

September 10, 1989
**Letter from GDR Ambassador to Hungary, Gerd
Vehres, to Foreign Minister Osker Fischer**

Citation:

"Letter from GDR Ambassador to Hungary, Gerd Vehres, to Foreign Minister Osker Fischer", September 10, 1989, Wilson Center Digital Archive, National Security Archive. Translated by Christiaan Hetzner. <https://digitalarchive.umd.edu/document/120815>

Summary:

A letter from Gerd Vehres to Oskar Fischer detailing aspects of his conversation with Rezso Nyers in which Vehres complains about Hungary opening its border to allow GDR citizens to illegally travel to Austria.

Original Language:

Russian

Contents:

Translation - English

Letter from GDR Ambassador to Hungary, Gerd Vehres, to Foreign Minister Osker Fischer dated the 10 September 1989[1]

Dear Comrade Minister:

In addition to my CT 385 from September 10, I would like to inform you of some further aspects of my conversation with Comrade [Rezso] Nyers.

After I had given an initial position on the decision by the Hungarian government and the following recognition by the Party Presidium, Comrade Nyers replied:

1. Comrade Nyers does not wish the events named to be viewed in the GDR as an anti-GDR campaign.

2. Comrade Nyers believes that a great part of the original problem was caused by the sudden opening of the border with Austria. This fact strengthened the existing intentions among a number of GDR tourists to illegally leave the country. The quickly increasing number of people willing to leave under these existing circumstances makes it impossible to convince such a huge number of people by words or declarations. Were the Hungarian organs to have been placed deep in the affair, that is, in the situation themselves, there would be many large conflicts started, undesired by both Hungary and the GDR. The political victor in this case is only the FRG. Comrade Nyers expressed his conviction that in the future the Hungarian side must deal with us on a more mutual level. He believes that the present wave of emigration is unique and that later it will start to abate, and consequently the problem will become manageable. Related to this, he emphasized once again that the Hungarian decision is only a temporary measure, valid for just a short time. Afterwards the Hungarians will again apply our existing bilateral agreement.

Comrade Nyers stated that the Hungarian leadership had examined up until last month whether the Berlin Formula would make a solution possible. "We wanted very much to proceed, but unfortunately had to find out that with such a number of people willing to leave the country under these concrete conditions in Hungary, success is unfortunately not a possibility." ...

In judging the Hungarian actions one must observe that "Hungary is in a dilemma, we have fallen into a political trap." Hungary could not choose between good and bad, but rather between only bad and worse (I refrained from remarking that with that statement, the GDR is the lesser evil). Comrade Nyers lastly referred to the exceptional nature of the present situation, namely that it was now pushed into a defensive position politically, and he can only hope that it will once again be able to go back on the offensive...

Thus far, the course of today's discussion in the Central Committee of the HSWP permits me to draw attention to still some further things in connection with the entire event:...

3. In spite of the verbally declared willingness on behalf of the Hungarians to solve the problem facing the GDR, the discussions with the GDR (Foreign Minister, Head of the Consular Affairs Department, MfS, DRK[2]) represent an attempt at stalling and deliberately misleading the GDR. The Hungarian organs undertook no serious attempts of their own to persuade those GDR citizens wishing to emigrate to return to the GDR. The efforts by our embassy's consular section to contact the GDR citizens in these [refugee] camps and explain the GDR's point of view, were both delayed and impeded.

Simultaneously the Hungarian media provoked and supported a campaign directed against the GDR, which, upon seeing it, encouraged the GDR citizens staying in the camps. Battle groups, which were temporarily placed at the border as reinforcements, were defamed by opposition groups, anti-socialist forces, and the majority of the press.

4. The campaign is judged at the same time to be a coordinated and successful attempt by imperialist states, in particular the FRG, to take advantage of the political and economic position of the HPR to exert pressure on the Hungarian leadership to solve the problem of those GDR citizens wishing to leave with the aim of looking out after all Germans. The imperialist policy of discriminating was here consciously directed to foil, via purposeful insertion of extensive economic means into Hungary, the already initiated solutions in accordance with the Berlin formula for the FRG representation in Berlin and Prague with regard to the HPR. With the massive scale of the migration [Ausschleusang] of thousands of GDR citizens, a socialist country will establish a publicly-effective precedent supporting the FRG position, which is not in favor of international laws. That follows the initiated process of expelling Hungary from the socialist state community.

Characteristic for the preparation and implementation of the [Ausschleusang] was that the FRG always more openly and directly conducted the maintenance and care of the camp "the consular responsibility for GDR citizens" and the deliberate preparation of the [Ausschleusang] campaign. The Hungarian organs tolerated and covered up these acts by the FRG.

[1] Oskar Fischer further relayed the letter to Gunter Mittag and then to all members and candidate members of the SED-Politburo as well on the 11 September 1989.

[2] Ministry for State Security, or Stasi, and the [East] Germany Red Cross, respectively.