

Cable from Cecil Lyon to U.S. Department of State Relaying Minutes of the First Meeting of the Western Military Commandants in Berlin, 17 June 1953, 6:00 p.m. CET

INCOMING TELEGRAM

Department of State

ACTION COPY

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Rec'd: June 17, 1953 2:37 p.m.

From: BERLIN

To: Secretary of State

No: 1670, June 17, 6 p.m.

French chairman Commandant called meeting this morning at 11 to consider situation arising from disturbances in East Berlin.

French Commandant reported that some thousand Germans have entered French sector from East Zone with intent [to] cross into East sector of Berlin to demonstrate. French officers, having noted that sector border was guarded by VOPOS and Soviet soldiers carrying automatic weapons, warned demonstrators against proceeding into Soviet sector. West Berlin police had been asked to assist in this matter, but their hearts not (repeat not) obviously in work. Commandants agreed that as their mission Berlin was to maintain law and order West Berliners and Soviet Zone residents transiting the West sectors should if possible be dissuaded from mixing in East Berlin demonstrations where serious possibility of bloodshed existed.

Commandants also agreed situs near sector border of West Berlin sympathy demonstration scheduled for this afternoon appeared undesirable.

Commandants then called in Acting Mayor [Walter] Conrad and Police President [Johannes] Stumm and French chairman informed them as follows:

1. Commandants consider their primary duty to maintain law and order in their sectors in Berlin. They appreciate sympathy of West Berliners for their fellow citizens in the East.
2. Commandants will not (repeat not) oppose orderly meeting or demonstrations of sympathy. However, they feel it their duty to warn West Berliners of grave consequences which might result were West Berliners to participate in manifestations in East sector. In this they are expecting the usual full cooperation of West Berlin police.
3. Commandants understand that West Berlin meeting is scheduled to take place at six this evening at Oranien Platz (SPD-sponsored sympathy rally). Commandants have no (repeat no) objection to such a meeting taking place, but feel that place chosen is too close to sector border and consequently might result in serious consequences. They, therefore, request that another meeting place be selected more removed from the sector borders.

4. Commandants scarcely feel it necessary to remind [West Berlin] Senat that status of Berlin is Allied responsibility and expect Senat to take no (repeat no) initiative to change it without consulting Allied Kommandatura.

Dr. Conrad speaking in name of Senat said that the Senat had no (repeat no) objection to Commandants' proposals. He pointed out that both yesterday and today he had been purposefully reticent so as not to give Soviets or GDR excuse to say that Western authorities behind movement. Conrad said this point of view was shared by the three parties, with the leaders of which he had just met and by his colleagues in the Senat. He indicated that they understood that West Berliners could not (repeat not) adopt callous attitude but that they must be very careful in every act they take and particularly in expressions which might be made at meeting planned for this afternoon. He reported that the street cars, buses ,S-bahn, and U-bahn in East ceased functioning; also that East sector was controlled by Soviet tanks and that very few VOPOS were in evidence; most of latter reportedly deployed to sector zonal borders to prevent influx of masses from East Zone into East Berlin. Conrad indicated that deputation from East Zone was at this movement awaiting him at the Rathaus.

Police President Stumm confirmed reports on transportation situation. He said reports indicated that large crowd had assembled in Leipzigerstrasse near GDR Government headquarters, which was cordoned off and protected by Soviet troops. Crowds had been dispersed there with hoses. He also said HO Building Potsdamer Platz had been stoned. He confirmed there had been no (repeat no) demonstrations hostile to West Berlin. Situations here calm and police were fully alerted. Conrad then indicated he had emphasized when questioned by foreign journalists today and yesterday that situation in the East was in his opinion entirely spontaneous and not (repeat not) as he had been suggested (a) inspired by American instigators (b) inspired by Soviet military in attempt to rid themselves of SED leaders.

Conrad also requested Allied assistance in air passage for Reuter to return to Vienna tomorrow.

Conrad asked that House Representatives Council of Elders be permitted to decide where this afternoon's meeting of sympathy be held, emphasizing that city officials' views re danger of meeting too close to sector borders coincided with those of Commandants. Conrad also suggested that if there was much bloodshed in East, Commandants consider visiting Soviet officials and urging restraint.

Lyon

TT: HMR/14

Note: Advance copy to GER 5:25 p.m. 6/17/53 CWO-JRL.

[Quelle: NARA, RG 59, 762A.0221/6-1755, dok. in: Christian F. Ostermann (Hg.), Uprising in East Germany. The Cold War, the German Question and the First Major Upheaval Behind the Iron Curtain. National Security Archive Cold War Readers, New York: CEU Press 2001, Dokument Nr. 32, S. 1194/95.]