

for a parallel society, and the top leaders tended to be more bureaucratic and state-technocratic than charismatic. In view of the Stasi's role as a junior ally of the SED, the label post-totalitarian party police state might also be regarded as appropriate. This underlines the dictatorial nature of SED rule and the fact that, unlike in Poland in the 1980s, the East German secret services remained subject to the overall political and normative control of the Communist party even though their operational latitude may have been greater than is often believed.²²

After a brief survey in Chapter 1 of the origins and development of the Stasi, the discussion will focus on the years 1971–89, that is, the period when Erich Honecker presided over country and party and the Stasi was in 'full bloom'. In the early 1970s, the GDR emerged from its diplomatic isolation and appeared to be a stable member of the international community. Despite this improvement in its status and despite the protection afforded by the construction of the Berlin Wall in 1961, the GDR's rulers remained allergic to the 'imperialist' threat and suspicious of the loyalty of their subjects. The closer relations with West Germany following the Basic Treaty between the GDR and the FRG in 1972, the country's entry into the United Nations in the following year and the signing of the Helsinki Final Act in 1975 stimulated popular hopes of an improvement in human rights and of a relaxation of restrictions on contacts with the West. But from the point of view of the regime, and particularly with memories of the Prague Spring of 1968 still very much alive, the new situation was seen as potentially destabilising. Hence, the Stasi was called upon to play a major role in countering the negative aspects of détente. Furthermore, as the terroristic methods of the 1950s and early 1960s were becoming increasingly inappropriate, the Stasi was also expected to carry out a multiplicity of tasks aimed at maintaining the SED system in all walks of life. Such was its apparent success in performing this function that as late as the spring of 1989 German unification appeared inconceivable. Why, despite its enormous potential for coercion, the Stasi was unable to halt the implosion of the GDR, as well as its own disintegration, will conclude the investigation into the 'firm' and the paradox of omnipotence.

Part I

THE ORIGINS AND DEVELOPMENT OF THE EAST GERMAN SECURITY SERVICE, 1945–71

²² See Chapman B. 1970: 119–21 and Los M. and Zybertowicz A. 2000: 17–18, 29–31.

FROM WEIMAR REPUBLIC TO GDR

THE KPD CRUCIBLE

The role model of the Stasi was the Cheka, the Soviet secret police founded by Felix Dzerzhinsky in 1917. However, the Stasi also saw itself as the heir to the secret apparatus of the German Communist Party (KPD), whose development before 1945 sheds light on some of the traditions which helped to shape the security doctrine and the working methods of the Stasi. The construction of a secret party apparatus was a compulsory condition of membership of the Communist International (Comintern), as set out in the '21 Conditions' of entry adopted by its Second World Congress in 1920. The secret underground structures were originally justified by the expectation that the period of legality enjoyed by foreign communist parties would end as the revolution in the developed western world approached. They also derived from the communists' belief that they belonged to a conspiratorial confraternity, an attitude which would be reinforced by their experiences in the Nazi period. The secret apparatus was initially subdivided into two sections, the *Nachrichtendienst* (Intelligence Service or N-Group) and the *Militärdienst* (Military Service or M-Group). The former was responsible for 'special political tasks' and the latter for the organisation of the movement's armed uprising.¹ Although formally subordinate to the KPD's German leadership, in practice they were financed and run by the Moscow-based Executive Committee of the Comintern (ECCI). The domination of Moscow's instructors is illustrated by their role in the preparations for the abortive revolution in October 1923. Soviet military advisers, who were present in force since the occupation of the Ruhr by French and Belgian troops in January 1923, took control of the crucial stages of preparations for the uprising.

The failure to ignite a revolution in Germany to overthrow the hated Weimar Republic had a direct impact on the policies of the Comintern, to

¹ Fricke K. W. 1984: 17-18.

which the KPD, as a national section, was subordinated. The Comintern, which had always paid close attention to the interests of the Soviet Union, increasingly placed the decisive emphasis on the foreign policy objective of breaking Russian 'encirclement' by the 'imperialist' powers. Germany, which since the Rapallo Treaty (1922) had opened diplomatic and trade relations with Moscow, was central to the Bolsheviks' geopolitical strategy. These developments also had an impact on the function of the KPD's secret apparatus. As the expectation of revolution receded, the M-Group was downscaled; perhaps symbolically, it was renamed the AM (Anti-Military) Group in 1928. The head of the M-Group during these years, Erich Wollenberg, described how the secret apparatus had changed from the military spearhead of a German revolution into a foreign adjunct of department four of the Red Army.² However, with the reorientation in communist policy, the functions of the N-Group were constantly expanded from the mid-1920s to suit the new demands made of the secret apparatus. Above all, these involved spying for the Soviets and eliminating Stalin's opponents in the KPD's factional struggles. For these ends, the N-Group was organisationally divided into two main departments, internal party counterintelligence (*Abwehr*) and subversion or decomposition (*Zersetzung*).

Walter Krivitsky, a senior KGB officer, wrote in his memoir-cum-exposé of Soviet secret service practices that: 'Out of the ruins of the Communist revolution we built in Germany a brilliant Intelligence Service, the envy of every other nation'.³ Whatever the substance of this claim, the success of the Nazis would demonstrate the limitations of a secret service in achieving a party's broader political goals. Under Hans Kippenberger, the head of the KPD's intelligence service, an extensive spy network extended through the army, police, the government and the political parties. Kippenberger himself was appointed to the Reichstag's defence committee in 1927, furnishing Moscow with insider information.⁴ So-called 'worker correspondents', who officially wrote for the KPD press, also unofficially provided reports on the situation in their factories and industrial branches and on technical developments, from which edited extracts were forwarded to Moscow. By the later 1920s, the communist movement had a large and diverse group of Soviet secret agents, facilitating the penetration of all areas of German society. The suitability and loyalty of prospective agents in the service of Soviet intelligence was put to the test in a series of minor assignments.⁵

During the second half of the 1920s, the N-Group played an important part in the party's all-consuming factional struggles, in which Stalin's opponents were purged from the party parallel to developments in the CPSU.

During this process, the installation of a tightly centralised structure on the model of the Bolsheviks' 'democratic centralism' played a crucial role. For this purpose, the creation of a new highly disciplined group of functionaries trained in the methods of party organisation was an essential prerequisite. Stalin's German expert, Manuilsky, identified a group of loyal functionaries who were then trained in the Comintern's Lenin School. Among this group who served the Comintern as well as the Soviet secret police, GPU, was Walter Ulbricht, the KPD's new head of organisation. Ulbricht attended the Lenin School in 1924–25 before returning to Germany to resume his work with the all-important Organisational Department of the KPD's Central Committee. An early biographer of Ulbricht writes: 'During the Weimar Republic, Ulbricht unfailingly represented Moscow's interests in the KPD. And just as unfailingly, he helped to eliminate those who had other ideas'.⁶ Other functionaries trained in Moscow who later attained prominent positions in the SED and Stasi were Erich Mielke, Markus Wolf, Wilhelm Zaisser and Ernst Wollweber.

The Stalinisation of the KPD, that is the imposition of a centralistic, bureaucratic organisation and ideological conformity, received a decisive impulse with the acceptance of the principle of Leninist democratic centralism at the 1925 Party Congress. This fundamentally eroded the confederal structures and the original ideological diversity of the party by strengthening the central organs, such as the Small Secretariat. The disciplining of the party culminated, in the later 1920s, in the fusion of the Stalin faction, headed by Ernst Thälmann, and the party apparatus functionaries who constituted the party's nerve centre. Thälmann, from a working-class background, became chairman in 1925, bound the KPD ever closer to Moscow and fostered the personality cult of Stalin.

Throughout the history of the KPD, the party leadership had to tolerate the presence of senior Comintern officials, who reported directly to Moscow. However, what changed after 1926 was the GPU's penetration of the wider German party structures through the conduit installed by the secret apparatus. According to Ruth Fischer, the KPD leader in 1924–35, N-Group functionaries pursued opposition activists by raiding their meetings, searching their flats and conducting interrogations.⁷ Her claim has broadly been substantiated by new documentary evidence. In Saxony, the mood in the party turned sour as dissident functionaries were placed under surveillance and their flats searched for literature.⁸

After promoting the Stalinisation of the KPD during the Weimar Republic, the N-Group fell victim to a factional struggle in the leadership-in-exile during the mid-1930s. Many of the apparatus functionaries died during the

² Wollenberg E. 1951: 14; Weber H. 1969: 347–8.

³ Krivitsky W. G. 1992: 59–60.

⁴ Fischer R. 1948: 510–11.

⁵ *Ibid.*, 512–14; Dallin D. J. 1956: 95–9.

⁶ Stern C. 1963: 47.

⁷ Fischer R. 1948: 507.

⁸ SAPMO 1 3/8/25. 'Protokoll', 1928, pp. 357–8, 390.

Great Purges and in 1937, Kippenberger was executed as an alleged spy and saboteur. Against this background, Ulbricht and the ECCI's cadre department replaced the existing N-Group with a new cadre organisation, which was entrusted with the security of the small leadership group around Pieck and Ulbricht. These changes were accompanied by a purge of Political Bureau members and candidates who had taken the 'wrong side' in the policy debate, thus transferring the locus of power to a Small Secretariat (see below).

THE KPD BETWEEN HITLER AND STALIN

Soon after the establishment of the Nazi regime in 1933, the Gestapo destroyed the KPD's legal party organisation as well as the illegal, secret apparatus which had, ironically, been created for such an eventuality. The Communists were the first major target of Nazi repression. The KPD fell like a pack of cards. As many as 60,000 to 100,000 Communists were interned by the end of 1933. At a KPD conference in Moscow in October 1935, Pieck reported that of 422 leading functionaries in Germany, 24 had been murdered, 219 had been arrested and 125 had found exile in the Soviet Union.⁹ The party's highly centralised organisational structure, which had been used to eliminate dissent during the Weimar Republic, proved to be counterproductive as it undermined the efforts of grassroots activists to coordinate any political initiative from below. Under these conditions, the KPD was reduced to little more than a party in exile, even though many thousands of Communists, both at home and abroad, engaged in a variety of resistance activities.

Nor did it help Communist resistance activities in Germany that the party was subordinated to Moscow's interests and its policy prescriptions. Stalin was not interested in rebuilding the KPD and the exile leaders were obliged to fall into line behind the 1935 shift in Comintern policy towards cooperation with social democracy, hitherto regarded as communism's main enemy. At its World Congress in 1935, the Communist movement was instructed to form an anti-fascist, united front not only with Social Democrats but also with bourgeois opponents of fascism. The Popular Front had to be abandoned, however, following the conclusion of the non-aggression pact between Germany and the Soviet Union in the summer of 1939. The KPD leadership in exile was obliged to sanction the dramatic change in policy on the basis that it was a 'success' for the Soviet Union's peace policy. Having been abandoned by the West, Moscow was presented as merely acting to break the 'encirclement' by hostile powers. Until the launching of Operation Barbarossa in 1941, the Comintern returned to the ultra-left policy that social democracy was the main enemy of communism.

Shifts in Stalin's policy also had significant – and sometimes fatal – consequences for the KPD leadership. Dissenters from the 1935 line on the

⁹ Weber H. 1990: 18.

Popular Front were purged. At the KPD's 'Brussels' conference in October 1935 the main dissidents, Hermann Schubert and Fritz Schulte, were removed from the party hierarchy and the Pieck-Ulbricht axis strengthened; Ackermann and Wehner became candidates of the Political Bureau.¹⁰ The purge of dissenters in the KPD leadership – as was also the case with the other parties in the Comintern – flowed into the Great Terror of the mid-1930s. Some 70 per cent of the KPD émigré functionaries and members were arrested between 1936 and 1938.¹¹ And more leading functionaries died in the Soviet Union than in Nazi Germany. Of the 43 members and candidates who belonged to the Political Bureau between 1920 and 1933, five members were murdered by the Nazis and five members and two candidates in the Stalinist purges, including Hugo Eberlein and Fritz Schulte. Eberlein's son, Werner, would become a member of the SED Politbüro in 1983. If one looks at the entire leadership corps of about 500 in the 1920s, then 102 lost their lives under Hitler and 41 under Stalin.¹² As indicated above, among Stalin's victims was Hans Kippenberger, the head of the M-P Group, who was executed in Moscow in October 1937. Although the charge was spying for the Western intelligence service and organising terrorist attacks, his real crime was his opposition to Ulbricht and Pieck during the struggles within the KPD leadership in 1935. He also clashed with them over their attempt to tighten party control over the apparatus and to carry out a constant screening and permanent surveillance of the party and its cadres.¹³ The apparatus was closed down in 1937.

STALIN'S FAITHFUL SERVANTS

Until the Comintern's dissolution in 1943, as a concession to Moscow's Western allies, no consistent attempt had been made to rebuild the KPD cadre organisation in Germany. However, with the war running in favour of the anti-Hitler coalition, the KPD leaders in Moscow turned their attention, under the close supervision of Dimitrov and Moscow officials, to the construction of a new order in post-war Germany. While they strongly favoured a Soviet-type system, practicalities dictated a gradual transition to this goal. The immediate goal was to be the realisation of the bourgeois-democratic programme of 1848 by means of a 'bloc of fighting democracy' in which the KPD would play the key role. It was from the group of proven Soviet loyalists – Ulbricht, Pieck, Ackermann and Herrstadt – that the core of the GDR's leaders would be drawn. Pieck, who became President of the GDR in 1949, had been associated with the Spartacus League and had served the Comintern in various positions in the 1920s and early 1930s. Herrstadt, a

¹⁰ Weber H. 1969: 155–7; Podewin N. 1995: 108–10.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, 133–4.

¹² Weber H. 1998: 23–4.

¹³ Kaufmann B., Reiserer E., Schwips D. and Walter H. 1993: 9, 43–6.

gifted journalist, was involved in espionage for Red Army intelligence between 1933 and 1939 before fleeing to Moscow. Ackermann, who did illegal work for the KPD after Hitler came to power, served in the Spanish Civil War and in 1940 was smuggled to Moscow by Soviet agents; he would become the first head of GDR foreign intelligence in 1951. What characterised this inner group of leaders? They had survived by demonstrating their loyalty and obedience to Stalin and the Soviet system and they had acquired practical skills on the organisation of a rigidly centralised political party. And, as Erich Weitz has pointed out, their experience of the terror and purges had accustomed many 'to the notion that political opponents could be dealt with by arbitrary arrest, physical intimidation, and execution'.¹⁴ They had also participated in the intensive ideological and political training at the Comintern's famous Lenin School for foreign cadres. The courses were intended to produce qualified party functionaries who would serve the Soviet-dominated communist movement under all conditions. Among top Stasi officials who were trained at the Lenin School and also spent some time in Soviet exile were Erich Mielke, Richard Stahlmann, Markus Wolf, Wilhelm Zaisser and Ernst Wollweber. Wolf, who had fled with his family to Moscow in 1934, became a Soviet citizen and adopted a Russian name.

But many KPD leaders had been tried and tested in other arenas – the battles on the streets of Weimar Germany, the Spanish Civil War, Nazi concentration camps, the resistance in Western Europe. Violence, repression and a stark friend-foe image were intrinsic to their way of life. Take, for example, Wilhelm Zaisser and Ernst Wollweber, the first two ministers of state security. They both joined the KPD in 1919, worked for Soviet military intelligence and served short terms of imprisonment during the Weimar Republic. Zaisser, like Mielke and Ulbricht, participated in the Spanish Civil War, serving as head of the Thirteenth International Brigade under the name of General Gomez. Wollweber, on instructions from Moscow, set up a maritime sabotage unit which conducted operations against Nazi shipping.

In summary, by the end of the Second World War, the Soviet Union had at its disposal a corpus of experienced functionaries who were totally committed to the communist cause, experienced in Stalinist modes of repression and ready to assist the Soviets in the establishment of a new order in Germany and in the administration of the Soviet zone of occupation.

THE FORMATION OF A SECRET POLICE: THE SOVIET ROLE

The history of the KPD before 1945 and the following examination of the emergence of the GDR from the chrysalis of Soviet occupation thereafter

¹⁴ Weitz E. D. 1997: 300.

reinforce Naimark's claim that after 1945: '... the Soviets and the SED did not create the Stasi as an afterthought for securing the East German state structure and protecting its accomplishments. Rather, from the very beginning, security concerns within the German party and the Soviet military government helped to create an East German state that was inseparable from its internal police functions'.¹⁵ Unquestionably, the Soviet Union played the decisive role in the formation of an East German security organisation in its zone of occupation. Appointments and dismissals required Soviet approval; senior officers were obliged to report directly to Soviet intelligence agents; and much of the police force's budget was financed by the Soviets.

The Allied Control Council enacted measures to confine the German police force to the maintenance of law and order and it explicitly proscribed the formation of any political police. However, these provisions were contravened in the Soviet zone of occupation, where from the outset the construction of secret police structures took on an important function in the consolidation of communist power.¹⁶ Developments in the period 1945–50 occurred against the background of the outbreak of the Cold War, which the Soviets believed was potentially only the period of international tension preceding a conflict between East and West. The importance the Soviets attached to the role of intelligence operations in future warfare, combined with Moscow's narrow ideological definition of its enemies, ensured that an early emphasis was placed on building up secret police structures in East Germany.¹⁷

The Soviet Military Administration in Germany (SMAD) was set up immediately after the arrival of the Red Army in Berlin to oversee the everyday practicalities of occupation. SMAD and other Soviet agencies conducted their own independent security operations in the zone as well as exercising firm control over the German political police. One of the most influential officials was Lieutenant General Ivan Serov, who, though a top SMAD officer, was responsible in his capacity as a NKVD/MVD officer only to his superiors in Moscow. One of Serov's basic jobs was to create a virtually independent system of operations groups consisting of Soviet officers, troops and interpreters which drew on Germans as informers and *agents provocateurs*. The main Soviet security agencies, with offices in every district and *Land*, were the NKVD (People's Commissariat of Internal Affairs) and the NKGB (People's Commissariat of State Security), both renamed in 1946 as the MVD (Ministry of Internal Affairs) and the MGB (Ministry of State Security) respectively. In January 1946, there were 2,230 NKVD and 399 NKGB officers in the zone and 2,304 Germans who spied for the Soviets.¹⁸

¹⁵ Naimark N. M. 1995: 354–5.

¹⁶ Tantzsch M. 1998: 48.

¹⁷ Childs D. and Popplewell R. 1999: 40–42.

¹⁸ Gieseke J. 1998: 6; Foitzik J. 1998: 121, 131.

Fundamental to the development of an East German security force was the formation in August 1946 of the German Administration of the Interior (DVdI). In order to achieve the wide-ranging demands of consolidating Communist control, the localised structures of the special Criminal Police branches for political affairs were reorganised and brought under central control. At the same time, it unified the political police departments under DVdI Kommissariat-5 (K-5) of the Criminal Police department (Kripo). K-5 of the Saxon police force had been established, on Soviet orders, in the summer of 1945; other K-5 agencies soon followed in other police administrations. Their functions included protecting the new economic order, combating fascist gangs, uncovering ex-Nazi functionaries, the surveillance of Interior Ministry personnel and providing support for the KPD/SED.

The issue of SMAD's command no. 201 for the deNazification of the zone in August 1947 signalled an increase in K-5's political tasks, adding to them a range of judicial functions, and extended its regional organisations. Two months later, at a DVdI conference, Mielke informed K-5 personnel that they would take over the implementation of tasks previously reserved for the occupying power and that these actions were part of the 'struggle for political power'.¹⁹ Later, in 1948, K-5 was separated from other Criminal Police activities and became the core of a centralised political police with additional powers for crushing political opponents.²⁰

At leadership level, SMAD control over the DVdI was ensured by co-opting long-serving and trusted individuals from the pre-war KPD into the decisive positions of the administration. For example, Kurt Fischer, who became DVdI's president in mid-1948, had received military training in Moscow before fighting in the Spanish Civil War; he had already demonstrated his abilities in the centralisation of the police system in Saxony. The same principle also applied to K-5, where Soviet instructors were present throughout the apparatus. In reality, K-5 was only nominally housed in the People's Police; in practice, it was a Communist cadre organisation rather than part of the state system. This facilitated its deployment as a party police force, which, until October 1989, was trained in the canons of Marxism-Leninism at party schools. Already performing a range of tasks associated with the later MfS, K-5 acted as an auxiliary of the Soviet Union's MGB units. Under the cover of deNazification, this involved not only the arbitrary arrest and detention of all actual and alleged Nazis, but also acting against opponents of Communist control in the zone. In the late 1940s, thousands of Social Democrats and politicians of the parties of the middle classes were rounded up, frequently finding themselves sentenced by Soviet military tribunals to years in Soviet labour camps as well as to incarceration in the 11 Soviet 'special camps' located in the zone. These internment camps, such as Sachsenhausen,

¹⁹ See the document in Tantzsch M. 1998: 50.

²⁰ Wegmann B. 1997: 17.

Berlin-Hohenschönhausen, Buchenwald and Torgau, were modelled on the Gulag Archipelago and most had served a similar purpose during the Third Reich. At least 154,000 Germans and about 35,000 non-Germans were interned and about 43,000 Germans died in the camps.²¹ While the Soviet camps were not analogous to the Nazi extermination camps, the high death toll, mainly from malnutrition and disease, was in part the result of grievous neglect by the Soviet authorities.

Another crucial structural element in the zonal security system was the Main Division for Intelligence and Information under Erich Mielke. Officially constituted as an organ of the DVdI in November 1947, the new body was flanked by the existing regional offices; it carried out counterintelligence, controlled the media, and collected and disseminated information. Informers and confidants were recruited to meet Mielke's aim 'to know everything and to report on everything worth knowing',²² a principle which Mielke would seek to apply throughout his long career. Measures were introduced in the DVdI to improve the political indoctrination and reliability of security staff, notably the launching of the Main Department Political Culture in the autumn of 1948. The department's highly trained political cultural officers – with a ratio of one to every 100 to 110 police officers by mid-1948 – conducted regular political training courses for members of the security organs and sought to ensure that appointments conformed with SED priorities.²³

FROM K-5 TO MfS

The SED delegation to Moscow in December 1948, comprising Pieck, Ulbricht and other top officials, was informed by Stalin that the Soviet Politbüro had decided that the East German security apparatus should be organisationally separated from the People's Police on account of the extensive range of tasks it had to execute.²⁴ Such a development was not to the liking of the Soviet Minister of State Security, Victor Abakumov, who harboured reservations with respect to the limited number of suitable East German cadres and preferred security matters to remain in Soviet hands.²⁵ In May 1949, a series of organisational changes were put in train, culminating in the formation of the MfS in February 1950. As part of a general overhaul of security, the protection of the economy was transferred in the first half of 1949 into the hands of the Main Administration for the Protection of the National Economy (*Hauptverwaltung zum Schutz der Volkswirtschaft*, or HVzSV) in the Ministry of the Interior. This department also assumed many of the

²¹ Dennis M. 2000: 38–9.

²² Naimark N. M. 1995: 366.

²³ Wegmann B. 1997: 21.

²⁴ Badstübner R. and Loth W. 1994: 252, 269.

²⁵ Otto W. 2000: 113.

police functions of K-5 and enjoyed wide-ranging powers for combating the class enemy. Yet more organisational changes led to the dissolution of K-5 in August 1949 and the transfer of numerous functions to Department D of the Criminal Police. The new ministry, whose creation was approved unanimously by what was still the provisional parliament or *Volkskammer* in February 1950, consisted of the HVzSV, sections of the former Department for Intelligence and Information, the Criminal Police and the Main Department Political Culture. The new Ministry of State Security was not subject to control or supervision by the GDR parliament and, although an organ of the Council of Ministers, its true masters were the officers of the KGB. Each head of a Stasi service unit was responsible to Soviet instructors who kept an eye on activities and stepped in when necessary.²⁶ In the early 1950s, the KGB employed 2,200 staff who performed the latter tasks as well as their own secret service work. After Stalin's death, Beria reduced the number to 328, only for the target figure to be increased to 458 after his own fall from power.²⁷

²⁶ Gieseke J. 1998: 12.

²⁷ Gieseke J. 2001: 58; Otto W. 2000: 128.

THE MINISTRY OF STATE SECURITY, 1950–71

THE SHARP SWORD

The law on the Ministry of State Security was terse and deliberately uninformative, its two short paragraphs amounting to little more than an announcement of the formation of the new body. On the other hand, the Minister of the Interior, Karl Steinhoff, was a little more forthcoming when he told the *Volkskammer*, on 8 February 1950, that the ministry's main task was: 'to protect the people's own enterprises and works, transport and the people's own property against the plots of criminal elements as well as against all attacks, to conduct a decisive fight against the activity of enemy agents, subversives, saboteurs and spies, to conduct an energetic fight against bandits, to protect our democratic development and to ensure uninterrupted fulfilment of the economic plans of our peace economy'.¹

Although Steinhoff had once been a Social Democrat, his speech resonated with the militancy of the old KPD. The address also underscored the Stasi's role as one of the SED's key instruments in the Stalinisation of East German politics and society, a process which had been set in motion in 1947–48. This entailed the emasculation of the other political parties, notably the CDU and the LDPD, the subjugation of the large mass organisations such as the Free German Youth and the Confederation of Free German Trade Unions (FDGB), the transformation of the SED into a monolithic, hierarchical body on the model of the CPSU, and the assertion of the party's dominance over an increasingly centralised economy and administration. Nor were SED members spared the pain of the party's transition into a Marxist-Leninist party. A series of expulsions and purges which lasted between 1948 and 1953 turned the SED into a more disciplined and 'ideologically pure' party and strengthened the position of those Communists such as Ulbricht and Pieck who had spent much of the Nazi era in Moscow. The main targets for expulsion from the party were former SPD members and non-conformist Communists. The

¹ Cited in Gieseke J. 1998: 9–10. Our translation.