

Document 19.

October 19, 1989, Prague – Federal Ministry of Foreign Affairs to the CSSR embassies. Summary from the department of information and documentation on the situation in the GDR and personnel changes in the SED leadership.

Ministry of Foreign Affairs Archive, Prague. Telegrams sent, 1989, vol. 9, ref. no. 3550. Translation by Todd Hammond.

On events in the GDR

The leadership GDR leadership has been taken aback by the mass emigration. The problem was ignored for about a month by the East German mass media. The population is disoriented. Of the citizens who went to the FRG, only 20 % had submitted an application to emigrate previously. Altogether some 60 000 people have left. The departure of a young qualified workforce is felt especially in health care. The situation has activated the illegal structures. Their program is to unite the opposition groups in a strategy against the policies of the SED. They advocate democratization and reform of socialist society, with no intent to alter the social system. They focus on ecology and human rights. An important role is played by the Protestant church. Mass protests in the biggest industrial centers attended by tens of thousands of mostly young people, climaxing in violent street clashes and dozens of seriously injured members of the security forces, have led to demands for a change in the attitude of the Party and state leadership towards resolving problems. Due to the continuing unrest, the 9th plenum of the SED Central Committee was called early, and Krenz was elected General Secretary of the SED Central Committee. Honecker asked to be relieved of all Party and state functions for reasons of health. Member of Politburo and Secretary of the SED CC for economics Mittag and Politburo member and Secretary of the SED CC Herrmann relieved of Party functions.

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