

**June 20, 1953**

**Telephonogram from V. Semenov and V. Sokolovskii  
in Berlin to V. Molotov and N.A. Bulganin, 20 June  
1953, 5:50 p.m.**

**Citation:**

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<https://wilson-center.drivingcreative.com/document/111627>

**Summary:**

V. Semenov and V. Sokolovsk stated that, although the the situation in the GDR and in East Berlin is generally peaceful, there are still some local strike movements in several areas.

**Original Language:**

Russian

**Contents:**

Translation - English

[The following excerpt is from a telephonogram sent by V. Semenov and V. Sokolovskii in Berlin to V. Molotov and N. A. Bulganin, on 20 June 1953 at 5:50 p.m., describing the situation in the GDR that day.]

"We report on the situation in Berlin in the GDR at 12 o'clock, Berlin time, June 20.

The situation in the GDR and in East Berlin is generally peaceful. The partial strikes which took place at night in the cities of Stassfurt, Halberstadt and in the Stralsund shipyard have ceased. In the morning, provocative elements managed to conduct short meetings and strikes at the railway car repair factory in the city of Halberstadt, in the Hellsford shipyard (Rostock district), at the medicine factory in the city of Wernigerode (Magdeburg district). In addition, demands for the liberation of the arrested ring-leaders of the disturbances have surfaced. The strikes which began yesterday at several small enterprises in the city of Ilseburg in the region of Magdeburg (about 2,500 workers in all) are continuing.

From the villages we are informed that among many workers who took part in the strikes of June 17-18, a sobering-up is taking place. These workers are stating regrets about the disturbances which arose and are distancing themselves from the provocateurs. But at the same time they often state that the discontent of the workers should not be mixed with the actions of provocateurs, as, allegedly, the government of the GDR is doing.

A leading article written by us and published in today's Neues Deutschland provides the necessary orientation on this issue.

According to the SED agitators, a majority of the Berlin workers with whom they spoke have a negative opinion of the actions of the provocateurs, but some of them are still pleased that the demonstration occurred. A readiness to work off the time lost because of the strikes is universally voiced.

The workers who did not take part in the strikes sharply condemn the strikers and demand severe punishment for the provocateurs. In many enterprises the workers adopt resolutions which express trust in the government of the GDR and state the necessity of raising vigilance.

Mass purchases of produce by the population, as was evident on June 16-17, is not observed. In a number of cities a certain increase in withdrawals from savings banks can be noted. The payment of money from accounts is taking place without restrictions.

A series of cases has been noted in which provocateurs agitate among the workers to the effect that the decision of the Politburo of the SED CC, which was published in connection with the new political course in the GDR, is directed at defending the interests of the private sector [and] the kulaks and not those of the workers. They say that the SED has been reborn, having taken the path of supporting the bourgeoisie. In the districts of Neubrandenburg and Suhl, the withdrawal of several hundred peasants from [agricultural] collective [production] cooperatives has been noted.

In the district of Steglitz, in the American sector of Berlin the regional committee of the SED has been broken up. The first secretary of the regional committee, Pirsch, and regional committee employee Firman were arrested and taken away in an undisclosed direction.

West Berlin newspapers speak of the arrival in West Berlin of the American High Commissioner, Conant, and the deputies of the English and French High

Commissioners. The exchange rate of the Eastern mark has remained stable throughout all of these days and has stood at 1:5.40.

On June 20, the Berlin military commandants permitted theatre and movie operations until 9 p.m."