

Jubilant E. Germans cross freely to West

BERLIN -- East Germany opened the Berlin Wall and its other borders Thursday as its cheering citizens crossed freely to the West for the first time since 1961.

Late Thursday and early today, exultant East Germans coursed through Berlin Wall checkpoints and others entered West Germany at other border crossings. Jubilant people pranced and danced atop the Berlin Wall, a sight unthinkable only hours earlier.

Near Brandenburg Gate, East Germans raced through streams of police water cannons and were pulled up the wall by the young West Germans atop it. Some Germans used hammers to chip away at the barrier for keepsakes or in their own small way try to destroy the infamous symbol of East-West division.

About 100 East Berliners at the Brandenburg Gate chanted: "Open the gate! Open the gate!"

Hundreds of West Berliners took advantage

of the newly opened borders during the carnival-like atmosphere to head in the opposite direction and catch a glimpse of the other side of the divided city.

"What joy! This is the best thing that happened in 100 years!" yelled a West Berlin man as he crossed into what had once been forbidden territory.

President George Bush said if East Germany makes good on its promise to allow free emigration, "this wall built in '61 will have very little relevance."

Hundreds were seen on the Friedrichstrasse subway to West Berlin, and East Germans also were allowed for the first time at Checkpoint Charlie, the famed Friedrichstrasse crossing run by the Allied military.

Many hugged and kissed total strangers, while cars packed with East Germans and others paraded down the streets of West Berlin in a carnival-like atmosphere.

"It's crazy! It's crazy!" yelled one young man as he sat in the back seat of a car with his parents after a brief trip through the once-impenetrable Berlin Wall.

His parents said they just wanted to see the West -- and then drive back. They declined to give their names.

"We heard it on TV, we just decided to go over and have a look," said the young man's father. "We want to show our son a little bit of Kurfuerstendamm."

The Kurfuerstendamm is one of Europe's most elegant shopping strips. For decades, East Germans locked up behind the now-crumbling Iron Curtain could only dream of seeing it.

All apparently were arriving without visas, although visas technically were necessary under regulations announced earlier in the day. A spokesman for the West German border police in Braunschweig said the East Germans had been allowed over the border there without

visas. West German leaders hailed the decision. Chancellor Helmut Kohl, on an official visit to Poland, said: "We will be in contact with the East German leadership shortly after my return and I would like to meet very soon with Mr. Krenz."

New Communist leader Egon Krenz also urged a law ensuring free and democratic elections in a desperate attempt to gain control of his country.

More than 200,000 East Germans have fled West so far this year; more than 50,000 have left since Saturday alone. Hundreds of thousands of people have taken to the streets to demand democratic reforms and the end of 40 years of one-party rule.

Those who want to emigrate can go to West Germany directly without having to go through a third country, Schabowski said.

Lawmakers discuss expanding

The Legislature's first floor fight was more of a protracted discussion Thursday on the merits of expanding the call of the current special session to further solve some of the myriad problems with the state's personal property tax system.

State Sen. Jim McFarland said to support the bills offered by Orr would "merely perpetuate the deceit and misrepresentation" by the administration on the personal property tax issue.

He cited the 1987 tax increase and the lack of community consent on the siting of a low-level radio-

active waste dump as similar "deceptions" from the administration.

Seven senators spoke in support of the resolution and two against it before McFarland asked that it be withdrawn.

McFarland's move to petition 33 senators to call a special session is progressing. Secretary of State Allen Beermann is polling the 49 lawmakers who have until Monday to respond.

The Legislature's Executive Board referred eight of the nine bills to the Revenue Committee for a public hearing today.

Nicaragua plans to meet Contra demands

UNITED NATIONS -- Nicaragua's foreign minister said Thursday his government will meet Contra demands for a truce and amnesty if the rebels agree to begin disbanding by the end of the month.

The U.S.-backed Contras and Nicaragua's leftist Sandinista government began their first direct talks in more than a year Thursday in an effort to end an 8-year-old war that has taken an estimated 12,000 lives.

U.N. Secretary-General Javier Perez de Cuellar and his Organization of American States counterpart, Joao Clemente Baena Soares, opened the meeting, then turned the mediation effort over to aides.

Foreign Minister Miguel d'Escoto of Nicaragua said before the meeting the key Contra demands would be met if demobilization began by the

end of November.

The Contras insist on resumption of the cease-fire President Daniel Ortega ended last week, a general amnesty and a visit by a Contra delegation to Nicaragua to make sure it is

safe for the rebels to return.

"They say they require three things; the three things are met by what we are offering," d'Escoto said, waving a copy of the Sandinista proposals.

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