



CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY

INFORMATION REPORT

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SECURITY INFORMATION

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COUNTRY East Germany

REPORT 

SUBJECT Berlin and East German Riots

DATE DISTR. 

NO. OF PAGES 1

DATE OF INFO. 

REQUIREMENT NO. RD 50X1-HUM

PLACE ACQUIRED 

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Enclosure: 1 report(4 pages)



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50X1-HUM**SUBJECT: SURVEY OF THE EVENTS OF 17 JUNE**

A preliminary analysis of the East Berlin and East German demonstrations of 17 June by a qualified observer of East German affairs.

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Course of Events

1. At least nine strikes preceded the large-scale East German demonstrations of 17 June. The wave actually began in mid-April, and for the most part, took place in outlying sectors around Berlin: Hennigsdorf, Rathenow, Premnitz, Fuerstenwalde, Treptow, and Marzahn. There were also strikes prior to 17 June in Finsterwalde/Brandenburg and in the copper mining area around Mansfeld. The strike action of 16 June began in Block 40 of the Stalinallee construction project, but there had been great excitement among the workers of the other construction sites along Stalinallee (Block C South) since the 28 May announcement by the government of increased labor norms. Starting on 12 June the government decree had been under constant discussion by the workers. On 15 June work went quite slowly at the construction sites; on the morning of 16 June, however, the laborers returned to their work.
2. When the Block C South workers joined the marching workers from Block 40, shortly after 9:00 A.M., no strike decrees or management were in existence. Block 40's action was like the falling of a spark in a powder barrel. At first the goal of the marchers was the FDGB-Haus in Wallstrasse. The workers there hoped to force through their demands for a lowering of labor norms and of prices. At first the strikers had no political goals whatsoever, and they were careful not to make a show of force. It was not until the columns of strikers, whose ranks had been swelled by the workers from G North and G South, were approached by SED agitators that the demonstration took on a political character. The workers' train then became a popular movement; the mob's goal then was Leipziger/Wilhelmstrasse. Until this time speeches were scarcely a factor in the demonstration; it is practically certain that at this time no strike committee had been formed.

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3. When the demonstration was resumed on the morning of the 17th there was still no central body directing the actions of the workers. Strike committees were not formed until the government showed its weakness at the official offices on Wilhelmstrasse; the strike directorates which then were formed were definitely anti-SED in character. Once the demonstration was organized the goal of the marchers became the police presidium and the Haus der Einheit. In attempting to combat the demonstration the VP and KVP attempted to split up columns of marchers and to keep demonstrators away from their main goals by force. They were not completely successful in these attempts until Russian tanks appeared on the scene. Starting at noon on the 17th, both the Russians and the West Berlin police tried to quiet the sector boundaries by force.
4. News of the uprising in Berlin reached the Soviet Zone on the evening of the 16th and the morning of the 17th, mainly by radio but also through a few official teletype nets and in part through the railway communications network. Strike actions in the East Zone were generally noticeable in industrial towns where factory workers took the lead. In most cases initiative in leading the demonstrations was shown by people between the ages of 30 and 40. Many women and children participated in the demonstration. Large scale demonstrations took place in the following areas: Wolfen/Bitterfeld/Halle; Leuna Merseburg; Leipzig; Wismut Thuringia/Gera; the shipyards in Rostock and Warnemuende; in Magdeburg (under the leadership of the Gruson plant); Goerlitz; Hennigsdorf/Berlin; and Jena. There were also important demonstrations in Lauchhammer, Dresden, and Chemnitz. Demonstrations were relatively unimportant in Potsdam, Erfurt, Zwickau, Aue (where only one project went on strike) Ruegen and Riesa.
5. The strikes in East Germany for the most part followed a pattern: demonstrations were begun as a political mass movement. It is worthy of note that in many cases the same verses and slogans were used in the Zone strikes as were heard in East Berlin. This might be explained by the fact that the Western radio stations RIAS and NWDR reported the strike slogans on the evening of the 16th. In the Eastern Zone strikes occurred in general where at least 400 or 500 men formed a hard core of dissidents. In some cases all 400 or 500 came from one plant. In other cases, labor forces of several plants banded together. The first tendency of all the strikers was to attempt to recruit workers from other plants. Once a column of strikers was formed it generally marched to the administrative center of the town. The special goals of the strikers seemed to be SED and PDJ as well as government buildings. Factory guards were ineffectual in suppressing disturbances. Plant managements were only slightly more effective. At the beginning of the demonstrations the

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Volkspolizei were quite unsure of themselves; the KVP were also ineffectual. Mutual distrust between the two was noticed.

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6. In contrast to the Berlin demonstrations, there was no original tendency to protest to the FDGB; indeed the Communist labor union played almost no role in the uprisings in East Germany. The tendency was to demonstrate against the SED and to the government. In most cases, no move was made to storm police headquarters and prisons until after the VP and KVP had arrested demonstrators. Then the strikers moved, demanding the release of their fellow workers. This led to a spontaneous demand that political prisoners be freed. As a rule, attempts up until the afternoon of the 17th to free political prisoners were successful, although not in cases where the prisoners were held in regular prisons. For the most part, jailkeepers cooperated with the rioters. The general objective of the demonstrators was to burn official documents and to destroy any weapons that they could wrest from the VP. The strikers did not try to make use of the weapons which fell into their hands. Even in towns where there were lynchings no use was made of firearms by the civilian protestors. In no case was any direct action taken against the Russian forces in East Germany; and there are no confirmed indications of destruction of factory machinery. On the contrary, those who remained in the factories tried to keep the machinery in running condition. Party symbols, signs, brochures and pavilions were burned.

General Impressions

7. Functionaries, especially those belonging to the SED, did not take part in the demonstrations. The majority of the VP and KVP were not equal to the situation; they were indecisive and were not prepared to fight for the system under which they live, but only seldom did members of the paramilitary forces join in the demonstrations. Russian soldiers, though their conduct varied, were generally moderate. Their job seemed to be to protect political buildings from the strikers. This was also a tendency of SED leaders. Attempts were made to isolate groups of workers, for example, in their factory departments, so that they could not contact each other and could be convinced individually to give up the strike, allegedly because their comrades had already capitulated - in short the divide and conquer method. These methods were apt to be successful, though in some cases only after the Russians had occupied the factories.
8. The leaders of the demonstrations were not so much the old line German Trade Union members, as the middle-aged workers, women and youths. These factions joined fully in the demonstrations, but had no skill or experience in conducting strikes. Women, for example, tended to assume leading roles in demonstrations when the columns became mass movements after they left factory precincts. In general the demonstrations were a protest of the laboring class. Almost all types of workers took part; laborers from the construction,

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machine, chemical and textile industries and, to a lesser extent, from the mining industry. In most cases, the factory intelligentsia also took part in the demonstrations. White collar workers, intellectuals and those privately employed were not active.

9. The entire uprising was obviously a spontaneous action and a welcome opportunity to relieve pent-up feeling. The demonstrations had little power where they were not led by large groups of industrial labor; successes were due to the ineffectuality of the police. It is probable that the workers can be appeased by social reform. The chief interest of the strikers was the lowering of norms and prices; political demands were of secondary interest. If further demonstrations occur it will be because of further arrests of demonstrators or because those demonstrators who were imprisoned have not been released. The SED, the SSD, the DSP, and the FDJ are hated by the people, but the occupation forces are respected as symbols of force. There are no indications that the demonstrations were the result of actions guided from outside of East Germany.

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