

~~SECRET~~

94

25X1

OCI No. 2480/63

CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY
Office of Current Intelligence
7 December 1963

CURRENT INTELLIGENCE MEMORANDUM

SUBJECT: Christmas Permits for West Berliners to
Visit East Berlin.

1. The Ulbricht regime long has been pressing the West Berlin Senat to authorize talks between Governing Mayor Brandt or his representative and a top-level East German official, with a view to securing implied Senat recognition of the GDR's "sovereignty" underlining the GDR's claim that West Berlin has a "special" status and weakening its ties with the Federal Republic. The Ulbricht regime now is seeking to use the possibility of Christmas visits for West Berliners with their relatives in East Berlin to put additional pressure on the Senat for talks.

2. On 5 December the Senat received a letter from GDR Deputy Premier Alexander Abusch, offering to establish machinery by which West Berliners could secure GDR permits to visit the Soviet sector during the holiday season (15 December-5 January). Abusch, however, attached conditions which are well known to be unacceptable to the West Berlin Senat and the three Western Powers. The letter states that the GDR is prepared to establish issuing facilities in West Berlin, where West Berlin citizens could receive permits for visits to "the capital of the GDR" during the period and expresses the hope that Brandt "deems it necessary to discuss implementation of the measure" with Abusch, either in East or West Berlin.

3. The Senat two years ago ejected East German permit offices which were being set up in West Berlin, and obtained an order from the Allied Kommandatura forbidding the establishment or operation of such offices. Apart from this the Senat has

State Department review completed

Declassified
24 Apr 1978

25X1

~~SECRET~~

~~SECRET~~

25X1

firmly resisted offers for talks with GDR representatives at any level which would imply West Berlin's recognition of the Ulbricht regime. Mayor Brandt, however, has indicated that he would be agreeable to talks with an official of the East Berlin municipal government even though he also belongs to the GDR government, but provided it was clear that this individual was acting only within his capacity as an East Berlin official.

4. The present East German maneuver nevertheless places the West Berlin Senat in a difficult position. The Senat and the West German government have been trying for a deal whereby Bonn would give the GDR badly needed financial aid in return for a concession on visits by West Berliners to the Soviet sector. Various moves either through interzonal trade channels or other levels to reach such an agreement, however, have been blocked by the GDR's insistence that any concession be in return for some form of recognition of East German "sovereignty."

5. On 30 November, West German Minister for All German Affairs Erich Mende renewed Bonn's offer of a loan, spelling out among the four conditions the demand that West Berliners receive the right to visit friends and relatives in East Berlin, "just as citizens of the Federal Republic do." East German media immediately stigmatized the offer as an insult to East German "sovereignty." Soviet Ambassador Abrasimov took up the matter with Ambassador McGhee in their 4 December talk in West Berlin, sharply criticizing the conditions of Mende's offer. When McGhee remarked that travel seemed a basic human right, Abrasimov suggested that the Allies urge Brandt to negotiate the question of internal Berlin travel with the East German government.

6. In this situation, the Senat officials apparently feel they cannot afford to leave the Abusch letter unanswered and have asked Bonn for immediate guidance. Meanwhile, in the absence of Brandt and his deputy Albertz, Senat officials are considering an unsigned and unaddressed aide memoire expressing regret that the East German offer is limited in time and declaring that permit-issuing facilities would be acceptable only if the operation did not constitute an exercise of GDR sovereignty on West Berlin's territory.

~~SECRET~~

25X1