

84. Letter From President Kennedy to Chairman Khrushchev [0](#)

Washington, December 14, 1962.

Dear Mr. Chairman: I was glad to have your message of December 11th¹ and to know that you believe, as we do, that we have come to the final stage of the Cuban affair between us, the settlement of which will have significance for our future relations and for our ability to overcome other difficulties. I wish to thank you for your expression of appreciation of the understanding and flexibility we have tried to display.

I have followed with close attention the negotiations on the final settlement of the Cuban question between your representative, Mr. Kuznetsov, and our representatives, Ambassador Stevenson and Mr. McCloy, in New York. In these negotiations we have tried to understand your position and I am glad to note that Mr. Kuznetsov has also shown effort to understand our problems. It is clearly in the interest of both sides that we reach agreement on how finally to dispose of the Cuban crisis. To this end, Ambassador Stevenson and Mr. McCloy presented on Wednesday a new draft of a joint statement which by now has certainly reached you.² I wish to assure you that it is our purpose to end this affair as simply and clearly as possible.

You refer to the importance of my statements on an invasion of Cuba and of our intention to fulfill them, so that no doubts are sown from the very start. I have already stated my position publicly in my press conference on November 20th, and I am glad that this statement appears to have your understanding; we have never wanted to be driven by the acts of others into war in Cuba. The other side of the coin, however, is that we do need to have adequate assurances that all offensive weapons are removed from Cuba and are not reintroduced, and that Cuba itself commits no aggressive acts against any of the nations of the Western Hemisphere. As I understand you, you feel confident that Cuba will not in fact engage in such aggressive acts, and of course I already have your own assurance about the offensive weapons. So I myself should suppose that you could accept our position—but it is probably better to leave final discussion of these matters to our representatives in New York. I quite agree with you that the larger part of the crisis has now been ended and we should not permit others to stand in the way of promptly settling the rest without further acrimony.

With regard to your reference to the confidential channels set up between us, I can assure you that I value them. I have not concealed from you that it was a serious disappointment to me that dangerously misleading information should have come through these channels before the recent crisis. You may also wish to know that by an accident or misunderstanding one of your diplomats appears to have used a representative of a private television network as a channel to us. This is always unwise in our country, where the members of the press often insist on printing at some later time what they may learn privately.

Because our systems are so different, you may not be fully familiar with the practice of the American press. The competition for news in this country is fierce. A number of the

competitors are not great admirers of my Administration, and perhaps an even larger number are not wholly friendly to yours. Here in Washington we have 1200 reporters accredited to the White House alone, and thousands more in other assignments. Not one of them is accountable to this government for what he reports. It would be a great mistake to think that what appears in newspapers and magazines necessarily has anything to do with the policy and purpose of this government. I am glad to say that I have some friends among newspapermen, but no spokesmen.

But let me emphasize again that we do indeed value these confidential channels. I entirely share your view that some trust is necessary for leading statesmen of our two countries; I believe that it is important to build the area of trust wherever possible. I shall of course continue to hold and to express my convictions about the relative merits of our systems of government, and I will not be surprised if you do the same.

In particular, we have been very glad to have opportunities for private exchanges with and through Mr. Bolshakov, and I am sorry to learn that he is returning to Moscow. It is our impression that he has made a real effort to improve communications and understanding between our two governments, and we shall miss him very much.

I appreciate your writing me so frankly, and in return I have tried to be as straightforward, for I agree with you that only through such frank exchanges can we better understand our respective points of view. Partly for this reason I refrained in my last press conference from commenting on certain aspects of your speech before the Supreme Soviet with which you realize, of course, we could not agree.

We also are hopeful that once the Cuban crisis is behind us, we shall be able to tackle the other problems confronting us and to find the path to their solution.

I cannot refrain from commenting briefly on your reference to the German question, though I do not think that it would be useful in this message to expound our full position once again. But your suggestion that the interests of our two countries are toys in the hands of Chancellor Adenauer seems to me to miss entirely the true nature of the problem which confronts us in Central Europe. For here the vital interests of many states are involved—on your side as well as ours. If this is recognized, then I am confident that a way can be found which will accommodate these interests and which will lead to a peaceful settlement. I cannot quite agree with you that Mr. Rusk and Mr. Gromyko have settled everything on Berlin but one issue. They are skillful and experienced diplomats, but I do not think we should give them too much credit yet. Still it is quite true, as you say, that the main issue which seems to separate us on Berlin is that of the presence of allied troops in West Berlin. I am confident that if you could begin from an understanding of our position on this vital point, our chances of making progress would be greatly improved.

I look forward to receiving your confidential letter and proposals on the test ban question, and I think there is every reason to keep working on this problem. I hope that in your message on this subject you will tell me what you think about the position of the

people in Peking on this question. It seems to me very important for both of us that in our efforts to secure an end to nuclear testing we should not overlook this area of the world.

Thank you for your expressions of good wishes to me and my family, and let me in turn send you and your wife and family our personal good wishes for the coming year.³

1. Source: Department of State, Presidential Correspondence: Lot 77 D 163. No classification marking. Another copy is in the Kennedy Library, National Security Files, Countries Series, USSR, Khrushchev Correspondence. Printed in part in Claflin, **The President Wants To Know**, pp. 227-229.[↵]
1. [Document 83](#).[↵]
2. Transmitted in telegram 1593 to USUN, December 11; see [vol. XI, Document 243](#).[↵]
3. Printed from an unsigned copy.[↵]

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