

PRESS DISCUSSES SHOOTING INCIDENT AT GDR BORDER

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[From the press review compiled by Thomas Stein]

[Text] Under the heading "The Deadly Border" the ESSEN NEUE RUHR-ZEITUNG writes: "By the method of holding the culprit, the SED is trying to turn the tables on the Federal Republic and blame it for the increasingly frequent border incidents. The accusation that security measures on the West German side are inadequate is now followed by the argument that in our country the state border with the GDR is not recognized. Unfortunately the opposite has become historical truth, for the Federal Republic had to recognize the border if it wanted to achieve alleviations for the people in Germany at long last. Mines, barbed wire, and shooting to kill could not be discussed as a special topic, and all fine speeches about the unity of the nation were no remedy against this deadly border. But this cannot mean that the death strip with all its brutality is accepted as irrevocable. The GDR will succeed in shaking off its bad reputation as disturber of the peace in Europe only if it takes decisive measures commensurate with peace here. Otherwise an escalation of the controversy threatens to occur which will not benefit the climate in Europe."

The editorial of FRANKFURTER ALLGEMEINE reads in part: "The West German people and the Federal Government clearly have ceased to believe that transgressions of the rulers of the other part of Germany should be ignored and hushed up for the sake of detente. In particular the months preceding a Bundestag election, in which public declarations of will are pronounced most sharply and watched most closely, indicate this change in sentiment. Just 4 years ago, in the summer of 1972, nothing was more popular than the nearly daily television appearances of the two negotiators Bahr and Kohl and the publication of continuously new German-German agreements, however miserably formulated and poor. This time there is nothing of the sort. Instead there is popular ire over the shooting madness of the GDR security organs, and the declaration of intent of a Federal minister to have their behavior examined by international bodies as an aspect of human rights. Was this not considered out of place and inopportune just a few months back?" FRANKFURTER ALLGEMEINE asks.

KOELNISCHE RUNDSCHAU declares: This state border is nothing to parade about. The GDR citizens know it, and so do all civilized states. But because this constant cause of complaint cannot be eliminated without endangering the existence of the state, they [the GDR] compensate for it by demonstrating sovereignty even with firearms, massacre their own people with pettifogging editorials and medals, pass the buck to the other party--firmly believing in the importance of Helsinki and the poor memory of the world. Surely it would be unrealistic to organize bus excursions and torch parades by masses in our country, excitedly sever the economic relationship and call the whole Ostpolitik into question, but it would be good to recognize the constant yielding as the wrong method and to measure the election campaigners in the country by their sense of reality.

The KOBLENZ RHEIN-ZEITUNG notes: "Torches and loudspeakers do not impress dictators who keep more than 7,500 political prisoners in harsh confinement. The terminated credit agreement could be easily countered by severed telephone connections and harassments of transit traffic.

The people over there reply to anonymous shots unconcernedly and officially. What should be done in a situation of most humiliating defenselessness? To begin with, our border should be clearly marked. Then neither foolish tourists carrying cameras nor sleepy border patrols of the Federal border police will step on GDR territory and give the dictatorship a pretext. Anyone wanting to talk with people from the GDR will not go to the deadly border but will enter the GDR normally. This is possible thanks to the treaties. What is long overdue is our protest before the United Nations organization and before the Human Rights Commission there. Granted, our woeful complaint will hardly alarm the majority of the GDR's friends and the representatives of the Third World, in which we prevent innumerable children from starving. Yet it is embarrassing for a nation of culture--which the Soviet-German republic pretends to be--to be internationally confronted by the harsh documentation of walls, a deadly border, and automatic shooting devices."