

Television Report

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[Text] Good evening, ladies and gentlemen. The GDR has arbitrarily ordered changes in Berlin border traffic affecting all diplomats accredited to East Berlin. From now on they also have to show their passports when passing through the checkpoints. Americans, Britons, and French today were exempted from the regulation. However, GDR border guards informed them they would have to present their passports next time.

[Begin Peter Merseburger recording] Checkpoint Heinrich Heine Strasse, early this afternoon. For the second time a member of the Bonn permanent representation in East Berlin has tried to cross the border — for the second time he is refused, politely but firmly. As of today the GDR is enforcing a new regulation forcing diplomats to produce their passports.

Until yesterday they just needed an identity card issued by the GDR Foreign Ministry for all diplomats accredited to East Berlin. Last Thursday the GDR delivered a note to all foreign missions announcing the change in procedure, but the embassies of the three Western powers in East Berlin and the permanent representation sent it back. Their members were instructed not to comply with the new border regulation. The three Western allies consider the new GDR checkpoint procedure a threat to Berlin's status. East Berlin did not justify the new procedure, but according to Soviet diplomats the controls should help control terrorism. After the attack on the La Belle discotheque, the GDR had expressively welcomed Western controls at checkpoints in Berlin. The new regulations do not apply to soldiers and diplomats of the three Western powers stationed in West Berlin.

No international border, but only a demarcation line — that is the Western interpretation of the sector frontier within the city. Soviet patrol cars today went freely from west to east as usual. As was learned, military vehicles of the Western allies today were exempted from the GDR measure. The usual travel and visiting traffic is not affected. While the Western allies, who are now negotiating the status problem at the four-power level with the Soviet Union, refused to issue an official statement for the time being. Federal Senator Rupert Scholz said

[Scholz] We will have to watch that. We will have to see what it is all about. But we must understand that everything that affects the open border principle — the legally undivided status of this city — might prejudice that very status. Therefore, such incidents are watched seriously, examined seriously, and if necessary, pursued seriously. [end recording]