

FOREIGN SERVICE DESPATCH

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SUBJECT: Conversation with West Berlin Labor Official on Demonstration of June 12 in Soviet Sector of Berlin

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There is enclosed the memorandum of a conversation held on June 25 between an EAD officer and

of the Deutsche Gewerkschaft Bund (DGB). This office, which is located in West Berlin, concerns itself with labor conditions in East Berlin and the Soviet Zone of Germany. has extensive contacts in the Soviet Zone, including some with members of the Freie Deutscher Gewerkschaft Bund (FDGB), the SED-controlled labor organization in the Soviet Zone of Germany.

In an article which appeared in Neues Deutschland, the official organ of the Socialist Unity Party, was attacked as the head of one of the terror organizations located in West Berlin. He was specifically accused of composing certain inflammatory pamphlets which were distributed in East Berlin on June 17.

As the enclosed memorandum indicates, the DGB Ost Beratungsstelle not only compiles data on Soviet Zone labor conditions but also actively maintains liaison between the DGB and workers in the Soviet Zone.

has always proved to be a reliable source of information. We are therefore inclined to attach great credibility to the observations which he made and which have been incorporated in the enclosed memorandum of conversation.

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Authority NND 931010
By Hr/pc NARA, Date 9/20/84

N. Spencer Barnes
N. Spencer Barnes
Chief
Eastern Affairs Division

Enclosure:

As stated above.

Distribution: Bonn, Heidelberg, Frankfurt (CINCER, FA), Moscow, London, Paris

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MEMORANDUM OF CONVERSATION

June 25, 1953

An EAD officer had a conversation on June 25 with

In a general discussion concerning hours of

work and rates of pay in the Soviet Zone of Germany, the conversation turned to the subject of the demonstrations and riots of June 17. He was asked if he or anyone in the DGB had any advance information that strikes and demonstrations would occur on the 17th of June. He said that before these dates he had knowledge of strikes that had been carried out in ten plants in the Zone. However, in all of these instances the workers had merely refused to work and there had been no attendant riots. He also said that he had been aware of several work stoppages among the workers along Stalinallee which had occurred around the end of May. Subsequent to these initial work stoppages but prior to the 16th of June, some of the construction workers from Stalinallee had contacted the offices of the DGB in West Berlin and expressed their dissatisfaction over the raising of norms. One of these delegations came on the 15th of June. He showed them the article which had appeared in Neues Deutschland on the 14th of June entitled "Es wird Zeit, den Holzhammer beiseite zu legen", and at that time advised the construction workers to get their hands on as many copies of this particular copy of Neues Deutschland as they could and distribute them among their fellow workers. He also provided them with arguments that they could use when confronted with Party functionaries and Activists. In other words, he readily conceded that positive encouragement was given the construction workers to go ahead and continue work stoppages in protest of the raising of norms. After the demonstrations led by the construction workers of Stalinallee which occurred on June 16, [redacted] was approached by some of these people on the night of the 16th and asked if he would take over the general leadership of a strike committee. This strike committee was to call a general strike for the entire zone. [redacted] flatly refused to assume any such responsibility inasmuch as he recognized the dangers of any such overt intervention by a West Berliner.

The printing plant of the DGB and also he says the printing plant of the SPD Ost Buro were busy all night the night of the 16th printing leaflets for distribution among Soviet sector workers on the 17th.

[redacted] definitely claimed responsibility for the strike of the BVG, that is the U-Bahn and the tram ways which occurred on the 17th of June. He said that the DGB Ost Buro has a number of FDGB members who actually work for the DGB. These people were in West Berlin on the night of the 16th and through them [redacted] issued the strike call to the BVG together with specific instructions as to how it was to be organized and carried out.

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was in the Soviet sector himself on the 17th for the first time in four years and there he saw the head of SPD Ost Bure and the head of Kampfgruppe gegen Unmenschlichkeit. He also was very frank to admit that on the 17th there were many West Berlin labor leaders and others who went into the Soviet sector and encouraged the Soviet sector strikers by means of leaflets and oral agitation.

He maintained with all sincerity, however, that the actions of the DGB were limited exclusively to encouraging work stoppages of an ordinary nature. They did not encourage and played absolutely no part in the fomentation of riots, disturbances or other forms of physical violence. They themselves, he said, were surprised that the demonstrations assumed the form that they eventually did. He gives great credit to RIAS for its factual accounting of the events that transpired in the Soviet Zone on the 17th of June and believes very strongly that this produced the strikes and demonstrations which occurred subsequently in other large cities in the Zone.

the opinion that when the troops are withdrawn that it is quite probable that there will be more strikes in individual plants and factories. However, he does not anticipate any Zone-wide disturbances approaching the proportions which were reached on the 17th in East Berlin.