

Document 20.

October 23, 1989, Berlin – CSSR Ambassador to the GDR František Langer to the Foreign Ministry in Prague. Reports on politics of the new SED leadership, and the political situation in the country. “The Party and state leadership is now being pressured into a number of reforms in a wide range of areas, beginning with travel and ending for example with revising the results of local elections.”

Ministry of Foreign Affairs Archive, Prague. Telegrams received, 1989, vol. 38.
Translation by Todd Hammond.

The period since the election of E. Krenz as General Secretary of the SED Central Committee is now referred to by officials and by the mass media as a turnaround (*Wende*) in the development of society and the economy, during which fundamental changes will be undertaken. In a number of commentaries there have been indirect hints that this turnaround was not possible before because the apparatus was too ossified, inflexible centralism in direction of the Party and state, etc. The path now embarked upon leads to a real social democracy, open dialogue, and involvement of all citizens. The biggest turnaround came in the manner of reporting by the mass media.

The Party and state leadership is now being pressured into a number of reforms in a wide range of areas, beginning with travel and ending for example with revising the results of local elections. This pressure is coming from several directions: “ordinary” citizens (demonstrations), the church (reintroduces previous demands), illegal opposition and the newly-forming so-called civic activities and fora. At the same time a number of demands are being heard from the cultural front.

Besides many meetings in the workplaces, which are being attended by members of the Party leadership, there are all kinds of various “spontaneous” improvised public assemblies. Here all the pressing issues are very heatedly discussed, and even when SED members are attending, active leadership is taken up by others. At the same time this is accompanied by continuing demonstrations and “silent marches”. Here, among other things, demands are being raised to investigate the actions of security against demonstrators in the first week of October, and punish the offenders; that is, personnel of security and prosecutors. These demagogic demands are finding ever greater support.

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