

July 8, 1953

Report from Maj.-Gen. Sergei Dengin to Vladimir Semyonov, 'On the Situation in the Soviet Sector of Berlin'

Citation:

"Report from Maj.-Gen. Sergei Dengin to Vladimir Semyonov, 'On the Situation in the Soviet Sector of Berlin'", July 8, 1953, Wilson Center Digital Archive, AVP RF, f. 0742, op. 41, port. 92, pap. 280, ll. 117-121. Translated by Daniel Rozas.
<https://wilson-center-digital-archive.dvincitest.com/document/112622>

Summary:

Sergei Dengin states that a series of strikes are occurring in the Soviet Sector of Berlin, following the East German Uprising. It is reported that GDR inhabitants are generally dissatisfied with the under allocation of food products, steel, electricity, and other resources. Jendretzky has agreed to take measures to improve the supply of resources, strengthen government authority, and control the spread of provocative rumors.

Original Language:

Russian

Contents:

Translation - English

SECRET

Copy #1

Chairman of the Soviet
Control Commission in
Berlin, Germany

TO FIRST USSR COMMISSIONER IN GERMANY

Comrade V.S. Semyonov

8 July 1953

bi/0718

On the Situation in the Soviet Sector of Berlin

In the past three days, 5-8 July, the hostile elements in the Soviet sector have been increasingly distributing provocative rumors that apparently a strike had begun again in national enterprises in Berlin, with the demand for the release of those arrested during 17-18 June of this year. Thus, on 6 July, rumors had spread that workers were striking in the factories "Abus," "Welzlager" in the Lichtenberg region, and the hospital construction site in Friedrichsheine; on 7 July rumors said that apparently workers were striking in the national enterprises in the Weissensee region: Machinengerätebau, Degusa, Gnom and Spezialmaschinenbau; on 8 July rumors said that apparently workers were striking at the construction sites of Stalinallee. After an investigation into the situation at these enterprises, it was determined that work is carrying on as usual at all national enterprises, with the exception of the nail-making shop at the factory "Welzlager" where, according to the chief of the FDGB, on the night of 5-6 July the workers did not work for an hour and a half, striking to express dissatisfaction with the miscalculation of their salary.

Today a rumor spread among the workers at the construction site on Stalinallee that apparently workers are striking at the "Bergman-Borzig" factory, while at the latter, rumors spread that apparently workers are striking at the Stalinallee construction site.

The Friedrichshain D[istrict] C[ommittee] SED Secretary Bertels stated that the provocateurs are telephoning to the enterprises and saying that apparently workers at the national enterprises are striking and calling for other workers to strike.

On 8 July, the West Berlin newspapers published provocative statements on the front page, saying that apparently a new strike had begun in the Soviet sector with the demand for the release of those arrested on 17-18 June.

In this manner the spreading of provocative rumors is creating nervousness and tension among workers at the national enterprises and other segments of society in the Soviet sector of Berlin. However, the democratic press of the Soviet sector as well as the radio are not exposing the provocative rumors being spread. The Friedrichshain D[istrict] C[ommittee] SED Secretary Bertels said that the democratic press has swung to the other side--toward increasing criticism of the mistakes and deficiencies of the party, instead of exposing the hostile elements that are spreading these provocative rumors.

He also pointed out that the presence of members of the Barracked Police on the

streets of the Soviet sector is increasingly alarming the population, which sees the situation in the city as troubling, and as a result there has been an increase in the number of food and merchandise sold in the "HO" stores.

Recently an opinion has arisen among the territorial party organizations of the Friedrichshain region that all these mistakes are the fault of W. Ulbricht, who is a Saxon and has brought many Saxons to Berlin, and that he must resign.

The majority of the workers and employees at the national enterprise Reifenwerk (Köpenick region), formerly a private enterprise, are dissatisfied with the fact that following the arrest of the factory owner Müller and the transfer of the enterprise to the authority of the city magistrate, the quality of food at the factory cafeteria has significantly decreased. (Müller had allotted an additional 5,000 marks per month for the cafeteria. At the present time, the director of the factory cannot do this in light of the absence of the director's fund.)

When the enterprise was private (until April 1953), all workers, including those residing in the GDR, were receiving group "A" Berlin food coupons, while since April these coupons have been canceled for workers residing in the GDR and numbering 560 people from a total of 690 workers, and now they are being given reduced amounts determined by place of residence, which has brought about dissatisfaction among this category of workers. In addition, Müller had allowed the taking of leftover rubber for personal use, had systematically given out Christmas bonuses [illegible], etc.

SED member Roski, an industrial security employee, said: "All attempts by Müller were directed toward creating for himself the good name of a father of a large family, but one without sons or stepsons. He accomplished much with small handouts. Now almost all workers remember his 'generosity' and scorn the SED and especially W. Ulbricht, whom they consider the culprit behind all the troubles."

During a discussion, Friedrichshain District Committee SED Secretary Bertels stated that the SED CC Politburo communiqué of 9 June 1953 and the SED CC statement are baffling to many party functionaries, since they do not clarify what is the new course of the party, and they are awaiting a decision of the ordinary session of SED CC regarding this question. Bertels, and in his opinion many other party functionaries, express dissatisfaction with the fact that the SED CC decided on the new course for the SED without the necessary preliminary explanatory work within the party organizations. Indeed, according to Bertels, the secretary of the party organization at the electric light bulb factory, Eliaschewig, had expressed the opinion that prior to making the decision in the Central or City Committee of the SED, its correctness should have been examined in the lower ranks, namely in party organizations.

There is a feeling among a portion of SED members in the Friedrichshain district who had participated in the strike and demonstrations on 17 June that, since the party had accepted the striking workers' demands as proper, the participation of party members in the strike and demonstrations was also proper.

During the 8 July discussion with first secretary of the SED City Committee, [Hans] Jendretzky, he stated that at the present time the political mood among a portion of the inhabitants in the Soviet sector is not to our advantage, since there has not been a serious improvement in the supply of food and merchandise for the populace, and the people are wondering whether the promises made in the resolutions of the SED CC and the GDR government will be fulfilled. The Chairman of the Government Commission on Supply, E. Schmidt, and the Minister of Trade, Wach, so far have been unable to determine the necessary quantities of foodstuffs and commonly used merchandise that should be supplied to Berlin using government funds, in accordance

with the GDR Council of Ministers resolution from 27 June. In this way, the decision has so far remained on paper and has yet to be implemented on the street. Berlin is not being supplied with margarine, butter, and sugar, which are the most important food products. However, future provision of these is so far unclear. At the Ministry of Trade they say that Berlin is one way or another being supplied with more products than GDR, and there is no reason for noise. Thus, at the present time, the food coupons are not being fully satisfied. "We cannot feed the population--stated Jendretzky--with nothing but political slogans. Right now we must fulfill the [food] coupons--that is the main concern. There is serious dissatisfaction among the people given the fact that Berlin is not being supplied with essential food products. We have at our disposal only enough food products to avoid open demonstrations. If in the near future an additional quantity of food products is not allocated for the populace, then dissatisfaction among the people will be even greater." The situation concerning this year's third quarter provisions for the city inhabitants is also unclear. Moreover, he expressed the opinion that even if a portion of the government reserves is used, it still does not present an opportunity to satisfy fully the food coupons. In connection with the existing shortages of provisions for the populace, hostile activities are increasing. "Following the latest session of the Politburo," said Jendretzky, "on 9 [July] the SED City Committee Secretariat will once again examine the question of increasing the provisions of foodstuffs and merchandise for the population."

Further, Jendretzky said also that special steel is not being provided to the "Bergman-Borzig" factory for the production of turbines for the Klingenberg electric power plant, which could disrupt the ability of the GDR government to fully meet the electric lighting needs of the GDR population. The construction of the new shop at this factory has also been halted due to the absence of materials and equipment; moreover, Deputy Prime Minister [Heinrich] Rau had told Jendretzky that this shop could now be used as a warehouse, which would bring about the layoff of a number of workers in this factory.

So far, the question of further growth in labor productivity at the national enterprises has not been resolved either. In connection with the fact that labor salaries are being paid in accordance with the norms set on 4 January 1953, this will cause an increase in workers' wages and a decrease in labor productivity. Moreover, the question regarding the future of those workers who had volunteered to accept a norm increase has not yet been resolved either. Thus, the question of norms has so far not been completely resolved. Presently, there is also uncertainty regarding the provision of raw materials and equipment to the national enterprise, in connection with the changes in the industrial plans.

"The inhabitants of Berlin are welcoming the opening of the sector border on [illegible] July of this year," said Jendretzky. "At the present time, the party organizations are holding discussions and broadcasting radio announcements on this question, and will also hold worker and employee assemblies at the enterprises. At the same time, the first secretary of District Committee SED has given an order for increased political vigilance and security at the enterprises. Today, together with the city's president of the People's Police and a representative of the Ministry of State Security, there was a special discussion regarding the plan of measures for increasing the security of borders, streets, and national enterprises, especially electric power plants, [natural] gas plants and water towers."

With regard to the spreading of provocative rumors, instructors from City Committee and District Committee SED and the primary party organizations have been carrying out investigations among workers and employees of enterprises and institutions in order to expose the activities of hostile elements.

In the course of the discussion, Jendretzky expressed agreement with the implementation of the following measures: improving the supply of foodstuffs and merchandise for the city inhabitants, exposing the activities of hostile elements using the press, radio and mass agitation work, arrest provocateurs for spreading

provocative rumors; hold a meeting with SED City Committee instructors assigned at enterprises, discuss within the democratic bloc measures for implementing government resolutions; strengthen authority using magistrates and regional councils; reinvigorate the work of the National Front committees.

SCC Representative in Berlin

[signature]

(S. Dengin)