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CONCEPTS= POLITICAL CRISIS, HUMAN RIGHTS, REFUGEE

TAGS= PGOV, PINS, PHUM, PREL, GC, (HONECKER, ERICH)

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PAGE 01 EMBBER 08141 01 OF 02 041606Z
ACTION EUR-00

INFO LOG-00 ADS-00 INR-07 SS-00 OIC-02 CIAE-00 DODE-00
H-01 MSC-01 IO-19 NSCE-00 NSAE-00 SSO-00 HA-09
L-03 TRSE-00 PM-10 PA-01 OMB-01 INRE-00 USIE-00
SP-02 SNP-01 PRS-01 DS-01 P-02 T-01 /062 W
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0041558Z OCT 89
FM AMEMBASSY EMBBERLIN
TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 1016
INFO EASTERN EUROPEAN POSTS COLLECTIVE IMMEDIATE
AMEMBASSY BONN IMMEDIATE
AMEMBASSY VIENNA
USAFSB BERLIN GE
USDOC WASHDC
USDEL NST GENEVA
AMCONSUL HAMBURG
AMEMBASSY LONDON
AMEMBASSY PARIS

DEPARTMENT OF STATE / IM/IPS/CR/IR /13 Date: 11/25/97
(*) RELEASE (X) DECLASSIFY
() EXCISE () DECLASSIFY EO 13526
() DENY () DECLASSIFY

FOIA Exemptions _____
PA Exemptions _____

SECTION 01 OF 02 EMBBERLIN 08141

E.O. 12356: DECL:OADR
TAGS: PGOV PINS PHUM, PREL GC
SUBJECT: THE GDR POLITICAL CRISIS: STILL DEEPENING
REF: EMBBERLIN 8123

1. ENTIRE TEXT.
2. SUMMARY: IN HIS FIRST PUBLIC COMMENT SINCE RETURNING FROM HIS SICK BED, HONECKER ADMITTED NO CRISIS AND BLAMED THE GDR'S PROBLEMS ON THE DEVIL IN BONN. PRIME MINISTER STOPH PLEDGED CONTINUITY AT NEXT SPRING'S PARTY CONGRESS. THE GAP BETWEEN THE OLD LEADERS WHO ARE CIRCLING THEIR WAGONS AND POLITICAL REALITY CONTINUES TO GROW, HOWEVER, END SUMMARY.

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PAGE 02 EMBBER 08141 01 OF 02 041606Z

3. THERE HAS BEEN NO PUBLIC ANNOUNCEMENT HERE OF THE GDR'S SURPRISE DECISION OCTOBER 3 TO ALLOW THE FRG EMBASSY IN PRAGUE TO BE EMPTIED FOR THE SECOND TIME IN A HALF-WEEK OF EAST GERMANS SEEKING REFUGE IN THE WEST. THAT AND THE FACT THAT THE GDR REICHSBAHN TRAINS WHICH HAD BEEN ANTICIPATED TO BEGIN ARRIVING IN PRAGUE THE SAME EVENING HAD STILL NOT REACHED THE CZECH CAPITAL BY MIDDAY OCTOBER 4 STIRRED SPECULATION THAT THIS NEW CONCESSION MIGHT BE PROVOKING A SERIOUS FIGHT WITHIN THE POLITBURO.

4. THE LATEST INDICATION, BASED ON WESTERN PRESS REPORTS, IS THAT THE TRAINS WILL BEGIN TO TAKE THE REFUGEES OUT OF PRAGUE BY LATE AFTERNOON AND THAT THE DELAY WAS DUE NOT TO HIGH-LEVEL POLITICAL OBSTRUCTION, BUT TO TROUBLE ON THE RAILS. ONE VERSION IS THAT SOME OF THE TRACKS WERE BLOCKED WITHIN THE GDR, PRESUMABLY BY ANGRY RAILROADERS OR AVERAGE CITIZENS, ANOTHER VERSION THAT THE SECURITY POLICE NEEDED ADDITIONAL TIME TO TAKE PRECAUTIONS TO PREVENT PERSONS FROM JUMPING ABOARD WHEN THE TRAINS PASSED BACK THROUGH THE GDR ON THEIR WAY TO THE WEST GERMAN BORDER.

5. NONE OF THESE REPORTS AND RUMORS ARE CONFIRMED; THE DELAY COULD BE CAUSED BY NOTHING MORE MYSTERIOUS THAN THE DIFFICULTY OF FREEING UP THE PERSONNEL AND ROLLING STOCK AT SHORT NOTICE ON A WEEKDAY. THEIR APPEARANCE IS SYMPTOMATIC, HOWEVER, OF AN ATMOSPHERE OF UNCERTAINTY THAT IS LIKELY TO CONTINUE AT LEAST THROUGH GORBACHEV'S VISIT FOR THE OCTOBER 6-7 FORTIETH BIRTHDAY CELEBRATIONS.

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PAGE 03 EMBBER 08141 01 OF 02 041606Z

6. NEVERTHELESS, THE RUMORS GAIN AT LEAST SOME PLAUSIBILITY FROM THE OBVIOUS AND TANGIBLE DISTRESS WHICH YESTERDAY'S ANNOUNCEMENT OF CURBS ON TRAVEL TO CZECHOSLOVAKIA HAS PRODUCED. AT AN OFFICIAL FOREIGN MINISTRY RECEPTION AFTER THE NEWS CAME OUT OCTOBER 3, FOR EXAMPLE, NORMALLY DISCIPLINED PARTY MEMBERS, BOTH DIPLOMATS AND LOCAL JOURNALISTS, WERE MORE OUTSPOKEN THAN WE HAVE EVER EXPERIENCED THEM. ONE CALLED THE DECISION "DANGEROUS," IMPLYING

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THAT IT COULD LEAD TO DEMONSTRATIONS. THE OTHERS,
OBVIOUSLY SHARING A CONSENSUS THAT THE PARODCHBNQ DIRECTLY,
HE USED HIS SPEECH, PERHAPS SYMBOLICALLY TO EX-

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PAGE 01 EMBBER 08141 02 OF 02 041719Z
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[REDACTED] SECTION 02 OF 02 EMBBERLIN 08141

E.O. 12356: DECL: OADR
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SUBJECT: THE GDR POLITICAL CRISIS: STILL DEEPENING

UNDERGROUND FIGHTERS AND "ACTIVISTS OF THE GDR'S FIRST HOURS," -- PROBABLY THE ONLY GROUP IN THE COUNTRY WITH A HIGHER AVERAGE AGE THAN HIS POLITBURO -- TO REPEAT STANDARD THEMES ABOUT THE GDR'S RISE FROM THE RUINS OF THE WAR. THE MORE OTHERS PROPHESED DOOM, AND THE MORE THE WEST GERMANS TRIED TO DESTABILIZE THE GDR, HE SAID, THIS STATE WOULD REMAIN A BULWARK OF SOCIALISM, ANTI-FASCISM, ANTI REVANCHISM.

9. WILLI STOPH WAS MORE EXPLICIT YET IN A SEPARATE
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PAGE 02 EMBBER 08141 02 OF 02 041719Z

PRE-40TH BIRTHDAY PARTY OCCASION, WHEN HE PLEDGED THAT "WE WILL BE CONSEQUENT IN CARRYING FORWARD OUR GOOD POLICY, WHICH IS DIRECTED AT THE WELLBEING OF THE PEOPLE AND THE ASSURANCE OF PEACE."

10. FROM THE OTHER DIRECTION, SIGNS OF POPULAR INITIATIVES CONTINUE TO MULTIPLY. FOR EXAMPLE, DOZENS OF POPULAR ARTISTS, MANY OF THEM FROM THE ROCK SCENE MOST ATTRACTIVE TO YOUNG PEOPLE, ARE CIRCULATING AN OPEN LETTER CALLING FOR MORE OPENNESS AND RECOGNITION OF NEUES FORUM AND CONCLUDING THAT, "WE WANT TO LIVE IN THIS LAND, AND IT MAKES US SICK TO HAVE TO WATCH WITHOUT MEANS OF ACTING AS ATTEMPTS AT A DEMOCRATIZATION, ATTEMPTS AT SOCIAL ANALYSIS ARE CRIMINALIZED OR IGNORED."

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11. COMMENT: A POWERFUL MIX OF CAUTION AND PRUDENCE STILL OVERLAYS THE ANGER AND FRUSTRATION. ONE CONTACT IN A SCIENTIFIC INSTITUTE GAVE US AN EXAMPLE: HE AND HIS COLLEAGUES DRAFTED A BOLD, STRAIGHTFORWARD LETTER CALLING FOR REFORMS THAT WAS INTENDED TO BE SENT TO THEIR NATIONAL TRADE UNION REPRESENTATIVES; IT PRODUCED VIGOROUS DEBATE AT THE MEETING AND DREW OUT COMMENT SHARPLY CRITICAL OF CURRENT POLICIES EVEN FROM PREVIOUS ONE HUNDRED PERCENTERS, BUT IN THE END CONCERN FOR CONSEQUENCES AND DOUBT WHETHER THE MOMENT WAS RIPE CAUSED MOST TO HOLD BACK. EVEN OUR CONTACT SAID HE AND HIS WIFE WERE IN DEEP DISCUSSION ABOUT WHETHER HE SHOULD SIGN. ON OCTOBER 4, NEUES FORUM LEADERS PUT OUT APPEALS FOR ALL ITS SYMPATHIZERS TO REFRAIN FROM ANY PUBLIC ACTIONS THAT COULD PROVOKE THE AUTHORITIES DURING THE WEEKEND FESTIVITIES.

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PAGE 03 EMBBER 08141 02 OF 02 041719Z

12. THE SITUATION, IN SHORT, STILL SEEMS TO US TO BE BETTER CHARACTERIZED AS POLITICALLY PREGNANT, NOT PHYSICALLY EXPLOSIVE, BUT THE GAP BETWEEN POWER AND REALITY IS INCREASING DAILY.

BARKLEY

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