

Document 16.

October 5, 1989, Prague – Czechoslovak State Security Headquarters, Second Department. Information on the exodus of GDR citizens from the Prague embassy of the Federal Republic through GDR territory, and the situation in and around the embassy on October 1–4, 1989

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Information

On the instructions of FRG Minister of Foreign Affairs Hans-Dietrich Genscher, citizens of the GDR were repeatedly admitted in groups into the building of the West German embassy in Prague through the main entrance until their numbers grew to 4500 persons. The main entrance was closed on October 3, 1989 at 05:00 on the recommendation of the head of the West German Red Cross group Schröder and the order of Ambassador Huber. The huge influx and concentration of GDR citizens continued, however, gathering especially in front of the main building of the FRG embassy and adjacent streets. Their numbers gradually rose to some 5000–7000.

In isolated cases GDR citizens reached the grounds of the West German embassy also through the garden of the embassy of the USA, and even over the rooftops of private buildings neighboring the FRG embassy building. On October 3, 1989, in the afternoon hours a group began to form of 400-500 people of GDR citizenship, mostly men, who gained access to the garden of the West German mission over the fence, having foiled the intervention by a patrol of uniformed Public Security personnel. In the evening hours of October 3, 1989 mothers with small children were allowed into the building of the FRG Prague embassy so they could spend the coming night in the warm embassy building, as they had stood out in front of the building and its vicinity all day.

On the basis of common agreement between officials of the interested countries FRG – GDR – CSSR the embassy of the FRG began on October 4, 1989 preparations for the departure of the GDR citizens. Just before the departure of the first special train (at 18:20) the number of persons in the building of the West German mission was estimated at 5000 – 6000. Meanwhile in adjacent areas the number of GDR citizens was estimated at 6000 – 7000. After curbing the possibilities for travel to the CSSR for GDR citizens, personnel of the FRG embassy estimated that another 5000 – 6000 GDR citizens were headed towards the West German embassy from various parts of the CSSR.

From the standpoint of age structure they are predominantly members of the younger generation (20-30 years). Aggressiveness and undesirable behavior by GDR citizens was to a great extent eliminated compared to the past with the help of personnel of the FRG embassy and the West German Red Cross (DRK).

For the entire time there was a clear tendency on the part of the FRG to inflate the problem of the GDR citizens from a political issue into a humanitarian one, which was used by the government of the FRG to create pressure on the governments of the GDR and CSSR. In this regard there was all-out support for the efforts of GDR citizens to emigrate to the FRG through the FRG embassy in Prague. The creation of political

and diplomatic pressure was significantly aided by representatives of the western news media, who have devoted extraordinary attention to the issue.

The Czechoslovak side was repeatedly asked to provide accommodation capacity for the GDR refugees with reference to existing humanitarian reasons. In this context the main issue referred to was the hygienic situation of persons inside the West German embassy, and also among other things the conditions under which hundreds of GDR citizens spent the night of October 3–4, 1989.

As a result of the heavy concentration of GDR citizens in the areas adjacent to the embassy, traffic was to a great degree limited, and in some cases even blocked. Ambulances on their way to the hospital Pod Petřínem had a difficult time weaving through the crowd. Despite certain measures there continued to be, though to a lesser extent, littering of the streets and other areas around the FRG embassy by GDR citizens.

The problem of parked motor vehicles in Prague is being dealt with together with the GDR side, but because of the great increase in their number, no clear signs of improvement have yet been seen.

During the stay of the GDR citizens the West German embassy has completely lost its intended function, as almost all the embassy personnel are busy dealing exclusively with the problem of the GDR citizens.

Since September 30, 1989, no further serious signs of verbal attacks on members of Public Security by GDR citizens have been reported.

On October 3, 1989 in the street U Brusnických kasáren a four-month-old child was found in a locked automobile; pointed out by passers-by, it was taken to the infant care facility in Prague 4-Podolí. Later its parents – GDR citizens – presented themselves at the Municipal Department of Public Security office on Vlašská Street.

Because the father is an officer in the People's Army of the GDR, and there was a reasonable suspicion that he intended to go with his wife and 2 children to the FRG embassy, on October 4, 1989, they were turned over for further processing to personnel of the GDR Ministry of State Security, and were transported by air to the GDR.

[...]

Additional information

By 00:25 on October 4 – 5, 1989 a total of 7 trains had been dispatched from Prague-Libeň Station, carrying according to unofficial estimates just under 8000 citizens of the GDR. At about the same time, according to unconfirmed information, some 100-150 GDR citizens remained at the FRG embassy, and at 01:05 the last 7 buses left for the Prague-Libeň Station. At that time Vlašská Street was deserted, with only Public Security personnel remaining.

According to personal information from friends of the GDR Ministry of State Security, along the route of the first two trains in Bad Schandau – on GDR territory – the trains were assaulted by a large group of about 12 000 people. GDR citizens blocked both trains from proceeding further, and demanded the opportunity to freely go on the trains to the FRG.

As a result it was necessary to divert the other trains, and there was a delay in the departure of these later-dispatched trains.