

June 19, 1953

Report, I. Fadeikin to V.D. Sokolovskii

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Summary:

Fadeikin reported that the situation in the GDR was improving. As brought to light by then, the strikes were a protest against the 10% rise in output quotas that the GDR government had declared at some GDR industry enterprises on May 29-30. They continued on June 6-7. The construction workers on Stalinallee in Berlin started saying that they did not agree with the new output quotas and would declare a strike if needed. The central leadership of the Free German Trade Union [League] and the SED CC knew about such feelings and opinions among working class people on June 15. Fadeikin accused the GDR leadership not to have undertaken timely preventive measures. Fadeikin concluded from secret service and official information that some SED members took an active part in the delays and strikes.

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OPERATIONS DIVISION, MAIN OPERATIONS ADMINISTRATION, GENERAL STAFF OF THE SOVIET ARMY Top Secret (Declassified) To Marshal of Soviet Union Comrade SOKOLOVSKII, V.D. I am reporting that the situation in the country (Germany) is improving. The workers' strikes are over in the overwhelming majority of the GDR cities as of 5:00 p.m., June 18. A minor number of enterprises have been on strike (LAS, the plant in Leipzig, the tool plant in Schmelna). Part-time strikes occurred in a number of other enterprises where personnel in the night shifts from 30% to 60% were to the close of June 18. The meetings at the plants were stopped by the evening of June 18. Street demonstrations in the GDR cities and towns were not permitted during June 18. The provocateurs and instigators had been actively withdrawn and arrested in Eastern Berlin and the Districts of GDR for June 18 and the night of June 19. The workers themselves have started participating in the exposing of the provocateurs and taking them into custody. For instance, some workers arrested SIMON, an engineer, who had visited plant shops calling for a strike, in K=F6penick (Berlin). Two provocateurs calling for a strike were detained by some workers at the High-Frequency Instruments Plant in Treptow. The German People's Police revealed the gathering of provocateurs in MITROPA, the restaurant, and arrested 40 instigators, confiscating weapons from three of them on the evening of June 18. Twenty provocateurs were arrested at Alexanderplatz. There have been some reports that workers at some plants (Railway-Carriage Repair Works in Weimar, et cetera), indicating that the strikes had been provoked by hostile elements, met and passed resolutions condemning themselves for their actions on 17 June 1953, and undertook to make up the lost working time next Sunday. Many workers understood they had been misled by provocateurs and cursed the fascist thugs from Western Berlin. The German People's Police arrested two persons in front of Cho, the restaurant, in the evening of June 18, who proved to be residents of West Berlin. The police action was welcomed by passers-by. Relations between Soviet troops and Berlin residents have been improving on June 18. Our soldiers have been very disciplined during all of the events. It was possible to witness peaceful conversations between Soviet soldiers and German residents in the streets of Berlin by the evening of June 18. As brought to light by now, the strikes were a protest against the 10% rise in output quotas that the government had declared at some GDR industry enterprises on May 29-30. They continued on June 6-7. The construction workers on Stalinallee in Berlin started saying that they did not agree with the new output quotas and would declare a strike if needed. The central leadership of the Free German Trade Union [League] and the SED CC knew about such feelings and opinions among working class people on June 15. However, timely preventive measures were not undertaken. During the investigation it became evident that many West Berlin residents and members of West Berlin subversive organizations, [such as the] so-called "Fighting Group Against Inhumanity,"⁶⁴ were among arrested provocateurs and instigators. For instance, BEREND, Helmut, a German, an active participant in the uprising, was arrested in Dessau. He indicated during interrogation that a large group of instigators including himself had arrived in Dessau from the American Sector of Berlin during the night of June 17 and that they had been sent by the West Berlin Center of "Fighting Group [against Inhumanity]." This is a typical example revealing that West Berlin authorities had been well-informed in advance about the actions in East Berlin on June 17. They had sent beforehand some West Berlin radio-commentators to democratic Berlin, where they were doing live radio-commentary in the places where clashes between East Berliners and the People's Police occurred on the morning on 17 June. RIAS, the West Berlin radio station, was continuously broadcasting that recorded commentary. Some members of the GDR Government and SED CC had been displaying cowardice and bewilderment during the events. This is the most typical evidence of such behavior. WEINBERGER, the Minister of Transport and Farm Mechanical Engineering, and HENKST, the member of the SED CC, arrived in Rostock on the evening of 17 June. Negotiating with the strike committee of Varnav, the shipyard, on the morning of 18 June, they cowardly made many unrealistic promises to the strikers. WEINBERGER signed a protocol in which he promised to raise salaries, to establish a new vacations system, to compensate workers for travel from residential areas to the enterprises, to pay for their staying apart from their families, etc. When the strike committee in their counter-suggestions was demanding the resignation of the GDR Government, releasing the convicts and canceling the state of emergency, WEINBERGER and HENKST did not reject those points while they were read in their presence on the radio to the workers at the plant. Speaking about their promises just

after that, they said no word about the "provocative demands" of the strikers. Moreover, WEINBERGER and HENKST made a decision regarding the release of two strike organizers arrested by police. It is clear from secret service and official information that some SED members took an active part in the delays and strikes. The interrogations of the arrested SED members have revealed that many of them were dissatisfied with the worsening living standard among the working people and justified their conclusions by referring to the SED Politburo's published admission of its mistakes. The evidence of considerable dissatisfaction among the Party members has been the fact that about 100 people have quit their SED membership in the Cottbus district in the last two days. The numerous secret service official and investigatory evidence has revealed that organizers and leaders of many strike committees at the GDR enterprises were executives of German trade-unions. For example, among the four organizers of the strike at the public enterprise Wohnungsbau (Berlin), on June 17 who were arrested by the MfS GDR, the main part was played by the chairman of the local trade-union committee and the candidate-member of SED, a certain MIFS.KOLSTER, the chairman of the plant's trade union committee, led the strike at the Electric Equipment Plant of the Soviet Joint-Stock Company in Treptow, Berlin (arrested). VETSEL, the chairman of the plant's trade union organization, was in charge of the strike at the Optical Apparatus Plant in Rathenow, Potsdam District. It was he as well who headed the demonstration and called on the workers of other plants to join the strikers (VETSEL was arrested). KULTUS, the leader of the Construction Workers Trade-Union in the Frankfurt [a. d. Oder] district, called on the workers to take to the streets and declared, "We are going to show our power and strive to get our demands fulfilled." According to information by 5.00 a.m. on 19 June 1953, 2,930 organizers, leaders and participants of the strikes, provocateurs and instigators as well as persons who took part in armed attacks on the German People's Police units, prisons, courts, party and state institutions in Berlin, Brandenburg, Magdeburg, Leipzig, Halle, G=F6rlitz, Jena and other GDR cities, were arrested. Among the GDR MfS, People's Police, officers and democratically-inclined [East] German citizens, 7 were killed and 151 wounded. According to information by 5.00 a.m. 19 June 1953, 21 rebels were killed in the armed clashes, and 85 were wounded. Apart from 6 rebels caught and shot instantly by Soviet troops during the armed clashes, military tribunals sentenced 6 of the most active organizers and participants in the armed actions to be shot, including: 1 in Berlin, 2 in Magdeburg, 2 in G=F6rlitz, and 1 in Jena. The Military Council of the Soviet Occupation Forces in Germany confirmed the sentences which were carried out the same day, and it was announced by radio to the German population. Among those executed, there was DARCH, Alfred, born in 1910, a non-Party man and resident of Magdeburg, who, armed (with a reconnaissance rifle) and jointly with other rebels, had burst into the House of Justice in Magdeburg, took part in its devastation and had fired from there at the arriving units of the German People's Police and Soviet troops. There was STRAUCH, Gerbert, owner of a private firm, also executed in Magdeburg, who had taken an active part in devastating the prison and releasing state criminals. G=D6TTLING, Willi, the resident of West Berlin, born in 1918, was executed in Berlin. He confessed under interrogation that he had been recruited by American intelligence on 16 June while he was repeatedly visiting the West Berlin Labor Exchange and had received the order from the latter to drive to the Democratic Sector of Berlin and take an active part in the planned riots there. Joining with other rebels during the clashes with German People's Police units in the center of Berlin, G=D6TTLING attacked a propaganda-vehicle of the German People's Police, which was calling for an end to the strike with a radio loud-speaker, threw the driver and the announcer out of the vehicle and brutally assaulted them. He called on the crowd to attack police and Soviet troops. REPRESENTATIVE OF MINISTRY OF INTERIOR OF USSR IN GERMANY Colonel FADEIKIN 19 June 1953 [Source: AGSh, f. 16, op. 3139, d. 155, ll. 217-222. Provided and translated by Viktor Gobarev]"