

July 4, 1961

**Summary of N.S. Khrushchev's Speech to Graduates
of the USSR Defensive Forces Military Academy on
the Question of Signing the Peace Agreement with
the GDR**

Citation:

"Summary of N.S. Khrushchev's Speech to Graduates of the USSR Defensive Forces Military Academy on the Question of Signing the Peace Agreement with the GDR", July 4, 1961, Wilson Center Digital Archive, RGANI, f. 52, op. 1, d. 322, ll. 12-28. Contributed by Sergey Radchenko and translated by Gary Goldberg.
<https://digitalarchive.umd.edu/document/300913>

Summary:

Khrushchev addresses graduates of Soviet military academies, emphasizing the strength of the Soviet armed forces and the importance of peace through disarmament and diplomacy. He outlines the need to conclude a peace treaty with Germany to resolve lingering tensions from World War II, criticizing the resistance of West Germany under Chancellor Adenauer and warning against militarization and nuclear escalation. Khrushchev stresses that the Soviet Union seeks peaceful coexistence but will defend its sovereignty if necessary.

Credits:

This document was made possible with support from Blavatnik Family Foundation

Original Language:

Russian

Contents:

Translation - English

Abstract of a Speech by N. S. Khrushchev at a Meeting with Graduates of Military Academies of the USSR Armed Forces Concerning Questions in Connection with the Signing of a Peace Treaty with the German Democratic Republic

a The title of the document was partially used.

I want to outline for you the plan for my speech at the graduation [ceremony] of military academies, because this speech will be very serious. It should demonstrate our strength, but indirectly, not crudely. In general, the speech should be peace-loving, in spite of the audience.

This is the approximate abstract of the speech:

Greetings from the CPSU CC, the Presidium, and the Soviet government. Congratulations on the conclusion of [your] training. An address in the form of greetings and gratitude to the professors and instructors who taught the personnel. This formal part can be taken from past speeches.

Say briefly that the graduates are receiving ranks and are being poured into our army at a time when 20 years have passed since the start of the Second World War, when fascist Germany attacked the Soviet Union. We should strengthen the army.^b

^b The text beginning with the words "Germany attacked" and ending with the words "strengthen the army" were underlined in pencil.

We have submitted proposals for general and complete disarmament, but these proposals of ours are not being accepted, they even want to accept our proposals concerning the cessation of the testing of nuclear and missile weaponry with the condition so that we do not have an equal vote even in the monitoring organization to conduct verification, but makes us subordinate. They want to make it so that verification is conducted on our territory, in our country, but we should be removed from the organization of this verification. This will be the function of the one who is appointed. Of course, there is no doubt that this will be some new Hammarskjöld.

It is evident from this that the negotiating partners have realized that our forces are equal, but they do not draw the conclusion that with equal strength comes equal rights and equal opportunities. But they want to rule over all the bodies and impose their will while recognizing we have equality in strength.

Humanity awaits such a decision in which it should be calm, that a Third World War will not break out. But only disarmament is needed to do this. But disarmament is not being accepted, and accordingly we should strengthen our defense and our armed forces.

Right now the might of our country, the successes in the development of the economy, culture, science, and technology are being transferred to strengthen our Soviet army, to its might. We can be proud of the successes of our people and our scientists who have created the most modern means of defense. Our Soviet Army right now is armed with the most modern missile weaponry both for close combat as well as for medium-range and intercontinental battle. Therefore we also sought a reduction of the armed forces, their numerical strength, and have honestly declared that in reducing the armed forces and their numerical strength we increase the firepower of our Soviet armed forces.

The launches of spacecraft and the latest spacecraft with a man on board – Yuriy Gagarin⁶⁸ – is an achievement by a science of new heights. And our country of the Soviets, our socialist system, achieved this first. This is on the one hand; on the other, this is a demonstration of the technical abilities which our Soviet people have achieved; this is a demonstration of the intercontinental missile technology which the Soviet Army has acquired, because the missiles launched into space, these are the same combat missiles which are in the inventory of the Soviet Army, only a different customization (content); instead of an atomic or hydrogen bomb, a spacecraft. This is the only difference, all the rest is the same.

We have proposed to our allies in the war against fascist Germany to conclude a peace treaty to improve [SIC] and relax international tension and to eliminate the Cold War, which would facilitate an agreement on disarmament; we have offered to liquidate the vestiges of the Second World War which are contained in the

unconcluded peace treaty with Germany. We have proposed to our allies in the war against fascist Germany to conclude a peace treaty. We turned to West Germany, to Chancellor Adenauer, so that he regard this necessity with understanding if he wants to avoid war and to facilitate the normalization [of the situation] in Europe and in the entire world. We named a deadline, that we want to conclude a peace treaty this year, because 16 years have already passed since the end of the War and the explanations that there has not been time to elaborate this question are unconvincing.

I report this because you are the new generation of the contingent of our Soviet Army so that you know what our policy is and what conditions have been created.

What have they answered us so far? The governments themselves have not given us a direct answer, but the organs of the press are closest either to the headquarters or the governments or the ministries of foreign affairs, and therefore they are more inspired, what voices are heard? Unfortunately, such voices are heard in which there is much nonsense and little common sense. They threaten us with war, they threaten that they will stand "firmly" and that they will use the armed forces in order to break through to West Berlin after the signing of the peace treaty in which we offer to declare West Berlin a free city with a special status and a guarantee of independence, non-interference, etc.

You, comrade military men, know what this means if we sign a peace treaty and the other armies do not recognize the sovereignty of the German Democratic Republic which it will acquire after the signing of the peace treaty. You will be in Germany yourselves, where our troops are located according to a well-known treaty; it means you will have to meet and rebuff aggressive forces which want to impose a war on us by force after the signing of the peace treaty. I direct your attention to the fact that right after the signing of the peace treaty they want to answer us with a new Third World War, to return to the state of the Second World War. And these people say that they are doing this in the name of good, in the name of peace, etc. This is blasphemy.

c The word "peace" was underlined in pencil.

Right now the heads of governments repeat such threats in their statements. For example, the President of the Republic of France, De Gaulle, said in his speech that by autumn France will withdraw one division from Algeria and station it in Europe to strengthen the forces of NATO. Mr. Macmillan said that they will stand "firmly", and other expressions.

We also say that we will stand firmly, but we want to stand firmly on a position of peace and non-interference, to stand firmly on positions of recognition of sovereignty and non-interference in the internal affairs of other countries. We stand and will stand firmly on this. We give our firmness a definite direction.

When others call divisions, but in some of the American press voices to conduct a mobilization, to send troops to Europe, etc. are even heard, then you can imagine that this is not being done for peace and not to avoid interfering in one another's affairs, but for war, for interference, for aggression.

How should we react to this?

We regret that they do not show attention to the need to conclude a peace treaty (say it softly). We will very much regret it if our allies do not sign a peace treaty together with Germany if West Germany does not want to sign a peace treaty. As I have already declared, we will sign a peace treaty with the German Democratic Republic with all the following conditions: the state of war will end on the entire territory of the German Democratic Republic, to also include West Berlin, because this is the territory of the German Democratic Republic. And the occupation rights which extend to West Berlin will cease to be in effect; the legal foundations for the presence of the Western countries in West Berlin lose effect if there is no new agreement between the Soviet Union, the German Democratic Republic, France, Britain, and America.

What kind of agreement might this be?

There might be an agreement, but without securing "the preservation of the freedom of the population of West Berlin", as the Western countries express it.

Accordingly, we proposed this earlier, that we are ready to guarantee the

independence and non-interference in the affairs of West Berlin and, consequently, ensure it the freedom of choice of its sociopolitical system, and access to West Berlin is also on the basis of an agreement both with West Berlin and with the government of the country through whose territory communications are possible, that is, with the German Democratic Republic.

But when we offer these, it would seem, reasonable proposals, in response to us they begin to count divisions and speak of mobilization, and Chancellor Adenauer begins to demand atomic weapons for the Bundeswehr until he is hoarse so, they do not appeal to reason here, but they already appeal to fear and want to bring this fear to us.

You all here are military men and almost all of you have gone through the Second World War; you know that right now, if, as they say, God forbid a war is unleashed, then it will be hard to bring fear with one division or with ten divisions, but if they unleash a war then it will be a nuclear war; when the missiles and nuclear missile weapons begin to speak, then the question of how many divisions will be brought from Algeria, one division or 10, will not change the situation at all.

Mr. Adenauer did not fight but evidently wants to make up for what was lost in old age, and it gives him no peace; evidently now he wants to unleash a war while he lives because he is already an old person. Does Mr. Chancellor Adenauer imagine what war is?

We know, we don't want to console ourselves with the fact that our bombs will burst, but they will not burst over us. No, they will also burst over us. We know that our enemies, if they unleash a war, also have this weapon.

But we want to appeal to reason, not to fail to resort this at all and to conclude a peace treaty. But if you prevent us and unleash a war after the signing of the peace treaty, Mr. Adenauer, you know that West Germany will cease to exist, not just on the first day, but in the first hours of the war which you unleash. This is not a threat, it is simply common sense. I speak of West Germany, but such a fate will also befall its neighbors if they unleash a war.

Therefore we should soberly imagine right now and not frighten one another, because right now the times for frightening one another have passed, because we have the means, and we would be idiots if we surrendered to your intimidation. Especially, what would we achieve? Not achievements, not territories, not claims on the wealth of others - we want nothing. We want peace, to conclude a peace treaty, and to consolidate in this peace treaty what developed as a result of the defeat of Nazi Germany.

West Berlin is actually an anomaly because it is an island in the midst of the German Democratic Republic and a capitalist system has been preserved there, on that island. Right now there are by right, until a peace treaty is concluded, the troops of our allies - America, France, and Britain. How is this to be resolved? We have thought much so that this resolution not bring any harm to the peoples, but that it would provide satisfaction to all countries which fought against Germany - we came up with, and we could not come up with anything better, so that neither one side nor another would suffer any moral, political, or material injury, we have offered to create a free city, we have offered guarantees to this free city and the participation together with France, America, and Britain or that the guarantors should be other, neutral, countries. But in both cases the involvement of the UN is mandatory.

Would it seem that you could think up something more rational? And this proposal of ours is viewed as a threat - they want to show it so - and accordingly they threaten us with a war, to use force.

You understand, dear comrades, that they are imposing on us such conditions when we would be forced to defend ourselves and defend sovereignty and prepare to repel [an attack]. (find the appropriate wording).

Nevertheless I would like to say the following in my speech in conclusion.

We are a great power, the Soviet Union. We have achieved improbable successes in the development of the economy, culture, and technology, and we have created our own armed forces, which crushed German militarism. We bore the main burden. After this we got stronger economically, politically, and militarily.

This gives me the right - I think they will understand me correctly - to turn to the heads of the countries, our former allies, the US, President Kennedy, the President of the Republic of France, General De Gaulle, and Prime Minister of Great Britain Mr. Macmillan with a call to find in themselves the strength and show wisdom and give the peoples of our countries and the peoples of all the countries of the world satisfaction. We, as the representatives of our peoples, our governments, would display the greatest wisdom and would literally delight the peoples of all countries if we found in ourselves the wisdom and strength to liquidate the vestiges of the Second World War and conclude a peace treaty, sit at a table, sit for negotiations, and conclude a peace treaty, and discard methods as unfit, threats against one another, because our peoples will burn in this war. And if you say so, other countries which rattle sabers most of all - this is the government of the FRG - will suffer in this war most of all. Therefore Chancellor Adenauer should also display sobriety and prudence and understanding.

What are we suggesting? To sit at a table.

(And here present again the proposals which I have made. Use the cable which I sent yesterday, the TASS article "Concerning the Problem of West Berlin", citing our proposals - repeat, don't just say).

While observing the elementary rules of sovereignty for countries the rights of permission to this access go through the government of the country through whose territory these communications pass.

For example, when we have just now established (I said this to the British Ambassador during a conversation) aerial communications with Britain and we fly from London to Moscow, then we fly via Copenhagen. Of course, no one would allow us to fly via Copenhagen if we had not come to agreement with the government of Denmark. So this is considered normal and legal, so why is such a rule concerning access to West Berlin not normal and not legal so that there be an agreement with the German Democratic Republic for overflight or the use of the territory of this country.

(Develop non-rigid language. Otherwise we paint ourselves into a corner. Present everything that we propose so that it is more intelligible).

We don't want anyone to be a winner or a loser. We only want a consolidation. We don't want just not to encroach on sovereignty, but we don't want any country's prestige to suffer. Therefore we want to sign a peace treaty. But if Chancellor Adenauer wants to push us, as he said, reunification - this is another question, then let the Germans themselves agree among themselves, because each person with common sense understands that this is not the business of our governments, but the business of the Germans themselves. We declare that if the Germans agree among themselves on reunification on any basis we will not interfere in this matter. This is the business of the German people. But it will never happen that we liquidate the socialist system with our own hands to present this for the consolation of Adenauer. I think that all people will agree with this. Such questions are not decided at a "roundtable" during the drafting of a peace treaty, because these questions are decided in battles. We [had] such a question: in the Soviet Union it was decided after the October Revolution, and its resolution took the four years of the Civil War. This was fought by Russians against Russians, Ukrainians against Ukrainians. This was a class war. This was a war of the poor against the rich.

If this is a question, then it is not a subject for negotiations on any level, in any forum. This question concerns the Germans.

d SIC

If they do not pay attention then, comrades, you see that the government of the Soviet Union does everything. If we do not find understanding, we should sign and we will sign the peace treaty. Therefore on you will rest the responsibility of demonstrating your duty if they impose a war on us so that an aggressor who raises his hand is stopped and punished. (Find a wording).

I read the declaration of US President Kennedy at a press conference where he addressed the Soviet Union with a reasonable proposal. I like it. We have spoken about this more than once. And if right now Mr. Kennedy says this, I welcome such a peaceful ambition about peaceful coexistence and competition, which country and

which system will give their people more benefits.

Mr. Kennedy treats our statements and our capabilities with some neglect. He said that it is unrealistic that we think that we will catch up with the US in the timeframes we named. Well, that is his right. Just forecasts of economic development cause arguments most of all – I also dispute and don't believe in the statement which Mr. Kennedy made when during the election campaign when he criticized Eisenhower for the slow pace of the development of the economy. I was even telling Mrs. Roosevelt that when Kennedy came I thought that he would not achieve more than what Eisenhower achieved, and possibly even less, because in the conditions of a capitalist system it depends least of all on the President since each capitalist manages his own capital himself.

But it is flattering for me to hear that US President Mr. Kennedy admitted that all the same the socialist system ensures the Soviet Union [with the capability] of catching up to the US. He admitted in principle, only he said what we will do in more distant timeframes than I named.

But, Mr. Kennedy, this is not a subject for a war between us and not even a subject for dispute. Let's let history judge who is making the more correct forecasts, and who is mistaken. Our peoples and the peoples of other countries will not suffer from this. These questions are not decided by war, not by the deaths of people, but these questions are decided by labor, persistent labor, by the development of science and technology, invention, etc.

We like all this, it impresses us. Mr. Kennedy, let us, Mr. De Gaulle, Mr. Macmillan, and I will also turn to Mr. Adenauer, let's compete in this field. This would be a rational solution. And I can say beforehand that if we, having concluded a peace treaty and shaken hands, would make such a statement that right now our efforts are pointed in this direction, it would sort of inspire the whole world, all humanity, what a relief it would be, and this would be the prologue for negotiations and the achievement of the final goal, the dream of humanity, for an agreement on disarmament in order to rule out war, etc. We are ready for this. (Possibly briefly present our position on disarmament).

(This is approximately the outline. And to show firmness, but firmness not through declarations and threats, but by real activity, the existence of atomic weaponry, the existence of missile weaponry).

Therefore, if a war begins, the first shots will begin on the border, where the troops stand face to face, but the war will break out in the entire world, since it is a thermonuclear war, and therefore there will be no front, and no rear. After all, this needs to be imagined right now. This will be the most terrible war. And, of course, gentlemen, you understand that you are threatening us, but you know that we have these means. So what do you think, do you want to corner us and deprive us of the right to sign a treaty, to impose a policy from a position of strength, to throw us out by force – so understand, gentlemen, that if you have such a desire, such is an unrealistic desire. Because when you threaten us, then everything with which you threaten us, you understand, that you will meet all this on your own land.

Therefore it is necessary to display prudence, and here we call for this prudence. And it can be expressed right now in not heating up the atmosphere, and not increasing the tension but, on the contrary, to fundamentally cut [it] back. And to achieve this goal we propose the signing of a peace treaty. What could be the most peace-loving, what proposal could be more peace-loving, than a proposal to conclude a peace treaty and eliminate the state of war[?]

If you do not understand and do not want to understand us, then the responsibility is on you, then, as they say, you won't escape fate. Our people, our army, which is a representative of the people, will spare no effort nor lives to defend our Motherland, to defend the right, to defend peace, etc.

Say:

When Chancellor Adenauer demands atomic weapons, what are they to him? Are they needed for peace? Twice Germany has unleashed world wars and right now, still not having signed a peace treaty, is demanding atomic weapons. For what, for peace? To unleash a third world war. Therefore it is necessary to show [one's] will and sign a peace treaty. But it is necessary to show such crazy people where this will lead to if

they strive [for] those times which existed under Hitler, they have passed for Germany.

(In just such a spirit. Show firmness, but not with a simple threat. It is necessary to appeal to people because they know that we have much strength.

In a word, don't drive [them] into a corner and don't show [our] teeth.

If we manage to work out this outline it will be a good speech. It will be both firm and mild. Firmness in achievement of the goal and mildness in not putting them in a difficult position; I am addressing them in a humane way.

Fulbright, a journalist - more and more Americans are taking such a point of view. We still have half a year ahead.

Perhaps I won't have any more speeches since there won't be an occasion [for one]. But here it is just to give such a speech to the military.

Notes: "Dictation of Cde. N. S. Khrushchev". "Recorded by A. Zakharova and N. Gavrilova, 4 July 1961".

RGANI. F. 52. Op. 1. D. 322. L. 12-28. Original. Typescript.