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Switzerland

Memo¹ by the Swiss Federal Department of Foreign Affairs

GDR — NEW GOVERNMENT AND POLICY

Bern, 18 April 1990

This Wednesday, 18.4., GDR Ambassador (B[ibow])² contacts me with the following requests:

1. He presents the *joint declaration by all factions of the People's Parliament* of 12.4.1990 (attachment³). The declaration, whose main points were made known by the media, constitutes, in B[ibow]'s words, a general reckoning with the German people's deplorable past, disowned by the GDR until now, as well as with more recent inglorious GDR activities. Official apologies are made to the Jewish people and Israel, to the Soviet Union, to the ČSSR (for the suppression of the Prague Spring), and the inviolability of the current Polish Western border is noted.

2. B[ibow] furthermore emphasises the new government's interest in *bilateral relations* with Switzerland. He enquires about a possible date for the visit, already agreed on in principle, of State Secretary Jacobi⁴ in Berlin. The signatory confirms this interest and suggests July 1990⁵.

The ball is now in the GDR's court, which intends to provide a specific suggestion for a date as soon as the identity of the host, the foreign ministry's future No. 2, is known. According to B[ibow], the current interim incumbent, Fleck, is most likely to be supplanted (Nier⁶ has been retired a while ago) and replaced by a DSU politician (the CSU of the GDR). The new foreign minister, Social Democrat Meckel⁷, has already stated that he will accept a DSU member.

1 *Memo (translated from German):* Swiss Federal Archives CH-BAR#E2010A#1999/250#7145* (B.73.0). Written by Daniel Woker, dodis.ch/P27996, signed in Woker's absence by Heidi Ifrid, dodis.ch/P57668. Copies to the Federal Office for Foreigners' Affairs (FOFA), the Federal Office of Foreign Economic Affairs, five copies for internal use of the Federal Department of Foreign Affairs (FDFA), and to the Swiss Embassy in East Berlin. Following references on visa questions were included for the FOFA: the FOFA draft of 16 March 1990, dodis.ch/53405, the FDFA answers of 27 March 1990, dodis.ch/53407 and dodis.ch/53410 and the letter of the Swiss Embassy in Berlin of 7 February 1990, dodis.ch/53402.

2 Eckhard Bibow (*1930), dodis.ch/P54792, GDR Ambassador in Bern 1986–1990.

3 *Joint declaration by all factions of the People's Parliament*, 12 April 1990, dodis.ch/52352.

4 Klaus Jacobi (1929–2004), dodis.ch/P19511, State Secretary of the Swiss Federal Department of Foreign Affairs 1989–1992.

5 The visit took place on 11 October 1990.

6 Kurt Nier (*1927), dodis.ch/P51057, Deputy Foreign Minister of the GDR 1973–1989.

7 Markus Meckel (*1952), dodis.ch/P54793, Foreign Minister of the GDR 12.4.–20.8.1990.



189 3. Finally, B[ibow] comes to the *topic of visa*. He says that at his embassy, the practical difficulties in coping with Swiss visa applications are growing. (A Swiss visa application has to be submitted through a travel agency and after 4 – 8 weeks and approval procedures by internal GDR authorities (according to B[ibow] for securing accommodation, amongst other things) reaches the local embassy to be issued.) He, B[ibow], can grant an immediate issuing of visa only in exceptional cases. I draw B[ibow]'s attention to the discrepancy between terms (GDR 4 – 8 weeks, Swiss visa for GDR citizens no more than 24 hours); B[ibow] has already broached this subject with Berlin and will now do so again, in order to gain leeway from his authorities for the immediate issuing of visas.

Basically, B[ibow] and the signatory agree, however, that the problem can only be solved by suspending the visa requirement. B[ibow] declares the GDR government's willingness to temporarily abolish the requirement, with immediate effect, based on an informal, oral, and mutual declaration. After a trial period, the abolition can be contractually settled. This is how the GDR proceeded with Austria, for instance.