

CONFIDENTIAL

~~SDM~~
13-A.0

External Department
British Military Government
BERLIN
British Forces Post Office 45.

SUMMARY OF REPORTS GIVEN BY REFUGEES DURING THE
PERIOD SEPTEMBER 28-OCTOBER 5, 1961

During the period under review a number of refugees reported that they had been actively helped by VoPo officers to climb the wall or get through the fence. In other cases VoPos have, after friendly talks with would-be refugees, looked the other way when the person made for West Berlin. In this way at least four refugees came through a stretch of the fence in the north of Berlin where members of the 4th company of the 1st Battalion (Abteilung) of the 1st Motorised Brigade, Berlin, were on duty. One VoPo from this unit reported that since September 25 12 Vopos in this company have themselves left their unit and probably all defected to the West. On that day stricter orders to shoot at would-be refugees were issued. Several refugees told us that when going through the checkpoint for West Germany with passports borrowed from West German citizens, they were thoroughly scrutinised and in some cases had to give a sample of their signature. Two or three of these refugees were convinced that the officer carrying out the check must have been aware of discrepancies but allowed them to pass through to the West. One refugee from Leipzig told us that a friend of his, who is on duty at the sector boundary in Berlin came to see him in Leipzig to tell him that he would be patrolling a certain stretch of the border on the following day and if his friend wanted to defect he, the VoPo, would see to it that he could do so unharmed. All worked according to plan and this refugee said that his VoPo friend would have come with him but for his fear of a bad reception in the West. Two women were helped by two VoPos through a fence in the Wilhelmsruh area last week. In this case the VoPos said they were considering defecting themselves but said that since they had done duty at the border for over 3 weeks, their names would probably be known to the West authorities and they might possibly be punished for actively supporting the communist measures.

2. On the other hand we have, of course, heard of very severe checks at the crossing points where would-be refugees with borrowed passports were discovered and arrested. We have also heard of frustrated attempts by many young East Berliners who have been beaten up by VoPos when trying to escape in the Bernauer Strasse or the Neukölln areas.

3. A refugee from Klein Machnow told us that the morale of the population in this town on the south-west side of Berlin, has dropped very sharply following reports of Western readiness to make big concessions in Berlin. He said that in his own large circle of friends and acquaintances there was not one who believed that West Berlin would be kept free indefinitely. People thought that there was likely to be a sell-out if negotiations were started and led to agreement. However, on the other hand, most of the members or functionaries of the SED whom he knew were firmly convinced that the Western Allies are so deeply committed that they cannot possibly give up West Berlin and that a compromise would be found which would

leave/.....

CONFIDENTIAL

CONFIDENTIAL

leave West Berlin more or less as it is now. He believed that propaganda inside the party had recently been aimed at damping down the excessive hopes of loyal party members who, immediately following August 13, had expected that West Berlin would, in the near future, be controlled by East Germany.

4. We have noticed that of the many refugees from East Berlin and the surrounding districts, a larger proportion than hitherto are now expressing the wish to be flown out to West Germany. A few of them have clearly stated that they think it advisable to go because of the uncertainty of the Berlin situation. Others declared they want to go because they cannot keep in touch with their relatives in East Berlin anyway. Therefore there is no reason for them to remain in Berlin.

(P.W.H. Graebner)
October 5, 1961.

Distribution

Mr. Holmer
Mr. Ledwidge
Mr. Mallet, Bonn
Mr. Howard-Gordon, F.O.
U.S. Mission

CONFIDENTIAL