US Notes on PW's

— — *Soviets Asked to Explain Failure*

THREE PREVIOUSLY unpublished notes from the United States Government to the Soviet Union, regarding missing German prisoners of war, gave Russia every chance to explain "a mystery which spells tragedy to millions of broken homes," Mr. E. L. Glazier of the Civil Administration Division, OMGUS, said in Berlin.

The notes, he added, were in line with American attempts to obtain Russian fulfillment of her pledge to return all German prisoners of war by the end of last year. British, French and US representatives in Moscow delivered protests on Jan. 3 and, subsequently, the chronology of attempts to speed return of prisoners from the East was published.

Estimates of German prisoners of war not returned from Russia, based on USSR announcements, run from 200,000 to as high as 2,000,000.

The three notes mentioned by Mr. Glazier were dated March 9, Sept. 15, and Sept. 23, 1948. Their disclosure has been delayed, he said, to allow the Soviet Union every possible opportunity to act in good faith.

"If they could not return prisoners as the western powers have done," he said, "we hoped until the last that at least they would furnish information which would end once and for all the agony of suspense in countless German homes."

THE FIRST of the notes appealed to the Soviet Union to furnish lists of the dead for humanitarian reasons. Its text, Mr. Glazier said, was phrased so as to give the Soviet Union as much leeway as possible in providing statistics on German dead. This note, handed to the Soviet government in Moscow March 9, 1948, stated in part:

"The Government of the United States of America is desirous of obtaining from the Soviet Government death certification, or, if those are unobtainable, duly authenticated lists of German prisoner of war dead.

"The Ministry will understand the necessity for such information for the maintenance of adequate civil records in the areas of occupation. The advantage, from the humanitarian standpoint, of its being available is likewise evident. The information is no less necessary to the occupying powers in the social and economic planning of their zones.

"The Embassy will be grateful for the Ministery's consideration and early reply in this matter."

MORE THAN half a year later, on Sept. 15, another note was delivered in Moscow, asking "whether the Ministry is yet in a position to reply to this Embassy's Note, No. 129, dated March 9, 1948, regarding notification to the zonal authorities in Germany of the deaths of German prisoners of war."

"The answer again," commented Mr. Glazier, "was silence."

The third note was delivered in Moscow under date of Sept. 23, 1948, and said in part:

"The US Government refers to the agreement reached by the Council of Foreign Ministers in April 1947 for the repatriation of German prisoners of war.

"Since the suspension in March 1948 of meetings of the Allied Control Council in Berlin, the American military authorities have not been receiving regular data regarding the repatriation of prisoners held by the other occupation powers of the kind needed in order to make adequate arrangements for their reception into the American zone of occupation.

"For this reason, and on behalf of its government as a party to this agreement, the Embassy therefore hopes the Ministry will be in a position to furnish it with up-to-date information regarding the number of German war prisoners repatriated from the Soviet Union, the number still in custody and the monthly rate of repatriation scheduled between now and the end of December, when all such prisoners will presumably have been returned to Germany."

NOW, concluded the OMGUS official, "the Russian propaganda press belatedly tries to blur written history. Fantastic countercharges against the West come a little late to reasure German families whose missing sons and fathers prove how the Soviet respects its agreements."

Commenting on the US note delivered to the Soviet Foreign Office in Moscow on Jan. 3 regarding prisoners of war, US Military Government officials in Berlin pointed out that Soviet representatives pledged repeatedly at quadripartite meetings that all prisoners held within Russian territory would be returned to Germany by Dec. 31, 1948.

"Failure to return all German prisoners of war by the end of 1948," said a spokesman of the Office of Political Affairs, "is another violation by the USSR of an international commitment. The failure not only prevents resumption of civilian life by German prisoners taken in a war which ended over three and one-half years ago, but robs the German economy of these men's useful production.

"Again officials of the German Communist Party, such as Otto Grotewohl, co-chairman of the Socialist Unity Party in the Soviet Zone, Emil Carlebach (dismissed licensee of the Frankfurter Rundschau) and others who promised the punctual return of the remaining German prisoners of war a number of times during the past years, have turned out to be false prophets.

"It should be pointed out also that this Soviet reluctance to repatriate PW's punctually extends to Austrian, Italian and Japanese prisoners of war as well."

MEANWHILE officials of the OMGUS Civil Administration Division cited chapter and verse of Soviet promises that all German

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prisoners would be home by the end of last year.

On working committee, intermediate and highest levels of the four-power Allied Control Authority, Prisoners of War and Displaced Persons officials recalled, the Soviet volunteered and reaffirmed its pledge. A chronology of events follows:

April 23, 1947—Council of Foreign Ministers at Moscow agrees that all Germans prisoners of war will be returned to Germany by Dec. 31, 1948. As a corollary, CFM agrees that Allied Control Authority will plan details of implementation.

May 16, 1947—US submits its plan of implementation in Allied Control Council in Berlin. (The US offered a detailed plan of monthly quotas, designed to promote a constant flow of returning prisoners of war, to be completed within the Dec. 31, 1948 deadline.)

Nov. 28, 1947—Soviet General Dratvin in Allied Coordinating Committee, Berlin, discussed number of prisoners returned by Soviet to date and promises that all will have been returned to Germany by Dec. 31, 1948.

Aug. 31, 1947—In Combined Services Directorate of Allied Control Authority, Berlin, Soviet Major General Barinov refers to Russian figures on returning prisoners of war, says it is not necessary to have any other "plan."

Dec. 30, 1947—Soviet General Dratvin, again in Coordinating Committee meeting, states intention of USSR to carry out exactly the instructions of the fourth session of the Council of Foreign Ministers. He affirms that all prisoners under Soviet control now outside Germany will be repatriated by required date.

Jan. 20, 1948—Control Council removes discussion of returning prisoners from its agenda. Soviet Marshal Sokolovsky states that Soviet delegation will meet Dec. 31, 1948 deadline set for return of all prisoners of war. He adds that important aspect is not how many prisoners are returned per month (other Allies had requested figures), but that all should be repatriated. Concluding, he affirms again Soviet intention to abide by Dec. 31 date.

Members of the Coopers Guild, one of the oldest craft guilds in Bavaria, staged their traditional dance during the past month in the public squares of Munich. The Schaeffler dance, performed by 40 red-coated members of the barrel-makers guild, dates back to 1564 when it was given to commemorate the end of a plague which had befallen the citizens of Munich. Ordinarily the event is held every seven years. However, this year is the first time it has been presented since 1935 because public dancing had been prohibited. (photo from PIO OMGB)

OMGUS officials said the Soviet record proves that the USSR while refusing to concur with the other Allies on any specific plan of implementation, repeatedly "volunteered, affirmed and reaffirmed" the promise of the USSR to return all prisoners by the end of 1948.

Wide differences exist in the estimates of the numbers of PW's originally held by the Soviet Union at the end of the war, an OMGUS official said.

Even accepting the validity of a figure of 890,532 German war prisoners in Russia in March 1947 (an official figure supplied by Soviet Foreign Minister Molotow), and crediting subsequent Russian reports as accurate, he said, there remain an estimated 253,000 prisoners still to be returned from the USSR. +END

Customs Committee Set Up for 3 Zones

The Bipartite Control Office has announced the setting up in Frankfurt of a committee of German customs experts—comprising two representatives from the Bizone and one from the French Zone—empowered to consider the uniform application of customs laws, ordinances and regulations throughout the Trizonal Area and to submit agreed recommendations to a Tripartite Customs Liaison Committee.

The members of the latter committee, representing the UK, US and French Military Governments, will, where appropriate, obtain implementation through their respective Military Governments.

The formation of these committees is a development in protracted efforts to resolve the complexities of customs administration in the western zones of Germany.

Legislation to achieve unification of customs procedure in the Bizone was adopted last December by the Bizonal Economic Council. Certain amendments to the Ordinance were proposed by Military Government and emplementation is pending by the Economic Council.

Customs regulations throughout the British Zone have in the past been issued by a central customs office. In the US Zone the issuance of such regulations was within the competence of individual states.

Bizonal officials are at present preparing, at the request of Military Government, a list of specified commodities which will not be subject to customs tariffs. The exempted items will in general comprise those classified as Category A (imports for the prevention of disease and unrest) paid for out of US and UK funds. Commercial imports not included in the specified list would be subject to the normal customs tariff.

Ammunition for German Police

For the first time in the history of the occupation, German police have been authorized to procure ammunition. Previously ammunition for the German police had been provided by the occupation powers.