

Agreement on Border Crossing (December 17, 1963)

Abstract

After the Wall was built, citizens of West Berlin were no longer allowed to travel to East Berlin. After the signing of four travel agreements, limited visits were possible between late 1963 and the summer of 1966. When renewed negotiations broke down in December 1966, the Wall was closed once again. With family emergencies being the only exception, it remained impassable until the ratification of the Basic Treaty [*Grundlagenvertrag*] in 1973.

Source

Berlin Protocol on Issuing Border-crossing Passes to West Berliners for the Purpose of Visiting Relatives, December 17, 1963

I. Berlin Protocol

An exchange of opinions was initiated by a letter dated December 5, 1963, from Mr. Alexander Abusch, Deputy Chairman of the Council of Ministers of the GDR, to the Governing Mayor of Berlin, Mr. Willy Brandt. Subsequently, Undersecretary Erich Wendt and Senate Councilor Horst Korber met seven times between December 12 and December 17, 1963, to consult on issuing border-crossing passes for residents of Berlin (West) to visit relatives in Berlin (East)/capital of the GDR, in the period from December 18, 1963, to January 5, 1964. Regardless of the different political and legal points of view, both sides were guided by the idea that it should be possible to realize this humanitarian wish. These consultations, which took place alternately in Berlin (West) and Berlin (East)/capital of the GDR, yielded the agreement attached as an appendix. Both sides noted that no agreement could be reached with respect to common designations for places, authorities, and offices. This protocol, including the appendix, shall be published with the same wording by both sides.

Berlin, December 17, 1963.

Signed [by] Erich Wendt, Undersecretary, on instructions by the deputy chairman of the Council of Ministers of the GDR.

[Signed by] Horst Korber, Senate Councilor, on instructions by the chief of the senate chancellery, given on behalf of the governing mayor of Berlin.

II. Appendix

I. 1. In the period from December 19, 1963, to January 5, 1964, residents of Berlin (West) can obtain a border-crossing pass to visit relatives in Berlin (East)/capital of the GDR.

2. Relatives eligible for visitation are parents, grandparents, grandchildren, siblings, aunts and uncles, nieces and nephews, as well as the spouses of these persons; spouses can visit each other.

3. Undersecretary Wendt declares that a precondition for the authorization of a visitor application is that the applicant has not violated the laws of the GDR.

II. 1. Offices will be established for the period from December 18, 1963, to January 4, 1964, in order to distribute application forms, accept completed applications for border-crossing passes, and issue such

passes. These offices are located in (*a list of the addresses of schools in West Berlin's twelve administrative districts follows*). The optional distribution of an instruction sheet to applicants is left up to the employees named in section II, no. 4.

2. The offices shall be open on weekdays from 1 PM to 6 PM. The distribution of application forms and the acceptance of completed applications for border-crossing passes shall take place in the period from December 18, 1963, to January 3, 1964. The issuance of border-crossing passes shall take place in the period from December 19, 1963, to January 4, 1964.

[...]

Source: "Berliner Protokoll über die Ausgabe von Passierscheinen an Westberliner für Verwandtenbesuche vom 17. Dezember 1963"; reprinted in Ingo von Münch, ed., *Dokumente des geteilten Deutschland*. Stuttgart, 1968, pp. 395–98.

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