

September 5, 1985
Transcript of the SED Politburo Session held on 5
September 1989

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Summary:

A transcript of an SED Politburo Session discussing Hungary's decision to open its western border and allow East German citizens to cross into Austria.

Original Language:

Russian

Contents:

Translation - English

Transcript of the SED Politburo Session held on 5 September 1989[1]

[Oskar] Fischer. The letter from Comrade Shevardnadze was forwarded by Comrade Gorinovich. He emphasized the concern of the Soviet Union for the further escalation of the campaign against the GDR. Kvitsinsky will speak with Genscher's representative to cool or sober feelings in the FRG. Fischer told Gorinovich that the article in "Pravda" was indeed good, but the Soviet side has far more possibilities.[2] O. Fischer's proposal for convening the Committee of Foreign Ministers of the Warsaw Pact states met with misgivings from Gorinovich. That did not materialize too quickly. One must take into consideration the deviating viewpoints in Poland and Hungary as well. Fischer stuck to the proposal, but Shevardnadze's representative Aboymov had reservations too. It seems clear that Hungary will be yielding to the pressure from the FRG. Nemeth, Pozgay, and Hom are not playing their cards openly. The Minister of the Interior Horvath views the situation better. A change in the Hungarian position, beginning with the emigration of GDR citizens from September 11, should not be expected.

[Willi] Stoph. The West wants to continually raise the stakes. Hungary supports this in actuality, particularly with the open borders. That goes against all treaties. The FRG's campaign also goes against the agreements between Erich Honecker and Kohl. We must present our situation more aggressively to our allies and other countries...

[Kurt] Hager. Hungary is playing a double game. Their meeting in Bonn is further kept[3] in secret. The Hungarian gate remains open. It is therefore necessary that the Warsaw Pact states present our point of view to Hungary. In the long run such a negative position by Hungary does not bode well for friendly discussions between the two of us. What they are doing is a breach in hitherto normal relations. We are faced with the question of how we should continue to conduct ourselves with Hungary. That is for me still an open question. But the Hungarian position worsens with respect to us - in favor of Bonn. They will obey the orders of Bonn...

[Werner] Krolitowski. I am in agreement with the letter by Erich Honecker,[4] the newscast declaration and the other materials. We must continue unwaveringly:

- The strengthening of the GDR.
- . The strengthening of the alliance system, particularly with the Soviet Union.
- . The exposing of the FRG campaign.
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One must fundamentally assess the entire campaign of the enemy and present it to the Politburo. We should use Shevardnadze's letter as an opportunity to make the first proposals. We must also continue to work with Hungary, so that what is planned does not occur...

[Erich] Mialle. Hungary is betraying socialism. The proposal by Fischer for a meeting of the foreign ministers is very important. It concerns the power relationships in socialism in general. If Hungary continues to proceed with this, we are risking Hungary becoming a transit country. We must however support our comrades in Hungary too. We provide our comrades with theoretical articles, which are read and studied. What matters though is to clarify on the practical questions in the spirit of these good, theoretical articles...

[1] Standing in for Egon Krenz at the session was Wolfgang Herger, who took down the minutes.

[2] Under the headline "Hour of the Hypocrites," "Pravda" ran an article by M. Podklyuchnikov. The West German media was made responsible for all of the situation in Hungary. See Neues Deutschland 1. September 1989.

[3] In a surprise visit, Hungarian Prime Minister Miklos Nemeth and Foreign Minister Gyula Horn came to Bonn for discussions with Chancellor Helmut Kohl and Foreign Minister Hans-Dietrich Genscher. There it was agreed to open the Hungarian border to the West to those GDR citizens willing to emigrate. See Gyula Horn: Freiheit, die ich meine. Erinnerungen des ungarischen Außenministers, der den Eisernen Vorhang Delete. Hamburg: 1991.

[4] On 5 September Neues Deutschland first published an article by Erich Honecker titled "40 Years of the German Democratic Republic," which was originally written for the theoretical journal of the Central Committee of the SED, "Unity." See Einheit, 1989 Volume 9/10, p. 788