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POL - 30 - GDR

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DEPARTMENT OF STATE

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INFO : BONN, MUNICH, LONDON, PARIS, MOSCOW, MISSION NATO,
PRAGUE, USAREUR/POLAD, CINCEUR/POLAD, USAFE/POLAD

USBER, Berlin

February 25, 1969

Escapes From East Germany Increase During Last
Half of 1968

Berlin A-770, July 31, 1968

DIST:

- MIN-2
- USCIB
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- EAS-3
- EGON
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Statistics obtained on a confidential basis from the Berlin office of the FRG Ministry for Expellees, Refugees, and War Victims show that the number of escapees (Sperrbrecher)^a from the GDR and East Berlin to the FRG (Giessen) and West Berlin increased to 720 during the second half of 1968, as against 681 in the second half of 1967. This is the first semi-annual increase of its type since the erection of the Wall in 1961 (reference). The figure for the full year of 1968, however, continued to show a declining trend, down to 1,135 from 1,203 for 1967.

The number of escapees registered at the West Berlin reception center during the period increased to 83 (from 58). This broke the declining trend for West Berlin. The trend for the West Berlin annual totals was also broken as 121 escapees were registered in 1968 (116 in 1967). The monthly breakdown of GDR escapees for the second half of 1968 is given below:

^a The term Sperrbrecher has been used since the building of the Wall in 1961 to describe all East Germans who leave illegally the GDR, East Berlin or another communist country to which they have been permitted to travel. It does not include the few legal travellers who defect in non-communist countries, or those who are permitted to emigrate from the GDR (mostly pensioners).

Exempt from Automatic Decontrol

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EAS:RWSmith:dh

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EAS:AKlay

M:DKlein

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	<u>Berlin</u>	<u>Giessen</u>	<u>Total</u>
July	18	112	130
August	14	172	186
September	16	120	136
October	17	138	155
November	15	68	83
December	3	27	30
Total	<u>83</u>	<u>637</u>	<u>720</u>

The Ministry official cited a total of 36 uniformed escapees for the second half of 1968. (Separate figures for West Berlin and Giessen are not available.) The total figure for 1968 is thus 72, down sharply from 131 in 1967. According to the official, four persons were killed during the first half of 1968 while attempting to escape to West Berlin, and eight while attempting to escape across the zonal boundary to West Germany. Figures for the last half of 1968 are not yet available.

Comment. The GDR participation in the military intervention in Czechoslovakia may have caused some laxity in controls along West Berlin sector borders, permitting an increase in the number of escapes to West Berlin. There was a relatively small increase in the number of escapes to West Germany, while the number of uniformed escapees was down sharply. The number of escapes during December is usually low for seasonal reasons, but the 1968 figure represents a new all-time low.

MORRIS

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