

Western Powers' Reply (March 25, 1952)

Abstract

In March of 1952, neither the three Western powers nor the West German government were willing to abandon the Federal Republic's ongoing integration into the West. The Western powers distrusted Stalin's March 10th offer to negotiate with them and an all-German government on a peace treaty and the reunification of Germany. They made the formation of an all-German government conditional upon the holding of free elections throughout Germany and emphasized that a government elected in such a free manner had the right to make independent decisions about its own alliances.

Source

Note from the American Embassy in Moscow to the Soviet Foreign Ministry, Regarding the Soviet Draft of a German Peace Treaty, March 25, 1952

The United States Government, in consultation with the Governments of the United Kingdom and France, has given the most careful consideration to the Soviet Government's note of March 10, 1952, which proposed the conclusion of a peace treaty with Germany. They have also consulted the Government of the German Federal Republic and the representatives of Berlin.

The conclusion of a just and lasting peace treaty which would end the division of Germany has always been and remains an essential objective of the United States Government. As the Soviet Government itself recognizes, the conclusion of such a treaty requires the formation of an all-German Government, expressing the will of the German people. Such a Government can only be set up on the basis of free elections in the Federal Republic, the Soviet zone of occupation and Berlin. Such elections can only be held in circumstances which safeguard the national and individual liberties of the German people. In order to ascertain whether this first essential condition exists, the General Assembly of the United Nations has appointed a Commission to carry out a simultaneous investigation in the Federal Republic, the Soviet zone and Berlin. The Commission of Investigation has been assured of the necessary facilities in the Federal Republic and in Western Berlin. The United States Government would be glad to learn that such facilities will also be afforded in the Soviet zone and in Eastern Berlin, to enable the Commission to carry out its task.

The Soviet Government's proposals do not indicate what the international position of an all-German Government would be before the conclusion of a peace treaty. The United States Government considers that the all-German Government should be free both before and after the conclusion of a peace treaty to enter into associations compatible with the principles and purposes of the United Nations.

In putting forward its proposal for a German peace treaty, the Soviet Government expressed its readiness also to discuss other proposals. The United States Government has taken due note of this statement. In its view, it will not be possible to engage in detailed discussion of a peace treaty until conditions have been created for free elections and until a free all-German Government which could participate in such discussion has been formed. There are several fundamental questions which would also have to be resolved.

For example, the United States Government notes that the Soviet Government makes the statement that the territory of Germany is determined by frontiers laid down by the decisions of the Potsdam conference. The United States Government would recall that in fact no definitive German frontiers were

laid down by the Potsdam decisions, which clearly provided that the final determination of territorial questions must await the peace settlement.

The United States Government also observes that the Soviet Government now considers that the peace treaty should provide for the formation of German national land, air, and sea forces, while at the same time imposing limitations on Germany's freedom to enter into association with other countries. The United States Government considers that such provisions would be a step backwards and might jeopardize the emergency in Europe of a new era in which international relations would be based on cooperation and not on rivalry and distrust. Being convinced of the need of a policy of European unity, the United States Government is giving its full support to plans designed to secure the participation of Germany in a purely defensive European community which will preserve freedom, prevent aggression, and preclude the revival of militarism. The United States Government believes that the proposal of the Soviet Government for the formation of German national forces is inconsistent with the achievement of this objective. The United States Government remains convinced that this policy of European unity cannot threaten the interests of any country and represents the true path of peace.

Source: Note from the American Embassy in Moscow to the Soviet Foreign Ministry, Regarding the Soviet Draft of a German Peace Treaty, March 25, 1952; reprinted in *Documents on Germany, 1944–1959: Background Documents on Germany, 1944–1959, and a Chronology of Political Developments affecting Berlin, 1945–1956*. Washington, DC: General Printing Office, 1959, pp. 87–88.

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