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Escape rewarded with riches, fame

NAILA, West Germany (UPI) — Two East German families who made the perilous flight to freedom aboard a hot air balloon have seen their daring exploit rewarded with quick riches and instant fame.

A West German magazine paid \$50,000 for their story, four bank accounts were opened to deposit money pouring in from West Germans eager to help them adjust to their new life, and the new heroes already have a lawyer to guide them through the dangers of capitalism.

The flight made overnight celebrities of the freedom balloon's crew — aircraft mechanic Hans-Peter Strelzik, 31, bricklayer Guenter Wetzel, 24, their wives and four sons.

Robert Strubel, the mayor of the Bavarian town of Naila, said his telephone had not stopped ringing all day with callers eager to help the families, who were hailed as heroes following their landing in Naila early Sunday.