

Document 23.

November 3, 1989, Berlin – GDR Minister of Foreign Affairs Oskar Fischer to General Secretary of the SED Central Committee Egon Krenz. Relays a telephone message from Prague with proposals by General Secretary Jakeš about the situation at the FRG embassy in Prague, and proposes to resolve the situation by allowing direct travel by citizens of the GDR from Czechoslovakia to the Federal Republic without formal release from GDR citizenship. (Below the address on the letterhead is the handwritten note, “Einverstanden [I agree], Egon Krenz”.)

SAPMO-BArch, Berlin. DY 30, 5196, Fols. 17–19; also DY 30 IV/2/2.039 (Bureau Egon Krenz), Vol. 342, Fols. 155–157.

Translation by Todd Hammond.

Esteemed Comrade Krenz!

Attached is information about the situation at the FRG embassy in Prague. I recommend telling the CSSR and FRG that we agree with travel by GDR citizens from the CSSR to the FRG directly – the processing of formalities and release from GDR state citizenship would not be insisted upon – and the territory of the GDR would be avoided. “

Kindly relay your decision.

With Socialist greetings,
Oskar Fischer

Information (Berlin, 3 November 1989)

1. Telephone call through special telephone network from Comrade Ziebart:

Comrade Jakeš sends Comrade Krenz the following message:

1. In view of the rapid rise in the number of GDR citizens at the FRG embassy (at the moment some 4000; a daily influx of at least 2000 is expected), it is necessary to speed the processing of these citizens in order to allow their immediate departure.
2. If this possibility is not available, a unilateral closing of the border from the side of the GDR is recommended, until the GDR has created the conditions for direct travel to the FRG.
3. If neither of these variants is possible, we recommend starting immediate talks in Berlin with the aim of agreeing on a unilateral suspension of the protocol on non-visa travel with the German Democratic Republic, so that the affected citizens can immediately leave the CSSR to any third country. (The ambassador in Berlin is fully empowered in this regard.)

Comrade Jakeš asks for an immediate decision if possible and a corresponding response.

2. Comrade Horst Neubauer tells us that he was told by department head Duisberg from the Federal Chancellor's Office that the situation at the FRG embassy in Prague has

worsened drastically. There are evidently over 5000 people “seeking refuge” at the embassy.

The federal government asks the GDR Government to investigate the possibilities for direct travel by train from Prague to the FRG. Quick processing and the possibility to exit is in the opinion of the FRG surely in the interest of the GDR itself.

3. Our ambassador in Prague Comrade Helmut Ziebart reports that the CSSR Foreign Ministry has told him the following:

As of noon on November 3, there were 4000 citizens of the GDR on the grounds of the FRG embassy (according to latest information over 5000).

Approximately 8000 GRD citizens are currently inside the CSSR.

The CSSR will not set up any “refugee camps for political refugees” from the GDR.

The CSSR asks the GDR to take measures that would either

a) stop the flow of “political refugees”, or

b) apply such practices during processing so that “each day as many former citizens of the GDR may travel out of the CSSR as arrive daily at the FRG embassy”.

Comrade Ziebart promised to inform the competent authorities in Berlin.