

Wednesday, October 18, 1989

Politburo meets to determine future of East German leader

BERLIN (AP) — East Germany's ruling Politburo held a meeting Tuesday that could determine the fate of Erich Honecker, the 77-year-old leader whose stern rule has been challenged by mass emigration and pro-democracy protest.

Demonstrations were reported in five cities on the eve of the regular weekly meeting, including a march by 120,000 people in Leipzig that was the largest protest since East Germany was founded 40 years ago.

In West Germany, the mass-circulation newspaper *Bild* reported late Tuesday that a special session of the Communist Party Central Committee had been called for Wednesday.

Quoting party sources it did not identify, *Bild* said Honecker would be "pressured" to turn over leadership of the party "to younger hands." Honecker also is East Germany's head of state.

Secrecy surrounded the Politburo meeting and there was no indication when news might emerge from it.

Bush selects new successor for C.E. Koop

Clearance postpones formal nomination

WASHINGTON (AP) — President Bush has picked Antonia Novello, deputy director of the National Institute of Child Health and Human Development, to be surgeon general, administration sources said today.

Novello was undergoing routine background checks before her formal nomination, said the sources, who spoke only on condition of not being identified.

Chase Untermeyer, President Bush's personnel chief, said "there is a candidate in clearance," but he refused to confirm or deny that candidate was Novello.

Novello's office said she had no comment and declined to provide any background.

According to an industry newsletter, *Medicine & Health*, she is 44 years old and studied at the University of Puerto Rico School of Medicine.

She would succeed C. Everett Koop, the outspoken pediatrician who stepped down last month after serving in the post for most of the decade.

Novello was recommended to the White House by Louis Sullivan, secretary of the Department of Health and Human Services, the sources said. Her nomination was pushed by Sen. Orrin Hatch, R-Utah, the senator's office said.

The flight of tens of thousands of East Germans and protests that began early this month have been the most visible signs of growing opposition to Honecker, who has presided over an authoritarian regime for 18 years.

Pro-democracy activists estimated the Monday night throng in Leipzig at more than 120,000, but West Germany's ZDF television network quoted witnesses Tuesday as saying the number of marchers was closer to 150,000.

Chants of "Freedom!" and "Democracy now!" rose from the throng and marchers shouted "We're staying here!" Most protesters in East Germany have been people who do not want to emigrate and demand reform at home akin to those being pursued in the Soviet Union, Hungary and Poland.

ARD television of West Germany said thousands also marched Monday night in Magdeburg, Plauen and Halle.

About 3,000 pro-democracy activists held a vigil in an East Berlin church Monday night. Security on the capital's streets was increased, but

no incidents were reported.

Three men were given prison terms for vandalism, illegal assembly and resisting arrest Oct. 4-5, when thousands of people tried to board trains at Dresden that carried East German refugees to West Germany from Czechoslovakia and Poland.

Two got more than three years and the third received 4½ years, the official news agency ADN said. ADN reported the convictions and sentences Tuesday.

Mayor Wolfgang Berghofer of Dresden told 10,000 protesters through a megaphone on a City Hall balcony Monday night that he was prepared to continue dialogue with reform-minded groups.

He refused, however, to talk with the pro-democracy New Forum, a relatively new organization that has united the East German reform movement.

At last week's regular meeting, the 21-member Politburo expressed willingness to talk about possible reform.

Fashion mongers declare ivory passé in effort to save elephants

WASHINGTON (AP) — Ivory is suddenly taboo in America. In an effort to save the elephant — just declared an endangered species — stores have stopped selling ivory, fashionable people no longer wear it and even Vladimir Horowitz agreed to give up his ivory-keyed Steinway piano.

Jewelry made from the tusks of elephants became unpopular so fast that some observers see the trend as evidence that a new environmental ethic is taking hold among fashion-setters.

"It's a grass roots movement; it's becoming unfashionable to wear furs, too," Reenie Brown, publisher of the trade magazine *Accessories*, said. "There seems to be a very strong trend among Americans to think first of wildlife, of compassion,

and not our own vanity."

David Federman, gemstone writer for *Modern Jeweler Magazine*, said, "I talk to jewelers every day, from Main Street to Fifth Avenue, and they all express abhorrence at selling ivory today. If they're doing it, they're selling it under the counter."

William Conway, general director of the New York Zoological Society, compared the situation to a turnaround in the fur industry a decade ago.

In 1968 and 1969, furriers imported the skins of 17,490 leopards, 23,347 jaguars and 3,168 cheetahs, he said. But, under pressure from public opinion, they stopped using those animals, he said.

Steinway & Sons appealed this summer to 800 "Steinway artists" — ranging from Horowitz and Van Cliburn to Billy Taylor and Peter Nero.

They were asked to forgo the ivory-keyed concert pianos the company had continued providing them even after switching to plastic years ago for ordinary pianos.

"Without exception, all were appreciative of the environmental concern," said spokesman Leo Spellman. Other piano makers also have switched to plastic, despite the preferred porous quality of ivory keys.

The effort to protect the elephant reached its climax this week at an international conference in Switzerland that classified the elephant as an endangered species and banned all trade in elephant products.

The action by the Convention on Trade in Endangered Species is likely to undercut the market for poachers who kill elephants with automatic rifles and cut off the tusks with chain saws.

Report: Soviets improve human rights

LONDON (AP) — The Soviet Union's attitude toward human rights has improved dramatically and most political prisoners have been freed, although abuses persist and the picture is "deeply confusing," Amnesty International says.

In a report published Wednesday, the worldwide human rights movement says its list of Soviet citizens imprisoned for non-violent exercise of their human rights shrank from 600 three years ago to about 90 in July, and would have been lower but for further arrests.

An Amnesty International delegation was allowed into the Soviet Union for the first time last March, and found that "the Soviet perspective on human rights has shifted dramatically since 1986," the report said.

"The most promising prospect for long-term reform is a major review of law . . . apparently aimed at bringing Soviet law into line with international standards," the report said.

For the first time, human rights issues are being freely discussed and acknowledged by the authorities to be an international issue, not an internal matter immune from outside scrutiny, the report said.

Amnesty International said that of the 600 prisoners, 337 were released early, and another 79 were freed from psychiatric hospitals where some had spent 15 years or more against their will.

"Most of these 416 people were prosecuted for expressing non-conformist opinions, or for their religious activities," the report said. "Some had been arrested for trying to leave the U.S.S.R."

"They make up the largest single group of prisoners of conscience to have been freed since the 1950s. Political arrests have also fallen noticeably since 1986."

But "despite this clear trend toward reform," the report said, "the human rights picture in the U.S.S.R. is deeply confusing."

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