alone but in the creation of a free city which embraces all Berlin--the communist east no less than the free western segment of that metropolis. Let this whole city be held in trust and in peace by some international authority until such time as it is again the capital of Germany. Let the routes of access to this whole city be garrisoned by international peace teams in the effective pattern of those now operating between Israel and the Arab States. Let this interim status of free city be guaranteed by the N.A.T.O. and Warsaw pact countries. Let

Bonn and Pankow subscribe to this arrangement and pay its costs in appropriate shares. Let these changes be incorporated in specific written agreements. Then, perhaps, we may have the beginning of a durable peace in Berlin and the healing of the cleavage in Germany and Europe.

I know, Mr. President, that to bring about this change in Berlin after the division of that city has hardened over many years may seem an immensely difficult, political and diplomatic undertaking. But is it not, really, an infinitesimal task when compared with the full implications of an essay in military solution with what comes after it?

I realize, too, Mr. President, that this approach may evoke no response from Mr. Khrushchev. But does Mr. Khrushchev's reactions, whatever they may be, dissolve us from our rational responsibilities to ourselves and to the world in this situation? Do not those responsibilities require us to explore fully and vigorously any and all avenues of peace even as we steel ourselves for what must come if the way to peace cannot be found?

I make these suggestions, Mr. President, as one Senator from the State of Montana. I make them in full recognition of the present position of this government which, if it is unchanged, will be my personal position when all the words are exhausted. I make them, however, in the belief that this present position is not enough, even as the present Soviet position is not enough. Our present position on Berlin, even unchallenged by the Soviet Union, leads only in a circle endlessly repeated as it continues to recede from the changing realities of Germany and Europe until it now promises to become at best irrelevant and at worst a stimulus to catastrophe. The Soviet position on Berlin, unchanged, in my opinion,

is also headed towards complete irrelevance unless before that point is reached, it precipitates a military conflict by accident or design.

The implications of what I have tried to say to the Senate, then, are clear. Sooner or later, the Western nations and the Soviet Union must seek a new way, a third way to solution of the Berlin problem along the lines which I have suggested or some other. Unless this search is pursued with energy and dispatch and to fruition, sooner or later, Berlin is likely to become the pivot of a new disaster for mankind.