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June 17, 1953

Cable from Czechoslovak Mission in Berlin to Vaclav David, 1:45 PM

Citation:

"Cable from Czechoslovak Mission in Berlin to Vaclav David, 1:45 PM", June 17, 1953, Wilson Center Digital Archive, National Security Archive/CWIHP, "Russian and Eastern European Documents Database (READD)" Collection. Provided by Andreij Edemsky (Moscow); translated by Caroline Kovtun.
<https://wilson-center.drivingcreative.com/document/113122>

Summary:

The Czechoslovak Mission in Berlin described the proceeding of the demonstrations in East Berlin on 17 June 1953.

Original Language:

Czech

Contents:

Translation - English

Receiving number: 6563/53 Sent by: Berlin
Re: information Received: [6/17/53] at 1:45 PM
Attention: I. Referred: [6/17/53] at 4: 00 PM Zi
Assigned: SO/I

Flash!

Comrade Minister David. Work has ceased at most factories in Berlin. Some workers are discussing events in the factories, others are marching towards the building of the Ministries. The demonstrators are shouting slogans like, "Down with German-Soviet friendship," "Down with the government . . . Long live Western freedom," "We want a new government," "Long live the general strike . . . We want butter, not armed police," "We want free elections in Berlin," etc. The main crowd of demonstrators is around the House of Ministries building. Part of the march went along Unter den Linden through the Brandenburger Tor into West Berlin, and turned at Potsdamer Platz, from whence they wished [to get] to the House of Ministries building, all roads to which have been closed by the People's Police. On the way they burned down several wooden buildings as well as SED agitation centers. They destroyed a photograph board with outstanding workers as well as a board inscribed with, "The Democratic Sector Begins Here." Also a number of windowpanes in the houses. Soviet tanks and armored vehicles driving amongst the demonstrators through Berlin were accompanied by cries of "Shame!" FDJ members in blue shirts were threatened, and shouts were heard that they should take their shirts off, and that they had overslept their time [tk: ask Vojtech]. The SED has sent all its functionaries among the demonstrators to try and win them over. Western radio is constantly broadcasting the course of the demonstrations and is partially organizing their expansion by broadcasting false reports. Many West Berlin agents in their hastily bought bricklayers' caps are spreading the unrest. They are trying to give the demonstrations the character of an uprising. The demonstrations have three centers--the streets Unter den Linden, Leipziger Strasse, Stalinallee....