

# 19 July 1961 - News Conference 14

President John F. Kennedy  
State Department Auditorium  
Washington, D.C.  
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427 In Attendance

**THE PRESIDENT:** I have a statement on Germany and Berlin. I will read a few paragraphs of it, and it will be available for distribution right after the press conference.

The Soviet aide-memoirs is a document which speaks of peace but threatens to disturb it. It speaks of ending the abnormal situation in Germany but insists on making permanent its abnormal division. It refers to the Four Power Alliance of World War II but seeks the unilateral abrogation of the rights of the other three powers. It calls for new international agreements while preparing to violate existing ones. It offers certain assurances while making it plain that its previous assurances are not to be relied upon. It professes concern for the rights of the citizens of West Berlin while seeking to expose them to the immediate or eventual domination of a regime which permits no self-determination. Three simple facts are clear:

(1) Today there is peace in Berlin, in Germany and in Europe. If that peace is destroyed by the unilateral actions of the Soviet Union, its leaders will bear a heavy responsibility before world opinion and history.

(2) The people of West Berlin are free. In that sense it is already a "free city" -- free to determine its own leaders and free to enjoy the fundamental human rights reaffirmed in the United Nations Charter.

(3) Today the continued presence in West Berlin of the United States, the United Kingdom and France is by clear legal right, arising from war, acknowledged in many agreements signed by the Soviet Union, and strongly supported by the overwhelming majority of the people of that city. Their freedom is dependent upon the exercise of these rights -- an exercise which is thus a political and moral obligation as well as a legal right. Inasmuch as these rights, including the right of access to Berlin, are not held from the Soviet government, they cannot be ended by any unilateral action of the Soviet Union. They cannot be affected by a so-called "peace treaty," covering only a part of Germany, with a regime of the Soviet Union's own creation -- a regime which is not freely representative of all or any part of Germany, and does not enjoy the confidence of the seventeen million East Germans. The steady stream of German refugees from East to West is eloquent testimony to this fact.

The real intent of the June 4 aide-memoire is that East Berlin, a part of a city under 4-Power status, would be formally absorbed into the so-called German Democratic Republic while West Berlin, even though called a "free city," would lose the protection presently provided by the Western Powers and become subject to the will of a totalitarian regime. Its leader, Herr Ulbricht, has made clear his intention, once this

so-called "peace treaty" is signed, to curb West Berlin's communications with the free world and to suffocate the freedom it now enjoys.

The world knows that there is no reason for a crisis over Berlin today -- and that, if one develops, it will be caused by the Soviet Union's and their government's attempt to invade the rights of others and manufacture tensions. It is, moreover, misusing the words "freedom" and "peace."

A city does not become free merely by calling it a "free city." For a city or a people to be free requires that they be given the opportunity, without economic, political or police pressure, to make their own choice to live their own lives. The people of West Berlin today have that freedom. It is the objective of our policy that they will continue to enjoy it.

Peace does not come automatically from a "peace treaty." There is peace in Germany today even though the situation is "abnormal." A "peace treaty" that adversely affects the lives and rights of millions will not bring peace with it. A "peace treaty" that attempts to affect adversely the solemn commitments of three great powers will not bring peace with it.

We again urge the Soviet government to reconsider its course, to return to the path of constructive cooperation it so frequently states it desires, and to work with its World War II allies in concluding a just and enduring settlement of issues remaining from that conflict.

Secondly, preliminary estimates of the Gross National Product in the second quarter of this year have been completed. The Nation's output of goods and services rose sharply to an annual rate of 515 billion dollars, a 14 billion dollar increase over the first quarter, reversing three consecutive quarters of decline.

Total personal income has risen steadily. In June it reached nearly 417 billion dollars, 10 1/2 billion dollars above its recession low of last February, and as you know, the Federal Reserve Board Index of Production increased two points in June, to reach a level of 110.

There are still, however, serious problems of unemployment in this country. As I said some time ago, unemployment is bad enough when there is a recession, but it is intolerable when there is prosperity, and I believe it important, therefore, that the country, the Administration, the Congress, remember, as we move into a period of advance, that there are still five million Americans who are unemployed, a million who are employed part-time, and we have to develop programs and actions that will make it easier for them to secure their jobs.

And finally, as you know, I had hoped to be able to attend the forthcoming meeting of the Inter-American Economic and Social Council at Montevideo. However, during early August, the Congress will be dealing with many of the most important issues of this session, including the foreign aid bill itself. Therefore, I consider it in the best interests of the Alliance For Progress that I remain here and work for those proposals on which our Latin American program and indeed our future relations with the entire free world so largely depend.

The delegation that I am sending to Montevideo will be led by Secretary of the Treasury Dillon, and will consist of high-level, responsible people from other departments of the government. They carry with them proposals to which I have given a good deal of personal attention and which has occupied the attention of

the government for some months, and which will, I believe and hope, mark an historic turning point in the life of the Americas.

Our task at Montevideo will be to build the framework of procedures and goals within which we can construct an American community of democratic states moving towards a better life for their people. This conference is the most important international gathering since the beginning of this Administration, for on its success very largely depends the future of freedom in this Hemisphere.

**QUESTION:** Mr. President, are you now considering a declaration of national emergency, limited or otherwise, in order to call up National Guard or Reserve units?

**THE PRESIDENT:** We are concluding this afternoon our review of what actions we might take towards strengthening the military position of the United States. Those decisions will be brought to the attention of our Allies this week who also bear heavy responsibilities in this area. They will be part of a speech which I will make to the country next Tuesday evening, and will be presented to the Congress a week from today, and at that time the details of what we now plan to do will be made public.

**QUESTION:** Mr. President, some months ago you suggested that our Allies could contribute to Western security by increasing the strength of their conventional forces. Since then, nothing much seems to have happened in this direction. Could you tell us whether you are satisfied with the pace of developments in this field?

**THE PRESIDENT:** We will, this week, be talking with our Allies about what we intend to do, and we will also have consultations with them about what we can in common do. There is going to be a Foreign Ministers' Conference in early August in Paris, which will be preceded by preliminary consultations, and at that time this will be one of the matters which will be before the Foreign Ministers.

We have the problem of concerting our activities with fourteen other countries. Napoleon once said that he won all his successes because he fought allies. We are anxious that we make the consultation between all our Allies on all these questions, military, political, information, economic -- that we try to work out procedures which will permit close harmony in the actions of all the countries which bear responsibility as Members of NATO. And therefore, in answer to your question, we will be discussing -- this will be one of the subjects to be discussed in the next two weeks.

**QUESTION:** Mr. President, in the note on Berlin yesterday, it said on several occasions that we are not wedded to the present situation in Berlin. In view of that, are we now planning to take an active lead in bringing about orderly and beneficial developments on Berlin, and specifically, how do you look upon the idea of an international peace conference on this subject?

**THE PRESIDENT:** The statement of yesterday plus the statement of today represents the view I want to express at this time on Germany and Berlin; and other views will be expressed, of course, as the time moves on. But this is where I stand for the present.

**QUESTION:** Mr. President, if your proposals for meeting the Berlin situation require substantial additional defense outlays, would you favor taxing to pay for this, rather than adding it to the deficit spending? The Senate Majority Whip has suggested that we ought to meet this kind of cost with higher taxes.

**THE PRESIDENT:** As you know, our budget, if the economy is proceeding at what we hope will be a steady rate of growth, the present tax structure would bring in very substantial resources. I think we discussed at a previous conference that that tax structure is so strong that it contributed to strangling the recovery after the 1958 recession. Therefore, the judgment on taxes and on expenditures will be made in light of what will produce the best economic situation for the United States in the coming months. We will make it clear at the time that we complete our review and announce then as to what exactly we propose on taxes.

I will suggest, however, while we are on it, that both the previous Administration and this Administration recommended nearly 840 million dollars of tax increase in postal payments. That amount has been steadily scaled down, and yet we have been unable to get a vote in the House of Representatives on the issue, and no hearings have been held in the Senate. This is a matter which I am hopeful the Congress will deal with, because it represents an agreement between this Administration and the last Administration that we should not permit nearly a billion dollars in deficit in the Postal Service, and a bill has just passed the Senate providing increased benefits for the employees which will add another sixty or seventy million dollars to the deficit which will take it over a billion dollars if passed and signed by the President.

So here is at least one area, preliminary to a decisive answer to your question, which will come in the next few days, that I think we should move on.

**QUESTION:** Mr. President, the whole bundle of your school legislation was torpedoed in the House Rules Committee yesterday, and it's clear that one of the things that largely helped to sink it was the religious issue.

Will you discuss that problem, including the report that you have just about given up on passing school legislation in this first session of this Congress?

**THE PRESIDENT:** Well, I know that we were defeated in the Rules Committee by a vote of 8 to 7. I will say that 7 out of those 8 votes came from Members of Congress who were not sympathetic to the legislation, nor supported me in the last election. They of course have their responsibility to meet. But the fact of the matter is that there are procedures available to the House of Representatives to adopt this bill in spite of the action of yesterday before the session ends.

Now the Senate passed it by a generous majority, and it came out of the House Committee with support. I consider it to be probably the most important piece of domestic legislation. I am hopeful that the Members of Congress who support this will use those procedures which are available to them under the rules of the House to bring this to a vote, and that a majority of the Members of Congress will support it.

Every study that we make indicates the need for the legislation. There is broad general support, in my opinion, for improving our educational system. Anyone who has a child wants that child to be educated to the extent of its talents. This program is most important. In addition, included within that bill is a provision for the so-called impacted areas, and the July first date has passed, and those impacted areas are working on an emergency basis. So I feel that the impacted area part should stay in this bill, that it should be I am hopeful considered by the House, and that a majority of the Members will vote "aye" or "nay" on it.

Now this matter has been involved. Education is a very important part of the life of this country, and there are strong feelings. The matter of religion has been brought into it -- other issues have. My view is that assistance for public education should be passed by this session. I am hopeful a majority of the Members of the House will agree, because I think it would be a most important step forward, and I am confident that Congressman Thompson and others in the House -- Senator Morse in the Senate -- who have been working on it, will continue to use all of their energies to get this bill by. I would sign it with the greatest possible pleasure.

**QUESTION:** Mr. President, could you give us a broad estimate of approximately how much more Defense funds you might be asking next week?

**THE PRESIDENT:** No, Mr. Lawrence. We are meeting in the National Security Council this afternoon, at which a final judgment will be reached. We do have an obligation to communicate our views to -- particularly those who are involved with us in Berlin. And it will be presented to the Congress early next week, and to the American people early next week.

**QUESTION:** Mr. President, will you give us your view of the Freedom Riders movement?

**THE PRESIDENT:** I think the Attorney General has made it clear that we believe that everyone who travels, for whatever reason they travel, should enjoy the full Constitutional protections given to them by the law and by the Constitution. They should be able to move freely in interstate commerce.

I am hopeful that that will become the generally accepted view, and if there are any legal doubts about the right of people to move in interstate commerce, that that legal position will be clarified. We naturally want those rights to be developed in a way which will permit them to be lasting, and which will permit them to meet the needs of those people who wish to travel.

In my judgment, there is no question of the legal rights of the Freedom Riders to move in interstate commerce. Those rights, whether we agree with those who travel, whether we agree with the purpose for which they travel, those rights stand, provided they are exercised in a peaceful way. We may not like what people print in the paper, but there is no question of their Constitutional right to print it. So that that follows, in my opinion, for those who move in interstate commerce.

The basic question is not the Freedom Riders. The basic question is that anyone who moves in interstate commerce should be able to do so freely. That's the more substantive question, not the question merely of the Freedom Riders.

**QUESTION:** Mr. President, in your consideration of the military requirements, now, in dealing with the Berlin situation, and of the allied military re-evaluation, are you basing your judgment on the assumption that it is conceivable that we might fight a ground war in Europe over Berlin?

**THE PRESIDENT:** I am making my judgment on what I consider to be the relative power balance between the Communist bloc and ourselves, the attitude which the Communist bloc is now taking, and what possible needs we might have in protecting our commitments of vital interest.

We have to realize that our commitments are far-flung. We operate at the end of a long supply line. Others in some cases operate at the end of a short supply line. All this indicates the needs -- the very

heavy burdens placed upon this country. We have commitments in Southeast Asia, and we have commitments in Berlin, and we are being very vigorously challenged.

Now in answer to your question, I think that we will make public, and you could make perhaps a better calculation after we give our figures -- as I said before, those figures should not be discussed, in my opinion, until at least those who share this burden with us have a chance to be informed.

This alliance, the NATO alliance, is going to move through very difficult periods in the coming months. Every country has its own strategic and tactical problems and carries particular burdens which other countries do not. If this alliance is going to move in concert, in my opinion we have to improve our consultation.

It took us, as you know, some time before we were able to come to a conclusion on the language of the aide-memoirs. We are going to have to improve our consultation so that we can come to decisions more quickly. But I think we should realize, as anyone who has studied the history of alliances, how enormous a task it is to have fifteen countries moving down a stream altogether, over an issue which involves the security of them all. So we will inform them, and then the Congress, of what we plan to do, and the Congress will make the final judgment.

**QUESTION:** Mr. President, can you give us some details of the speech that you plan for the Nation next Tuesday?

**THE PRESIDENT:** The speech will be a discussion of what our responsibilities are, and what our hazards are, and what I think the situation appears to be at the present time, what its consequences could be, and what we must do and what our Allies must do to move through not merely the present difficulties, but I would say we have to look forward to many challenges in the coming months and years.

So we will try to discuss the general problem that the United States faces in the security field in the summer of 1961 -- not merely that tied to Berlin, but generally.

**QUESTION:** Mr. President, could you tell us whether the Space program -- the launching of a man into orbit, is going to come a bit faster than we might have expected, in view of the fact that a second short ballistic flight was scheduled for today? I don't know whether it has come off yet.

**THE PRESIDENT:** Yes, I am not familiar with whether there has been any step-up in the previously announced schedule. If there has been, I will speak to Mr. Webb. But as I understood it, it was at the end of this year that we are talking about the orbit, but that may not be the precise date now. I have to look into it.

**QUESTION:** Mr. President, many countries receiving foreign aid from us are concerned because their expanding populations nullify the aid. The President of Pakistan referred to this in his speech to the Joint Session of Congress, and also in his speech at the Press Club. Since you are asking billions of dollars more in foreign aid, will you help countries control their expanding populations if they ask you?

**THE PRESIDENT:** I have said before, Mrs. Craig, that this is a decision which goes very much to the life of a country, and it is a personal decision and a national decision which these nations must make. The

problem is not altogether an economic one. We help countries which carry out different policies in this regard and it is a judgment, in my opinion, which they should make.

**QUESTION:** Mr. President, although the White House has commented on the fact that Under Secretary of State Bowles is remaining in his job at this time, there still remains some doubt as to your own confidence in him, sir, and your own ideas on how the administration of the State Department is proceeding?

**THE PRESIDENT:** Well, in the first place, contrary to some reports, I have never asked Mr. Bowles for his resignation, nor has he ever offered it. I have always expected that he would be part of this Administration until it concluded its responsibilities.

I have a high regard for Mr. Bowles. He was my adviser on foreign policy last year. And all my conversations with members of the State Department, the members of the Defense Department, and the members of the intelligence community, have gone to the question of how we can best organize our talents -- and the White House -- how we can best organize our talents so that everyone is being used in a way which makes maximum use of their abilities.

Now, when General Taylor was appointed it was regarded as a diminution of the responsibilities of the Joint Chiefs, which it is not. But it came about as a result of conversations between the Joint Chiefs and Secretary McNamara. We have the Killian Committee now examining the structure of the intelligence community. We have been talking about how we can make more effective the structure and the personnel of the State Department. We will continue to do so, because they are faced with unprecedented hazards.

As I said, when Mr. Rusk is going to be meeting with the Foreign Ministers on the vital question of Berlin, Secretary Dillon will be meeting at Montevideo, and this puts a great burdens on the Department of State, which is the arm of the President in foreign policy.

Mr. Bowles has my complete confidence. He is going on the trip which will take him to Africa and Asia, consulting with heads of states and with Allies, and I expect that his trip will be most valuable, and I am confident that everyone who talks to him, Americans or heads of other states, will recognize that Mr. Bowles will be, I hope, a valuable part of this Administration as long as it continues, and that he has the confidence of the President and the Secretary of State.

**QUESTION:** Mr. President, does your answer mean that there is a possibility that he may be shifted, though, to some other responsibility more in keeping with his talents?

**THE PRESIDENT:** We have reached no judgment on how we are going to organize any of these departments.

I put the general principle forward that we are going to attempt to maximize the abilities of everyone working in the government. If I came to the conclusion that Mr. Bowles could be more effective in another responsible position, I would not hesitate to ask him to take that position, and I am confident Mr. Bowles would not hesitate to take it.

My judgment is, now, that he should stay as Under Secretary of State, and if there is going to be any change, I will make it very clear at the time. But he will continue as Under Secretary of State, and I have no plan to ask him to assume a new responsibility. But any time I think that he or anyone else in the

Administration can do their job better in another way, I will certainly ask them, because as long as I am going to bear the responsibility of the Presidency, I am going to attempt to make sure that it is implemented to the best, at least, of my ability.

**QUESTION:** Mr. President, Congressman Powell said yesterday, sir, that it is your intention to veto any bill that may be passed for aid to education in Federally impacted areas unless a general Federal aid bill is approved. Now would you veto a bill for impacted areas if the general aid bill is --

**THE PRESIDENT:** My judgment is that the impacted school bill should be a part of general public assistance, and that is the position of the Administration. And therefore I am hopeful that the Members of Congress who are anxious to secure the passage of this legislation should also recognize that we are not meeting our responsibilities if we merely pass the impacted area, but we should pass them both together. And that is what we are working to do. As far as what action we would take, of course, we would have to wait until Congress has made its judgment. But my view is that the best way to secure the passage of that bill is to treat this as a unit which I believe it is.

**QUESTION:** Mr. President, in your reply to the Soviet aide-memoirs, you stressed several times the lack of the right of self-determination among the peoples of Eastern Europe, and within the week you have issued a Proclamation looking to the freedom of Captive Nations. Can you conceive, in the event of any popular uprisings in Eastern Europe, of a more active role for the United States in support of those uprisings than was the case in Hungary in 1956?

**THE PRESIDENT:** I will stand on the statement which we made at this time.

**QUESTION:** Mr. President, do you personally favor passage of aid to private schools as part of the National Defense Education Act, as part of the school package, which Congress should enact this year?

**THE PRESIDENT:** Well, as you know, in the bill which we sent to the Congress, it continued the previous assistance given to nonpublic schools, to meet certain technical and defense requirements. The Office of HEW, I think indicated to the House Committee that the amendments which they added were not unconstitutional. Whether they are in public policy or not, and whether that would affect the final passage would be a judgment we would reach. They are not unconstitutional because they do not go across the board in a way which in my opinion is clearly unconstitutional. But the program which we support and which we hope the Congress will pass is the program which we sent up there. Now the Congress has to make its judgment on those bills. But in my judgment the best bills, and the most effective is meeting the problem, was the legislation that we sent up there.

**QUESTION:** Mr. President, Soviet Ambassador Menshikov is reported to have said that he did not think the United States people were either prepared or ready to go to war over Berlin. Do you think Ambassador Menshikov is sending back a correct assessment of the mood and temper of the American people?

**THE PRESIDENT:** Well, I saw that this report came out of some function. I don't know how accurate it is, and whether that represents Mr. Menshikov's view. But I don't think that it's possible that anyone could read the aide-memoirs or the other statements which have been made by other governments, and this government, without realizing that this is a very basic issue, the question of West Berlin, and that we intend to honor our commitments.

**QUESTION:** Mr. President, tomorrow, as you doubtless know, marks the end of your first six months in the Presidency. In view of Laos, Cuba, and now Berlin, I wonder if there is anything you would care to tell us about the vicissitudes of the Presidency?

**THE PRESIDENT:** Well, I will say that we have had a -- I think I said in the State of the Union Address that the news will be worse instead of it's better. I would also say that Mr. Khrushchev would probably agree with that, in the sense that I think we are always conscious of the difficulties that we have but there are a good many difficulties which should be taken into calculation in considering future bloc actions, is considering their own problem, whether it's the food shortage in China, or the difficulties in other parts of the bloc empire, relations between certain bloc countries, and all the rest.

Now, as far as the United States, we have been pleased with the progress we have made internally, as far as the economy, the progress the country has made. We do feel we still have this problem of rather chronic unemployment. I am glad that some of these bills which have been discussed for a number of years have passed. I am hopeful that we can add education to that, and long-term borrowing authority for foreign aid.

My judgment is that the American people and this government and the Congress must realize that we are in a long struggle which we will be involved with for a great many years against very powerful countries, nearly a billion people in them, with strong economies in some cases, and that we cannot look for success on every occasion.

But I think if we have the patience and the willingness to take some setbacks without taking unwise actions, and recognizing that there are also other successes which may not be as dramatic to us, but certainly come within Mr. Khrushchev's calculations, that we can move through this period, I hope, protecting our vital interests and our commitments, and also maintaining the peace. But no one should think that it's going to be easy.

**(AL SPIVACK, UPI):** Thank you, Mr. President.