

Document 24.

November 3, 1989, Berlin – CSSR Ambassador František Langer to the Foreign Ministry in Prague. Reports on the fecklessness of SED officials in the face of the situation created after the reopening of the border for free travel from the GDR to Czechoslovakia. Langer tells East Berlin officials that “no one in the CSSR understands why citizens of the GDR must travel to the FRG through the CSSR”.

Ministry of Foreign Affairs Archive, Prague. Telegrams received, 1989, vol. 39.
Translation by Todd Hammond.

During today's meeting of the diplomatic corps with the new chairman of the State Council in a conversation at about 15:30 I informed Com. Krenz of the crisis that is again taking place at and around the FRG embassy in Prague. I told him that there are 4-5000 at this hour, and the number is rapidly rising.

Com. Krenz was visibly taken aback by the numbers. I asked in the name of our leading officials for a quick solution. Com. Krenz promised one. He asked that his assurances of a quick solution and measures be relayed to Com. Jakeš along with the message that he looks forward to their meeting on November 17 in Prague.

The problem was also described to Herbert Krolkowski and deputy minister Harry Ott. They said something in the sense that the opening of the border took place without any consultation with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. I told him that no one in the CSSR understands why citizens of the GDR must travel to the FRG through the CSSR. It would be enough to publish a short official announcement in the press that what is done at the GDR's embassy in Prague can just as well be done at the proper office back in the GDR. The (less than pertinent) statement published today by NDR ambassador in Prague Ziebart comes across as totally unconvincing.

The reaction of all of them seemed bewildered; their only concrete reaction was to the effect that temporary spaces should be found in Prague for the short-term shelter of the refugees. Faster processing is allegedly limited by the resources of the GDR embassy. Maybe tomorrow information from the ministry of the interior is to be published (vaguely put) on the possibilities of travel directly from the GDR.

The expected mass demonstration on November 4 (today's estimates do not rule out a million participants) seems however to be keeping them all so busy that without further pressure on the embassy in Prague the refugee situation can hardly be energetically dealt with.

Langer 0440