

BLOC SAID WORRIED BY NUMBER OF EXIT REQUESTS IN GDR

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[Article by Werner Khal]

[Text] Berlin--The governments of several East Bloc states have asked their diplomatic representations in East Berlin to comment on reports on the number of "GDR" citizens wanting to emigrate to the Federal Republic. DIE WELT has learned in addition that Soviet emissaries about a week ago sought to ascertain the actual extent of the "defection" of SED functionaries in East Berlin and in some bezirk capitals. Reportedly the SED top in some cases learned only with some delay about the probing of the "Soviet friends."

Official party and government agencies in Moscow and in some capitals of the Warsaw Pact states, the reports say, have demanded "reliable data" for a decision-making process on the current political situation in East Germany.

Obviously the alarm among the partners in the East Bloc as well as in the medium and lower echelons of the SED leadership is linked with the instruction of the SED leadership to the official "GDR" news agency ADN to deny the number of about 200,000 applicants for exit to the Federal Republic contained in Western reports. The chief editor's office of the SED central organ NEUES DEUTSCHLAND received instructions Wednesday to print the ADN report in its Thursday edition.

The report says, among other things, that this involves a "purposeful defamation campaign" by West Berlin and the Federal Republic. Such "malignant lies and slander" are aimed at burdening the relations between the "GDR" and the Federal Republic and at jeopardizing "further steps toward normalization" and toward detente.

No details have as yet become known about the opinion-forming process among the members of the SED Central Committee and Politburo. Reportedly, influential economic officials have voiced objections to an intensified [word indistinct] policy toward the West, which cannot be precluded any longer at this stage of the game, and pointed out that this would not be opportune in view of the currently gloomy economic situation. In the discussions in the SED leadership on how the domestic situation could be consolidated again, a wing of the top functionaries reportedly asked Moscow for approval of a "hard course."

Soviet agencies in East Berlin and in the "GDR" bezirk capitals are watching the development especially from the angle of the fulfillment of contracts in the economy. The "GDR" citizens who have filed applications for an exit permit to the Federal Republic reportedly include many skilled workers and engineers who, unlike the usual practice in the case of, say, medical people, cannot be taken to task.