

AIR

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Chief of Mission, Frankfurt

Chief, Berlin Operations Base

INFO: KE, CASSAIN, BOHM, PULL

CADGRY/CALL/Operational

SPD Views on a General Strike in the DDR

Ref: SFRAN-2050
Strat Div. SITREP #100, Para 1B.

1. Views attributed to a SED functionary on federal level conceivably reflect those expounded by [] in my presence on 16 December in CANLET's office. [] however, did not predict another uprising, but a general strike under conditions similar to those outlined in your SITREP. This, in my opinion, is an important difference, because no one conversant with DDR conditions could envision another spontaneous uprising under conditions of harsh repression as they now prevail. A general strike, on the other hand, not accompanied by street demonstrations and avoiding an open challenge of the authority of the state, would undoubtedly place the SED in an exceedingly embarrassing position, even if it be short-termed. Needless to emphasize, the workers on strike would ultimately be starved into returning to their lathes, but in the meanwhile incalculable damage would have been inflicted upon the remnants of SED prestige, and the delicate balance of East Zone economic would once more have been disturbed.

2. It is []'s contention, vigorously seconded by CANLET, that the workers of the East Zone can be depended upon to follow the call for a general strike if sufficiently provoked. Such provocation would result from a clear-cut Soviet refusal to accede to Germany's reunification on any terms. An inconclusive outcome of the Four-Power Conference, on the other hand, would not provide the spark, especially not if its breakdown could with some semblance of truth be attributed to American intransigence. (Inasmuch as the SPD seems willing to pay the price of German neutrality for reunification, anything short of this concession is liable to be construed as intransigence).

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1127

3. I am in no position, on the basis of information available here, to gauge the temper and morale of the DDR's working population. CARLIT has all along taken a very "anguine" view concerning both, and his predictions in that respect were borne out by the events of the 17th of June. He now maintains that no appreciable dent has been made in the working population's will to resist, and that retribution meted out to the 17th June insurgents has merely served to increase the universal detestation in which the regime is being held. He claims to have a wealth of information substantiating the generally high level of morale and the determination not to bow to the communist regime indefinitely.

4. I failed to get a conclusive answer to my question how the prospect of a general strike could be contemplated without thought being given to a strike leadership beyond the reach of the communist police. I stated as my own personal opinion that the call to walk out would have to originate from outside the DDR, a circumstance which is liable to pose very delicate political problems. (5. In implication I denied the possibility of a "spontaneous" general strike). I further pointed to the importance of having a communications system on a standby basis (also to obviate the involvement of official broadcasting media) a need that in the light of our dismal experiences during the 17th June could not be denied. There was a notable absence of response to any of the questions posed to shed more light on the organizational problems of a general strike, an attitude susceptible to a number of interpretations.

5. May I suggest that you continue to pursue the study of this particular issue which, for all I know, may loom large in DDR planning. I am not quite sure, incidentally, whether the fact that it is being brought to the fore at this time should not be construed as a veiled threat, implying that the DDR, if placed under duress, might decide to open Pandora's box. I also consider this matter important from the point of view of determining whether a general strike in the DDR is an act a realistic concept. If answered affirmatively, the further question should be looked into whether KUBARK could not harness this capability to its control rather than leaving it to the discretion of the DDR/DDR leadership and under what circumstances a general strike is to be called.

1127