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Mit Deutscher Gründlichkeit: The People Behind the World's Most Effective Police State

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Introduction

Our story starts with an unlikely figure. Margot Honecker, deemed the “Purple Witch” (due to her lilac-dyed hair) of the German Democratic Republic (GDR), or East Germany, as it is known colloquially, sits for an interview with the Associated Press in Chile in 2012. Honecker was the wife of the late Erich Honecker, General Secretary and face of East Germany from 1971-1989. Margot Honecker enjoyed unusual political power in the days of her husband’s rule. Even though the communist world was a man’s world, ironic given their official commitment to gender equality, Honecker was Minister of Education for the German Democratic Republic from 1963-1989. Her achievements included the training and arming of school-aged children in the event of an invasion from the West, as well as supposedly running “Margot’s concentration camps,” a program that kidnapped and sought to rehabilitate the children of arrested dissidents and deserters from the GDR.

In the interview, Honecker was asked what she thought of the revolution of 1989, which deposed the communist government of East Germany. Denying the possibility it was a peoples’ revolution, she insisted that it was the work of foreign actors. She responded, saying “The GDR also had its enemies. That’s why we had the Stasi.”¹ Enemies of the East German state permeated every school, every office and every street corner, if we are to listen to people like Honecker. The *Ministerium für Staatssicherheit* (Ministry of State Security), or the Stasi as it came to be known by shorthand, the secret police organ of the ruling communist party, the the *Sozialistische Einheitspartei Deutschlands*, the Socialist Unity Party of Germany or the SED, would be assigned the task to “know everything,” to keep the civilian population in check, and most importantly, to spy on malicious provocateurs, whether they came from abroad or at home. The

¹ Kate Connolly, “Margot Honecker Defends East German Dictatorship,” *The Guardian* (Guardian News and Media, April 2, 2012), <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2012/apr/02/margot-honecker-east-germany-interview>.

Stasi would be immortalized as the “*Soldaten der Unsichtbaren Front*,” soldiers of the invisible front, in a song composed in their honor.²

Backpedaling to 1991, Erich Honecker, the recently-deposed General Secretary of the now-defunct German Democratic Republic is in Moscow. The Soviet Union is on life support, and the former head of state no longer has his trademarked cheerful, confident, and friendly disposition. He agreed to sit for an interview with the broadcaster *ARD*, a public service funded by the Federal Republic of Germany. The interviewer asks, “*Herr Honecker*, on the classic tasks of the Ministry of State Security, there was this, in my opinion, politically counterproductive spying on citizens. Why did you have the conviction that you had to do that?” Honecker responded, “If this ministry really engaged in activities you described and put huge pressure on citizens, then it means that the ministry didn’t proceed according to the rights it had under the law.”³ This statement reveals that Honecker may have been ignorant of the true power wielded by the Stasi in the GDR. Interior ministerial work was delegated due to the top-down system by which the GDR functioned. More likely, Honecker provided a non-answer to the interviewer, and chose to hide knowledge of the surveillance, even terror that occurred under his regime. Regardless of what Honecker did or did not know, it is difficult to miss the look of shame on his face during the interview. This visage contrasts greatly with the enthusiasm of which his wife spoke about the regime 21 years after Honecker’s 1991 interview.

These two apologists for the regime, Margot and Erich Honecker, would prove to be characteristic of the missteps of the GDR. Out of touch, oversimplifying the complicated historical and logistical problems of East Germany, and dismissing the overt concerns of the

² “Kundschafterlied (Spy Song) - Anthem of Stasi with English Lyrics,” YouTube (YouTube, February 17, 2020), <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Oyu-n15vX5o>.

³ “Erich Honecker Ard Interview in Moscow, 1991.” YouTube. YouTube, March 5, 2017. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=AGoDUzpsFCE>.

people in the name of ideology would be what this communist power couple were known for. The two used what would be the central discussion of this thesis, rhetoric, in order to justify the abuses of the Stasi. However, this time, they did not have a power apparatus to back them. These interviews were not conducted by journalists intent on making them feel comfortable about their past lives.

Yet, within the GDR, central power was not focused within the General Secretaryship or within the Ministry of Education. Rather, power was determined by the people who ran East Germany day-to-day. Yes, the Honeckers made important and abusive policies that guided East Germany to the end of its life. But, they were not the only faces of communist terror. Rather, responsibility also lay within the functionaries of the police state; the individual ministers and officers that committed the abuses that East German citizens faced. Judges and higher-ups signed off on warrants and orders in the attempt to maintain a vague constitutionalism in the SED-dominated state.

The Stasi would come to dominate and define life in the German Democratic Republic. State security was embodied in the Marxist-Leninist ideology as a significant resource in the proper construction of socialism. The ruling SED would found the Stasi in 1950 as the “Shield and Sword of the Party,” an organization that was designed to keep the “dictatorship of the proletariat” in power. From the beginning of East Germany’s conception, it was inevitable that state security would play a large role in East German politics, given that the state was modeled after the Soviet system. Before 1953, the Stasi concerned itself with counter and foreign espionage. It was not until after the 1953 Uprising that the Stasi would become an important, independent branch of government under SED control. It was also at this point in time the ruthless and dogmatic Stalinist Erich Mielke would come to lead the Stasi. Mielke’s charisma

enabled Stasi propaganda to flourish. Styling himself a “Chekist of the Soviet Union,” Mielke identified himself with the communist international above the state he so mercilessly served. Despite his insistence that the Stasi followed strictly the rule of law and respected the fundamental rights of the citizens of the GDR, the evidence reveals the opposite. Killings, kidnappings, torture, and other forms of repression were committed by Stasi agents. Among those targeted included students, foreigners, and ordinary citizens.

Similar conduct occurred abroad. Although Markus Wolf was head of the Stasi’s foreign espionage service, Mielke still took an active role in international politics. His initiatives reflect his rhetoric back in the GDR, and also reveals a more anxious, unconfident side to Mielke’s powerful personality. East Germany was by far the most important espionage organization in the Eastern Bloc just behind the KGB, and they took an active role in spying programs. The GDR’s focus on Israel reveals a unique communist anti-Semitic motivation in the name of “anti-Zionism,” deeming the State of Israel as an example of “bourgeois nationalism” and a product of the West, and justifying extensive espionage campaigns against this small state. Under the directives of Mielke, the Stasi also worked closely and was a decidedly useful asset to the North Vietnamese. Neither did the Stasi shy away from spying on major Western powers, including the U.K., revealing the extent of resources available to the Stasi.

The goal of this work is a close examination of the Stasi, including its foundation in the ideology of Chekism and its importance in the daily functioning of the German Democratic Republic. The Stasi, considered the Party’s “shield and sword,” would be East Germany’s greatest investment, if only to keep the SED in power for as long as it could. Particular attention will be paid to rhetoric, specifically, the manner of speech of the Stasi’s nearly 32-year long reigning minister Erich Mielke, which will then be directly contrasted with the actual conduct of

Stasi officers and Mielke himself. The findings are apparent: Mielke utilized a flawless, educated command of German to vouch for the humanistic mission of the Stasi; however, what the Stasi found themselves in was nothing short of an abuse of power at best, and a horrible moral and ethical violation of the rights of the people at worst. Many of his speeches discussed have never before been translated into English. As a general standpoint, I hope that this work is able to increase academic curiosity in the Stasi as a defining characteristic of life in East Germany through the lens of Erich Mielke in particular. As East Germany enjoyed a significant status unique among the Soviet Union's satellite states, a sort of "East German exceptionalism" developed due to the geographical and historical relevance during the Cold War era. The Stasi took particular liberty with this unofficial status, making it one of the most effective and strategically important resources for the communist world.⁴

⁴ A note on historiography: While English-based scholarship remains relatively slim on the topic of the East German Stasi, there are a number of quality publications investigating the role of the Stasi in the history of the German Democratic Republic. While sources vary in content, focus, and tone, each work discussed identifies the legal implications of the Stasi's violation of basic human rights as well as the rights guaranteed by East Germany's legal codes. In *Stasi: The Untold Story of the East German Secret Police*, John O. Koehler discusses many details of the MfS as well as brief details regarding East German history in general. The book does not follow a chronology, but rather, Koehler breaks up each chapter by sections of Stasi history, including a history of its longest-serving director, Erich Mielke, its close collaboration with the Soviet KGB, its role in espionage in West Germany, domestic espionage, espionage in the Third World, etc. The book, after the introduction, begins with the present day, and how reunified Germany under the West deals with its socialist past. It is important to note that John Koehler is not a historian, but a former foreign correspondent for the Associated Press, focusing on German affairs during the Cold War. Koehler maintains a noticeable anti-Communist tone throughout his work. This may be shaped by his upbringing, first in Weimar Germany, then Nazi Germany, and, before the arrival of Soviet troops in the end of World War II, to America, where he served in the U.S. Army and the Reagan Administration as White House Communications Director (for one week).

In *The History of the Stasi: East Germany's Secret Police, 1945-1990*, author Jens Gieseke follows a relatively similar pattern to Koehler's work, although placing much less emphasis on individuals and foreign espionage. Rather, Gieseke follows closely the activities of the Stasi in domestic affairs. While Koehler touched upon some famous accounts of the *Inoffizieller Mitarbeiter* (IM, or unofficial collaborator) program in which Stasi officers recruited citizens to spy unofficially on friends, family, and acquaintances, Gieseke follows these collaborators more closely. Because the book was published relatively recently (2014), it may be speculated that more information was declassified and released to the public, researchers, and archivists.

Both authors are not shy to point out the objective reality that the Stasi acted above and beyond the laws of the German Democratic Republic and committed flagrant abuses of human and civil rights and international law.

Koehler's emphasis on the constitutional framing of Stasi actions is by far his strongest contribution, and one that I will seek to expand on with this thesis. I will also be using content that has never been before published in English to my knowledge in order to better understand the rhetorical work

Chapter 1: Foundations and the Rhetorical Justification of a Police State

State terror took many forms within the history of the Eastern Bloc. Often, the governments of socialist nations used specific rhetoric in the justification of their actions. The mechanism of state security remained an integral piece in the function of Marxist states. The communist parties of these nations considered their state security, also referred to as “Chekists,” of particular usefulness in the fight against what was deemed “counterrevolution” and other subversive activities against the socialist state. The term “Chekists” or “Chekism” is derived from the name of the first socialist police force in the Russian Soviet Federative Socialist Republic, referred to as the Cheka. The Cheka would become the benchmark standard for state security forces all throughout Eastern Europe and the world. The Stasi took particular interest in its ideological connection to the Soviet Union. The Stasi, while relatively unknown in the Western world, was arguably the most brutal security service in the Eastern Bloc. As the Stasi attempted to consolidate the unchallenged power of the ruling SED, its forces resorted to torture, murder, terrorism, and other acts of subversion. Such activities directly contrasted with its rhetorical humanist tone and justifications for its actions as expressed by party leaders and East German propaganda.

Foundations of the Socialist State Security Apparatus

Justification for state security began immediately upon the creation of the first socialist state, the Russian Soviet Federative Socialist Republic, under Vladimir Lenin. A definitive marker of the socialist state in the 20th century was the prevalence of some security force. For

of the Stasi and their psychological attitude towards the people and politics of the German Democratic Republic.

Koehler, John O. *Stasi: The Untold Story of the East German Secret Police*. Westview Press, 1999;
Glees, Anthony. *The Stasi Files: East Germany's Secret Operations against Britain*. London: Free Press, 2004.

example, Soviet state security evolved from the Cheka to the more well-known *Komitet Gosudarstvennoy Bezopasnosti* (KGB, 1954), while the Romanian state security was termed the *Securitate* (1948), the Albanians the *Sigurimi* (1944), and the Polish *Sluzba Bezpieczeństwa* (1945). Lenin ranked the importance of the Cheka highly on the new order of the Soviet system, establishing the Cheka immediately after seizing power in 1917.⁵ Lenin proclaimed the bourgeois threat to genuine revolution in a letter to Feliks Dzerzhinsky,

With regard to your report for today, about measures for combating saboteurs and counter-revolutionaries. It is not possible to produce a decree along the following lines: ... the bourgeoisie is intent on committing the most heinous crimes, suborning the scum of society... The supporters of the bourgeoisie, especially among higher functionaries, bank officials, etc., are sabotaging their work and organizing strikes in order to undermine government measures for bringing about a socialist transformation.⁶

Lenin recognized what he deemed the “counter-revolutionary” forces almost immediately. He was convinced that there were actors at play that sought to undermine his revolutionary cause, and thus, destroy the socialist state from within. Lenin would further elaborate:

We need to send to that front- the most dangerous and cruel of fronts- determined, hard, dedicated comrades ready to do anything in defense of the Revolution. Do not think that I seek forms of revolutionary justice; we are not now in need of justice. It is war now- face to face a fight to the finish. Life or death! I propose, I demand an organ for the revolutionary settlement of accounts with counter-revolutionaries. And we must not act tomorrow, but today, now...⁷

⁵ Ibid. The Cheka, or the *Vserossiyskaya Chrezvycháynaya Komíssiya*, the so-called “All-Russian Extraordinary Commission,” was the first secret police force created in the Soviet Union, and thus, the socialist world. All state security services, including that of the Stasi, would follow the formula of the Cheka.

⁶ George Leggett. 1981. *The Cheka: Lenin's Political Police*. Oxford, U.K.: Oxford University Press. <https://archive.org/details/chekaleninspolit0000legg/page/16/mode/2up>, 16. Feliks Dzerzhinsky was an Old Bolshevik and one of Lenin’s chief commissars, given the task of establishing the Cheka. He is often referred to as the “Architect of the Red Terror,” which modeled itself on the revolutionary French “Reign of Terror” and led to thousands of executions of political prisoners and dissidents.

⁷ Ibid., 17.

Lenin's successor, Joseph Stalin, would also defend the existence of State Security as "the defense of the revolution."⁸ The presentation of the Cheka as warriors defending the honorable cause of the revolution is a common motif in self-characterizations of the Stasi as well. Specific examples of this will be discussed later.

Founding the Ministry of State Security

The Ministry of State Security began with modest intentions. By 1950, the Volkskammer, the legislative body of the German Democratic Republic, proposed that the state, which was hardly a year old, adopt a security service to counter criminal activities occurring throughout East Germany. Dr. Carl Steinhoff, the minister of the interior, first proposed that the GDR establish a new department of government to fight the "bombings as of late," which occurred on state farms and industries.⁹ He would argue, "The detailed reports, whose basic contents you will have gathered from the press, offer proof of the activities of criminal elements in the employ and under the direct guidance of the Anglo-American imperialists and their henchmen."¹⁰ Dr. Steinhoff's claims were not unfounded. After all, had crime broken out in such a fashion as described in any new state, the new governing bodies would have a right to intervene and restore order lest the new state succumb to anarchy. Similarly, it was well-known that the Soviets and the United States and their allies were spying on each other, as this is the time period in which the Cold War began. The MfS thus was formed, and originally served as a dependent branch of government under the Ministry of the Interior, replacing the Main Administration for the Protection of the National Economy.¹¹ Erich Mielke, deputy under Stasi director Wilhelm

⁸ Qtd. in Koehler, *Stasi: The Untold Story of the East German Secret Police*, 30.

⁹ Gieseke, *The History of the Stasi : East Germany's Secret Police, 1945-1990*, 11.

¹⁰ Qtd. in *ibid.*

¹¹ *Ibid.*

Zaisser, denounced the purported criminals as “gangsters and murderers,” and offered a solution to East Germany’s problems with crime:

Do the facts not force us to take action and put an end to the doings of these hostile elements? The Constitution of the German Democratic Republic says in Article 6: “Incitement to the boycott of democratic institutions and organizations, incitement to the murder of democratic politicians, the propagation of religious, racial, and national hatred, military propaganda and the incitement to war, and all other acts directed against equality of rights are offenses according to the Criminal Code.” To preserve the full effectiveness of our Constitution it is necessary to put this article into practice through the creation of suitable organs for waging a battle against agents, saboteurs, and diversionists, as well as through relevant criminal laws which give the judiciary the possibility to justly punish the perpetrators apprehended and found guilty by these organs.¹²

Erich Mielke would prove himself a vocal and ambitious employee of state security. His influence and rhetorical style would continue to influence East German discourse from this point on until the end of communist rule in 1989. Already, East Germany saw a great call for state security from the top-down. Mielke, in particular, would seize this opportunity to establish a basis for Stasi power, as a means to solidify SED rule and to protect the constitution. While Mielke would remain behind the scenes in Stasi operations, he would mercilessly work to seize power in the Council of Ministers.

Erich Mielke: History’s Most Ambitious Communist

From nearly the start of his life, Erich Mielke was closely associated with Communism. Born in Wedding, a locality in the borough of Mitte in Berlin in 1907, Mielke was raised in a working class, socialist neighborhood.¹³ A member of the *Kommunistischen Jugendverband Deutschlands*, the Communist Youth Association of Germany, during his childhood years, Mielke would join the *Kommunistischen Partei Deutschlands* (KPD, the Communist Party of

¹² Qtd. in *ibid.*, 12.

¹³ “I Love – I Love All – All Humans’ – Erich Mielke Biography.” DDR Museum, March 27, 2017. <https://www.ddr-museum.de/en/blog/archive/i-love-i-love-all-all-humans-erich-mielke-biography>.

Germany) at age 18.¹⁴ In Weimar Germany, Mielke would associate himself with the *Roter Frontkämpferbund*, the Alliance of Red Front-Fighters, a major paramilitary wing of the KPD.¹⁵ As such, he would frequently cross violent paths with early members of the *Sturmabteilung*, the SA, or the Storm Detachment, the earlier paramilitary force of the NSDAP, the *Nationalsozialistische Deutsche Arbeiterpartei*, the National Socialist German Workers' Party, or the Nazi Party. Likely, too, he would come into contact with various Weimar-era organizations and paramilitary associations, including the police force and the *Freikorps*, a mainly reactionary force of disgruntled former World War I-era German veterans. The communists' tendencies towards violence in the streets would culminate on 9 August 1931, when Mielke and fellow comrades would murder officers Paul Anlauf and Franz Lenck.¹⁶ According to the wanted poster produced by the Berlin police in 1933 entitled, "*Helft bei der Suche nach Rotmord!*," or "Help find the Red Murderers!," Mielke was always implicated as a suspect, both named and photographed.¹⁷ Included in the wanted poster was Walter Ulbricht, who would become East Germany's First Secretary in 1949.¹⁸ Due to fledgling support for the communists after the election of Hitler as Chancellor of Germany in 1933 and the subsequent flight of communist Germans to the Soviet Union, France, the U.K., and America (including Mielke and Ulbricht, both fleeing to the Soviet Union), the investigation was halted. Building himself a name as a

¹⁴ Ibid.

¹⁵ Ibid.

¹⁶ Ibid.

¹⁷ "Murder of Paul Anlauf and Franz Lenck." Wikipedia. Wikimedia Foundation, March 30, 2022. [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Murder_of_Paul_Anlauf_and_Franz_Lenck#/media/File:Rotmord_-_Fahndungsplakat_der_Berliner_Polizei_\(1933\).jpg](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Murder_of_Paul_Anlauf_and_Franz_Lenck#/media/File:Rotmord_-_Fahndungsplakat_der_Berliner_Polizei_(1933).jpg).

¹⁸ Ibid.

trustworthy and ideologically-sound communist, Mielke would be trained at the Lenin School in Moscow.¹⁹

By 1936, Mielke was assigned his first major role for international communism and the Soviet Union. He would be assigned as an officer of the secret police operating in the International Brigades in the Spanish Civil War.²⁰ Performing exceedingly well at his duties, his work would be noted by his fellow officers and higher-ups. After the leftists lost the Spanish Civil War before the breakout of World War II, Mielke was transferred to various detachments in the International Brigade, including in Belgium and Toulouse, performing subversive work that is unknown to this day.²¹ In 1944, Mielke found himself back in Berlin as a member of *Organisation Todt*, the engineering organization of Nazi Germany.²² There, he recultivated a network of contacts that he enjoyed more than a decade prior and waited patiently undercover for the Soviets to one day arrive in the city.

By June 1945, Mielke, no longer using an alias or hiding his alignment, reconnected with the Soviets in the Soviet sector of Berlin and was transferred to the Berlin Lichtenburg police station to manage the police force of the city.²³ He would remain in this post for four years, until the creation of the German Democratic Republic in 1949, in which he was given the task of building from the ground-up the *Hauptverwaltung zum Schutze der Volkswirtschaft* (Headquarters of the Defense of the Peoples' Economy), which would be the forerunner of the

¹⁹ "I Love – I Love All – All Humans' – Erich Mielke Biography." DDR Museum.

²⁰ Ibid.

²¹ Ibid.

²² Ibid.

²³ Ibid.

Ministry of State Security.²⁴ Mielke was assigned this duty because of his fierce loyalty to party interests as well as his proven record in dealing with matters of state security, abroad in Spain first, then in the Soviet Union, and for four years in Berlin. When the Stasi was founded in 1950, Mielke became deputy under the first minister of the Stasi, Wilhelm Zaisser.²⁵ Mielke would stand rather silently and would use every opportunity possible to continue to show his loyalty to Moscow and his commitment to the ideals of Marxism-Leninism. He need only wait for the right moment to act and assume the position he dreamt of since his foray into Spain in the 1930s.

The 1953 Uprising and the Reformation of the Stasi

1953 was a tumultuous year for the GDR. One of the first major uprisings to occur in East Germany, the June 1953 Uprising, justified the expansion of state security and the role chekism would play in the young socialist republic. The 1953 Uprising was a spontaneous revolt in the early days of the German Democratic Republic. Over 1 million people were involved in what ironically started off as a workers' strike. Joseph Stalin had died in 1953, and leadership in East Germany, and elsewhere in the Eastern Bloc, was unsure of which direction to take. Liberalize, or stay true to Stalinist principles? The East German leadership decided to ease the SED's totalitarian grip on the young nation. They sought to take "measures to strengthen the rule of law and guarantee civil rights."²⁶ Similar measures would be taken throughout the Eastern Bloc, including in the Soviet Union. Rather than stabilize the nation, however, moderate liberalizing measures instead promoted the rise of grassroots movements, calls for democracy, expanded workers' rights, and other demands.²⁷ Some concessions made by the party did not

²⁴ Ibid.

²⁵ Ibid.

²⁶ Qtd. in Gieseke, *The History of the Stasi: East Germany's Secret Police, 1945-1990*, 40.

²⁷ Ibid.

fulfill the desires of East Germans, however. Workers demanded the state relax norms, that is, the heavy industry and goods quotas imposed by the state's five-year plan.²⁸ The state, however, refused to budge on relaxing its central concern for the implementation of socialism.²⁹ The resulting fiasco would result in riots in 121 cities and towns, and, by official numbers, 191 police, 126 demonstrators, and 61 bystanders wounded; and one Stasi officer, 19 demonstrators, and 2 bystanders killed.³⁰ A further 331,390 would use the opportunity to flee to the West, including 8,000 members of the *Kasernierte Volkspolizei* (Barracked People's Police) and 2,718 members of the SED.³¹

A national embarrassment and a bloody stain on the new nation, the Uprising would result in a stern correction from Moscow at the failure of state security to contain or have prior knowledge of the event. Rather, it took Soviet power, two armored divisions and 1,500 secret trials to restore order in a 24 hour period.³² The Soviet head of the Ministry for Internal Affairs (MGB), Lavrentii Beria, expressed anxiety at this turn of events in official correspondence.³³ As revealed in statements to the Central Committee, Beria considered abandoning East Germany and renegotiating terms for German unification. Beria's last visit before his execution was to East Germany, where he surveyed the situation and considered retracting the hastily-crafted

²⁸ Ibid. In a Soviet-style command economy, the market was tightly regulated, and production of industry, food, textiles, and other goods were planned years in advance by the Central Committee, in what was referred to as "five-year plans."

²⁹ Ibid.

³⁰ Koehler, *Stasi: The Untold Story of the East German Secret Police*, 60.

³¹ Ibid. The *Kasernierte Volkspolizei* would later become formalized as the *Nationale Volksarmee*, the "National People's Army" of the GDR.

³² Ibid.

³³ The MGB was the successor organization of Joseph Stalin's NKVD, which was a successor organization of the Cheka. The MGB would later become the more well-known KGB.

socialist government in the new state.³⁴ He notes his error in deviating from the Party's line regarding the "German problem," as he stated from his jail cell, "Comrades, during the discussion on the German question [sic], of course, here I am guilty without question and have to be denounced thoroughly."³⁵ Thus, the Soviets would show their own anxiety regarding the developing situation in East Germany.

Vladimir Semyonov, a diplomat for the Soviet Union, contacted Vyacheslav Molotov, Minister of Foreign Affairs in the Soviet Union and Nikolai Bulganin, Minister of Defense in the Soviet Union, during the course of the demonstrations.³⁶ In written correspondence from Berlin, Semyonov particularly took issue with the East Germans in their failure to contain the situation. He reported,

Until our [Soviet] troops took active measures to settle the unrest, the demonstrators succeeded in overcoming resistance by the German People's Police and the Garrisoned People's Police, who in general did not hold them off. With the start of active intervention by our troops, the situation in Berlin began to normalize. Demonstrators dispersed after the appearance of Soviet tanks.³⁷

Both East Germany and the Soviet Union learned valuable lessons with the events that unfolded in June of 1953. First, they determined the extent they were willing to go to contain so-called

³⁴ Ibid.

³⁵ AP RF, f. 3, op. 24. D. 463, ll. 163-174. Published in its entirety in *Istochnik*, 4 (1994), p. 4-8. Translated by Vladislav M. Zubok. Portions of English translations originally published in the *Cold War International History Project Bulletin*, no. 10 (March 1998), p. 99. The situation regarding Lavrentii Beria was complicated. Although he was indicted for crimes including treason, there was an intense power struggle between Nikita Khrushchev and Beria at this time. On orders from General Secretary Georgy Malenkov, who worked with Khrushchev, Marshal Georgy Zhukov, Vyacheslav Molotov, and others, Beria was executed in a show trial in 1953 for crimes not only of treason, but also of counter-revolutionary activities, terrorism, and the sexual molestation of hundreds of women and children.

³⁶ Semyonov was instrumental in the establishment of the German Democratic Republic. Molotov was most well-known for his role in drafting the Molotov-Ribbentrop pact which ended Polish sovereignty and established peace between the U.S.S.R. and Nazi Germany, until Operation Barbarossa. Bulganin, together with Molotov, were major figures in Stalin's Politburo.

³⁷ AVP RF, f. 06, op. 12a, pap. 51, d. 300. Translated by Benjamin Aldrich-Moodie.

counterrevolutionary activity. Military intervention was a tool used various times to retain power in socialist states under Soviet domination. Semyonov also reported on orders given to Soviet troops and East German police and military units to “use their weapons if necessary to arrest and punish the instigators of the unrest.”³⁸ Second, the Soviet Union would take an active role in quelling such instances of insolence to the Party apparatus. Third, and most importantly, the events of 1953 proved weakness, instability, and a severe lack of legitimacy regarding the socialist regime in East Germany. The people were not satisfied with the new Soviet system installed in what was the Third Reich only a few years prior.

SED leadership in the GDR concluded that state security needed to take a more active role in the development of East Germany so that such an event could never occur again. Wilhelm Zaisser, then director of the Stasi, was removed from office shortly after the events of June. In an act of opportunism, Erich Mielke reported to Moscow that Zaisser sought unification terms with the Federal Republic of Germany and undermined SED leadership in East Germany, because “he believed the Soviet Union would abandon the DDR.”³⁹ This was a deliberate lie that Moscow chose to believe. As such, Zaisser was removed from office as head of the MfS and positions in the Politburo and Central Committee, and denied membership in the SED.⁴⁰ Mielke, currying favor with Moscow and the SED, moved a step closer to his coveted position as head of the MfS.

Although the MfS was reduced in status after 1953, by 1955, it achieved its full status once more with many overhauls.⁴¹ With an expanded budget and more agents at its disposal, the

³⁸ Ibid.

³⁹ Qtd. in Koehler, *Stasi: The Untold Story of the East German Secret Police*, 61. Koehler received this information from Gitta Bauer, a journalist who was imprisoned by the Stasi for eight years, alongside her husband, Leo Bauer. Leo Bauer, a Party veteran, relayed this information to his wife, who relayed it to Koehler in an interview.

⁴⁰ Ibid., 61.

⁴¹ Ibid., 62.

mission of the Stasi, to expand state power and promote the development of socialism, highlighted a renewed sense of diligence. As Party Control commissioner Hermann Matern stated, “We have to hit hard and ruthlessly. There is no room in our ranks for weak-kneed pacifists and dreamers [*Mondgucker*]. Comrade Ulbricht once proclaimed at a Central Committee meeting: ‘We must make the German Democratic Republic a hell for enemy agents.’ Comrades, this is your principal task.⁴² Ernst Wollweber, the new minister of state security, defined “enemy agents” as foreign spies.⁴³ Thus, in his tenure as Stasi minister, Wollweber focused on counter-espionage tactics. Mielke, then Wollweber’s deputy, would take to defining the enemy, and a desire to make the GDR “a hell,” a step further. By 1957, Wollweber resigned his ministry. The journalistic arm of the SED, *Neues Deutschlands*, would report Ernst Wollweber’s “resignation for health reasons.” Prime Minister Grotewohl would then assign Mielke the task of Minister of State Security beginning 1 November 1957.⁴⁴ Hence, from this point on until 1989, Mielke would lead the Ministry of State Security.

The Soviet Connection

Mielke insisted on referring to his officers as “Chekists of the Soviet Union” rather than “Chekists of the German Democratic Republic.” Perhaps, then, his loyalty lay less so with the East German nation and the citizens of East Germany than with his loyalty to the Soviet Union, the heart of the revolution, or even the Warsaw Pact in general. Just as the Stasi officers were referred to as the “Chekists of the Soviet Union,” so too they were the “Shield and Sword of the Party,” rather than, say, the “Shield and Sword of the Nation.” The Party was the nation, at least in the view of Mielke and the Politburo, and the Stasi was its defender from activities deemed by

⁴² Ibid., Qtd. in Gieseke, *The History of the Stasi : East Germany's Secret Police, 1945-1990*, 43.

⁴³ Koehler, *Stasi: The Untold Story of the East German Secret Police*, 62.

⁴⁴ Qtd. from “I Love – I Love All – All Humans’ – Erich Mielke Biography.” DDR Museum.

the state as “subversive.” In an interview between journalist John Koehler and former Stasi Colonel Rainer Wiegand, Wiegand described Erich Mielke and the Stasi’s close relationship with the Soviet KGB in the following:

Minister Mielke, in staff meetings and official directives, continually stressed that MfS officers were to consider themselves ‘Chekists of the Soviet Union.’ He never tired of swearing absolute loyalty to the ‘close relations and alliance’ between members of his Stasi and KGB. There was hardly a public speech between 1946 and 1989 in which Mielke did not pay homage to the Soviet ‘Chekists’ and extol the virtues of the KGB-Stasi brotherhood, even when he spoke at collective farms and before factory workers.⁴⁵

Chekism must not be merely tolerated, but rather exemplified as socialist dogma.⁴⁶

Mielke and his Stasi’s connection to the Soviet KGB was constant throughout both nations’ histories. While Mielke declared absolute loyalty to the Socialist Unity Party and the Soviet Union, instances of collaboration with Soviet officials can be traced to 1985 in documentation discussing a collaborative four-year plan between the security agencies.⁴⁷ The document details:

The strengthening of joint efforts in the battle against hostile secret services is necessitated by conditions developing out of drastically worsening international military-political situations created by the adventurous policy of American imperialism. The USA, its NATO allies, and other states have developed hostile actions of espionage and subversion by their secret services and propaganda organs against the national and unified armed services of the USSR, the DDR, and other states of the socialist

⁴⁵ Koehler, *Stasi: The Untold Story of the East German Secret Police*, 74.

⁴⁶ Chekism is a Marxist-Leninist ideology which emphasizes the strong, central role of state security in nearly every societal aspect.

⁴⁷ The document discussed here details plans for collaboration between 1987-1991. It must be noted that the SED-led DDR lasted until 1989, while the Communist Party of the Soviet Union dissolved in 1991. Thus, ironically, the Soviets and East Germans overestimated how long their respective regimes would last. Another noteworthy observation reveals the relative independence of security agencies in the DDR and the USSR. While Gorbachev was reform and democratic-minded (elected General Secretary of the CPSU in 1985), the agents of the KGB, the Stasi, and other Warsaw Pact nations only became more conservative until the collapse of their ministries. The Stasi would be dissolved in 1989 upon the dissolution of the socialist state and the fall of the Wall, while the KGB would dissolve in 1991 after its attempted ousting of Gorbachev in the August coup.

community.⁴⁸

The link between the socialist community was the threat posed by NATO alongside its ideological convictions. Strong language such as “hostile,” “subversion,” and “imperialism” suggest the position of the GDR is one of pure defense. In no way had the GDR considered itself the accessories to a new form of “Red” imperialism, but rather as a force against historical imperialism. Mielke insisted on the development of a new form of imperialism via subversion through “back-door” means. Instead of a “hot” invasion of the GDR or the socialist community by NATO forces, the United States and the Western world used unofficial means to attack the Warsaw Pact nation.

Mielke exemplified and defined his commitment to the virtues of state security through Feliks Dzerzhinsky. In fact, Mielke admired Dzerzhinsky so much that he ordered his Berlin Guard Regiment, an elite regiment in the MfS, to be renamed the “Dzerzhinsky Regiment” in 1967.⁴⁹ In a written order, Mielke describes the change,

ORDER: In recognition and appreciation of the loyal and reliable fulfillment of duties and the high level of commitment of all members of the Berlin Guard Regiment of the Ministry for State Security and for the exemplary fulfillment of the combat decrees made by the party and state leadership, the Berlin Guard Regiment of the Ministry for State Security is given a name of honor. I order: On the occasion of the 50th anniversary of the formation of the All-Russian Extraordinary Commissioner - the Cheka - the name will be given to the Berlin Guard Regiment of the Ministry of State Security. "F.E. Dzierzynski" was head of the Cheka and the closest combatant to Lenin. All soldiers, sergeants and officers of the Berlin Guard Regiment of the Ministry of State Security are to be trained to be loyal, steadfast and uncompromising fighters against the enemies of peace and socialism, true to the great example of F. E. Dzierzynski. You have to familiarize yourself with the life and the revolutionary struggle

⁴⁸ Qtd. from Koehler, *Stasi: The Untold Story of the East German Secret Police*, 75-76. Cited from John Koehler's personal Stasi document collection. GDR, the official name of East Germany, the “German Democratic Republic,” also shortened by its German name to DDR, the “*Deutsche Demokratische Republik*.”

⁴⁹ Wilfriede Otto. 2000. *Erich Mielke - Biographie*. Berlin, Deutschland: Karl Dietz Verlag Berlin., 589.

of Comrade F. E. Dzierzynski - a close combat threat of Lenin and the first organizer of the Cheka - and at all times of the unshakable campaign alliance between the German Democratic Republic and the USSR, especially the fighting community between the German and Soviet Chekists, strong and consolidated.⁵⁰

Mielke sought the memorialization of the architect of Red Terror himself, Feliks Dzerzhinsky. Based upon Mielke's language in this document, Dzerzhinsky was a saint-like figure. This contrasted greatly with the East German characterization of NATO, as described prior, as "loyal," "steadfast," "uncompromising," and the description of the Stasi's holy war for "*Friedens und des Sozialismus*," or "peace and socialism." As such, the Ministry for State Security and East Germany, in general, tended towards hyperbole when extolling the virtues of their Marxist mission. It is important to note that this elite guard, the so-called "Dzerzhinsky Regiment," had the responsibility of protecting the Berlin Wall, which, at this point, was Mielke's crowning achievement. Because of Mielke's admiration for Dzerzhinsky, it is symbolic to have assigned this elite regiment to the Wall. Mielke connected the two as tantamount to his personal success as minister of the Stasi.

The Berlin Wall and Stasi Propaganda

While the rhetoric of the Stasi remained committed to the ideals of Marxism as a noble mission securing so-called peace and freedom and closely aligned with the Soviet Union, the tactics of the Stasi contrasted greatly with its purported virtue. Yet, the Stasi still sought to justify their abuses. For example, the Stasi took particular interest in the Berlin Wall as a matter of state security.⁵¹ While the East German *Grenztruppen* (border troops) assumed command of the defense of the Berlin Wall by official capacity, unofficially, the Stasi had the majority if not

⁵⁰ Qtd from *Ibid.*, 589. Translation my own.

⁵¹ Referred to by the East Germans as the "*Antifaschistischer Schutzwall*" or the Anti-Fascist Defense Rampart.

absolute control of the Berlin Wall operations.⁵² The Stasi was charged with the surveillance of the *Grenztruppen*, as the flight of the so-called elite border guards was not uncommon.⁵³ Despite these realistic concerns, however, the Stasi embarked on a propaganda campaign to convince the citizens of East Germany alongside sympathetic voices in the West of the morality of the Wall.

By official decree of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union, border guards were first ordered to man the border of East and West Germany in 1953, before the construction of the Wall. The resolution states, “Instruct the SCC in Germany (Cdes. Semichastnov and Semyonov) to inform Ulbricht that there are no objections to the measures planned by the SED CC Politburo to deploy guards from the forces of the GDR national police along the border between East and West Berlin and to end uncontrolled access to East Berlin from Western sectors.”⁵⁴ Here is proof that the Soviet-dominated East intended to use force to control the borders between East and West. Noticeable is the anxiety provoked by a porous border between East and West, as a Stasi report entitled, “Brief Assessment of the Investigation Results Achieved In 1961 In Work On Crimes of Espionage,” details: “More agents were smuggled over the Western state border into the territory of the GDR and likewise told to gather information of a military-strategic character. These conclusions are based on the investigative results reached in the cases against the agents of the American secret service [three names blacked out] among others.”⁵⁵ Thus, securing the

⁵² Frederick Taylor. *The Berlin Wall: A World Divided, 1961-1989*. New York, NY: HarperCollins Publishers, 2006, 265.

⁵³ *Ibid.*

⁵⁴ "CPSU CC Resolution Approving the Deployment of Border Guards along the Eastern Border of the GDR," January 02, 1953, History and Public Policy Program Digital Archive, Foreign Policy Archive of the Russian Federation (AVP RF), fond (f.) 0742, opis (op.) 41, portfel (port.) 92. Translated by Daniel Rozas. <https://digitalarchive.wilsoncenter.org/document/111325>. The document references Ulbricht, or Walter Ulbricht, First Secretary of the SED and *de facto* head of East Germany from 1950-1971.

⁵⁵ "East German Ministry of State Security, 'Brief Assessment of the Investigation Results Achieved in 1961 in Work on Crimes of Espionage'," January 09, 1962, History and Public Policy Program Digital Archive, BSTU, ZA, MfS-HA IX, Nr. 4350, pp. 226-235. Translated by Paul Maddrell. Names

borders became a top priority for Stasi agents even before the construction of the Wall. It was not necessarily a rampart to keep East Germans *in*. It was also an attempt to keep spies *out*.

However, as East German anxiety boiled up beyond the concern about foreign espionage, it looked closer at espionage within its own borders.

This concerning development is made clear by the story of Rüdiger Knechtel, an “unwilling” East German border guard. After finding a picture of a man shot in the head in a desk on his first day of work and questioning his superior on the existence of the photograph, his commanding officer told him, “A cadaver of one who tried to flee.”⁵⁶ Knechtel would later explain, “This reinforced my vow to make it my task to convince fellow soldiers not to shoot at innocent people.”⁵⁷ Mielke, believing himself to be acting in the interests of socialism, described his stance towards East German “security” in defending the “impenetrable” Wall. In a secret recording made public only recently, Mielke ordered the *Grenztruppen* to not hesitate in using deadly force to prevent the flight of East Germans into the West. He states, “I’d like to say something comrades. When we shoot, we have to make sure that the guy we shot at does not run away, but rather that he gently stays with us. No, because that’s the thing, if we shoot the guy seven times but he still manages to get to the other side, they’ll make a big deal out of that.”⁵⁸

This was Mielke’s infamous “shoot-to-kill” order, which Western observers believed to occur regularly until the destruction of the Berlin Wall in 1989. Now there is hard proof that such an order existed. Those fleeing to the West would face death, without trial. Viewing border

redacted in accordance with the German Law on State Security Records.
<https://digitalarchive.wilsoncenter.org/document/118657>.

⁵⁶ Koehler, *Stasi: The Untold Story of the East German Secret Police*, 114.

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, 115.

⁵⁸ Marvin Entholt, dir. 2017. *Mielke Und Die Freiheit*. YouTube. Arena Aktuell Film und TV GmbH [de]. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=l1mAyrJmlrM>.

security as a matter of state security, the Stasi infamously gave free license to its soldiers to open fire on those attempting to flee to the West. Such actions reinforced an inhumane view towards the political criminal among the Stasi which will be explored in greater depth in chapter 3.

In direct opposition to the actual reality of life with the Berlin Wall, East German propaganda took a bizarre approach. Rather than accepting the Wall merely as a means of containing East and West, the Stasi propaganda outlet created countless pamphlets, booklets, and other literature discussing the Wall as a means of defense and socialist success. East Germans made no attempt to downplay their role in the construction of the Wall. Far from being a source of embarrassment to the East Germans, they valorized it as a source of pride. Whether this was the attitude of everyday East German citizens was unimportant. For example, a pamphlet created by the Department of Agitation and Propaganda, a propaganda wing of the Stasi and thus, the SED, declares triumphantly, “On 13 August 1961 peace-loving Berliners won a battle for peace. The battle groups of Berlin’s working class, along with comrades in the National People’s Army and comrades of the German police of the capital of the GDR, put an end to subversive activity against the GDR by spies, slave-traders, and Revanchist organizations based in West Berlin.”⁵⁹ The Berlin Wall was thus described as a product of the will of the people. Its construction was considered “[winning] a battle for peace,” which elevated the Berlin Wall to a status symbol for East German citizens. Equally interesting was the comment regarding “spies and slave-traders.” While no doubt an innocuous claim insinuating that the West spied on the nations of the Eastern Bloc, the claim that those in the West, and in particular, in West Berlin, were “slave-traders,” was a common accusation used by the East Germans in their indictment of the West. Such accusations can be found in *Neues Deutschland*, the media organ of the SED, which stated in an

⁵⁹ “On the 13th.” East German Propaganda. Grand Rapids, MI. Accessed September 16, 2021. <https://research.calvin.edu/german-propaganda-archive/schlugs13.htm>.

article from 1989, “organized trafficking is being cloaked in the guise of humanitarianism.”⁶⁰ A major cause for concern for the East German government and the Stasi, the flight of East Germans to the West was cleverly denounced as a plot by the West German government. The same *Neues Deutschland* article also contends in the following that,

FRG politicians have not concealed the massive economic and sociopolitical interests, calculated in marks and pfennigs, which underlie the long-term trade in people as commodities. The *Generalanzeiger* newspaper in Bonn described the newly arrived labour power as ‘potential for economic growth’ for the FRG, which, in the face of the shrinking and aging West German population, could serve to allay the concerns of labour market politicians about the long-term guaranteeing pensions. State secretary Waffenschmidt spoke in the same context of an “elixir of life for the Federal Republic.”⁶¹

The major accusation here is that the West German government did not care for the so-called “plight” of East Germans escaping to the West, but rather saw, and treated them, as human cattle, mere pawns in the machinery of capitalism. This was a clever Stasi tactic, that is, the twisting of spoken words as a means of subverting the original context to support the cause of the SED.

Yet another example of Stasi propaganda was a pamphlet entitled *What You Should Know About the Wall*, written entirely in English, and clearly meant for export to anglophone nations, and perhaps Western Europe as well. Discussing the reason for the Berlin Wall, the author(s) repeated a mantra accusing West Germany of “militarism” and desiring to disturb a supposed “peaceful coexistence” between East and West. The unidentified authors of the text wrote, “West Berlin Mayor Willy Brandt called West Berlin a ‘thorn in the side of the GDR.’ Would you like to have a thorn in your side? We don’t either! But Brandt even proclaims quite frankly: ‘We want

⁶⁰ “The ‘Great Coup’ From the FRG.” East German Propaganda. Grand Rapids, MI. Accessed September 16, 2021. <https://research.calvin.edu/german-propaganda-archive/coup.htm>.

⁶¹ Ibid. The FRG, or the Federal Republic of Germany, was the official name of West Germany, as contrasted with the GDR, or the DDR, the German Democratic Republic, or the *Deutsche Demokratische Republik*, or East Germany.

to be the disturber of the peace.”⁶² The pamphlet also described the division of East and West Germany as a product of West German doing via currency reforms (creating a West German Mark), West Germany’s acceptance to NATO, and aggressive espionage and radio propaganda efforts conducted by West German intelligence.⁶³ Other justifications for the Wall’s construction included the prevention of World War-type conflict and the prevention of neo-Nazis from infiltrating the socialist state. East Germany declared that the aim of West Germany was the annexation of the DDR. “Repeatedly the annexation of the GDR is proclaimed as the official aim of Bonn policy, most recently in a statement of the Adenauer Christian Democratic Union (CDU), on 11 July 1961.”⁶⁴ Such an action would certainly result in a World War-type scenario. The pamphlet cited an Indian journalist, R.K. Karanjia, in his defense of the Berlin Wall. “It (the protective wall of the GDR) served the cause of world peace since it halted the advance of the German neo-Hitlerites toward the East,” Karanjia wrote, continuing that it “forced the world to recognize the reality of the division of Germany and thus supports negotiation.”⁶⁵ The GDR also addressed Western concerns that the Wall keeps its citizens in “concentration camp-like conditions,” as it explains,

Their espionage centres, their revanchist radio stations, their fascist soldiers' associations, their youth poisoners, and their currency racketeers have been walled in. They are excited because we have erected the wall as an antifascist, protective wall against them. Does something not occur to you? West Berlin Mayor Brandt wails that half of the GDR, including the workers in the enterprise militia groups, is armed. What do you think of a concentration camp whose inmates have weapons in their hands?

⁶² “What You Should Know About the Wall.” East German Propaganda. Grand Rapids, MI. Accessed September 16, 2021. <https://research.calvin.edu/german-propaganda-archive/wall.htm>.

⁶³ Ibid.

⁶⁴ Ibid.

⁶⁵ Ibid.

The Wall is a means of keeping *them* (the West) out of the East, rather than holding back their own citizens from a supposedly better existence in the West. In keeping true to Marxist principles, the DDR also maintained an unverifiable claim that the working class was armed via citizen militia groups. And, the propagandists make a decent point. How can people supposedly imprisoned simultaneously be armed? It is in this manner that the East responded to Western propaganda by forming its own propaganda. East German propaganda tends to simplify the Wall's existence and even inserts humor into the West's considerations regarding its supposedly unjust construction, for example, in countering the claim that "the wall is a gymnastic apparatus."⁶⁶ In conclusion to this pamphlet,

So, make your contribution to the pulling down of this wall by advocating a reasonable policy of military neutrality, peaceful co-existence, normal relations between the two German states, the conclusion of a peace treaty with Germany, a demilitarized Free City of West Berlin. That is the only way to improve the situation in Berlin, to safeguard peace, a way which can, one day, also lead to the reunification of Germany. The wall says to the war-mongers: He who lives on an island should not make an enemy of the ocean.⁶⁷

According to East Germany, the Wall is a symbol of peace, and the communists in the East want nothing more. The propaganda piece makes a final ultimatum, and says, "Decide in favour of the recognition of realities. Don't join in the row over the wall. Perhaps YOU don't want socialism. That is your affair. But should we not come to an agreement jointly to refrain from doing anything that leads to war and do everything that serves peace?"⁶⁸ East Germany was protective of the Berlin Wall, and its defense of it ranged from prideful to an overtly defensive and/or aggressive stance. The Berlin Wall was simply one example of the Stasi's efficient use of propaganda to justify its activities in East Germany.

⁶⁶ Ibid.

⁶⁷ Ibid.

⁶⁸ Ibid.

A Brief Note On Humanism

The next section, as well as some sections later in this work, discusses the broad and vague concept of “humanism.” The Constitution of the German Democratic Republic, 1967 guarantees the basic rights of every citizen, including the limitation of State power and organs and democracy, and dedicates the GDR towards peace, socialism, and “humanism.”⁶⁹ While peace and socialism are straightforward subjects, the GDR’s “humanism” is ambiguous and ill-defined. While humanism is thought to have its roots in Renaissance Italy as a rejection of the Medieval outlook, likely, the GDR’s constitution’s use of “humanism” may have a specific school of thought in mind. Specifically, and perhaps unsurprisingly, it may be an allusion to the school of Marxist Humanism, which was made popular by East Germany’s foremost philosopher, Ernst Bloch.⁷⁰ While Marxist Humanism is also difficult to define, its general essence can be found in Bloch’s earliest work, *The Spirit of Utopia*. In the opening lines of this work, Bloch says, “I am. We are. That is enough. Now we have to begin.”⁷¹ Separating himself from the Cartesian tradition of *Cogito Ergo Sum*, Bloch feels no need to waste time and establish the existence of the self, and instead opts for the phrase, “we are,” implying “we think, therefore we are.” This emphasis on *we*, arguably, is the root of Marxist Humanism. The belief in the collective and the rejection of the interest of the self, is enough for philosophy and thus, the ruling Party. Thus, “we” is the defining trait of the German Democratic Republic’s constitution

⁶⁹ Louise Wilhelmine Holborn, John H. Herz, and Gwendolen Margaret Carter, *German Constitutional Documents since 1871* (New York: Washington, London, Praeger Publishers, 1970)., 190.

⁷⁰ A note on Bloch: While considered the “Philosopher of the German Democratic Republic,” it must be noted that Bloch grew distasteful of SED rule in East Germany following the Soviet invasion of Hungary in 1956, of which East Germany gave its support. Still, this did not mean that his thought was not influential in East Germany following this event.

⁷¹ Ernst Bloch and Anthony A. Nassar, *The Spirit of Utopia* (Stanford, Cal.: Stanford University Press, 2009)., 7.

and its emphasis on what it terms “humanism.” The interests of the collective and of the human race in the quest for socialism is what defined the GDR’s constitutional structure, at least *de jure*.

The Mielke Speeches

On 12 July 1958, shortly after his elevation to the coveted position of Minister of State Security, Mielke made a speech to the Fifth Party Congress of the SED, where he discussed enemy spies:

The arrest of hundreds of spies and agents on the territory of the German Democratic Republic and the liquidation of underground groups of various kinds are proof that hostility has not subsided and that the class struggle is being fought under the influence of imperialist forces from West Germany and West Berlin. Countless secret services of the imperialists, their agent and underground centers, are developing intensified criminal activity and employing the most varied and sophisticated methods to damage the German Democratic Republic.⁷²

While not downplaying the actions of foreign spies in the sabotage of the German Democratic Republic, Mielke alluded to the issue being *internal* as well. This was Mielke’s linguistic and political shift in the direction of the Stasi. As originally intended, the Stasi would conduct operations against counterrevolutionary activities. However, counterrevolution need not come from outside of the DDR. It may come from inside the very walls of the small nation. Such rhetoric continued throughout another speech addressed to East German coal miners. The “enemy” was thoroughly denounced but unclearly defined. Mielke said,

Just as the working people of the GDR perform new deeds in building socialism, it is just as necessary to protect our achievements from attacks by the enemy. The anti-people politics of the Adenauer peace in Europe and in the world are a great danger. In Western Europe, and especially in West Germany, there are forces at work today whose policy is solely concerned with disrupting and preventing the beginnings of peaceful understanding, the friendly work of socialist construction in our republic and in the other socialist countries.⁷³

⁷² Erich Mielke. 1987. *Sozialismus Und Frieden - Sinn Unseres Kampfes*. Institut Für Marxismus-Leninismus Beim ZK Der SED. Ost-Berlin, Deutsche Demokratische Republik: Dietz Verlag Berlin., 31. Translation my own.

⁷³ *Ibid.*, 38. Translation my own.

Mielke continued to present the motif of a Germany under attack, besieged by Western forces. It was precisely in his carefully crafted language that he kept the idea of the enemy ambiguous to target a greater number of those deemed “counterrevolutionary,” which extended not only to foreign agents operating inside the GDR, but also to some of East Germany’s own citizenry.

Pertinent to the discussion of Mielke is a close examination of some of his other writings, which also reveal this shift in policy. After his instatement as minister of the Stasi, Mielke gave a speech to the Fifth Party Congress of the SED on July 12, 1958. As titled by the *Institut für Marxismus-Leninismus beim ZK der SED*, “To Steadily Strengthen the Relationship of Trust Between the Organs of State Security and the Population.”⁷⁴ Once again, Mielke, almost immediately, introduced the threat that the West posed to the German Democratic Republic: “The socialist construction could take place much faster if the imperialists, their secret services, agent centers, and other representatives did not constantly try to maintain their hostile bases in the German Democratic Republic and to constantly send new spies, agents and saboteurs from outside to help theirs regain lost positions.”⁷⁵ In this speech, Mielke decried the foreign “spies, agents, and saboteurs” as consistently damaging the building of proper socialism in the German Democratic Republic. As Mielke was a hardline communist, however, he always returned the Stasi’s role as a state security apparatus operating under the Marxist-Leninist theory of class warfare. He continued, “The arrest of hundreds of spies and agents on the territory of the German Democratic Republic, the liquidation of underground groups of various kinds are proof that hostility has not subsided and that the class struggle is being fought under the influence of

⁷⁴ Ibid., 31.

⁷⁵ Ibid. Translation my own.

imperialist forces from West Germany and West Berlin.”⁷⁶ In order for class to be eliminated, as per the requirements of instituting communism, Mielke insisted that imperialist agents from the West must be erased, as they represented, in his mind, the interests of an international cabal of the bourgeoisie. Mielke then praised the work of his Stasi as fighting for the working class in the so-called “workers’ and peasants’ state” of the German Democratic Republic, as he proclaimed, “The organs of state security, under the leadership of the party, have achieved significant successes in the fight against hostility. With the support of the people, they waged an effective struggle in all districts and counties.”⁷⁷ Mielke connected the party with state security, and the party with the people. Therefore, logically, it follows that state security works in the interest of the people, as it remained the organ of the party. However, Mielke eventually reoriented the discussion of the role of citizens in the counterrevolutionary activities of foreign powers. He said, “The accidents and fires, which have increased particularly in recent years, and in which the responsible bodies are often unable to prove the extent to which the enemy has a hand in the game, whether it is sloppiness, carelessness or deliberate action without a direct connection to the West, could be avoided if the functionaries, departments etc. acted responsibly.”⁷⁸ Once again, Mielke placed at least partial blame on the functionaries within the German Democratic Republic. East German citizens, workers, and clerical staff were not doing enough to weed out the counterrevolutionary elements within the nation. Even the party was not free from this infiltration, as Mielke continued,

How important this is is shown by the arrest of a few days ago of an engineer in Magdeburg, a former member of the NSDAP and an officer of the fascist armed forces,

⁷⁶ Ibid., Translation my own.

⁷⁷ Ibid., Translation my own.

⁷⁸ Ibid. Here, Mielke touched on the relatively banal nature of some of the Stasi’s work. In the name of state security, Stasi officers also responded to events such as fires and accidents.

who was a long-time spy for the American secret service and who made his work easier by fraudulently becoming a member of our party. Since no concrete control of his behavior was carried out, he managed to be disruptive for a long time and to induce a number of people to flee the republic.⁷⁹

Mielke implied the Western world was continuous with European fascism. Besides the constant reminders of how communists are ideological enemies of fascism, the East German government was constantly concerned about fascism infiltrating its borders. For example, the name of the Berlin Wall in East Germany, the “Anti-Fascist Defense Rampart,” was another example of the importance of the nature of East German politics. It was not seen as a mere exaggeration, but rather as a *real* threat to East German sovereignty. After all, post-war West German politics were dominated by former members and collaborators with the National Socialist German Workers’ Party. What Mielke fails to mention, however, is the Stasi’s ironic connection with the Reich’s Gestapo. Several former Gestapo agents worked with the Stasi, and their methods were often co-opted from Gestapo tactics. According to Nazi hunter Simon Wiesenthal, “[The Stasi] blackmailed Nazi criminals who fled abroad after the war into spying for them.”⁸⁰ Wiesenthal’s claims have merit. According to Jens Gieseke, the Stasi tracked down and recruited many former agents of the Gestapo, the Wehrmacht, and the Security Service of the Third Reich in the interests of “making amends,”⁸¹ or, more accurately, to blackmail them into cooperating with the Stasi. The Stasi would go even further with their relationship to the Gestapo.⁸² According to Gieseke, “many case officers expressed their frequent admiration for the professional experiences of former Gestapo and Security Service men or recruited them on the basis of their

⁷⁹ Ibid.

⁸⁰ Koehler, *Stasi: The Untold Story of the East German Secret Police*, 27.

⁸¹ Gieseke, *The History of the Stasi : East Germany's Secret Police, 1945-1990*, 142.

⁸² Ibid.

common ‘anti-Zionist’ convictions.”⁸³ Whether or not it can be asserted that the Stasi recruited these former Nazis for their expertise or for information cannot necessarily be proven from the evidence. However, it is important to note the relationship as well as many Stasi officers’ admiration for such officers’ former employment. The West immediately assumed the Stasi to be a continuation of the Gestapo’s work. When the Stasi first formed, the Western radio station broadcasting throughout East and West Germany, “Radio in the American Sector,” “reported on the formation of an apparatus similar to the earlier Reich Security Main Office.”⁸⁴ The Stasi’s connection to the Third Reich’s security apparatus revealed hypocrisy, as East Germany portrayed itself as a humanistic system working for the good of all mankind, while simultaneously working with its supposed ideological enemies which threatened European civilization in the Second World War.

Particularly troubling to Mielke was the agent’s, whose name remained undisclosed, capacity to be recruited into the SED. Hence, in this 1958 speech, Mielke made the case that the Stasi was more necessary than ever in East German society. Not even the Party, the heart of the revolutionary cause, is safe from Western imperialist infiltration. A recurring theme in his language, Mielke anxiously viewed the prospect of East Germans fleeing the GDR. Rather than fleeing to seek a better, more free, and comfortable existence, East Germans must have fled from the GDR by the aid of Western intelligence services. Thus, they do not act in the interest of the self, but rather as a means of fulfilling an imperialist agenda.

Of most importance in this speech, Mielke cultivates distrust for those East German citizens who are in any way linked to the Federal Republic of Germany. “In addition to smuggling in and recruiting spies to scout out our political, economic and military potential, the

⁸³ Ibid.

⁸⁴ Qtd. in Gieseke, 22.

secret services also take advantage of the citizens of the German Democratic Republic who have fled to West Germany for various reasons.”⁸⁵ While not overtly accusing East German citizens, Mielke implies wrongdoing. Even merely traveling to West Germany is a cause for concern. He took this a step further and declared, “Lately there have been quite a few cases where people who left the republic came back with instructions from the secret services. Experience therefore compels us to pay the utmost attention to those people who are leaving and returning to the republic.”⁸⁶ Mielke alienated those citizens with any ties whatsoever to the West. He made it known to his SED comrades that such free travel would not be tolerated in the GDR. A major cause for concern, it potentially threatened the *sozialistische gemeinschaft*.

Despite this contention with select citizens, Mielke’s speech takes a humanistic turn when he discusses the necessary cooperative relationship between the Stasi and the population.

The organs of the Ministry of State Security rely in their fight against criminal activity on the firm trust and help of the workers, the peasants and the intelligentsia. The party organizations and the responsible employees of the Ministry of State Security therefore pay close attention to the fact that the relationship of trust between the state security organs and the population is continuously strengthened. The organs of State Security know very well that the success in their work depends on the application of Lenin's principles of partiality in work, on strict observance of legality, on the application of the law against the enemy; they know that they must not allow a citizen to be unjustifiably suspected or arrested. Violation of these principles means a weakening of workers-and-peasants power.⁸⁷

Such statements certify the legal methods of the Stasi and their commitment to socialism and the rights of the citizens of the GDR.⁸⁸ Here, Mielke asserted that the Stasi is a humanistic service that works in the interests of the workers and peasants. If the worker and the peasant were oppressed by the organs of state security, such power violated Leninist principles. Mielke spoke

⁸⁵ Mielke, *Sozialismus Und Frieden - Sinn Unseres Kampfes*, 31. Translation my own.

⁸⁶ Ibid.

⁸⁷ Ibid.

⁸⁸ The validity of Mielke’s claims here will be explored in chapter 3.

strongly to the lawfulness of the Stasi's actions, and seemed firm on strengthening this commitment to transparency and legality, an area in which the Stasi apparently already held a negative reputation in the GDR. It is quite an interesting phenomenon for Mielke to continuously discuss the Stasi's commitment to humanism and proper legal procedure. As the Stasi was an organ of the government and the ruling SED, it seemed unnecessary to point out that they would follow the laws of their employers. Mielke concluded his address,

Comrades! Anyone who visits West Berlin and West Germany for legitimate reasons must always remember that the enemies are constantly trying to get citizens of the German Democratic Republic into their hands, from the most primitive methods to the most sophisticated provocations. That is why we must be vigilant and steadfast patriots of the German Democratic Republic and educate all citizens to bash our enemies and thwart their criminal activities. Comrades! We also have to take up the fight against chatty behavior. A babbler is a treasure trove for a spy. That is why only those who need them for work are allowed to gain knowledge of our state and party secrets. Such an atmosphere must be created that the gents do not dare to solicit a citizen of the German Democratic Republic for dirty jobs because they run the risk of being handed over immediately to the organs of the state security of the GDR. Comrades! Carried by the love of our people, we as employees of the State Security promise that we will not spare our lives in the fight against the enemies of peace, in the fight for the cause of the party, the working class and socialism.⁸⁹

In his conclusion, Mielke addressed the concerns of those patriotic East German citizens that wished to visit West Germany for legitimate reasons, that is, outside of the interests of conducting internal espionage. At the same time, Mielke placed distrust in those same citizens who may have been recruited by Western security services as a legitimate risk to the security of the GDR. At this point in his speech, Mielke seemed to be repeating himself, simply reiterating the need for state security, but this is also in many ways the most important part of his speech. Mielke wished to create a state which had no room for foreign spies. The police state apparatus would be so expansive, so knowledgeable of everything that spies would not dare attempt to infiltrate the GDR. Yet, the Party, and thus its shield and sword, the Stasi, loved the people and

⁸⁹ Mielke, *Sozialismus Und Frieden - Sinn Unseres Kampfes*, 52.

the cause of the working class. Thus, any such action for the advancement of socialism and for the Party is for the goodness of the people. Even if such repression appeared to be against the health and liberty of the people of East Germany, it would be for their own good.

As Erich Mielke continued to make speeches on the danger of the enemy in the German Democratic Republic, he particularly spoke in a tone of perturbation. He believed such concerns were caused by external forces operating in the West. In the speech, “Even After August 13th, the Enemies of Our State Have No Chance,” Mielke stated,

In the period from the XX party congress of the CPSU in 1956 to August 13, 1961, the struggle and defensive measures of the GDR were directed particularly against the activities of the enemy, organized human trafficking and headhunting as well as the preparation of provocations and served a so-called small war that would inevitably have led to a world war involving the use of nuclear weapons. In connection with their aggressive intentions, the enemy organized extensive psychological warfare and ideological diversion against the GDR by using the means of disintegration available to them, such as the RIAS station, the "Free Berlin" station, and West TV, through inflammatory pamphlets and agitation - agitation leaflets in particular of the East Office of the SPD, through lies and false reports from the IWE agent center, through rumors from outside and through its agencies inside, spread the lying claim that the German Democratic Republic was at an end as a result of internal and external difficulties and that it was just a question of time when workers and peasants' power will collapse.⁹⁰

Mielke carried the charge discussed earlier in this chapter regarding “human trafficking” back to this speech to justify the existence of the Wall. Likewise, he discussed the possibility of averting a war as more justification for the Wall’s construction. Particularly noteworthy is Mielke’s labeling of the RIAS station, the “*Rundfunk im Amerikanischen Sektor*” (Radio in the American Sector), the “Free Berlin” station, and “West TV” as acts of “psychological warfare” and means of “ideological diversion.” While such stations were indeed illegally accessed by East Germans (and the presence of jammers in the East would verify this), whether this constituted psychological warfare and, thus, a possible violation of the Geneva Convention, would be a

⁹⁰ Ibid., 49. The “August 13th” that Mielke mentions here refers to August 13th, 1961, the day the Berlin Wall was constructed.

serious accusation aimed at the West. Accusations against the SPD were also common in East Germany.⁹¹ Mielke's specific criticisms were ideologically pointed against the SPD in West Germany, which it saw not only as a political party in West Germany but an ideological enemy that escaped the clutches of the original German communists. Later in his speech, Mielke reiterates the need for a wall, saying, "The development after August 13th shows that the path taken by the party and government to erect an anti-fascist protective wall is good and correct."⁹² Yet again, Mielke, as the chief of the "shield and sword of the Party," defended the Party line and acted in its best interests. While Mielke celebrated the Party's "achievement" in the construction of the Wall, he nevertheless made his case for revamped counterespionage efforts in East Germany. "August 13th severely restricted the possibility of infiltration of the GDR and the ability of the enemy headquarters to act. But it would be wrong to assume that this made the enemy more inactive. It is rather the case that the Bonn Ultras and the NATO agents are now trying to achieve their criminal goals with more refined means and methods."⁹³ Mielke assumed that Western spies needed less-sophisticated methods of infiltrating the GDR before the construction of the Wall. However, with the Wall built, Mielke was concerned that these foreign spy networks acted more cleverly in their attempts to break through East German defenses. However, Mielke also appealed to morality, "The enemy's slogans of slander and corruption aim to create confusion in the minds of young people, to distract them from their obligations as young citizens of a socialist state, to create a reluctance to work and to go for a job, to promote

⁹¹ The SPD, the *Sozialdemokratische Partei Deutschlands*, the Social Democratic Party of Germany, is a moderate, center-left party considered revisionist by Marxists. The SPD was involved in a forced merger among the Communist Party of Germany and the Social Democratic Party in Germany in East Germany (hence the ruling party's name, the Socialist Unity Party).

⁹² Ibid.

⁹³ Ibid., 72. Translation my own.

alcoholism and amorality and to induce imperialist lack of culture spread.”⁹⁴ In this part of his speech, Mielke attacked the international order of capitalism, which he accused of lacking morality and a clear cultural focus, as well as the promotion of anti-socialist behaviors, such as apathy to work. This would no doubt be a fixture of the radio services I mentioned previously, used by the West as a means of demoralizing the citizens of East Germany and/or convincing them to rebel against their state. The SED, and Mielke in particular, would preface that they had no tolerance for any ideological standpoint that stood contrary to the SED. This seems to go without saying, however, Mielke was sure to make this point clear that ideological subversion of any kind cannot be tolerated in the GDR. He also encouraged the average citizens’ involvement in a kind of “unofficial” work of weeding out any dissident chatter or other subversive means against the GDR’s own citizens. He said, “A spy is not easy to grasp, but the ideological diversion, the psychological warfare of the enemy seeps into a thousand fine channels. It is not always immediately recognizable. It is often hidden under a seemingly impeccable surface. Therefore, the first step towards vigilance is intolerant behavior against any kind of hostile ideology.”⁹⁵ As “a spy is not easy to grasp,” a spy could be anyone. Because people talked, and the people listened to the radio, and some even watched the television, ideological subversion may also affect anyone too. Speaking candidly, Mielke shaped the state’s goals to include ideological education of the citizenry to convince and align the people towards a path of genuine socialist development. “The policy of the party and government does not consist in making many arrests by the organs of state power, but rather in patient persuasion and educational work to prevent citizens of the German Democratic Republic from being abused by the enemy and

⁹⁴ Ibid. Translation my own

⁹⁵ Ibid.

therefore having to be arrested.”⁹⁶ Rather than appeal to a sanctimonious persuasion that the Party knows what is best for the people, Mielke used the occasion to encourage citizens to avoid arrest, even proving through his words that such arrests may be unjustified from a perspective of humane treatment of citizens. In conclusion to his speech, Mielke pays homage to the employees of the Stasi,

Comrades! I can assure the Central Committee that the employees of the Ministry for State Security will continue to carry out their tasks with determination, uncompromisingly and with the utmost commitment. The employees of the State Security are raised to be real communists, of whom it is stated in the program of the CPSU that their inalienable qualities are high communist consciousness, work loyalty and discipline and devotion to the interests of society. As such people, as communists, we State Security employees, true to our obligation to the party and the government, will do our part to prevent atomic bombs from being thrown on socialist land.⁹⁷

Mielke assured the Central Committee that the operatives of the Stasi were the finest communists that the German Democratic Republic had to offer, and asked for trust in their work, commitment, and orthodoxy.

While Mielke used many loaded terms in his speeches and discussed the “enemy” with a sense of ambiguity, it is important to examine who he meant when he discusses “the enemy,” based upon his speeches and public thoughts. Perhaps unsurprisingly, the enemy included the West as well as Western spies. Yet, even the word “spy” is ambiguous, as who may be considered a spy? There are, of course, spies formally employed by Western governments to do their military duties by means of espionage. Many official spies did indeed operate in the Eastern Bloc, including West Germany. America and West Germany in particular, and NATO in general, were also considered enemies. However, the definition of an enemy tended to blur, especially with regard to the discussion of class enemies. Nearly anyone could be an enemy of the working

⁹⁶ Ibid.

⁹⁷ Ibid.

class. East German citizens, educated and residing in the GDR, may be accused of being “the enemy.” In particular, any East German with ties to the West in any way was a suspect of the Stasi. Even members of the Party could not be free from ideological subversion, and maybe “enemies.” As explored above, Mielke identified those enemies that infiltrated the SED, in particular, a former unnamed member of the NSDAP.

Conclusion

The unlawful and inhumane activities of the Stasi will be discussed in chapter 3. Before this is discussed, however, it is pertinent to discuss the Stasi’s justifications and use of language in discussion of the goals and motivations of the Stasi, the definition of the enemy, and the role of the Stasi in earlier East German society. First founded on the Leninist principles of safeguarding the revolutionary fervor of socialism, “chekism” would become the ideology of the 20th-century socialist state, present in all nations including East Germany. However, the mettle of the Stasi would not be tested until 1953, when, in an act of abject failure, the Stasi, along with the rest of the East German defense and police forces, failed to contain an uprising that had the potential of toppling the socialist government, only four years old at the time. Through a number of demotions and elevations of other ministers, the Stasi would not solidify its role and conduct until the appointment of communist hardliner Erich Mielke as Minister of State Security in 1958. His use of language eloquently explained the Stasi as conducive to building socialism in a humanistic, lawful, and productive fashion. The actual conduct, as well as the methods of maintaining the “safest GDR in the world,” will be contrasted with the cultivated image of the Stasi in further discussions.

Chapter 2: International Objectives of State Security

Another way to analyze the Stasi's rhetoric is through a close examination of its foreign initiatives alongside its rhetorical justification for framing such intervention. Evidence shows that the Stasi sponsored an impressive number of agents abroad, mainly focused in West Germany, Africa, and the Middle East. While the Stasi operating in the German Democratic Republic was referred to as the *Ministerium für Staatssicherheit* (Ministry for State Security), its foreign intelligence service was referred to as the *Hauptverwaltung Aufklärung* (Main Directorate for Reconnaissance).⁹⁸ The Stasi, while retaining a greater sense of autonomy in the borders of the German Democratic Republic, typically conducted foreign espionage within military ranks or by direct party orders. While operations were outstretched from South Africa to the State of Israel, to America and Britain, much of the HVA's focus was on West Germany. The reason such a focus is important to this overall study is the self-importance exuded by the regime. No other nation apart from the Soviet Union intervened as much as the East Germans in foreign affairs. Whether or not they did this because of a greater availability of resources is unknown. However, Moscow recognized the Stasi's, and more important, Erich Mielke's potential in carrying out sensitive and important work for the advancement of international socialism, namely through maintaining contact throughout the socialist world.

Operations in Israel and the Middle East

The German Democratic Republic based its opinion on Israel as a position of "anti-Zionism." As such, the GDR, through both official and unofficial means, supported organizations such as the Palestinian Liberation Organization (PLO). Rhetoric pertaining to East

⁹⁸ From this point on, the Stasi operating in foreign nations will be referred to by the German acronym "HVA," or simply "Stasi." This is not to be confused with the Stasi discussed in the previous chapter, however.

Germany's opinion on the State of Israel can be traced back to memos from 1966, in which the GDR's Foreign Ministry commented extensively on the volatile situation in the Levant. This confidential memo expressed its hostility to the State of Israel in the following,

The State of Israel was established against the will of the Arab people of Palestine and the Arab states. In terms of international law, this creation of a new state is sanctioned by the UN Resolution of 29.11.1947 on the division of Palestine into a Jewish and an Arab state. Despite the non-recognition of the establishment and existence of Israel by the Arab states, the state of Israel, which has been a member of the United Nations since 1949 and has diplomatic relations with over 80 countries, is fully subject to international law. This subjectivity to international law is not reduced by the characteristics of its historical creation nor the role it plays in the Arab space. To be sure, Israel is exploited by foreign imperialist powers politically as a base of support for reactionary efforts in the Near East, but nevertheless it is politically and by rights a sovereign state, whose existence must be counted upon in international relations.⁹⁹

At first glance, it is difficult to determine East Germany's position on the State of Israel's existence. While the GDR determined that Israel was indeed a sovereign state, it has many objections to its development. East Germany considered the state's formation as against the will, and thus, the self-determination of a people, namely, the Arab population, yet considered the state, as a whole, to be a sovereign state. Despite its international status, East Germany accused the West of using Israel as a proxy state, or a mere puppet of Western powers to interfere with the Middle East's development. As the foreign minister continued, he accused Israel as "pro-imperialist" and determined the "Zionist bourgeoisie as the profound economic, military, and political dependence of Israel on the USA and the other imperialist superpowers."¹⁰⁰ As such, Israel would only exist to do the bidding of the United States and its allies. However, the

⁹⁹ "Ministry of Foreign Affairs Information Department, 'Some Aspects of Israel's Foreign Policy and the GDR's Position Toward Israel'," February 10, 1966, History and Public Policy Program Digital Archive, SAPMO-BArch, DY 30/IVA2/20/832. Obtained by Lorena De Vita and translated for CWIHP by Richard Iserman. <https://digitalarchive.wilsoncenter.org/document/145091>.

¹⁰⁰ Ibid.

GDR refused to denounce Israel as reactionary in of itself, but rather considered its proper role to be within a framework of “cooperation of the Arab states in the anti-imperialist struggle.”¹⁰¹

The foreign ministry’s effort took a turn as it described the international legality of Israel’s actions as acting against UN Resolution 181/11 (29.11.1947), which sought to resolve a conflict through bringing about a lasting peace, and the mutual understanding between the warring nations regarding the sovereign rights of the state.¹⁰² As such, from both a legal and Marxist perspective, the GDR felt they could not possibly support such a reactionary state which did not adhere to international law, and thus, the GDR’s Foreign Ministry must denounce its current administration without prejudice. Using anti-Semitic tropes, the foreign minister considered the state “closely allied with monopolistic capitalist circles in the USA and through them exercises considerable influence on the USA’s and other imperialist countries’ foreign policy decisions. For example, Jewish publishers have far-reaching power over New York and Paris newspapers and press.”¹⁰³ As such, the GDR accused Israel of using the ethnic identity of Jews abroad, and the supposedly heavy Jewish influence in the media as a means of propping up a pro-imperialist state in a previously Arab-majority nation in the Middle East. Furthermore, the GDR does not consider itself anti-Semitic, but rather anti-Zionist, as it claimed that the Jewish state gave the GDR no choice but to support the Arab populations in the Middle East oppressed by global capitalism and imperialism. The GDR claimed that Jews abroad and within Israel use this accusation of anti-Semitism to discredit the GDR’s standing in the world, whereas the GDR merely saw itself as standing up for the oppressed populations in the Middle East.¹⁰⁴ As a final

¹⁰¹ Ibid.

¹⁰² Qtd. in *ibid.*

¹⁰³ Ibid.

¹⁰⁴ Ibid.

point of contention, because of Israeli diplomatic actions against the GDR, foreign ministry declared that “the Israeli government is an ally of West German imperialism.”¹⁰⁵ However, the GDR expressed its support for the left-wing element within nationalist Israel, and united with their slogan, “With the Arab states against imperialism and not with imperialism against the Arab states.”¹⁰⁶

By June 1967, Israel would engage with hostilities with Syria, Jordan, and Egypt. First Secretary Walter Ulbricht would write a letter to General Secretary Leonid Brezhnev regarding the “hostile actions” of the State of Israel against sovereign Arab states. Ulbricht considered it necessary to

Address the observance of the Security Council’s Resolutions on ending combat operations, the withdrawal of Israeli assault troops to their position before the attack, the condemnation of the aggressor by the UN, questions of reparations, and possible UN sanctions against the aggressor as well as other joint policies toward the Arab and non-aligned states.¹⁰⁷

The German Democratic Republic suggested harsh measures be taken against the State of Israel for their actions. Rather than dismiss its invasion of sovereign Egypt as a “preemptive strike” as was common in the West’s justification for the war, the GDR, and, urging its socialist brethren to undertake a similar position, took such action as an unjustified invasion against a nation considered potentially viable for the establishment of communism.

Such events as well as the general distrust of Israel made it a primary target for espionage by the Stasi. Within this framework existed a network of spies operating all throughout the Levant. The Stasi did not act alone. Indeed, they were working closely with the Soviet KGB, yet

¹⁰⁵ Ibid.

¹⁰⁶ Ibid.

¹⁰⁷ "Letter from Walter Ulbricht to Leonid Brezhnev," June 14, 1967, History and Public Policy Program Digital Archive, SAPMO-BArch, NY 4182/1206. Obtained by Lorena De Vita and translated for CWIHP by Richard Iserman. <https://digitalarchive.wilsoncenter.org/document/145092>.

they operated in such a way that would align with Mielke's earlier orthodox Marxist rhetoric. Within the larger project, *Operation Moses*, existed various sub operations, including the surveillance of Jews within the Soviet Union, the apprehension of foreign smugglers, and indirect operations against the State of Israel.¹⁰⁸ KGB recruitment of the Stasi focused almost entirely upon the third sub operation, codenamed *Scout*.¹⁰⁹ Stasi operatives were sent to Israel to report on wayward Soviet spies who had lost contact with Moscow.¹¹⁰ East Germany was hesitant at first to operate in Israel, as discussed by Colonel Rainer Wiegand with Soviet Colonel Vladimir Kremakovski, mentioning, "[Israel] knows what an anti-Semitic government we have. They are already angry that the DDR has refused to pay even a single mark in reparations. They are just waiting for us to do something stupid so they can step on us."¹¹¹ In Colonel Wiegand's frank discussion with Colonel Kremakovski, one sees a great departure from the public rhetoric of Erich Mielke, Erich Honecker, and other high-tier East German politicians. Instead of defending the East German government in private discussion, Colonel Wiegand exposes its ruse. Even Stasi officers admitted that East Germany had lesser-than-noble objectives.

Stasi Involvement in Foreign Secret Police Services

While the Stasi often focused its foreign initiatives on espionage, many of its resources went towards the training and recruitment of secret police agents in friendly overseas governments, such as Vietnam. Stasi rhetoric played a decisive role in the creation of a secret police force for the Democratic Republic of Vietnam during the Vietnam War.

¹⁰⁸ Koehler, *Stasi: The Untold Story of the East German Secret Police*, 85.

¹⁰⁹ *Ibid.*, 86.

¹¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 85.

¹¹¹ Qtd. in *ibid.*

In East Berlin, 14 December 1965, Erich Mielke received Nguyen Minh Tien, then director of North Vietnam's Technical Operations Center.¹¹² Nguyen, acting on behalf of the Communist Party of Vietnam's general secretary, urgently sought instruction from the East Germans on the construction of a state security apparatus. As North Vietnam was in the midst of a large-scale war and due to the poor infrastructural integrity of the nation compared to, say, the European socialist world, it is unlikely that neither serious time nor a budget was put together for its development. Hence, Nguyen urges Mielke that the issue of state security was one of dire importance for the development of North Vietnamese socialism. While East German state security relied on the implementation of Marxist orthodoxy, the strategies utilized by the North Vietnamese differed from the East Germans. For example, Nguyen discussed, "Outside of the Army, the comrades of state security have a large role in the battle against the American aircraft. As I reported to you, the comrades of the armed security institutions have shot down many aircraft."¹¹³ While the Stasi focused on counterespionage, the North Vietnamese utilized their state security, at least for now, as an extension of military operations. Foreign spies were not so much perceived as a threat as actual G.I.'s looking to defeat the VietCong. Likewise, Nguyen continues to make the point that state security operates by the very meaning of its name, as acting in the interests of security. He said, "When a bombing takes place, the employees of state security go to the factories to provide guidance for the protection of the factory. Operations employees [state security personnel] follow their targets during attacks."¹¹⁴ Rather than work in

¹¹² The "Technical Operations Center" was the earliest prototype of North Vietnamese State Security. It would eventually be replaced by the Vietnam People's Public Security, the "*Công an Nhân dân Việt Nam*," which is the state security currently in use in the modern Socialist Republic of Vietnam.

¹¹³ "Memorandum of a Meeting of Minister Erich Mielke with Nguyen Minh Tien on 13 December 1965," December 14, 1965, History and Public Policy Program Digital Archive, BStU, MfS Abt X 652, 31-49. Obtained for CWIHP by Martin Grossheim and translated for CWIHP by Sean O'Grady. <https://digitalarchive.wilsoncenter.org/document/120719>.

¹¹⁴ Ibid.

the shadows, which was more so the specialty of the Stasi, North Vietnam seemed to desire a more direct, less covert means of defending public safety.

However, Nguyen's tone changed rhythm as he anxiously described the secret police and espionage service of South Vietnam, which he admitted was effective against North Vietnamese operations. It is helpful to note here that espionage and counter-espionage efforts existed in nearly every country, especially during the Cold War. The Soviets and their allies did not have a monopoly on spying. Nguyen described, "The [South Vietnamese] agents work both for espionage and sabotage. They are equipped with refined technology with which they can conduct their sabotage and espionage."¹¹⁵ This was essentially the North Vietnamese' dilemma. While they had the willpower and manpower to conduct effective campaigns against American and South Vietnamese troops, the technology was not there, or the North Vietnamese were not sufficiently trained enough to use such technology effectively. Nguyen continued to describe the tactics used by these foreign agents,

There are cases where they have brought small rockets with them to carry out sabotage. These rockets are around 1m long and have a diameter of 115mm. The launch of these rockets is very simple. To adjust the elevation it is only necessary to support it on a simple dirt ridge. It has an explosive effect and can be launched to a distance of 8km. Launch is caused by triggering a contact using a battery from a distance of about 30m. After impact only shrapnel remains of the rocket. It has not yet been possible to disarm these rockets in order to remove the explosive warhead. These rockets use solid propellant.¹¹⁶

Nguyen made the threat to North Vietnam clear by describing in great detail the technology and means given to the South Vietnamese, presumably by America and other NATO allies. And so, Nguyen came to the main point of the discussion when he declared, "The agents have modern

¹¹⁵ Ibid.

¹¹⁶ Ibid.

technical equipment, but our technical level is still very low.”¹¹⁷ In short, the North Vietnamese looked to recruit agents for the Ministry of State Security in the GDR to advance its technological awareness and effectiveness. Specifically, Nguyen asked the GDR to provide various technologies and resources to North Vietnam. This included technology to carry out eavesdropping, safecracking, photography, mail control, and many other forms of surveillance. Nguyen’s demands also included a general transfer of experience, trainers and recommenders from East Germany, and access to the GDR’s Criminal Technology Institute.¹¹⁸ While the North Vietnamese were focused on direct warfare, one may surmise that the North Vietnamese state security planned for the long haul in the event that they won the Vietnam War. Many of these technologies, such as the use of eavesdropping technology and interest in the surveillance of persons, seem for use beyond direct warfare.

Mielke, in response to Nguyen, argues for the united cause of “comrades” in North and South Vietnam, but also points out the differences in the following statement: “Although here we battle the different secret services daily – the Americans, English, French, West German, and others -, it is something different from yours, where the Vietnamese comrades lead the fight against the Americans and their lackeys in armed combat.”¹¹⁹ While he pledged to support the North Vietnamese government and provide as much technology and experience transfers as possible, Mielke added a disclaimer upon the actual resources available at the moment. He was neither sure, nor was he willing to commit to any transfer.¹²⁰

¹¹⁷ Ibid.

¹¹⁸ Ibid. Note: All additions, including those in parentheses, are added by the Wilson Center.

¹¹⁹ Ibid.

¹²⁰ Ibid.

This lack of confidence is significant and differs greatly from public speeches Mielke gave to fellow Party members and workers in the GDR. In private correspondence, Mielke seemed much less certain and optimistic about the future of socialism, and specifically, East Germany's role in aiding international socialism. Shortages existed of nearly everything except men, which is what the North Vietnamese were held together by. Not only did Mielke deflect Nguyen's requests, but did not consider them exactly useful or productive towards North Vietnamese aims. Mielke said in further response to Nguyen, "We are of the opinion that our Vietnamese comrades know much and have a good deal of technology, otherwise they could not fight so effectively against the enemy... The situation in Vietnam is very different from that in the GDR."¹²¹ This response can be interpreted in many ways. On one hand, it can be complimentary towards the fighting spirit of the North Vietnamese people. On the other hand, it can be interpreted as a chauvinistic attitude present in the orthodox Marxist elite of Europe. Because a nation like East Germany was industrialized and at a further stage of development than a developing country like North Vietnam, Mielke's words may be interpreted as a snide remark, turning the nose at a formerly colonized and orientalized people. Such an attitude, if truly present within Mielke's mind, is ironic considering the arguable colonial status of East Germany under the leadership of the Soviets, not that he would have seen the situation of East Germany in this manner. Wishing to return the conversation to a warmer point of view, Mielke continued,

You should have come earlier, communists need to meet one another more often. Fighters must always share their experiences. We do not want to come into a position to speak about questions that are not valuable to you; we are unpretentious. We know very well that everyone has something [to share] and that they have specific achievements and

¹²¹ Ibid.

good results. Therefore, it is very good if you can meet more often; the exchange of experience is mutual. One should not only take, but also say their opinion.¹²²

While my original point of view regarding Mielke's perceived attitude of a "lesser" people stands, his words here may be evidence to the contrary. Rather, Mielke turns the "orientalism" trope towards one that is self-sustained by North Vietnamese leadership. Mielke senses an inferiority complex, and even grows impatient with his fellow North Vietnamese comrade because they did not speak up earlier to request aid from the East Germans. Mielke remains confident that the Stasi may be able to assist the North Vietnamese, however, demands greater openness and transparency from the North Vietnamese, who, as Nguyen stipulated, are "diffident."¹²³ As such, Mielke realized, in a Marxist sense, the immaturity of the Vietnamese people towards the implementation of socialism. Mielke, thus, took on the role of a stern paternal figure who corrected his children when they stepped out of line. Mielke concluded the meeting, as he requested, "We ask for the list of equipment to be handed over, so that it can be revised corresponding to the results of our exchange of experiences."¹²⁴ Mielke affirms the socialist fraternal bond between the states of the German Democratic Republic and the Democratic Republic of Vietnam, and appeared firm in asserting the possibility of East German aid via Stasi training and tactics for the Vietnamese secret police.

Stasi Operations in the United Kingdom

While HVA initiatives included so-called fraternal assistance in various communist nations, much of the Stasi's foreign budget went to programs spying on the West, including the U.K., West Germany, and the United States, perhaps the three most powerful, influential nations

¹²² Ibid.

¹²³ Ibid.

¹²⁴ Ibid.

in NATO. According to historian Anthony Glees, the Stasi began heavy espionage in 1974 upon the opening of the first East German embassy in London.¹²⁵ Unsurprisingly, the embassy was used as a field office for Stasi agents operating in the United Kingdom, and the building itself was fitted with various counter espionage measures implying the embassy was less for peaceful purposes and more for nefarious means.¹²⁶ According to Glees, the Stasi operating in the U.K. did so with two major aims in mind: exposition and analysis of the political aims of the U.K.'s government, and the monitoring of the influential peace movement.¹²⁷ While the former is unsurprising, the latter expressed an East German concern not previously discussed, namely, an alliance of educated citizenry not associated with government that, more-or-less, desired to see the crippling of the Warsaw Pact's means of defense, at least in the eyes of East German leadership. Ironically, both sides of the Iron Curtain were consistently irked by peace movements, mainly because they potentially threatened delicate peace talks between both sides. The 1970s were certainly not the 1950s. The Cold War was still alive, however, the existential threat of confrontation was not felt as strongly as it was in the days of Stalinism and McCarthyism.

Certain articles produced in espionage reports by the Stasi indicate a shift in rhetoric at this time during the Cold War. The time period of espionage, beginning in 1976 and onwards, indicates the growing change in the politics of international relations, that of thawing, or detente. Stasi records indicate a growing interest in GDR leadership forging an alliance with the U.K.'s Labour Party. By East German standards, such a move was unparalleled in its history, as East German leadership enabled one of the most conservative and hardline communist parties in the

¹²⁵ Anthony Glees, *The Stasi Files: East Germany's Secret Operations against Britain* (London: Free Press, 2004), 87

¹²⁶ Ibid.

¹²⁷ Ibid., 117.

entire Eastern Bloc. In a 1986 memo, during the leadership of such conservative politicians as Margaret Thatcher, Ronald Reagan, and Helmut Kohl, the Stasi reported on the foreign policy of the Labour Party, which it preferred to the hawkish-leaning Conservative Party. The report reads,

Internally, leading members of the Labour Party are saying they want an extension in relations with the SED, especially when it comes to consultations over security and disarmament questions... The Labour Party faces difficulties unless British nuclear weapons are included in the first stage of any disarmament programme because the official position of the Labour Party is that, on gaining power, they would immediately disarm all nuclear strike capacity.¹²⁸

The Stasi's analysis of the Labour Party's goal is a mixed bag. It is not to say that the Stasi trusted the Labour Party. Rather, they saw Labour as the better of the two options. While the Conservatives may have backed East Germany and the entire Eastern Bloc in a war scenario (at least, according to Eastern Bloc propaganda), Labour seemed willing to work more closely with the communist world towards achieving peace. This is due to the hawkish policies of then-Prime Minister, Margaret Thatcher, who took a hardline stance against the communist world. This peace, however, would not include the maiming or disarmament of the East, as would be stipulated by more hawkish politicians. Because Labour was open to the possibility of nuclear disarmament, it makes such an alliance that much more coveted. It also reveals a concern for image not previously recognized by East German leadership. While previously the East Germans would likely be unwilling to work with any bourgeois party, nevermind one from the West, by the 1980s, the situation in the Eastern Bloc was changing. The East German government recognized this change in culture and attitude and it too adjusted accordingly, despite its earlier, harsher rhetoric.

Further documentation reveals a warming relationship between the SED and Labour. In a report from 1986 again, it is detailed that,

¹²⁸ Qtd. in *ibid.*, 130-31. The information in brackets is added by me.

Leaders of the Labour Party regard XXX's visit to the GDR as extremely satisfactory and valued highly the open atmosphere in which talks were conducted. They note, however, that the solution of certain humanitarian problems would make things easier. The Labour Party has a special interest in relations with the SED, the Soviet and Polish parties. There was no objection to the sending of a Labour Party study delegation to the GDR to discuss security and disarmament issues.¹²⁹

What is seen here is a possible turn to the left for the Labour Party in the United Kingdom as well as a moderate, progressive change in the attitude of the East German SED. While thawing its hostile attitudes towards the West, the East Germans still worked within its own framework as well as a left-wing faction of the U.K.'s Labour Party. The ease with which the two parties established this new cooperative effort is quite striking in the Cold War era.

Other agendas in which the East Germans took a keen interest included the Provisional Irish Republican Army's activities in the U.K.¹³⁰ Recognizing a potential ally in this group, the Stasi's official report on the IRA speaks positively, but with hesitation at its promotion of what the Stasi refers to as "Christian Socialism."¹³¹ The report continues, detailing, "Further evaluation of the IRA relies on the results of analyses of our informal collaborators' materials and includes evidence gained from the Western media about the repressive measures used by British security organs and the British government."¹³² While it comes to no surprise that the Stasi considered the United Kingdom as a repressive nation given its current politics and colonial past, it saw a potential ally with the IRA. The language used in this report also indicates the ideological convictions of the Stasi. For example, about halfway through the report, the Stasi reported, "There is no evidence that UK forces operate 'death squads,' as do the Spanish. But

¹²⁹ Qtd. in *ibid.*, 131. "XXX" is a name redacted in Stasi records.

¹³⁰ The Provisional Irish Republican Army will now be referred to as the IRA, not to be confused with the "old" or original IRA that existed from 1919-1922.

¹³¹ *Ibid.*, 135.

¹³² *Ibid.*

individuals do hunt down and kill IRA members. Immense sums of money are expended by the reactionary forces in Northern Ireland and the ruling classes in Britain.”¹³³ While subtle, the use of words such as “reactionary” and “ruling classes” indicates the Marxist potential that the Stasi saw in the IRA, as well as the dialectical significance of such language. While the IRA may have contained reactionary elements, it could never be as reactionary as the British government, and thus, the Stasi would be more apt to work with the IRA against the British, ideologically and pragmatically. Regardless, the Stasi recommended caution when dealing with the IRA, as is made clear by the following statement: “The IRA has no hostile intentions against the GDR. It will not join in the ‘anti-imperialist Fighting Front.’” While ambiguous, the Stasi did not consider the IRA as a threat to the interests of the GDR, while at the same time not overtly aligning itself with a non-Marxist group. As a final word in the document, the Stasi operatives wrote, “We will continue to monitor the IRA constantly. We will test all new operationally gained information for its impact on the GDR and, if necessary, introduce the necessary operational intelligence and control measures.”¹³⁴ Despite its opinions on the IRA, the Stasi took keen interest in its activities, and perhaps considered them to be one day helpful. This day, of course, never came, as the SED dissolved in 1989, a mere three years after the report was created.

Conclusion

Overall, it is important to examine the role that the Stasi took in the international world. Firstly, it gives us a sense of the amount of resources available to the organization, that it had the power to more-or-less intervene in the development and politics of other nations. Second, it reveals to a degree the willingness of the East Germans to export their sophisticated network of

¹³³ Ibid., 137.

¹³⁴ Ibid.

secret policing. Clearly, the communist world coveted the effectiveness exuded by the Stasi. This, combined with the fact that the Stasi and Mielke saw themselves as the true defenders of Marxist orthodoxy via their rhetoric and tactics, would set a standard of “East German exceptionalism” which would be absent from nearly every other communist nation, even the Soviet Union after the election of Mikhail Gorbachev to the General Secretaryship.

Chapter 3: The Criminal Police State

Without documented hard proof, one may come to the conclusion that the East German system had its flaws, but worked towards a noble vision of equality and workers' democracy. In the effort to claim a communist utopia, the people would have to sacrifice and labor tirelessly for a new, great humanistic vision. The Stasi would thus have to play the role of the "gatekeepers" of socialism, not to oppress the people, but to help them achieve their goals and be a force of real, socialist change in the face of reactionary onslaught from the West. This would be the view of the ruling political class and of people like Erich Mielke. However, even a lay understanding of the events and circumstances of the people who labored under the socialist system would see that this viewpoint was inaccurate at best, or a complete, distorted lie at its worst. In actuality, the Stasi operated as a force to keep the ruling class in power by any means necessary. Keeping this in mind, it would be helpful to base further discussion on the legal standards set by the East German government to determine whether actions committed by the Stasi were legal according to the East German criminal code and constitution. Second, the closer evaluation of men such as Erich Mielke will be examined further and his claims evaluated against Stasi actions. Like chapter 1, chapter 3 will devote much time to a close examination of Mielke, as the face and executive of interior ministerial security. However, at this moment the benefit of the doubt given to Mielke will be suspended as his actual conduct is brought to the forefront. Altogether, the Stasi was a mostly ruthless organization which paid little attention to laws, mainly because the Stasi ensured the SED's continual grasp of power. Thus, the East German government and court system never intended on prosecuting their organ of power. A social contract of sorts between the SED and the Stasi was established, and their power was contingent on each other.

Erich Mielke, in a speech mentioned in chapter 1, claimed the actions of the Stasi to be of a legal nature.¹³⁵ Specifically, Mielke mentioned “The organs of State Security know very well that the success in their work depends on the application of Lenin’s principles in partiality in work, on strict observance of legality, on the the application of the law against the enemy; they know that they must not allow a citizen to be unjustifiably suspected or arrested.” While offered publicly as an assurance of a system of checks and balances concerning governmental authority over the citizen, the Stasi operated *de facto* in many cases illegally and beyond the power *de jure* vested in them. Murder, kidnapping, psychological warfare, torture, rape, unjustified monitoring, detention without trial and indefinite detention against citizens and actual and perceived threats were utilized to maintain SED rule. To any society following the concept of human rights, many of these actions may appear deplorable. The reality of the situation revolved around the Stasi threat, which was very real as, among other things, freedom of expressing opposition was consistently suppressed.

Constitution of the German Democratic Republic

Previously in chapter 1, I discussed how the constitutional structure of the GDR may have been inspired by the philosopher Ernst Bloch, particularly his ideas concerning Marxist Humanism. It is now pertinent that I discuss the particular rights guaranteed by the constitution, and critique the application of it. According to the “Fundamental Rights and Duties” section of the East German constitution, “every citizen in the GDR has the right to express his opinion

¹³⁵ Full quote: “The organs of the Ministry of State Security rely in their fight against criminal activity on the firm trust and help of the workers, the peasants and the intelligentsia. The party organizations and the responsible employees of the Ministry of State Security therefore pay close attention to the fact that the relationship of trust between the state security organs and the population is continuously strengthened. The organs of State Security know very well that the success in their work depends on the application of Lenin's principles of partiality in work, on strict observance of legality, on the application of the law against the enemy; they know that they must not allow a citizen to be unjustifiably suspected or arrested. Violation of these principles means a weakening of workers-and-peasants power.”

freely and publicly... no one may be discriminated against for exercising this right.”¹³⁶ Likewise, the constitution states that “Freedom of the press, of radio, and of television is guaranteed.”¹³⁷ However, there are various instances in which the Stasi played an active role in suppressing these supposedly guaranteed rights. Horst Erdmann, a medical student at the University of Greifswald, was one such victim of the Stasi.¹³⁸ Erdmann, along with a group of fellow students, distributed leaflets around town calling for free elections.¹³⁹ Erdmann described the following morning in detail, when he was awoken by a pounding at his flat door: “When I opened up, I saw five men pointing pistols at me. One showed me an ID card and said they were from state security and that I should come along to ‘clear up a certain matter.’ They had no arrest warrant, and I didn’t ask to see one; one never questioned the Stasi about such legal niceties.”¹⁴⁰ Thus, according to Erdmann’s testimony, it was common knowledge among citizens of the GDR that they should not interfere with Stasi operations even if they were breaking laws or violating simple common decency. The display of an arrest warrant or even a declarative statement that Erdmann was under arrest for a specified charge was never given. When in state security custody, Erdmann was subjected to various humiliating exercises, including a “penis search” which he found odd. It was later on that he discovered inmates at this particular prison hid ballpoint pen fillers in their urinary tracts to write in prison.¹⁴¹ Here in prison, the Stasi subjected Erdmann to torture. His basic needs were not met. He was purposely sleep deprived by officers and offered little food,

¹³⁶ *German Constitutional Documents Since 1871*, 192.

¹³⁷ *Ibid.*

¹³⁸ Koehler, *Stasi: The Untold Story of the East German Secret Police*, 107.

¹³⁹ *Ibid.*

¹⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, 107-08.

¹⁴¹ *Ibid.*

water, or human interaction.¹⁴² He would later say, “At first I refused to sign any statements, and they repeatedly kicked me in the kidney, even threatened to put my mother in the cell next to mine. Eventually you’d sign anything! And I did.”¹⁴³ Months after his imprisonment, Erdmann was given a “secret” trial by a judge with two jurors present in which he was accused of “sabotage and fascist propaganda that endangered the peace.”¹⁴⁴ Erdmann was given eleven years of hard labor, however his mother was not informed of his arrest and detention for months, and her letters to the President of the GDR went ignored.¹⁴⁵ As one can see, guaranteed rights were stripped away when such exercise was detrimental to the Party’s tight grip on society.

The Stasi was not concerned with maintaining law and order. Rather, “state security” ensured continual Party rule, and resorted to even more bizarre means of upholding the East German status quo. In various instances, the Stasi conducted kidnappings of perceived threats on West German territory, violating the sovereignty of the Federal Republic of Germany. For example, Walther Linse, the head of the economics section of the Investigative Committee of Free Jurists, a CIA-backed organization used for propaganda purposes against the GDR, crossed the border to East Germany in a taxi front with Stasi operatives, and was handed over to East German custody.¹⁴⁶ While the kidnapping itself is brazen enough, it is not the most bizarre part of this story. Rather, it is in the fact that the four men who kidnapped Linse were actually four petty criminals whose sentences were commuted to work for the Stasi in what was deemed “Operation

¹⁴² Ibid.

¹⁴³ Ibid.

¹⁴⁴ Ibid., 109.

¹⁴⁵ Ibid.

¹⁴⁶ Ibid.

Lehmann.”¹⁴⁷ Thus, the capacity whether citizens were imprisoned or not was dependent upon how useful you were to the SED regime. Between July 8th and December 12th of 1952, Linse was interrogated thirty-four times.¹⁴⁸ Similar to Erdmann, Linse’s rights were not respected by Stasi agents.

Horst Erdmann’s case is particularly unique because of the various constitutional abuses that occurred under Stasi detention. Article 99, section 2 states, “An act can be punished only if it was a legally punishable offense at the time the act was committed... and if his guilt has been proven beyond reasonable doubt.”¹⁴⁹ Had the Stasi been assigned to merely prove beyond reasonable doubt that Erdmann had indeed committed acts in violation of the criminal code of the German Democratic Republic, such actions would have been constitutionally sound. However, no such procedure took place. Rather, the Stasi forced Erdmann to sign a pre-written confession to the accused crime, and threatened his mother’s life if he did not comply, as discussed prior. This is hardly proof beyond reasonable doubt; it is an extracted confession. Furthermore, section 4 of article 99 states, “During criminal procedure, the rights of the citizen can be restricted only insofar as this is legally permitted and absolutely necessary.”¹⁵⁰ While at first glance this appears to be a stipulation intended for the protection of suspects, its language is ambiguous at best. Who is to determine what is “absolutely necessary?” The Stasi officers and higher government officials who carried out such actions on Erdmann, Linse, and others seemed to have thought that such methods were necessary. Therefore, such a section appears relatively worthless in actually offering any protection to East German suspects. Article 100, section 1

¹⁴⁷ Ibid., 139.

¹⁴⁸ Ibid.

¹⁴⁹ *German Constitutional Documents Since 1871*, 202.

¹⁵⁰ Ibid.

states, “Only the judge can decide whether pre-trial detention is justified. Arrested persons must be brought before the judge at the latest on the day following their arrest.”¹⁵¹ Erdmann was certainly detained in the preliminary stages of setting up his “secret” trial. There appears to be no judge who authorized his detention, but rather, this was up to the discretion of arresting officers. Once again, this is another case in the violation of Horst Erdmann’s constitutional rights guaranteed by the state. Likely because Erdmann never appeared in front of a judge, another constitutional right was violated, article 100, section 3: “The prosecutor-general must inform close relatives of the arrested person within twenty-four hours after the first judicial examination.”¹⁵² Although Erdmann likely never appeared in front of a judge during his extrajudicial pre-trial detention, his mother was never informed of his *imprisonment* by judge and jury, and thus, she was never notified of his arrest in the first place. In “Concluding Provisions,” article 107 claims that “This constitution has the direct force of law,” meaning it is defined as the highest law in the land.¹⁵³ However, the following section will shed some light on the accuracy of this statement, as the constitution in many cases was directly manipulated or even blatantly ignored by the Party apparatus and organs of state power.

Amending and Twisting the Constitution

There are various limitations to the actual power of the GDR’s constitution, as revealed by the evidence of its actual implementation in the GDR by Stasi officials. However, the exact wording of the GDR’s constitution leaves room for interpretation. It is clear that the Stasi violated the constitution. However, it is equally clear that the constitution was not written well, including vague language and easily applied amendments. Under “Political Foundations,” the

¹⁵¹ Ibid.

¹⁵² Ibid.

¹⁵³ Ibid., 203

first section of the East German constitution, this malleable nature of the constitution appears in a few ways. Article 1 states, “The German Democratic Republic is a socialist state of *Staat deutscher Nation* (roughly, German nationhood, meant to define the GDR as both German, united, and socialist). The GDR is the political organization of the urban and working people. Under the leadership of the working class and its Marxist-Leninist party, it is making socialism a reality.”¹⁵⁴ Article 1, coming after the preamble, states the aims of the East German nation. Mainly, it is to build socialism, however, it is important to note that the “Marxist-Leninist party” is defined as having a “leadership role” within the state. Thus, the power the SED held in the nation is defined in the constitution, which *de facto* makes the SED the sole legal party of the nation. Defining the “working class” as a leader of the GDR is simply semantics.

Marxist-Leninist theory holds on to the vanguard ideology of Leninist thought in that a “dictatorship of the proletariat,” or a central party organ (which, in the case of East Germany is defined as the Council of Ministers or Politburo) leads the nation by default. Thus, the absolute power of the Central Committee and the SED, not the people or the democratic process, is in fact guaranteed by the constitution. This is further shown by article 2, section 1, which states “All political power in the GDR is exercised by the working people. Man is the center of all endeavors of the socialist society and state. The social system of socialism is constantly being improved.”¹⁵⁵ Once again, in theory, the working people are in charge of the nation, however, in actuality, the working people are represented by the SED and their council of ministers. Article 3, section 1 further proves that freedom of political expression was, in fact, *not* guaranteed by the constitution. It states, “The unity of all forces of the people finds its organized expression in the

¹⁵⁴ Ibid., 186.

¹⁵⁵ Ibid.

National Front of the democratic Germany.”¹⁵⁶ In short, the only party other than that of the SED that the people of the GDR can join is that of the so-called “National Front,” which was under the leadership of the SED. Thus, in actuality, the SED was the sole-legal party of East Germany.

The “Fundamental Rights and Duties” section of the GDR’s constitution also contains many provisions that are ambiguous or up to interpretation. Article 23, section 1, states, “The citizens of the GDR have the right and sacred duty to protect peace, the socialist fatherland, and its achievements. Each citizen must serve and defend the GDR according to the law.”¹⁵⁷ The constitution thus outlines the duties necessary for each person in the GDR, which may include things like civil service, military conscription, labor conscription, etc. However, it makes the citizen subservient to the will of the state, as the term “socialist fatherland” implies the governmental structure above the country itself. Thus, the constitution calls each citizen to serve the government, not necessarily the nation itself. While subjective, the East German constitution clearly endorses the economic and cultural system of “socialism,” whereas most modern constitutions in the world do no such thing, at least within the domain of liberal democracy. Because of this endorsement, the constitution seals communist control over the government.¹⁵⁸ Likewise, regarding freedoms, the constitution outlines in article 28, section 1, that “All citizens have the right to assemble freely within the framework of the principles and aims of this constitution.”¹⁵⁹ If the aim of the constitution is the consolidation of the Party’s control over the

¹⁵⁶ Ibid.

¹⁵⁷ Ibid., 191.

¹⁵⁸ As a further point of explanation, imagine the United States’ Constitution outlining the sacred duty to serve a “Republican” or “Democratic” Fatherland, as in the vision of our country according to the visions of the Republican Party or the Democratic Party. Aside from most finding this notion absurd, it would imply the Democratic or Republican Parties as central to operations of government and as the definitive characteristic of the country.

¹⁵⁹ Ibid., 192.

state, then this section would in fact severely limit the free assembly of the people for causes beyond those greenlit by the Party. If citizens were to assemble in such a fashion that would threaten the SED's control of East Germany, likely, the Stasi would be deployed to quell such disobedience to the "aims" of socialist development via the constitutional structure of the state. Article 31, sections 2 and 3 provide yet another example of ways in which basic rights of East German citizens may be violated by the state. It reads, "Secrecy of postal, telephone, and wire services is inviolable. It can only be restricted by law if the security of the state or the prosecution of a crime so requires."¹⁶⁰ Wiretaps and monitoring were central to the Stasi's means of controlling the population. Hence, although in article 1, the constitution claims such things are "inviolable," it leaves its application open to interpretation in article 2, which stipulates that if the "security of the state" is concerned, then such monitoring is licit.

Not only were many articles of the constitution of the GDR open to interpretation, but the constitutional structure of the GDR emphasized it as "living," in that amendments were frequently made, often by Party congresses. While constitutions, including our own, have been amended and may continue to be amended, the East German state made various changes to its constitution. In this way, Party congresses became an almost unofficial means of bypassing judiciaries and the people to advance new agendas. It was also in this manner that the Party itself almost became a stand-in for the constitution. One such addition occurred in 1963. The "SED Statute Adopted at the Sixth Party Congress, East Berlin, January 15-21, 1963," laid out a platform of domination of the political scene in the GDR for the SED. This document outlines the case for continuous SED domination of the East German government. Its preamble states, "The SED is the conscious and organized vanguard of the German working class and of the

¹⁶⁰ Ibid.

working people. It combines in its ranks the progressive members of the working class, of the cooperative farmers, and of the intelligentsia.”¹⁶¹ As a force of unity, the constitutional document does not shy away from the SED’s role in the socialist state, nor does it pretend there is room for any other organizations or parties to take control of the government by the will of the people. Other such articles were created governing Party structure, including disciplinary protocols for Party members (expulsion, demotion, election, etc.), the basic structures and duties of the Free German Youth association (*Freie Deutsche Jugend*, the youth division of the SED), membership dues and duties, etc.¹⁶² The takeaway from this information that was available to the public is the central role of the Party in government. The constitution was framed with SED domination in mind. As these Congress reports were seen as important, if not officially at least unofficially, as the constitution itself, the “Democratic” in the official name of East Germany (the German Democratic Republic) is clearly a misnomer, as true democracy, at least in our understanding of it, was not guaranteed or made available by the constitution or the ruling SED.

Because this constitution secured SED power in the government, it is no surprise that the “Shield and Sword of the Party,” the Stasi, held the power it did. Now that the constitutional structure of the GDR is framed, it is especially unsurprising to arrive at the conclusion that the Stasi were empowered to commit the abuses that they did. The next sections will explore other Stasi abuses in greater detail, especially when examined alongside other speeches given by Erich Mielke on his beloved Ministry of State Security.

¹⁶¹ Ibid., 204.

¹⁶² Ibid., 209-214.

Mielke: Master Manipulator

Erich Mielke continuously stressed the importance of state security in ensuring enemy spies did not infiltrate the GDR and alter the people's socialist way of life. In a quote discussed in chapter 1, Mielke vowed the Stasi would always serve the people in the following: "Carried by the love of our people, we as employees of the State Security promise that we will not spare our lives in the fight against the enemies of peace, in the fight for the cause of the party, the working class and socialism."¹⁶³ Such so-called counter-espionage took up the bulk of the Stasi's resources. In his speech, Mielke admonished the state security apparatus he helped to create into one of the largest and most effective in the Eastern Bloc. The Stasi showed so-called love to the people in a variety of ways: citizens were recruited as *Inoffizielle Mitarbeiter*, or unofficial collaborators, vocal dissidents were gaslighted by Stasi agents, and other bizarre means of espionage and monitoring were conducted. One such document, entitled *Richtlinie 1/76* (Policy 1/76, full name *Richtlinie Nr. 1/76: zur Entwicklung und Bearbeitung Operativer Vorgänge*, "For Developing and Editing Operational Processes"), outlined methods to psychologically break real and suspected political opponents of the regime. Methods used, termed *Zersetzung* (decomposition), were intended to bring about terror in the hopes that the suspect would willingly give himself to state custody and/or cease dissident activities.¹⁶⁴ According to the

¹⁶³ Original quote: Comrades! Anyone who visits West Berlin and West Germany for legitimate reasons must always remember that the enemies are constantly trying to get citizens of the German Democratic Republic into their hands, from the most primitive methods to the most sophisticated provocations. That is why we must be vigilant and steadfast patriots of the German Democratic Republic and educate all citizens to bash our enemies and thwart their criminal activities. Comrades! We also have to take up the fight against chatty behavior. A babbler is a treasure trove for a spy. That is why only those who need them for work are allowed to gain knowledge of our state and party secrets. Such an atmosphere must be created that the gens do not dare to solicit a citizen of the German Democratic Republic for dirty jobs because they run the risk of being handed over immediately to the organs of the state security of the GDR. Comrades! Carried by the love of our people, we as employees of the State Security promise that we will not spare our lives in the fight against the enemies of peace, in the fight for the cause of the party, the working class and socialism.

¹⁶⁴ "Richtlinie Nr. 1/76 Zur Entwicklung Und Bearbeitung Operativer Vorgänge (OV)." Richtlinie 1/76. Stasi Unterlagen Archiv. Accessed March 15, 2022. <https://zersetzung-heute.de/richtlinie-1-76/>.

document, “Decomposition measures can be directed against groups, groupings and organizations as well as against individuals and can be used as a relatively independent way of closing operational processes or in connection with other types of closing.”¹⁶⁵ The handbook also outlined the people it targeted: “for effective preventive combating of activities hostile to the state and other hostile-negative actions, such as e.g to prevent negative groups from taking effect in an anti-state manner, to limit the effectiveness of politically destructive views or actions that cause damage, against organizers and backers of anti-state activity in the theater of operations.” As such, the people targeted included a subjectively established net of potential suspects. Those who act in an anti-state manner may be those who engage in dissident activities, but also activities contrary to the values of the state, for example, listening to music considered “anti-socialist” or engaging in activities of a socially liberal nature.

One such tactic that was perhaps the most widespread use of *zersetzung* was the use of unofficial collaborators. The point was not in what information the unofficial collaborators could collect for the state. Rather, this well-known program created wariness around fellow citizens. Because there were so many IMs recruited by the Stasi, there were few people who could be trusted. Thus, “dissident” activities, including simple criticism of the government, could not be shared among citizens for fear of exposure. These unofficial collaborators were considered very important by the Stasi. In a doctoral thesis written by three Stasi officers at the MFS university in Potsdam-Eiche, the love and use of the informer is described in detail:

The ability to penetrate the thought processes of others can only and exclusively be done by humans themselves. Despite highly developed devices and mechanisms to relieve and sometimes replace the physical and mental work of human beings, there is nothing in the age of modern technology comparable to the art and capacity of a human being to probe into the train of thoughts of another. . . . Here is and will be no equivalent substitute to the

¹⁶⁵ Ibid. Translation my own.

Unofficial Collaborator working along these lines.¹⁶⁶

Thus, in an ironic manner, the Stasi utilized the complexity and beauty of the human being to work against it, to break down the spirit of the population, and bring forth its citizenry to total submission to the state. The way in which unofficial collaborators were recruited was unique. Once again, it was framed as humanistic. The Stasi referred to this program as *Forderung des Wiedergutmachungswillens*, or “promoting the will to make amends.”¹⁶⁷

One such example of activity involved Professor Emeritus and East German/German language scholar Richard Zipser who worked with the University of Delaware. Some time in the 1970s, Zipser did research in the GDR. During his time there, the Stasi put together a file hundreds of pages long detailing everything, from employment description, to contacts, to, most importantly, reports submitted by unofficial collaborators.¹⁶⁸ Zipser, upon viewing his file for the first time in 1999 when such information was made available for public and private viewing, discovered eight unofficial collaborators who reported his activities to the Stasi.¹⁶⁹ Two of these informers were good acquaintances of Zipser.¹⁷⁰ The others were mainly colleagues that he worked with when he spent time in East Germany, perhaps an unsurprising find.¹⁷¹ However, perhaps most interestingly, two collaborators were based in America, and voluntarily offered information on Zipser to the Stasi.¹⁷² It is important to note this specific instance of collaboration,

¹⁶⁶ Qtd from Gieseke, *The History of the Stasi : East Germany's Secret Police, 1945-1990*, 79.

¹⁶⁷ Ibid.

¹⁶⁸ Richard A. Zipser. "Reading My Stasi File." *Colloquia Germanica* 39, no. 3/4 (2006): 367-82. Accessed August 13, 2021.

¹⁶⁹ Ibid.

¹⁷⁰ Ibid.

¹⁷¹ Ibid.

¹⁷² Ibid.

as it would be too simple and inaccurate to say that East Germans were forced by the Stasi to inform. Rather, some were quite enthusiastic to report on suspicious activities out of loyalty to communism or the status quo. There is still a stigma regarding the time period, making access to such information rare and, in most cases, impossible. Individual Stasi files are not available for public viewing. Rather, because many of these individuals and/or their families are still alive, records have been kept private, and only available to the individual that was reported on. Thus, as is the case with Richard Zipser, it is up to the discretion of the individual to report on their files. Many have opted to keep their files private for obvious reasons.

Other such occurrences of *zersetzung* included the wrecking of victims' careers. In one example, Wolfgang Templin, a philosopher who led several human rights groups in East and West Germany, was fired from his professorship and had his doctorate revoked.¹⁷³ For the rest of his life as an East German citizen, he could not obtain gainful employment in an academic setting. It was only after the fall of East Germany that he found out that the Stasi was deliberately withholding his applications.¹⁷⁴ However, the Stasi's interference in Templin's life did not end there. The Stasi spread rumors about his family and him, affecting his reputation in East Germany. It even ordered the East German Youth Welfare Service to take his children into custody.¹⁷⁵ Such activities were common. However, it must be noted that this was the bulk of Stasi activities beginning in the 1970s onwards. "Hard" methods of kidnap, torture, and murder were seldom carried out by Stasi agents. *Zertsetzung* was the norm, and typically, the Stasi did not disturb citizens who merely worked and minded their business.

¹⁷³ Anna Bailey, Sheelagh Barron, Costanza Curro, and Elizabeth Teague. "Control: Instruments of Informal Governance." In *Global Encyclopaedia of Informality, Volume 2: Understanding Social and Cultural Complexity*, edited by Alena Ledeneva, 420–86. UCL Press, 2018. <https://doi.org/10.2307/j.ctt20krxgs.13>, 453.

¹⁷⁴ Ibid.

¹⁷⁵ Ibid., 453-54.

Conclusion

In addition to the methods utilized by the Stasi, evidence leads to the conclusion that East Germany was a criminal state. Its organizations, particularly the MfS, did not follow the East German criminal code and ignored the constitutional rights of its citizens. While various international bodies and Western nations denounced East Germany as a state allowing the violation of human rights, hard evidence regarding these allegations was not discovered until after 1989. The Stasi did not discriminate, and various groups, foreigners and citizens, religious and irreligious, loyal and disloyal, were targeted. By the 1970s, use of overt terror tapered under General Secretary Erich Honecker and Stasi Minister Erich Mielke's leadership as Stalinist tactics were utilized less. The Stasi still took up a large amount of the GDR's resources, however. While overtness was reduced, effectiveness increased. The Stasi made life for the average East German uncomfortable. It stifled freedom of expression, even in private conversation, as the Stasi employed a large number of informal collaborators. The idea was, as long as the citizen was committed to Marxist-Leninist ideals, served the interests of the state, and minded their business, they should be left alone. And it is likely that such people were, indeed, left alone, and the people targeted had been dissidents in one way or another. Still, this cannot excuse the methods and goals of the Stasi to instill terror as a means of making the citizenry comply and submit to the will of the state and the Party.

Conclusion

The Dangers of Ideological Thinking

Ideology is the basis of every state in existence. For example, classical liberalism guides every governing body in the United States, and the minds of nearly every voter, aside from a few radical, anti-democratic citizens carried away by demagoguery. Our nation is founded in the liberal tradition, and society reflects this today. While ideological, liberalism in America is not rigid. We have many various political positions, as well as our two-party system. All, if not most, Americans believe in liberty. Some see the expression of liberty in the availability of social programs, the worker and state alike culminating towards a more equitable society in an expression of “liberty and justice for all.” Similarly, other Americans believe that the people and the state have a duty to protect individual rights over the collective. Some want to be taxed less, others want to ensure that their second amendment rights continue to be defended and upheld, and some desire to maintain freedom of speech at all costs, regardless of what one may say to offend. Many, almost always coming from the Right, are opposed to what they determine to be “political correctness.” Often, this is opposed to the typically center-left belief that people have the right to not be offended, and seek every way to include those of diverse backgrounds, religious faith, and ways of thinking. While political correctness has taken on a greater, more divisive role in America, the right to freedom of speech still exists. What many on the contemporary American Right (and perhaps Left) do not understand is the true definition of political correctness. Political correctness is not simply politeness for the sake of being polite and the avoidance of, for example, derogatory terms and methods to bring about a greater sense of inclusion. Political correctness is exactly what it sounds like. It is to be “correct” in the sense of the dominant political structure of society. And an argument can be made that America *is*

becoming more politically correct, particularly among center-left to left-wing elites and their massive influence in businesses and other forces in society. Yet, the United States remains a free nation; free, at least for the time being, from rigid ideological thinking. Yet, there still remains an ideology.

East Germany, and the entire Eastern Bloc generally, operated under political correctness. The Stasi, in turn, was the ideological enforcer of Marxism-Leninism. As discussed earlier, the Stasi arrested and monitored suspects that ran against the grain of the politically correct society set up by the ruling SED. This is exemplified in the award-winning international film, *The Lives of Others* (*Das Leben der Anderen*, 2006), about a Stasi agent suddenly filled with humanity who went rogue in 1986. In one scene, the main character, Gerd Wiesler, an agent of the Stasi, sits opposite his friend and colleague, Anton Grubitz, a menacing, ruthless Stasi lieutenant eating lunch in a mess hall. Suddenly, a Stasi agent of a lesser rank sits near Wiesler and Grubitz, and tells an inflammatory joke to his friends regarding Erich Honecker, General Secretary of the SED and the country's (at that time) current leader. Such is common in the U.S., as poking fun at political leaders is part of our democratic culture. But, Grubitz overhears this and threatens to report his joke to his superiors. Suddenly, it is revealed that Grubitz was actually kidding, and even inserts his own, worse joke. Although Grubitz likely never reported this joke to his superiors, such conduct was common in East Germany. Political correctness dominated the culture of East Germany. Even a joke was enough to justify one's arrest or monitoring as a potential subversive. People were given perks, invited to become unofficial collaborators, or otherwise rewarded for reporting things such as jokes against the political apparatus or the regime. *This* is political correctness. Still, it must be noted, political jokes were unofficially a major part of East German daily life. Everyone, including East German politicians and their

associates, knew of the jokes. Some jokes included, “A school teacher asks little Fritzie: "Fritzchen, why are you always speaking of our Soviet *brothers*? It's *Soviet friends*." – "Well, you can always choose your friends." Another was “Honecker and Mielke are discussing their hobbies. Honecker: ‘I collect all the jokes about me.’ Mielke: ‘Well we have almost the same hobby. I collect all those who tell jokes about you.’” Finally, a third one is “Why do Stasi officers make such good taxi drivers? – You get in the car and they already know your name and where you live.” Clearly, despite the rigidity and tight control the state had over society, East German citizens and select upper-society Party members had some semblance of a sense of humor regarding their situation.

***Ostalgie* and the Stasi in Modern Germany**

Still more interesting than East German political jokes is the role of the Stasi in modern Germany. Perhaps it is thought that ex-Stasi officials were simply prosecuted for the excesses committed in East Germany from 1950-1989. However, this is entirely inaccurate. The overwhelming majority of Stasi officers integrated into unified German society mostly, if not completely, unscathed. The policy of reunification differed greatly from, for example, the reparations instituted by the Federal Republic of Germany for crimes and actions committed in the era of the Third Reich.¹⁷⁶ Stasi records were sealed upon reunification in 1990, and to this day remain behind locked vault doors, save for select private and professional inquiries.¹⁷⁷ Much of the information I have recorded here is in the public domain for reasons of national and international interest and its relative insensitivity, given that it involves cases which were

¹⁷⁶ While some comparisons can be made between the crimes of Nazi Germany and the crimes of the German Democratic Republic, I chose to compare the two mainly due to the relative closeness in historical memory and the characteristic German response to each, specifically noting the large response to the former and the quiet integration of the latter.

¹⁷⁷ Gieseke, *The History of the Stasi : East Germany's Secret Police, 1945-1990*, 203.

previously known, the main actors have passed away, or, for one reason or another, they are publicly known. As discussed in chapter 3, Richard Zipser voluntarily shared details of his personal Stasi file with the public and academic community. Most, for obvious reasons, have continued to keep their personal files private, whether they be former Stasi officers or employees, unofficial collaborators, or victims of Stasi suppression. While there has been some effort at *Aufarbeitung* (a German word literally meaning “processing,” but conceptually meaning a process of historical, political, and legal reckoning), efforts of aiding victims of the Stasi and offering legal and moral retribution have been, at most, a crawl. This is not to say that the new German government simply wanted to forgive and forget, as there were many complications, including legal and logistical hoops. For one, of the 91,000 employees of the Stasi that found themselves without a job in 1990, more than 90 percent were of working age.¹⁷⁸ As such, they could not simply be given a “hush” pension by the German government. Most found jobs in unified Germany under the government. At least 1,500 became members of the state, local and *Bundespolizei* (federal) police forces.¹⁷⁹ 1,000 of these 1,500 would ironically become employees of the Federal Border Guard.¹⁸⁰ Former Stasi agents likely would have felt right at home, minus the abuses they may have been able to commit to the East of the Wall years prior. At least one former Stasi official became an office secretary of the German *Bundestag* (federal parliament).¹⁸¹ While this may seem astonishing to the reader, the fact is many former Stasi agents were also simply trying to make a living in East Germany. While there were certainly many cruel and overzealous Stasi officers, many were simply clerical staff, and were not as committed to the

¹⁷⁸ Ibid., 206.

¹⁷⁹ Ibid.

¹⁸⁰ Ibid., 207.

¹⁸¹ Ibid.

cause of Marxism-Leninism as previously thought. Historian Jens Gieseke also makes the point that many of these officials identified themselves with professionalism above all, and also close workings with the state (*Staatsbewusstsein*).¹⁸² It is not as though Stasi officials identified with the East German state closely, but rather they identified with *any* state. Bureaucratic dealings and orders from higher-ups was what they were used to. It did not matter whether the persons handing down the orders were members of the SED or the CDU, or if the paperwork filed and goals pursued were in the realm of socialism or capitalism.¹⁸³ While I previously outlined my case regarding the dangers of ideological thinking in the previous section, a case can be made regarding the banality of it all too. People will adapt to their circumstances, whether or not they live in a communist regime or a modern, capitalist economy, and their commitment to one ideology over another is seldom a large factor in determining one's day-to-day life.

However, the situation was slightly different for older former Stasi officials, who felt that they were ostracized from life in newly-unified Germany. Those of pension-collecting age often had to seek employment after benefits were cut to 990 marks.¹⁸⁴ Among the jobs reported by older pensioners included as parking attendants, night watchmen, and leaflet distributors.¹⁸⁵ Overall, ex-MfS officials typically enjoyed quiet lives and tried as much as possible to distance themselves from their former employers, at least in the public sphere. There is one lobby that exists in Germany today that advocates for them, named the "Joint Initiative for the Protection of the Social Rights of Former Members of the Armed Organs and the Customs Administration of

¹⁸² Ibid.

¹⁸³ The Christian Democratic Union. The main center-right political party in Germany today.

¹⁸⁴ Ibid., 208

¹⁸⁵ Ibid.

the GDR,” or ISOR.¹⁸⁶ While mainly consisting of pensioners, the organization has impressive reach in Germany today, with 187 local chapters and unofficially runs a veteran organization for former members of the *Nationale Volksarmee* (NVA), the “National People’s Army” in the GDR.¹⁸⁷ The majority in these groups still hold on to some semblance of a Marxist-Leninist or broadly antidemocratic leftist ideology, including heavy ties to *Die Linke* (The Left, a leftist political party in Germany formally known as the Party of Democratic Socialism, which was the successor organization of the SED).

Overall, Stasi officials were able to live a comfortable life after German reunification. Some even became wildly successful. For example, Matthias Warnig, a major in the Ministry of State Security, is CEO of Nord Stream AG, the company well-known for their workings with Russia in the construction of an undersea gas pipeline.¹⁸⁸ As for justice served to ex-Stasi officials, there essentially was none. Most Stasi officials that committed crimes in the former GDR in accordance with the criminal code and constitution of the GDR were never tried. The main scapegoat of Stasi crimes were *Grenztruppen*, border guards, with shoot-to-kill orders, who were prosecuted.¹⁸⁹ However, individual Stasi officers were either never tried, or had their cases dismissed due to lack of evidence, old age, and other loopholes in the written law.¹⁹⁰

Even Mielke was never found guilty of a single crime committed under his nearly four-decade duty as Stasi Minister. He would be prosecuted in February 1992 for “only” the

¹⁸⁶ Ibid., 209.

¹⁸⁷ Ibid.

¹⁸⁸ Deutsche Welle. “Who Is Nord Stream's Matthias Warnig, Putin's Friend from East Germany?: DW: 25.01.2021.” DW.COM, January 1, 2021. <https://www.dw.com/en/who-is-nord-streams-matthias-warnig-putins-friend-from-east-germany/a-56328159>.

¹⁸⁹ Gieseke, *The History of the Stasi : East Germany's Secret Police, 1945-1990*, 214.

¹⁹⁰ Ibid.

crimes he committed discussed earlier, namely, the shooting of two Berlin police officers in 1931 and the attempted murder of a third.¹⁹¹ However, this attempt at prosecution fell through. Mielke's sentencing of six years would be overturned in 1995, due to senility and old age. Mielke died in relative comfort in May 2000. There would be no massive education campaign like what occurred after Nazi rule, nor would there be massive amounts of money in reparations for victims of repression, nor executions or internment of higher-ups. The many crimes committed under his rule as discussed prior will likely never see justice. The GDR and the Stasi will only live in the memories of those still alive to remember it.

Ich Liebe doch Alle Menschen and Final Remarks

“*Ich liebe doch alle Menschen!*” (I love all mankind) were some of the last words spoken by Stasi Minister Erich Mielke in 1989 in the Volkskammer legislative body of the GDR. Mielke, now 81, started his speech with the typical tropes: “*Wir haben, Genossen, liebe Abgeordnete, einen außerordentlich hohen Kontakt mit allen werktätigen Menschen in überall*” (Comrades, Members of Parliament, we have extremely high contact with working people everywhere).¹⁹² But this time, it was different. His opening line was not met with applause or silence or respect. In the newly democratic GDR, his manner of speech, once heard by countless citizens and ministers in the context of fear and intimidation, was met by laughter from MPs. “*In dieser Kammer sitzen nicht nur Genossen*” (In this chamber, there are not only comrades), quickly retorted an MP, who sarcastically interrupted Mielke's speech, followed by more laughter and applause.¹⁹³ Mielke looked out into the vast chamber, filled with 200

¹⁹¹ Ibid.

¹⁹² Erich Mielke. “Erich Mielke - ‘Ich Liebe Doch Alle, Alle Menschen.’” Deutschlandfunk. deutschlandfunk.de, November 13, 2014. <https://www.deutschlandfunk.de/erich-mielke-ich-liebe-doch-alle-alle-menschen-100.html>.

¹⁹³ Ibid.

representatives, not a single one belonging to the now defunct SED, the Party that built him up but also mercilessly crushed him under the heel of the people. Rather, the vast majority belonged to the new center-right coalition, *Allianz für Deutschland* (Alliance for Germany). Before succumbing to the laughter and disrespect, Mielke managed to speak perhaps the most infamous words ever spoken in the Volkskammer: “*Ich liebe ... ich liebe doch alle, alle Menschen ... Ich liebe doch, ich setze mich doch dafür ein*” (I love... I love all, all mankind... I love all, I still stand up for it).¹⁹⁴ After meeting a tumultuous orchestra of laughter from the chamber, Mielke took his seat, never again speaking in a public capacity for the remainder of his life.

If this publication reveals something to you, the reader, it is undeniable proof that Mielke was not a good man. He was ruthless, dogmatic, and even opportunistic. He would stop at nothing to achieve his goals. But something unexpected happened to me while writing this paper. I feel like I have become close with Mielke. A man that I have researched nearly every day for a year, through his personal triumphs, a window into his hopes and fears for socialist Germany and the world, and, minus the most intimate details, a true look into his soul and methods of thinking. The man was certainly one thing: committed. Way back in chapter 1, I referred to Mielke as “history’s most ambitious communist,” a claim I truly believe. No man, not even Lenin, Stalin, or Mao, can compare to the talents exuded by Mielke, talents certainly utilized for evil purposes, for the suppression of his fellow man, and for his own gain. While Lenin, Stalin, and Mao built nations, Mielke built a psychological network. While the Honeckers, East Germany’s other notorious family, were busy fueling their hedonistic lifestyles and planning on leaving East Germany after the inevitable fall of communism, Mielke remained in his office, working. While Erich Honecker was busy viewing illegal pornography imported from West Germany in his private villa, and his wife, Margot, was busy having affairs with other men in the socialist world,

¹⁹⁴ Ibid.

Mielke was on the phone, discussing the days events with the *Grenztruppen*, monitoring individual Stasi offices all over the country, and conducting espionage on his bosses and subordinates alike, making sure everything was operating as seamlessly as he wanted it to. Mielke knew few pleasures. Despite his short and stocky build, Mielke did not eat much, never smoked, and did not drink. He knew his wife, Gertrud, enough to produce two children, but found himself caught up in his work, exuding an asexual demeanor as to not distract him from his duties, which was done *mit Deutscher Gründlichkeit* (with German thoroughness).

Thus, the question must be asked. Was Mielke truly evil, or did he simply believe that the end justifies the means? Did he truly love all mankind, or was his final speech to the Volkskammer just a failed attempt at his excellent command of German rhetoric? We cannot know what was truly going through the mind of Mielke towards the end of his career and life, but we do know that Mielke never once offered to give up Party secrets or betray his country, as so many of his fellow countrymen and comrades were so anxiously willing to do. He did not flee like the Honeckers- first to Moscow then to Chile- to avoid his fate. He did not shed tears when the Berlin Wall, once considered his crown achievement, fell. He acted in the most consistent way he could. Perhaps he wished to regain his youth. If only he had a little more time, perhaps East Germany would still be around today if it were not for what many deemed the betrayal by Moscow. Other leaders, like Deng Xioping in China, Mikhail Gorbachev in the Soviet Union, and Wojciech Jaruzelski in Poland, simply abandoned the socialist dream. Yet, Mielke seemingly never did. Gazing upon the destruction of what he spent his entire life building, there is no doubt had Mielke had more time, he would have started again from scratch. Little could be said about other communists of the time period, who were so anxious to leave behind their dream to live a

comfortable, quiet life in retirement, with pension funds provided from external sources or even the modern governments that overtook the old socialist world.

Notes

Enclosed are the original German transcripts of each quote I translated.

Chapter 1:

Footnote 58: Original German: “In Anerkennung und Würdigung der treuen und zuverlässigen Pflichterfüllung und hohen Einsatzbereitschaft aller Angehörigen des Wachregiments Berlin des Ministeriums für Staatssicherheit und für vorbildliche Erfüllung der von der Partei- und Staatsführung gestellten Kampfaufträge wird dem Wachregiment Berlin des Ministeriums für Staatssicherheit ein Ehrenname verliehen. Ich Befehle: Anlässlich des 50. Jahrestages der Bildung der Allrussischen Ausserordentlichen Kommission- der Tscheka- wird dem Wachregiment Berlin des Ministerium für Staatssicherheit der Name des ersten Leiters der Tscheka und engsten Kampfgefährten Lenins "F.E. Dzierzynski" verliehen. Alle Soldaten, Unteroffiziere und Offiziere des Wachregiment Berlin des Ministeriums für Staatssicherheit sind zu treuen, standhaften und kompromisslosen Kämpfern gegen die Feinde des Friedens und des Sozialismus, getreu dem grossen Vorbild F. E. Dzierzynski, zu erziehen. Sie haben sich mit dem Leben und den revolutionären Kampf des Genossen F. E. Dzierzynski- eines engen Kampfgefährten Lenins und ersten Organisators der Tscheka- vertraut zu machen und jederzeit des unerschütterliche Kampfbündnis zwischen der Deutschen Demokratischen Republik und der UdSSR, insbesondere die Kampfgemeinschaft zwischen den deutschen und sowjetischen Tschekeisten, zu stärken und zu festigen.”

Footnote 77: Original German: “Die Festnahme Hunderter von Spionen und Agenten auf dem Gebiet der Deutschen Demokratischen Republik, die Liquidierung von Untergrundgruppen der verschiedensten Art sind ein Beweis dafür, dass die Feindseligkeit nicht nachgelassen hat und der Klassenkampf unter der Einwirkung der imperialistischen Kräfte von Westdeutschland und

Westberlin aus geschürt wird. Zahllose Geheimdienste der Imperialisten, ihre Agenten- und Untergrundzentralen entfalten eine verstärkte verbrecherische Tätigkeit und wenden die vielfältigsten und raffiniertesten Methoden an, um die Deutsche Demokratische Republik zu schädigen.”

Footnote 78: Original German: “Genauso wie die Werktätigen der DDR neue Taten beim Aufbau des Sozialismus vollbringen, genauso notwendig ist es, unsere Errungenschaften vor den Anschlägen des Feindes zu schützen. Die volksfeindliche Politik der Adenauer-Frieden in Europa und in der Welt eine grosse Gefahr. In Westeuropa und besonders in Westdeutschland sind heute Kräfte am Werk, denen mittels ihrer Politik einzig und allein daran gelegen ist, die Ansätze einer friedlichen Verständigung, das friedliche Werk des sozialistischen Aufbaus in unserer Republik und in den anderen sozialistischen Ländern zu stören und zu verhindern.”

Footnote 80: Original German: “Der Sozialistische Aufbau konnte sich wesentlich schneller vollziehen, wenn nicht die Imperialisten, ihre Geheimdienste, Agentenzentralen und sonstigen Beauftragten ständig versuchten, ihre feindlichen Stützpunkte in der Deutschen Demokratischen Republik zu erhalten und von aussen laufend neue Spione, Agenten, und Saboteure zu entsenden, um ihre verloren gegangenen Positionen wiederzugewinnen.”

Footnote 81: Original German: “Die Festnahme Hunderter von Spionen und Agenten auf dem Gebiet der Deutschen Demokratischen Republik, die Liquidierung von Untergrundgruppen der verschiedensten Art sind ein Beweis dafür, dass die Feind Tätigkeit nicht nachgelassen hat und der Klassenkampf unter der Einwirkung der imperialistischen Kräfte von Westdeutschland und Westberlin aus geschürt wird.”

Footnote 82: Original German: “Die Organe der Staatssicherheit haben unter der Führung der Partei bei der Bekämpfung der Feind Tätigkeit nicht unwesentliche Erfolge errungen. Sie fuhren in allen Bezirken und Kreisen mit Unterstützung der Bevölkerung einem wirksamen Kampf.”

Footnote 83: Original German: Die besonders in den letzten Jahren zunehmenden Havarien und Brände, bei denen es den zuständigen Organen oft nicht gelingt, nachzuweisen, inwieweit der Feind seine Hand im Spiel hat, ob es Schlamperei, Unachtsamkeit oder bewusstes Handeln ohne direkte Verbindung nach dem Westen ist, konnten vermieden werden, wenn die zuständigen verantwortlichen Funktionäre, Dienststellen isw. einen lebendige beiter vernachlässigt werden, schleicht sich sehr oft der Klassenfeind ein.

Footnote 84: Original German: Wie wichtig das ist, zeigt die jetzt vor einigen Tagen durchgeführte Festnahme eines Ingenieurs in Magdeburg, eines ehemaligen Mitglieds der NSDAP und Offiziers der faschistischen Wehrmacht, der langjähriger Spion des amerikanischen Geheimdienstes war und sich seine Tätigkeit durch die Erschleichung der Mitgliedschaft in unserer Partei erleichterte. Da keine konkrete Kontrolle seines Verhaltens durchgeführt wurde, gelang es ihm, lange Zeit zersetzend tätig zu sein und eine Reihe von Personen zur Republikflucht zu veranlassen.

Footnote 90: Original German: “Neben der Einschleusung und Anwerbung von Spionen zur Auskundschaftung unseres politischen, ökonomischen und militärischen Potentials nutzen die Geheimdienste auch die aus den verschiedensten Gründen nach Westdeutschland geflüchteten Bürger der Deutschen Demokratischen Republik.”

Footnote 91: Original German: “In der letzten Zeit gab es auch nicht wenige Fälle, wo Personen, die die Republik verliessen, mit Aufträgen der Geheimdienste zurückkamen. Die Erfahrungen

zwingen uns daher, größte Aufmerksamkeit jenen Personen zu widmen, die die Republik verlassen und wieder zurückkehren.“

Footnote 92: Original German: “Die Organe der Staatssicherheit wissen sehr wohl, daß die Erfolge in ihrer Arbeit abhängig sind von der Anwendung der Leninschen Prinzipien der Parteilichkeit in der Arbeit, von der strengen Einhaltung der Gesetzlichkeit, von der Anwendung der Gesetze gegen die Feinde; sie wissen, daß sie nicht zulassen dürfen, daß ein Bürger unberechtigt verdächtigt oder festgenommen wird. Eine Verletzung dieser Prinzipien bedeutet eine Schwächung der Arbeiter-und-Bauern-Macht.“

Footnote 94: Original German: “Genossen! Wer aus berechtigten Gründen Westberlin und Westdeutschland aufsucht, muß stets daran denken, daß die Feinde ständig versuchen, angefangen von den primitivsten Methoden bis zur ausgeklügeltsten Provokation, Bürger der Deutschen Demokratischen Republik in ihre Hände zu bekommen. Deshalb müssen wir wachsame und standhafte Patrioten der Deutschen Demokratischen Republik sein und alle Bürger dazu erziehen, die Feinde zu bassen und ihre verbrecherische Tätigkeit zu vereiteln. Genossen! Wir müssen auch den Kampf gegen die Schwatzhaftigkeit aufnehmen. Ein Schwätzer ist eine Fundgrube für einen Spion. Deshalb darf von unseren Staats- und Partei Geheimnissen nur der Kenntnis bekommen, der sie für die Arbeit benötigt. Es muß eine solche Atmosphäre geschaffen werden, daß die Feinde es nicht wagen, einen Bürger der Deutschen Demokratischen Republik in schmutzige Aufträge zu werben, weil sie Gefahr laufen, sofort den Organen der Staatssicherheit der DDR übergeben zu werden. Genossen! Getragen von der Liebe unserer Bevölkerung, versprechen wir als Mitarbeiter der Staatssicherheit, daß wir unser Leben nicht schonen werden im Kampf gegen die Feinde des Friedens, im Kampf für die Sache der Partei, der Arbeiterklasse und des Sozialismus.“

Footnote 95: Original German: “Der Kampf und die Abwehrmaßnahmen der DDR richteten sich in der Periode vom XX, Parteitag der KPdSU im Jahre 1956 bis zum 13, August 1961 insbesondere gegen die Tätigkeit des Feindes, die dem organisierten Menschenhandel und der Kopffjägerei sowie der Vorbereitung von Provokationen und eines sogenannten kleinen Krieges diente, der unweigerlich zu einem Weltkrieg unter Anwendung nuklearer Waffen geführt hätte. Der Feind organisierte in Verbindung mit seinen aggressiven Absichten eine ausgedehnte psychologische Kriegführung und ideologische Diversion gegen die DDR, indem er mit Hilfe der ihm zur Verfügung stehenden Zersetzungsmittel wie des Senders RIAS, des Senders »Freies Berlin« und des West Fernsehens, durch Hetzschriften und Hetzflugblätter insbesondere des Ostbüros der SPD, durch Lügen und Falschmeldungen der Agentenzentrale IWE, durch Gerüchtemacherei von außen und mittels seiner Agenturen im Inneren die lügnerische Behauptung verbreitete, die Deutsche Demokratische Republik sei infolge innerer und äußerer Schwierigkeiten am Ende und es sei nur noch eine Frage der Zeit, wann die Arbeiter-und-Bauern-Macht zusammenbreche.

Footnote 97: Original German: Die Entwicklung nach dem 13. August zeigt, daß der von Partei und Regierung beschrittene Weg der Errichtung eines antifaschistischen Schutzwalls gut und richtig ist.

Footnote 98: Original German: “Es ist vielmehr so, daß die Bonner Ultras und die NATO-Agenten nach Eseren Maßnahmen nunmehr mit raffinierten Mitteln und Methoden versuchen, ihre verbrecherischen Ziele zu erreichen.”

Footnote 99: Original German: “Die Verleumdungs- und Zersetzungsparolen des Feindes zielen darauf ab, Verwirrung in den Köpfen der jungen Menschen zu schaffen, sie abzulenken von ihren Verpflichtungen als junge Bürger eines sozialistischen Staates, Arbeitsunlust und

Arbeitsbummelei zu erzeugen, Alkoholismus und Amoralität zu fördern und imperialistische Unkultur zu verbreiten.”

Footnote 100: Original German: Ein Spion ist zwar nicht leicht zu fassen, aber die ideologische Diversion, die psychologische Kriegführung des Feindes sickert in tausend feinen Kanälen ein.

Footnote 101: Original German: “Die Politik von Partei und Regierung besteht nicht darin, durch die Organe der Staatsmacht viele Festnahmen durchzuführen, sondern vielmehr darin, durch geduldige Überzeugungs- und Aufklärungsarbeit zu verhindern, daß Bürger der Deutschen Demokratischen Republik von den Feinden mißbraucht werden und deshalb festgenommen werden müsste.”

Footnote 102: Original German: “Genossinnen und Genossen! Ich kann dem Zentralkomitee versichern, daß die Mitarbeiter des Ministeriums für Staatssicherheit auch in Zukunft ihre Aufgaben entschlossen, kompromißlos und mit höchster Einsatzbereitschaft durchführen werden. Die Mitarbeiter der Staatssicherheit werden zu echten Kommunisten erzogen, von denen es im Programm der KPDSU heißt, daß ihre unveräußerlichen Eigenschaften hohes kommunistisches Bewußtsein, Arbeits- Treude und Disziplin und Ergebenheit den Interessen der Gesellschaft gegenüber sind. Als solche Menschen, als Kommunisten, werden wir Mitarbeiter der Staatssicherheit getreu unserer Verpflichtung gegenüber der Partei und der Regierung unseren Teil dazu beitragen, zu verhindern, daß Atombomben auf sozialistisches Land geworfen werden.”

Chapter 3:

Footnote 174: Original translation: “Zersetzungsmaßnahmen können sich sowohl gegen Gruppen, Gruppierungen und Organisationen als auch gegen einzelne Personen richten und als

relativ selbstständige Art des Abschlusses Operativer Vorgänge oder im Zusammenhang mit anderen Abschlußarten angewandt werden.”

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