

November 9, 1989

**Transcript of the Tenth Session of the SED Central
Committee from 3:47 - 3:55 p.m.**

Citation:

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Summary:

Transcript of the Tenth Session of the SED Central Committee regarding the issue of new temporary travel regulations.

Original Language:

German

Contents:

Translation - English

[EXCERPTS]

Krenz: Comrades! Before Günther[1] speaks, I have to digress from the agenda once more. You are aware that there is a problem that wears on us all: the question of exit [from the GDR]. The Czechoslovak comrades are increasingly finding it a burden, as our Hungarian comrades did earlier. And, whatever we do in this situation, it will be a move in the wrong direction. If we close the border to the -SSR, then we are basically punishing the upstanding citizens of the GDR, who would not be able to travel, and in this way put pressure on us. Even that would not have led to our gaining control of the situation, since the Permanent Mission of the FRG has already informed us that they have finished with renovations. That means that when they open the building, we will face the same problem again.

And, Comrade Willi Stoph, as acting Chairman of the Council of Ministers, drafted a decree which I would like to read to you here and now. Although the draft has been approved by the Politburo, it has such an impact that I wanted to consult the Central Committee.

Decision to change the situation for permanent exit of GDR citizens to the FRG via the -SSR.

It is decreed:

1. The decree of 30 November 1988 about travel abroad for GDR citizens will no longer be applied until the new travel law comes into force.

2. Starting immediately, the following temporary transition regulation for travel abroad and permanent exits from the GDR are in effect:

a) Applications for travel abroad by private individuals can now be made without the previously existing requirements (of demonstrating a need to travel or proving familial relationships). The travel authorizations will be issued on short notice. Grounds for denial will only be applied in particularly exceptional cases.

b) The responsible departments of passport and registration control in the police county offices [VPKÄ] in the GDR are instructed to issue visas for permanent exit without delays and without presentation of the existing requirements for permanent exit. It is still possible to apply for permanent exit in the departments for internal affairs.

c) Permanent exits are possible via all GDR border crossings to the FRG and (West) Berlin.

d) The temporary practice of issuing (travel) authorizations through GDR consulates and permanent exit with only a GDR personal identity card via third countries ceases.

3. The attached press release explaining the temporary transition regulation will be issued on 10 November.

The press release reads as follows: "As the Press Office of the Ministry of the Interior has announced, the GDR Council of Ministers has decided that the following temporary transition regulation for travel abroad and permanent exit from the GDR will be effective until a corresponding law is put into force by the Volkskammer."

Then follow the four points that I do not need to read to you again.

I said that however way we do this, it will turn out bad. But it is the only solution that saves us from the problems of having to do everything through third countries, which does not further the international prestige of the GDR. Comrade Hoffmann?[2]

Hoffmann: Comrade Krenz, could we avoid this word "temporary"? It creates a constant pressure, as if people didn't have any time left and had to get away as soon as possible. Wouldn't it be possible-I don't know the entire text-to avoid that or work around it?

Krenz: Yes, we could write: "According to the Volkskammer's decision, the following transition regulation" and simply take out "temporary." Transition regulation, after all, means temporary.

Dickel:[3] Until the travel law comes into effect.

Krenz: So, until the travel law comes into effect, the following things are valid, OK? (noise)

Krenz: Agreed? (noise) Comrade Dickel, do you foresee any difficulties? It's correct as it is, isn't it? [noise, Chair rings bell]

Dickel: As far as the announcement is concerned- (shout: louder!) it perhaps would make sense for the Press Office of the Council of Ministers to make the announcement rather than the Ministry of the Interior, although we will actually carry out the decree, since it is a decree from the Chairman of the Council of Ministers.

Krenz: I would suggest that the government spokesman make the announcement right away. (shouting) What? (noise)

Banaschak:[4] Isn't it dangerous to adopt such a passage, "temporary"? ... (shouts: louder!) If we adopt such a passage, one that contains "temporary" or "transition solution," couldn't that have the effect that people aren't sure what will come next... (noise, shouts: They just said that! Further noise, shouts)

Krenz: Therefore, we will say that we will avoid "temporary" as well as "transition rule" and say: until the travel law, which is to be passed by the Volkskammer, comes into effect, this and that is decreed. Agreed, Comrades? (shouts: yes!) Good, thank you very much. Günther Jahn, you have the floor.

(Quietly, to his neighbor at the presidium table, with the microphone turned off): It is always good to do something like that. (Loudly, with microphone turned on): After Günther Jahn, Günter Sieber will take the floor.

[1] Günther Jahn, the First Secretary of the SED District leadership of Potsdam, was next on the list of speakers.

[2] Hans-Joachim Hoffmann, born 1929, from 1973 to 1989 the GDR Minister of Culture and from 1976 to 1989/90, he was a member of the SED Central Committee and a Representative in the GDR Parliament. Hoffmann died in 1994.

[3] Friedrich Dickel, Army General, successor to Karl Maron as Minister of the Interior and the head of the People's Police, member of the SED Central Committee and delegate in the GDR Parliament, member of the National Defense Council.

[4] Professor Dr. Manfred Banaschak, editor-in-chief of the SED theoretical journal "Einheit" [Unity].