

PRESS DISCUSSES GDR BORDER KILLING OF ITALIAN

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[From the press review composed by Eva-Dorothea Jikeli]

[Text] HANNOVERSCHE ALLGEMEINE ZEITUNG writes: A person has been killed again at the GDR border. For the first time in a long time the victim was not a German but a foreigner--according to the GDR an Italian. Details permitting a clear picture are still missing. It seems obvious that somebody wanted to avoid control at the border, which for the GDR was reason enough to shoot him down like a dangerous criminal. It is to be hoped that this death of an Italian will eventually shake up the public of other European countries, which have tended to consider the incidents at the GDR border as a minor inter-German affair discarding it with a shrug of the shoulders.

BRAUNSCHWEIGER ZEITUNG stresses: The murder of the Italian truck driver is not just a crime but a deed which because of its brutality will fan foreign resentment against "the Germans". Since the SED rulers and their enforcement agents are Germans, it will also entail political complications because the bullets this time have hit a Western foreigner, from Italy of all places, where the ideological comrades of the East Berlin communists are trying very hard to behave in a decent, bourgeois way. They are participating indirectly in state power and therefore they are embarrassed by the killing of their compatriot.

RHEINISCHE POST of Duesseldorf declares: The news about the new murder at the zonal border coincided with the publication of a sobering CDU assessment of the fatal shots fired at the inter-German border and other incidents. It was linked to the reproach that the Federal Government and the coalition had not reacted, or only in an insufficient way, to the increasing number of human rights violations of the simplest kind. It is to be hoped that the government and coalition will agree after the recent incident on the most important common denominator which will permit a joint German policy with the opposition, at least on one point. It may remain debatable whether there is an alternative to the Ostpolitik of the SPD and FDP. But murder should in the future be called by all Germans by its correct name.

NEUE RUHR-ZEITUNG writes: Now that an Italian has become a victim of a shooting command the brutality at the GDR border will receive international attention. The 166 casualties since the building of the wall have not had that effect. Such incidents remained "German affairs." Now the Rome government is dealing with the situation at the border, of which Chancellor Schmidt said: "Detente means making the border more human, too." But it seems that the GDR wants to prove the opposite.

HESSISCH/NIEDERSAECHSISCHE ALLGEMEINE ZEITUNG notes: The usual justification that the GDR must defend itself against aggression and provocation-greedy West Germans now finally proves to be a cynical excuse. The shots of Hirschberg could touch off a worldwide echo. East Berlin immediately saw the danger. The reaction, therefore, is unusual: Not silence first and then accusations, as always, but a stilted declaration and the assurance that immediate medical aid has been given to the injured. This will not calm the mood of the Italians. It is a coincidence of fate that the Communists there have just arrived at the antechamber of power and that they must experience now how a communist regime in full possession of power deals with humanity.

NEUE OSNABRUECKER ZEITUNG is of the following opinion: Despite the tragic cause, it can be considered a positive sign that the GDR yesterday for the first time expressed regrets over the fatal shots at the border instead of lamenting about border violations. But as the situation is, suspicion will remain that the regrets have been expressed just because the dead man was a foreigner and because East Berlin fears Italian protests. Humanity, however, remains indivisible. As long as the GDR fails to see this, all the struggling for a more international prestige will be in vain. Shots at the German-German border destroy not just human lives, they also destroy the heavily outlined picture of the GDR as a humane, progressive state.

WESTDEUTSCHE ALLGEMEINE of Essen states: Some phrases of the GDR message permit the conclusion that it considers the death of the man as unpleasant. It tries harder than usual to justify the action of border organs. But if you pay bonuses to and commend soldiers for bagging border violators, you cannot be surprised by the killings. The GDR, supported by the Soviet Union, has political reasons for insisting on the inviolability of its borders. Penetrable borders would undermine its system. The message of Helsinki was that human lives are more important than systems, the way the West understood it. The fact that borders are more important than anything else is the only lesson the East has derived from Helsinki.

HAMBURGER ABENDBLATT writes: The UN declaration of human rights, the final document of Helsinki, and international law as such demand peace and humanity--at the zonal border as well. The GDR avows this tirelessly, but its deeds contrast cynically with its words. Mechanical instruments of death and trained shooting squads create a deadly and bloody border delimitation. The European Community of states cannot and must not accept such acts of violence. It is not just a demand of the law, it is a commitment for the protection of people here and elsewhere. The wall, barbed wire, and delimitation slogans are symbols of fear. With its brutality the GDR is supplying proof of its own fear and inner weakness. This is, indeed, the only hopeful sign about the sad death of Benito Corghi.