

**DOCUMENT No. 38: Psychological Strategy Board Memorandum from  
John M. Anspacher to George A. Morgan, 17 June 1953**

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*News of the uprising in East Germany set off intense deliberations in Washington about how the United States should react. A State Department guidance instructed U.S. overt media, such as RIAS, to report fully but factually on the unrest. Within the ranks of the Psychological Strategy Board, other, more active measures, such as encouraging resistance throughout the zone, exploiting the defection of People's Police officers "to undermine the whole VOPO structure," or "martyrizing" the victims of the crackdown, are put forward.*

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Psychological Strategy Board  
17 June 1953

Memorandum for: Mr. George A. Morgan

Through: Mr. Mallory Browne<sup>104</sup>

Subject: East Berlin Riots

It is accepted by both State and CIA that today's riots in East Berlin were a spontaneous result of a planned demonstration yesterday. It is understood, although not definitely known, of course, that the Soviets staged yesterday's demonstration against increased productivity quotas in order to react to them by cutting back those quotas. However, over night the workers took the initiative themselves and carried on with a spontaneous uprising far beyond the Soviets plan. We know from press reports and from a conversation with Berlin this morning that the Soviets have moved tanks and machine gunners into East Berlin, and already three casualties have occurred. The press reports, especially by the AP and CBS, have been verified by Mr. Lyon in Berlin in a phone conversation this morning as well as by Mr. Reber in his talk with Mr. Riddleberger, also this morning. The State Department (GER) has prepared a briefing paper for Mr. Smith to be used at today's luncheon. This paper, attached,<sup>105</sup> covers the most significant items of information about what is going on in Berlin and describes in the 4th paragraph the guidance which had been issued to U.S. overt media. It is important to note the caution included in this guidance in the last paragraph.

Several additional ideas were suggested during my conversation with the GER officers who drafted the attached briefing paper, but were not included largely because of the caution with which State is approaching this situation. For your guidance, however, at today's luncheon when the subject will probably be brought up, I should like to set them forth here:

a. It would be important to suggest the possibility of more resistance to the Soviet regime within the Zone. Such resistance need not be violent—in fact it should preferably be passive—but the possibility that seething unrest might break out into open violence at any time would put the Soviets on the alert and make it necessary for them to make a show of armed strength throughout the Zone. This has obvious psychological implications with respect to the "workers paradise" and the insincerity of what the Soviets mean by "peaceful unity."

<sup>104</sup> Handwritten note at the bottom of the page reads: "George: I concur, but want to emphasize that this seems to me to the moment to hit hard through C.I.A. to make possible trouble covertly. M.B."

<sup>105</sup> Not printed.

b. There has been an increase in the defection of *Volks Polizei* in the last 24 hours. Along with the defection earlier this morning of Otto Nuschke, this is significant particularly in the light of the Vopos' participation in the military maneuvers to quell today's riots. The obvious possibility exists in this connection to undermine the whole Vopo structure.

c. The "boomerang" effect of the Soviet campaign to incite East Germans to demonstrate against the Adenauer Government should not be ignored. They have been urging such riots for the past six months; now they have their riots, but not the way they expected them.

d. With the reservation that we should not tend to create chaos in West Berlin, it might be helpful if the East Germans could, [one line sanitized] be persuaded to "blur" the border between the Soviet Zone and East Berlin. The Soviets will try to use these demonstrations as an excuse for sealing off their section of the city from the Soviet Zone; any leverage we have to forestall such a move could be profitably employed at this juncture.

e. Although it is perfectly valid to avoid any outbreak of East-West violence by encouraging sympathy demonstrations in the West sectors, some advantage might be derived from the presence in the West Zone of Soviet guards at Rundfunkhaus and at the Soviet memorials in the Western sectors.

f. A high level statement by the President would be useful to reiterate our position in West Berlin and to put the Soviets on notice that this kind of tactic is going to avail them nothing in so far as Berlin unity, German unity, Four-Power negotiations, etc. are concerned. The President should also make it clear that although we do not want to see East Berliners leave themselves open to armed violence at the hands of the Soviet military, we are encouraged by their spirit and feel gratified that they have taken the initiative in expressing their dissatisfaction with communist tyranny.

g. The more we can commit the communist either to give in to the Germans and/or to reverse themselves and take more repressive measures, the more we will put them on the defensive.

h. Obviously we should exploit the fluidity of the East-West travel situation wherever possible to increase our defection operations [one line sanitized]. It will be extremely important to use discreet German outlets to warn the East Berliners and the East Germans for that matter, against exposing themselves to armed force which would achieve nothing, or to sudden reversals of communist policy which would find them out on a limb. In other words, the Easterners should neither get themselves shot in their enthusiasm nor take measures on which they cannot follow through and would leave them at the mercy of the communist authorities at some future date.

i. There have been three casualties already today in East Berlin—workers who have been shot seriously by the Soviet soldiers. If any one of these casualties becomes a fatality, it would be important immediately to "martyrize" this individual throughout the world. Dependent upon the time factor his death might also be used in the Rosenberg framework—while shouting for the lives of the Rosenbergs the communists would have taken the life of one of their own citizens, for much less reason to put it mildly.<sup>106</sup>

From the long-range point of view, I would certainly suggest that all possible emphasis be placed on two aspects of the current development in Berlin. The first is that these minor relaxations are not to be construed as real deeds in the sense that the President used these words on April 16; the second is that peace and unity in Germany will not be created at pistol point. Further I would emphasize most strongly that large scale efforts be made to mobilize

<sup>106</sup> Ethel and Julius Rosenberg were executed for atomic espionage against the United States on 19 June 1953. Reports of the executions were used by the Soviet bloc press to divert attention from the crackdown in East Germany.

Social Democrat opinion throughout Western Europe, especially in the Low Countries and Scandinavia against the Soviet/communist unity campaign on the basis of this kind of demonstration. This is not the road to Four-Power negotiations; if this is what the Soviets want, this is not the way to get it.

It is suggested that PBS immediately study the possible Soviet exploitation of this situation so as to provide the means of forestalling whatever advantage the Soviets hope to gain from it psychologically.

*John M. Anspacher*

Encl.  
6/17/53 Memo to Mr. Phillips  
from GER/P—Richard Straus

*Source:* Dwight D. Eisenhower Library (FOIA release to the editor). On file at the National Security Archive, "Soviet Flashpoints" Collection.