

THE HOUSE SOVIET GERMANY

A quiet villa on Lima Street, West Berlin, haunts the rulers of the "other Germany." They know that there an organization with agents in every corner of their domain is recording their cold-war crimes and planning their punishment

by Fred M. Hechinger

BERLIN



Dr. Friedenou

IF THE Communist rulers of East Germany could put a curse on one building in West Berlin, they would probably pick a pleasant-looking residential "villa" at Number 29 Lima Street.

The house on Limastrasse conceals no secret weapon. It hides no

headquarters of a high command that plans the overthrow of the East German government. And yet, in rows of well-guarded files at 29 Lima Street are weapons which the present rulers of East Germany dread: detailed listings of their names and their actions, the dates and the details of their crimes against their fellow citizens, the charges on which they are to be tried before the people they now oppress.

This house is the official center of an organization known as the *Untersuchungsausschuss Freieillicher Juristen* — the Investigating Committee of Free Jurists. It is the receiving center of messages — some frantic, some coldly legal — from every corner of the "other Germany" behind the Iron Curtain. It is also the spot from which thousands of messages of hope or threats to wrongdoers are sent to the East Zone.

Members of the committee — and there are thousands of them in East Germany — carry no card, pay no fee, receive no salaries. They are not referred to by their names, and all instructions and acknowledgments to them go out in code.

Anonymous Callers

When I entered the house on Lima Street, only an armed guard at the wall gave any hint that this was not just another prosperous home in Berlin's comfortable Zehlendorf-West. But at the reception desk was an ominous sign: "Do not submit your name" and "Hand your identification papers over sealed." In the waiting room there is little conversation. The loudspeaker from time to time calls out a number. A visitor rises and is led upstairs.

The East German visitor regains his identity only when he is closeted in private session with one of the top officials of the committee. Then he identifies himself and tells his story. What does he tell?

I listened to the report of a carpenter from the East Zone who, after release as a Soviet prisoner of war and after weeks of unemployment, had been given a job with

the *Volkspolizei*, the Red People's Police. At first he had merely been used as a driver in the motorized units. Eventually he was singled out to drive important dignitaries.

Suddenly he was transferred to the criminal police division and, against a considerable bonus, was asked to act as an informer. When he saw where his secret activities were leading him, he came across the line and told his story to the committee. For a while the committee asked him to continue his work, but to report back secretly. When things began to get too hot he was advised to get out for good.

The day I talked to him he had left the nightmare behind. His story — together with thousands of corroborating stories — permit the committee to fit together the pieces of the pattern and use the emerging knowledge as a most effective weapon.

We climbed to the carefully guarded rooms where the records are kept. There are two separate files. The first — known as the "Incriminating Records" — now contains 39,000 names. Each of the men and women so listed is carefully identified. In line after line his crimes, his betrayal of a neighbor, his unjust actions as a judge or an informer in court, his ruthless confiscation of a peasant's property or a merchant's

shop are set down. Again and again there is the dread word: *Spitzel* — "informer." "We now estimate the total number of *Spitzel* at between 80,000 and 100,000 in East Germany," said my guide. "We still have plenty of work to do."

In addition to the name files, the committee there keeps a detailed "map of political prisoners" in the East Zone. It has 25,000 prisoners charted, plus 6,000 who have "disappeared" — probably to Russia.

Life-Saving Lists

While part of the purpose of the "Incriminating Records" is to prepare to deal with offenders "after liberation" — a kind of cold-war-crimes tribunal in the making — there is an immediate and life-saving goal: Month after month the committee prints carefully documented "warning lists." These name persons to be on guard against.

"Koch, Martha," a recent *Warnliste* identified as a "People's Judge." It gave her home address and accused her of tampering with justice. A police officer was charged with brutally beating a defenseless prisoner. A postmaster was accused of spying on the content of letters.

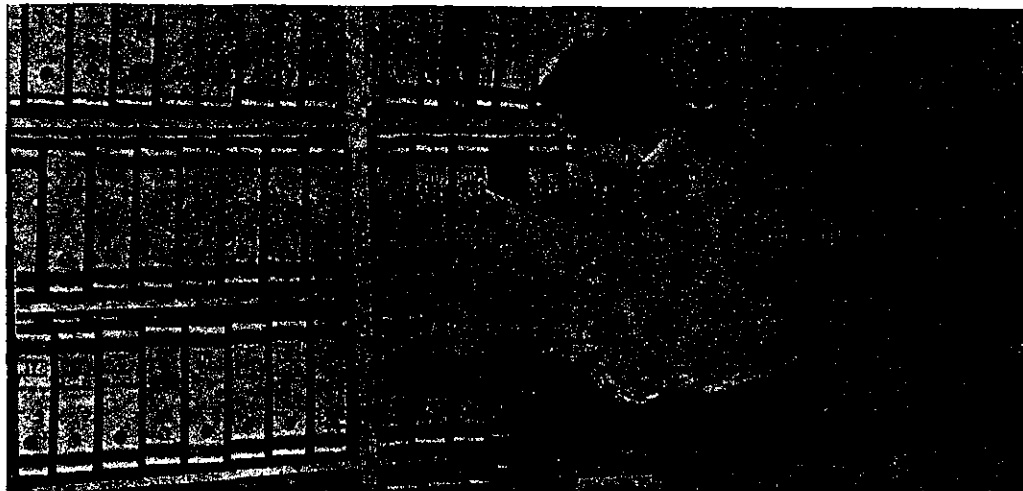
A second file serves as a future source of character references for decent, useful

citizens. Any future non-Communist administration will be able to draw from the names — at present more than 30,000 — for candidates for important positions.

There are more and more indications that the work of the committee is effective enough to frighten even Communists in high position. Recently, early in the morning, a committee "member" got word to an important judge that "we know that you go to church every day only to show up in court an hour later to pronounce most inhumane sentences. This is no way to serve either God or your country, and we won't forget it."

Word came that on the morning the handwritten message reached the judge at his home, he was so shaken that he appeared in the court room without his false teeth. More important, he has been known since to have toned down his "political sentences" considerably.

Every time an East German writer, farmer, actor or scientist is decorated with the *Nationalpreis*, an award roughly equivalent to Russia's Stalin Prize, carrying with it a check for a thousand marks, a careful, handwritten letter is dispatched to the winner from the house on Lima Street. The letter starts with a pleasant, congratulatory



"INCRIMINATING RECORDS": In these long files are set down the names of East Germany's informers, betrayers, confiscators

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note. Then it mentions that the ordinary people get high prices and little food and that there are tens of thousands of political prisoners. "Perhaps you might want to give up part of your 1,000 marks to help us assist these prisoners and others less fortunate than you," the letter concludes.

"It's not so much the money we want to get," said my guide. "But we want to make sure that they know what they must account for when the day of reckoning comes. We have ample proof that the letters work: so far between thirty and forty brought the requested contributions."

A Change in Policy

SOMETIMES the committee, through its network of thousands of volunteers in the East Zone, actually changes Communist policy. Not long ago the committee's collaborators brought back a prize document

a secret order about to be issued to employees and officials in East German banks, post offices and insurance bureaus, to turn in regular "reports on public opinion" by engaging clients and customers in conversation and getting them to let off steam. The names would go to the secret police.

When the committee had all the details of this new plan of mass spying, it flooded East Germany with the information, sent out copies of the secret order and asked the West German radio to put out frequent warning bulletins. The result was that silence descended on all East German banks and other public offices. Frustrated Eastern officials canceled the scheme.

Here are some other examples of the committee's work.

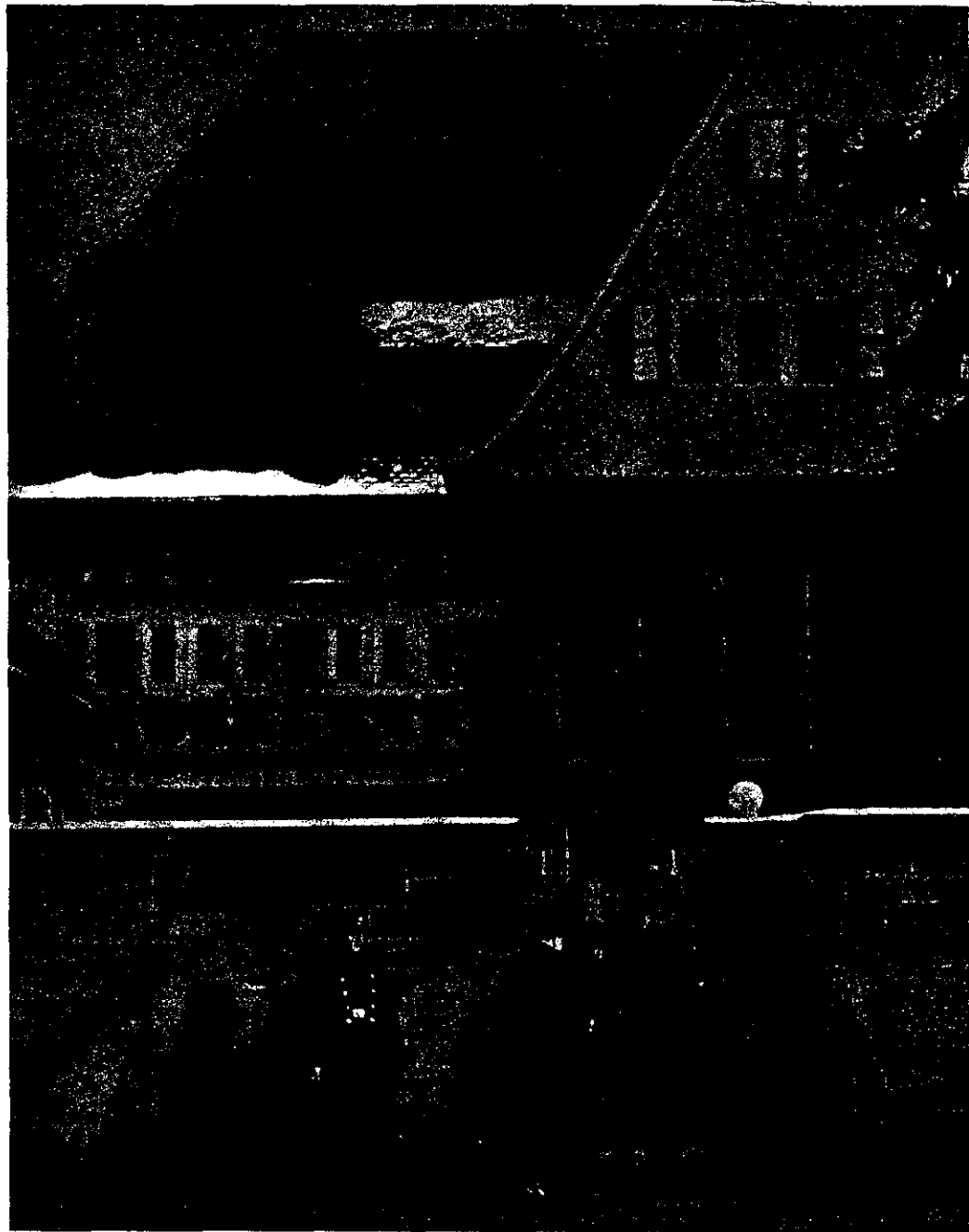
Thousands of skillfully dressed-up pamphlets — often looking like innocent tourist folders — are sent "across" to tell of the true state of affairs in Soviet Germany.

How To Dodge Quotas

SPECIAL "house organs" for workers in large East German industrial concerns are regularly printed under mastheads that include the trade name and symbol of the firm. A recent one — "Film Funken" — went to the Agfa film and chemical works in Wolfen. In addition to technical articles it contained details about one Emil Holzappel alias Riesa who, as a new "worker" at the factory, was handing over political reports on his colleagues to the secret police.

A series of readable "how to" pamphlets contained instructions on: how to visit the Leipzig Fair without either being taken for a sucker or getting into political trouble; how to listen to the radio and be assured of clear reception — especially of programs from the West; how teachers can remain on their posts without actually teaching government-dictated propaganda; how to get away with paying a minimum of taxes; and — this one is for farmers — how to deal with any disasters ranging from hoof-and-mouth disease to delivery (or non-delivery) of "quotas."

Founded in October, 1949, by a lawyer, Dr. Theo Friedenau, and one volunteer collaborator in a dingy two-room apartment in Berlin, the committee has become a key weapon in the fight against Soviet



29 LIMASTRASSE: An air of intrigue hangs over the nerve center of the Investigating Committee of Free Jurists

totalitarianism. The West German government welcomes information collected by the committee. The East German rulers confirm the committee's power and effectiveness with a stream of invective and unfounded accusations that the organization is in the pay of Western intelligence.

Even though the Communists tried in 1952 to disrupt the committee by brutally beating and kidnaping one of its directors in West Berlin, the work continued. "We are paying a heavy price," said one official. "More than eighty-five of our members in East Germany have been arrested and sentenced. But it is worth the sacrifice."

"We have had 220,000 visitors who have either helped or needed help. In addition, we've sent as many as 1,600,000 individually addressed letters to East Germany in a single year."

Each visitor is a link in a chain. Item after item helps to piece together information which helps to save lives and alleviate suffering. But most of all, the visitors are simple, hardworking people who need help:

The peasant who escaped and whom the Reds were trying to lure back with promises of land, money and forgiveness.

The teacher who, close to tears, said she couldn't stand the continuous political pres-

sure and spying by pupils and colleagues.

The parents whose teen-age son had been sent to a political reform camp because he had made an anti-Communist remark.

The committee tries to help all of them — some with advice, others with strong follow-up pressure applied at a vulnerable spot at an East German headquarters or with the help of a sympathetic official. It is tedious, heart-rending work; but the reward of a tiny crack in the Communist armor seems worth the strain. The anonymous men of the committee consider their greatest reward the evidence that the Reds hate and fear the house on Limastrasse. — The End

A TOUGH PRISON

MADE ME GO STRAIGHT

For years there has been a hot argument over whether our prisons should be softer or tougher. Here's a surprising story from an ex-convict who tells what changed him from a habitual criminal to a solid citizen

Anonymous, as told to A. E. Hotchner

Photograph by William Vandivert

I AM 22 years old, and this is the first period of my life since I was nine that I have not committed a crime or been in prison. It's been more than a year now that I've lived straight, and I have a good job and a pretty fiancée to show for it.

But I'm the guy who's been hearing all his life that he'd wind up in the chair because he was through and through no good. And God knows I was. I've held up more people and robbed more stores than I could ever count. I often had a gun in my pocket or a bayonet tucked inside my jacket.

"No good" is putting it mildly. But now I'm straight, and I'm straight from here on out. And you know what did it for me? Prison. A strict, old-fashioned prison was what I needed to prove to myself that no amount of dough I could rob or steal made up for spending a couple of years behind prison walls in a prison cell.

This is what I want to get across: despite all this talk about criminals being sick and strict prisons are out-of-date and conditions should be nice and pleasant - don't lose sight of the fact that some men will stop committing crimes if the penalty is bad enough. At least that's how it worked with me.

The first time I got sent up, it was to one of those fancy progressive places where there are no walls and you live in cottages. If this is all that happens to you, I figured, crime isn't so bad. In fact, two hours after I got let out, I was heisting bag sugar off a railroad train. But the day I got clanked

Continued on page 54