

East Germans flee

PRAGUE, Czechoslovakia -- More than 1,300 East Germans jammed the West German Embassy on Thursday to seek new lives in the West, and many scoffed at promised reforms in the communist homeland they left behind.

In East Berlin, Communist leader Egon Krenz urged closer economic ties to the West and said a new law permitting freedom of travel to the West would be announced Monday. Several top Communist officials resigned, including the wife of ousted leader Erich Honecker.

At least 8,000 East Germans swarmed into Czechoslovakia after East Germany lifted a month-old travel ban on Wednesday, the official East German news agency ADN said. It is the only country East Germans can visit freely.

A Czech policeman outside the embassy said he and his colleagues had orders not to interfere with any

East Germans seeking entrance because this was a matter for the two Germanys alone.

Shipments of tents were ordered from West Germany to cope with what embassy sources expected would be a renewed influx over the weekend.

East Germany has agreed to allow East Germans at the embassy and at the West German Embassy in Warsaw to renounce their citizenship and go to West Germany, which automatically gives them a new passport and assistance in starting a new life.

East German diplomats are processing only about 100 people a day in Prague, and more than 1,000 are still waiting in the West German Embassy in Warsaw.

West German coaches were used to ferry the processed East Germans to the Czech border with Bavaria at Waidhaus.

Sandinistas attack Contras

MANAGUA, Nicaragua -- Sandinista troops launched attacks in Nicaragua's central and northern mountains Thursday to try to wipe out outnumbered Contra forces that have infiltrated from Honduras, according to reports.

Lt. Col. Rosa Pasos, a military spokeswoman, said most of the action was concentrated on rebels sneaking into Nicaragua, but she would confirm only one attack near Quilali, in the border province of Nueva Segovia.

"What the lifting of the cease-fire does is give us the possibility of organizing offensives in a more organized manner and with greater firepower," Pasos said.

President Daniel Ortega ended a 19-month cease-fire on Wednesday, saying the Contras had been stepping up attacks inside Nicaragua. He also blamed the United

States for the renewed attacks and accused President George Bush of promoting "terrorism."

The Sandinista party newspaper Barricada said Thursday that combat units in 14 towns and villages in northern Nicaragua began operations overnight, but neither the newspaper nor Pasos gave details.

A communique distributed by the Nicaraguan Resistance in Tegucigalpa, Honduras, said the Sandinistas had mounted attacks Wednesday with tanks, helicopter gunships and heavy artillery.

Pasos refused to comment on those reports and said she had no immediate reports on casualties or details of the fighting.

In Tegucigalpa, Contra commander Enrique Bermudez said that the Contras would continue observing the cease-fire because

they have not had the resources to launch attacks since U.S. military aid was cut off in February 1988.

In Washington, Bush administration officials reiterated concern that the ending of the cease-fire was a prelude to cancellation of the Feb. 25 vote.

White House spokesman Martin Fitzwater said Thursday it was unrealistic to expect the Contras to lay down their arms when the leftist Sandinista government is out "to destroy them."

State Department deputy spokesman Richard Boucher said the administration believes reports from Contra rebel leaders that the Sandinistas have commenced major military operations in at least two regions in Nicaragua.

"We believe that the process of elections cannot be helped by these kind of attacks," he said.

Colombian judges, court employees begin striking

BOGOTA, Colombia -- Judges and court workers began a series of nationwide strikes Thursday, a day after another judge and a congressman were murdered, apparently by drug traffickers.

In Medellin, where the judge was killed, federal justices walked off the job indefinitely until they receive more protection.

It is the third time judges have gone on strike in the last three months, with each walkout following the assassination of a federal judge. In the last eight years 222 court workers, including 43 judges, have been killed, most of them by drug traffickers.

In the latest slaying, federal Judge Mariela Espinoza was killed by sub-machine gun fire from two speeding cars as she arrived at her Medellin home Wednesday night with two motorcycle guards. One of the bodyguards and a bystander were wounded.

Espinoza, 43, was one of 42 federal appellate judges in Medellin, a city of 2 million people that is the cocaine capital of Colombia. It was not immediately known if she had handled drug trafficking cases.

In the capital of Bogota federal Rep. Luis Francisco Madero was

killed with a pistol shot to the head Wednesday night by a man who was waiting for Madero in the shadows outside the congressman's apartment.

Madero, a 27-year veteran in Colombia's House of Representatives, had supported extradition of Colombians to the United States to face drug trafficking charges.

No one claimed responsibility for either of the slayings, but government security forces say that brought to 42 the number of people killed by drug traffickers since a government crackdown began 11 weeks ago.

The deaths include the three federal judges, a congressman, a governor, a state leader of the leftist Patriotic Union and nine news media employees. Two newspapers have been bombed.

The traffickers are trying to force the government to reverse its decision to extradite suspected Colombian drug traffickers to the United States. Five suspected traffickers have been extradited so far.

The National Association of Court Workers, which includes 5,000 judges and 12,000 other court workers, declared a strike of two hours Thursday, four hours today, and all of Nov. 7 and Nov. 8.

Senate acts on North pension

WASHINGTON -- The Senate late Wednesday acted to restore Oliver North's \$23,000-a-year military retirement pay, which had been revoked after he was sentenced in July for illegally shredding government documents.

"Ollie North has been punished enough," said Sen. Jesse Helms, R-

N.C., sponsor of the change. "Let the persecution end. Let the vendetta end."

The issue, which has heavy political overtones stemming from the Reagan administration's Iran-Contra scandal, now goes to the House, where similar legislation has been introduced but not yet acted on.

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