

BERLIN AUTHORITIES INVESTIGATE ESCAPE HELPERS

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[Article by Berlin correspondent Annamarie Doherr]

[Text] Berlin, 20 August--The Prosecutor's Office of the Berlin District Court is increasingly carrying out investigations into criminal acts committed in connection with commercial escape assistance.

The Judicial Administration of Berlin reported Tuesday that a total of 57 proceedings have been initiated since the enactment of the quadripartite agreement in June 1972. Of these, 36 proceedings dealt with criminal acts in connection with escape assistance on transit routes; 21 were initiated in connection with the travel and visiting regulation, in some cases against several defendants.

The harshest sentence--8 months in jail--was handed down in a case of so-called trick abduction. Most criminal acts involve fraud and falsification of documents, as well as misuse of identity papers. In four cases the charge was trick abduction, in two cases each it was duress and involuntary confinement, and in three cases extortion.

Of the 36 proceedings for crimes in connection with escape assistance on the transit routes five were settled with orders to inflict punishment. Fines between DM 750 and 1,200 were imposed for fraud in renting automobiles. In an especially serious case the fine was DM 4,000.

The predominant number of proceedings had to be discontinued, partly because the accused is jailed in the GDR, partly because of lack of evidence and, hence, inadequate suspicion of culpability.