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September 14, 1989, Prague – Charter 77 spokespersons to the CSSR government.
Letter on the situation of East German refugees at the Embassy of the Federal Republic of Germany in Prague.

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Translation (extract) by Todd Hammond.

On the question of East German refugees

Since the end of July of this year East German citizens have begun to take refuge at embassies of the Federal Republic of Germany in the GDR, Hungary, and Czechoslovakia. In this way they hoped to be able to emigrate to the West. From a legal standpoint there is now a stalemate; for the laws of these countries do not recognize this method, but at the same time they respect the embassy's extraterritorial sovereignty. If they leave the grounds of the embassy the citizens of the GDR are threatened with up to two years in prison. This is why they are staying put, in makeshift conditions; but meanwhile they are obstructing the normal functioning of the embassy. It is for these two reasons, humanitarian and practical, that steps have been taken in neighboring countries to achieve mutually-acceptable solution.

[...]

In our opinion there are only two possible solutions to this situation – either on the basis of CSCE documents to allow all East German citizens still on the grounds of the embassy of the Federal Republic to leave for the Federal Republic without delay, as the Hungarian government did recently; or to deal with the situation at least temporarily and in accordance with humanitarian principles as is customary in the world. This approach could be guaranteed overseen by the International Red Cross, for example, which however would require the provision of the needed spaces where the East German citizens still staying at the embassy could take shelter. This good-will gesture from the Czechoslovak side would assure them medical care and school instruction for the children, as well as free up the grounds of the embassy for their normal functions.

We find it necessary to emphasize that the abnormality of the situation is being caused above all by the current political situation in the GDR. Disappointed hopes of reform and uncertain future prospects for the ability to emigrate caused a spontaneous and often ill-considered reaction by citizens. We believe that the best prevention of such a problematic form for protest and achievement of inalienable rights would be the introduction of truly democratic conditions to the GDR. However, in our opinion the present situation of GDR citizens at the FRG embassy in Prague must be dealt with quickly right here, above all from a humanitarian standpoint.

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