

September 12, 1989

East Germany: Emigration Raises Pressure

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Summary:

An analysis of Hungary's pressure on East Germany to replace Honecker and tighten travel restrictions.

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~~Top Secret~~

6.2(d)

EAST GERMANY: Emigration Raises Pressure

By letting East German refugees depart to the West, Hungary has increased the pressure on East Germany to replace its ailing leader Erich Honecker and to impose travel restrictions, even at the risk of further public disaffection. [redacted]

6.2(d)

Hungary's announcement Sunday that it would temporarily suspend restrictions on East German emigration has, as of late yesterday, cleared the way for more than 6,000 East Germans in Hungary to leave for West Germany. Hungarian officials also estimate that some 60,000 additional East German travelers, many of whom want to resettle in West Germany, remain in the country. Budapest radio reports an additional 16,000 vacationing East Germans have streamed into Hungary from Czechoslovakia since the announcement. [redacted]

6.2(d)

East Germany has condemned Budapest's actions and blames West Germany for the emigration pressure as well as the Hungarian decision, but signs of disarray in the East German leadership are mounting. Officials have begun speaking openly [redacted] of the need for Honecker to step down. [redacted]

3.3(b)(1)

6.2(d)

Comment: The only option that appears open to the East Germans is imposing new restrictions on Bloc travel. Such a move would risk increasing disaffection and renewed public protests; the regime's domestic legitimacy probably already has been challenged anew by the formation yesterday of a new national political opposition group of intellectuals, professionals, and former Communists called New Forum. [redacted]

6.2(d)

If the East Germans do not act, however, a larger illegal exodus and the unprecedented level of legal emigration will deprive their troubled economy of skilled workers, technicians, and professionals when growth is already declining and labor short. The morale of the remaining work force probably would suffer, further depressing productivity. West Germany's economic importance to Budapest leaves East Germany no realistic option for economic retaliation. [redacted]

6.2(d)

Honecker's failure to act decisively to halt the flow and his inability to persuade the USSR or other Bloc regimes to help will probably speed his replacement. [redacted]

3.3(b)(1)

6.2(d)

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