

June 17, 1953

**Situation Report from Vladimir Semyonov and
Andrei Grechko to Vyacheslav Molotov and Nikolai
Bulganin, 7:26 a.m.**

Citation:

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Summary:

Vladimir Semyonov and Andrei Grechko were reporting on the situation in Berlin towards the close of 16 June.

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Contents:

Translation - English

OPERATIONS DIVISION, MAIN OPERATIONS ADMINISTRATION,
GENERAL STAFF OF THE SOVIET ARMY

Top Secret

To Comrade V.M. MOLOTOV
To Comrade N.A. BULGANIN

We are reporting on the situation in Berlin towards the close of 16 June.

As reported before, there was a demonstration by construction workers on strike downtown in the Soviet sector of Berlin during the first half of 16 June, directed against raising output quotas in the Berlin construction industry. Some people from West Berlin took part in the rally. The majority of construction workers started breaking up after it was announced that SED CC had cancelled the rise in output quotas. The participation of persons sent from West Berlin kept increasing in subsequent gatherings.

The situation in the city became more complex towards the evening of 16 June. While SED activists were meeting in Friedrichsstadtpalast, big crowds started arriving from West [Berlin] into East Berlin, moving towards the above-mentioned building. At the same time, a band of up to 2,000 people, mainly West Berliners, were throwing stones at the I.V. Stalin monument at Stalinallee at 9:30 p.m. and [then] moved towards the Friedrichsstadtpalast, destroying a shop on the way. Four hundred [East] German policemen who were dispatched there dispersed this band. At the same time, large groups of West Berliners were attempting to promote chaos, blocking streets, holding up tram traffic, turning over cars, breaking shop windows. About 500 bandits tried to burst into the gas plant and block its operations. Separate groups gathered at the Berlin City Railway Office, as well as near the SED CC building. Some hooligans tried breaking into the residential flats of SED activists at Berzarin Platz. All those groups were dispersed by [East] German police. 25 people were arrested, according to incomplete information.

The organizers of the disturbances announced that there would be a meeting at Strausberger Platz in central Berlin at 6:00 a.m. on 17 June. In addition, there was strong agitation for a general strike in East Berlin. The workers at "Fortschritt 1" and "Fortschritt 2" clothing factories, as well as the night shift of 120 people at one of the Berlin plants, went on strike during the evening of 16 June.

The special edition of Der Abend, published in Western Berlin on the evening of 16 June, called for a general strike in East Berlin on 17 June. It is clear from the reports of West German press and radio that the above-mentioned hostile actions were organized from West Berlin as a response to the recently declared measures on the normalization of the political situation in the GDR. From reports, it is also clear that this is a matter of a rather major planned provocation.

We talked with the GDR leaders Ulbricht, Grotewohl, and Zaisser. They all believed that the riots of 16 June were just the beginning of actions, which have been organized from West Berlin. The friends [East German leadership] are counting on the probability of even larger disorders on the morning of 17 June. They made the decision to introduce police patrols on the streets where the disturbances took place, as well as to strengthen the protection of the most important objects in the city with the forces of the German People's Police. Zaisser, Minister of State Security and Politburo member, has been made responsible for maintaining order in the city. Units of the Barracked Police totaling 1,100 men are being called from Oranienburg and Potsdam to reinforce the Berlin city police forces. At the recommendation of the SED Berlin City Committee (Gorkom), measures have been taken to rally the party and

youth activists to carry out explanatory work among inhabitants and to assist the authorities with maintaining order in the city.

At the request of the German friends, we are introducing troop patrols of 450 men [total] in cars in areas where disorders have occurred and also near the important installations in East Berlin. Moreover, by the morning of 17 June troops from two mechanized regiments, one mechanized division, and a battalion of the 105th regiment of the Ministry of Internal Affairs will be concentrated in the Karlshorst district (East Berlin).

We have agreed with the "friends" that the German People's Police carry out the duties of maintaining order in the city and that Soviet troops will take active part in keeping order only in exceptional circumstances of extreme need.

Colonel-General Comrade GRECHKO has taken over the overall supervision of Soviet troops in Berlin. Marshal [L.A.] GOVOROV is also in Berlin.

We will report on further events.

SEMYONOV
GRECHKO

Reported by "VCh-phone" at 7.26 a.m., 17 June 1953, Moscow time.