

Document 4.

September 20, 1989, Prague – GDR Ambassador Helmut Ziebart to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in Berlin. Reports on measures taken by the Czechoslovak authorities against attempts by citizens of the GDR to cross into Hungary, and the situation at the Federal Republic embassy in Prague.

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Translation (extract) by Todd Hammond.

The responsible organs of the CSSR, on the basis of agreement with their partners in the GDR, have taken a number of measures to prevent or limit attempts by citizens of the GDR to cross into Hungary. Among them was a decision to place barriers in front of border crossings with the Hungarian Democratic Republic to prevent, before the border crossing itself, the many attempts being made to cross the border by force, and also to strengthen the guard in front of the Embassy of the FRG in Prague. The Embassy of the FRG has made no request for extraordinary security measures around its embassy. In one conversation with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Ambassador Huber declared that he is not authorized to make such a request.

At the embassy at the moment are 520 citizens of the GDR. In the border zone between the CSSR and the Hungarian People's Republic, 4 500 people have been denied crossing the border. Since unilateral border controls have been introduced in the border crossing regime between the CSSR and the Hungarian People's Republic, the inspections and often arrests are now made on Hungarian [sic!] territory. At the end of the week there were attempts to cross the border in noisy, disruptive groups. The high customs inspector of the Slovak Socialist Republic told me that in the western Slovak sector the security of the border is on a good level, but in central and eastern Slovakia there is practically none. In central and eastern Slovakia the CSSR is carrying out more frequent spot checks on the main highways leading towards the Hungarian border. Unfortunately this includes a number of tourists from the GDR visiting Slovakia. According to the Slovak comrades, relations with Hungarian customs officers and border guards have worsened. In places smuggling of people has even taken place, carried out by Slovaks (mostly ethnic Hungarians living in the Slovak Socialist Republic). The majority of GDR citizens detained in the border zone on the border of the CSSR and Hungary told of broadcasts on FRG radio and television and the rumor that the CSSR would allow for a period of 24 hours entry into the Hungarian People's Republic without the need to apply for a visa. The accommodation of those detained in Bratislava is problematic. Slovak organs refuse to take women and very small children into custody, referring them to the general consulate, which in some cases has had to provide overnight accommodation. The general consulate is now trying to place women and children in factory apartments for guests from the GDR. Possibilities are limited.

[...]

*Ziebart*