

Chapter 7

MIELKE'S UNOFFICIAL
COLLABORATORS

AN ARMY OF INFORMERS

Although the MfS kept monthly statistics on its army of informers, many of the materials have not survived and a full record is only available from 1985 onwards. However, the data for the Frankfurt/Oder region are probably a reliable indicator of the general trend: whereas in 1952 only 533 informers were in the service of the MfS in the region, 13 years later the number had increased to 2,986, reaching a peak of 4,977 in 1985.¹ The main expert on the topic, Helmut Müller-Enbergs, estimates that about 250,000 full-time staff and about 600,000 *Inoffizielle Mitarbeiter*, that is, unofficial collaborators or co-workers (IMs) worked for the ministry between 1950 and 1989.² Müller-Enbergs's figures do not, however, include the informers used by the Criminal Police.

Despite the many statistical uncertainties, the explosion in the numbers of IMs is beyond dispute. A peak of about 180,000 was probably reached in the mid-1970s before falling slightly to about 176,000 ten years later.³ The figures include a large shadowy group – 32,282 in 1988 – of IMKs (*Inoffizielle Mitarbeiter zur Sicherung der Konspiration und des Verbindungswesens*), who, usually in return for money or gifts, put their telephone, address or apartment at the disposal of the Stasi for clandestine meetings between controllers and IMs.⁴ Most IMs spied for the units in Main Departments II, VI, XVIII, XIX and XX, with high concentrations too in the Main Department/Administration in the National People's Army and Main Department VII.⁵ Turnover was rapid in the 1980s. There may well have been a complete turnover of IMs over the short period of three to six years in the District Service Units

but probably between seven and ten years among those controlled by the Regional Administrations and by the central organs in East Berlin.⁶

The rapid expansion of the IM network, like that of the full-time staff, is explained by the Honecker regime's determination to combat the negative effects of détente and closer relations with the West and, from the later 1970s onwards, to control the alternative political culture and the growing desire for emigration among the East German population. A deteriorating economic performance, too, gave cause for concern and prompted action against alleged spies and saboteurs. As the Stasi's 'eyes and ears', the agents were regarded as the 'main weapon' in the struggle against the enemy, without whom the full-time officials could not achieve their goals. According to the ministry's 1979 guidelines on IMs, they 'play a key role in ensuring overall internal security in the area of operations. Their work is to a great extent preventive in nature and contributes to the early detection and implementation of new security requirements. Their work must serve the comprehensive and secure evaluation and control of the politically operative situation in their area of responsibility and provide further clarification of the question of "Who is who?"'⁷ As the bread and butter of counterintelligence, not only were IMs deployed to combat and prevent subversion by an external enemy but also to protect socialist society against the disruption and harm caused by the 'hostile' and 'negative' actions and attitudes of East German citizens. Mielke referred to this latter task in his usual uncompromising fashion at a service conference in 1973:

By means of political-operative work, in particular the work of IMs, greater efforts have to be made in the ministries, institutions, economic organisations and especially in the foreign trade enterprises to keep them free of bribery, corruption, petty bourgeois behaviour but above all from the impact of hostile corrupting influences.⁸

As the enemies of the socialist state were supposedly omnipresent, then the MfS, too, had to be omnipresent – as well as omniscient. This aim led, in the opinion of the former head of the Erfurt Regional Administration, Josef Schwarz, to the principle that the unexpected had to be eliminated at all times and everywhere.⁹ The resulting scale and depth of the penetration of people's private lives as well as of the institutions of state and society, not the organisation's methods, is, according to Klaus-Dietmar Henke, the historically unique feature of the MfS.¹⁰ The techniques of surveillance such as phone-tapping, the opening of mail and house searches and the deployment of agents and spies to gather information and to subvert groups who were seen

¹ Müller-Enbergs H. 1995b: 1.

² Müller-Enbergs H. 1999: 1338.

³ Müller-Enbergs H. 1996: 54, 59.

⁴ Müller-Enbergs H. 1993: 10.

⁵ Giesecke J. 2001: 114.

⁶ Geiger H. 1993: 47.

⁷ Müller-Enbergs H. 1996: 314. Our translation.

⁸ Cited in Geiger H. 1993: 43. Our translation.

⁹ Schwarz J. 1994: 86.

¹⁰ Henke K-D. 1993: 586.

as a threat to the existing political and social order have been practised by dictatorships, monarchies and parliamentary democracies alike.

A TYPOLOGY OF INFORMERS

Until 1968, unofficial collaborators were called GIs (*Geheime Informatoren*), that is, secret informers; thereafter, IM became the generic term. The Stasi was keen to avoid the term spy or *Spitzel* as this was associated with the Gestapo; IMs, it was asserted, constituted an elite of dedicated defenders of their socialist homeland.¹¹ The range of tasks performed by IMs required an ever more esoteric and sometimes bewildering differentiation into IMS, IMB and so forth which renders inadequate the definition in Federal German law of an IM as someone who had declared their willingness to supply information to the Stasi. This definition excludes, for example, several hundred prison cell informers, the foreign spies of HV A, and 15,200 informers (*Inoffizielle Kriminalpolizeiliche Mitarbeiter*) attached to *Arbeitsgebiet 1* or K1 of the Criminal Police.¹² The Stasi could also draw on voluntary helpers as contact persons (*Kontaktpersonen* – KPs), SED functionaries, cadre managers and employees' superiors who submitted reports without the knowledge of the persons concerned. KPs, though sworn to secrecy, did not enter into a binding and official commitment to the Stasi, but they did provide information about neighbours, work colleagues and others, and were often recruited as IMs at a later stage.¹³

Five ministerial major guidelines (*Richtlinien*) were issued concerning the work of IMs, three in the 1950s, one in 1968 and the final set in 1979.¹⁴ These guidelines defined the functions of the many different categories of IMs, their recruitment and motivation, and how controlling officers should work with their charges, in particular the need for regular meetings and the establishment of a relationship of trust. The 1979 guidelines have been described as a bureaucratic document which fostered the illusion that a totally conformist society could be achieved by comprehensive series of administrative and repressive regulations.¹⁵

The following 'spyclopedia' may not be easy for a reader to digest, but it should be borne in mind that it reflects the quality monitors' obsession with defining and assigning specific tasks to the ever changing panoply of agents. Some IMs were classed as unofficial full-time agents (*Hauptamtliche Inoffizielle Mitarbeiter*, HIMs) and others as societal collaborators for security (*Gesellschaftliche*

Mitarbeiter für Sicherheit, GMSs). Although HIMs usually had a part-time job as cover, they were in the pay of the Stasi and they belonged in effect to the ministry's full-time staff. There were 4,347 HIMs in 1983 and 32,000 GMSs in 1986.¹⁶ The latter were a looser category of collaborator, normally functionaries loyal to the system, who were willing to cooperate with the Stasi in a range of political-operational tasks and formed a reservoir of potential IMs. They provided the Stasi with information and assisted in damage limitation and other pre-emptive activities.¹⁷ IMEs (*Inoffizielle Mitarbeiter für einen besonderen Einsatz*), of whom there were 7,213 in 1988, were deployed for work on difficult assignments and held important positions in the state apparatus, the mass organisations, the economy and other spheres. They supplied specialist information and expert reports on the situation in their area of responsibility.

Officers on Special Duties (*Offiziere im besonderen Einsatz*, OibEs), like the ambitious Alexander Schalck-Golodkowski, the head of KoKo, constituted a higher category of elite informers than the IMEs; there were 2,232 OibEs in 1989. 'Big Alex' admits to being attracted by the career advantages, the salary and the prestige attached to serving as a Stasi officer.¹⁸ FIMs (*Inoffizielle Mitarbeiter für Führung anderer Inoffizieller Mitarbeiter*), in addition to their own duties, helped to relieve the burden on full-time officers by recruiting and running other IMs who were usually employed in the same area of work.¹⁹ The 'pearls' among the spies, the IMBs (*Inoffizielle Mitarbeiter zur unmittelbaren Bearbeitung im Verdacht der Feindtätigkeit stehender Personen*), were highly proactive agents; they infiltrated opposition groups and kept an eye on individuals suspected of hostility towards the state and were involved in coordinated campaigns to damage their targets' careers and lives. As they usually enjoyed the trust of such persons, they were in a favourable position to report on their plans and activities. Like Sascha Anderson (IMB 'Fritz Müller') and Reiner Schedlinski (IMB 'Gerhard'), they were integral to the operational subversion strategy.

In 1985, the most common type of agent involved in political-operational work was the IMS (*Inoffizieller Mitarbeiter zur politisch-operativen Durchdringung und Sicherung des Verantwortungsbereiches*). In that year, of the key IM categories, IMSs constituted 84.5 per cent, IMBs 3.3 per cent, IMEs 7.5 per cent and FIMs 4.7 per cent, or, in numerical terms, 112,115. The 30,301 IMKs should be added to this total. As the footsoldiers of the Stasi, the IMSs were expected to contribute towards the assessment and management of security problems in a specific area and to help in answering the fundamental question

¹¹ Interview with Heinz K. in Karau G. 1995: 169.

¹² BStU 1994: 14–18, 31. The number of Criminal Police informers relates to the year 1985.

¹³ Krone T., Kukutz I. and Leide H. 1997: 113.

¹⁴ The guidelines are to be found in Müller-Enbergs H. 1996.

¹⁵ Otto W. 2000: 410–11.

¹⁶ Krone T., Kukutz I. and Leide H. 1997: 113; Gieseke J. 2000: 394; Müller-Enbergs H. 1993: 10.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 5–6.

¹⁸ Schalck-Golodkowski A. 2000: 229–30.

¹⁹ Geiger H. 1993: 60.

MIELKE'S WILLING EAST GERMANS?

'Who is who?'²⁰ In spite of the many differences between the IMs, their main task was to provide information on people's attitudes towards the socialist system, especially those suspected of having contact with 'negative-hostile' forces, and to operate in all areas of public life. Some idea of the comprehensive nature of MfS surveillance of society can be derived from the regional distribution of IMs. In the mid-1980s, there was an average of one IM per 120 inhabitants, ranging from 1 per 80 in the Cottbus Administrative Region (*Bezirk*) to 1 per 159 in the Halle area.²¹ Although it is not easy to account for regional differences, the head of the BStU branch office in Frankfurt/Oder, Stephen Wolf, has attributed Cottbus's leading position to the location in Lusatia of the energy industry.²²

Statistics relating to the proportion of women and young people working for the MfS can only be estimated on the basis of the data of a few Regional Administrations. Of the IMs recruited in 1989 by the Rostock Regional Administration, about 10 per cent were women – a reflection of the patriarchal power structures of the male-dominated ministry – and about 6 per cent were under 18 years of age. Between January and June 1986, 63.5 per cent of IMs in the Karl-Marx-Stadt Regional Administration were employed in the state economy, one in three belonged to the SED and about one in two was aged between 27 and 40 years.²³ Recruiting officers much preferred men to women for a variety of reasons: the heavy burdens already borne by women in the home and at work; women's alleged gossipiness; and the greater ease with which men were able to absent themselves from home for clandestine meetings. Furthermore, the MfS was concerned about controlling officers and female IMs entering into a sexual relationship.²⁴ On the other hand, intelligent and sociable women were perfectly acceptable as IMs if they were prepared to prostitute themselves as part of elaborate 'operational beds' campaigns which targeted foreign journalists, businessmen and conference participants staying at hotels.²⁵ Several dissertations on the use of prostitutes as IMs, especially in the Interhotels, were produced by MfS officers as part of their training at the Law School. Angela Schmole, a researcher at the Gauck Office, draws the conclusion that, given their various activities both as IMs and full-time officials, these women should be regarded as co-perpetrators (*Mittäterinnen*).²⁶

²⁰ Müller-Enbergs H. 1993: 9–10.

²¹ Vollnhals C. 1994: 510. These ratios apply to the IMS, IMB, IME, FIM, IMK and GMS categories in the Regions but not to the IMs and the GMSs in the Main Departments: Müller-Enbergs H. 1993: 10.

²² 'Cottbus war Hochburg der Stasi-Mitarbeiter', *Der Tagesspiegel*, 25 August 2001, p. 15.

²³ Müller-Enbergs H. 1993: 13. According to Schmole, the percentage of female IMs in 1989 ranged from 10 to 16 per cent: Schuole A. 2001: 17.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, 18.

²⁵ Schmole A. 1996: 518–20, 522, 525.

²⁶ Schmole A. 2001: 18–19.

Why did so many East Germans become IMs? Was it the result of coercion, commitment to the state, or expectation of material gain and status enhancement? The MfS was interested in exploring the motivation of informants not as basic research *per se* but as a branch of 'operational psychology', with a view to controlling not only its own staff and informers but also the East German population in general. The ministry had its own psychology unit at the Law School in Golm-Eiche near Potsdam. It organised staff training courses and its graduates produced dissertations on the theory and practice of work with IMs.²⁷ The 1968 and 1979 ministerial guidelines contain an elaborate catalogue of norms for work with IMs and document the secret police's ceaseless but often fruitless and counterproductive search to create an IM system of matchless quality and efficiency. In pursuit of this goal, the guidelines stressed the need for surveillance to be both comprehensive and focused and for IMs to adhere to set targets, deliver accurate reports to their controllers and not to lose their cover.

The ministry was averse to voluntary denunciations. Although 'spite' denunciations constituted a relatively high proportion of information gathered by the Stasi during the 1950s, this declined sharply in the following decades. The MfS preferred to select its own IM candidates and familiarise them with the values and practices of the service in the belief that this would greatly improve the quality and reliability of their work. As early as 1952, one ministry guideline warned: 'Particular care should be taken with those individuals who volunteer their services',²⁸ partly because it feared that they might be imperialist agents. By contrast, the Gestapo was almost entirely dependent on spontaneous denunciations and meetings with informers were rare.²⁹ The difference is frequently attributed to the greater legitimacy enjoyed by the *Volksgemeinschaft* of the Third Reich than that commanded by the SED's form of state socialism. However, the MfS did not entirely ignore 'spite' information, especially in the early years before the ministry had perfected its machinery of surveillance.³⁰

MfS recruiting officers were provided with a template for identifying the personality traits of the 'model' IM: the ability to assess situations, to judge human character, and to reproduce information on situations both quickly and accurately. These characteristics were assembled in so-called recruitment profiles. The utmost importance was attached to individuals who could fulfil

²⁷ Müller-Enbergs H. 1995b: 103–4; Behnke K. 1995: 12–27, 38–42.

²⁸ Cited in Müller-Enbergs H. 1996: 173.

²⁹ Diewald-Kerkmann G. 1995: 55–7.

³⁰ In 1965, according to Gieseke, about 30 to 50 per cent of OV's were based on spontaneous denunciations, whereas IM sources accounted for only 20 per cent. The remainder seem to have come from interrogations by full-time staff and from information supplied by the Soviets. See Gieseke J. 2001: 122–3.

the requirements of a specific task, a goal which, however, was easier to set than to achieve.³¹ Prospective IMs were checked beforehand and information collected from a variety of sources – other IMs, close relatives, work colleagues, neighbours, friends – regarding their political views, personal characteristics and habits, membership of organisations, health, sexual behaviour, contacts in the West and so forth. If the preliminary check was satisfactory, then formal contact could be initiated. The whole process from the initial stage to the final recruitment could last a few weeks or, as was sometimes the case with individuals connected with the churches, five to seven years. The first contact with a recruiting officer might be through an appointment arranged by letter or telephone, directly at work or at home, or via a third party. A pretext was usually found for the first meeting so as not to frighten off the target. Once contact had been made, serious wooing could commence.³² The MfS was anxious that its recruiting officers exuded competence, political commitment and empathy with the candidate, and even that they dressed appropriately. One officer, Reiner Blühel, in a dissertation on the recruitment of homosexuals, stressed the need for ‘stylish, clean clothes as in general homosexuals pay a great deal of attention to their appearance and their approach to other people is often dependent on the way they dress’.³³

Despite the elaborate preparations, the recruitment process often ended in failure. It is estimated that in the 1960s and 1970s only one in three to four attempts succeeded; this ratio improved during the 1980s, partly because SED members were pursued with greater vigour.³⁴ But while many potential informers resisted the recruiting officer, others agreed to cooperate and sign an official commitment – a form of licence to spy. The new recruit assumed a cover name, which might be suggested by the officer or the collaborator, and a personal file was opened. The IM's file was normally divided into three parts: the first contained the oath of commitment and an evaluation of the IM's work, the second the reports submitted by the IM, and, finally, any payments and awards.³⁵ The words of the oath of commitment varied. One example reads: ‘I herewith pledge voluntarily to co-operate actively and with initiative with the Ministry of State Security of the German Democratic Republic. I have chosen the cover name of —’.³⁶ Another might acknowledge socialist norms: ‘I herewith declare myself willing to support the MfS in its activities to secure our socialist state. I will report to the appropriate officer of the MfS all indications of hostile activity. I further declare myself willing to produce official assessments to the best of my ability. I pledge not to divulge to any person conversations and facts that I have become aware of.

³¹ MfS ZA, JHS, no. 24069, ‘Lehrmaterial’, pp. 13, 17, 22–3, 50.

³² Miller B. 1999: 35–7.

³³ MfS ZA, JHS, no. 878/85, 1986, p. 22. Our translation.

³⁴ Geiger H. 1993: 51.

³⁵ Miller B. 1999: 39–40; Krone T., Kukutz I. and Leide H. 1997: 115.

³⁶ Cited in Richie A. 1998: 763.

Cooperation is based on secrecy and for this reason I am choosing the pseudonym Pistol’.³⁷

Not all IMs, especially members of the intelligentsia and the churches, committed themselves in writing. In some cases, like that of Robert Havemann, who served under the cover name ‘Leitz’ in the later 1950s, a written engagement was waived on account of his proven commitment to the communist cause.³⁸ The 1953 guidelines on IMs made allowance for this procedure if it aided recruitment and the establishment of a close bond.³⁹ Many IMs from the churches followed this route, and the absence of a written commitment is one of the props of Manfred Stolpe's argument that he was not aware of his registration as IM ‘Sekretär’ by the Stasi. While not denying regular contacts and discussions with Stasi officers over many years, Stolpe claims that as the top lay official in the Protestant churches, he was ‘an equal partner in negotiations’.⁴⁰

Why then did East Germans from all walks of life cooperate with the Stasi? The motives may be classed under five broad headings: political and ideological conviction; coercion and fear; personal advantage; emotional needs; and a desire to influence official policy. Given the diversity of motives, no uniform type of informant is apparent, an observation which also applies to the ‘spite informers’ of Nazi Germany. There are, however, some indications that, as far as young people are concerned, a feeling of insecurity rooted in a disturbed family milieu and a poor relationship with their parents made many vulnerable to the blandishments of the Stasi's recruitment officers.⁴¹ It is, however, extremely difficult in retrospect to be categorical and precise with regard to the motives of IMs and to draw broad generalisations. One difficulty is that the memoirs of and the many interviews given by informers since the end of the GDR tend towards exculpation and deliberate deception, and suffer from the fragmentation of memory. Secondly, although the contemporary records may provide an antidote to the latter, any interpretation has to take account of the distortions arising from the prism of the ministry's Marxist-Leninist ideology. Furthermore, entries in an IM's files often contain little more than a brief and highly general reference to an individual's motives for cooperation,⁴² and motivation might change over time, perhaps from one of idealism to a more materialistic outlook. As a rule of thumb, cooperation was not usually determined by a single motive; a complex or bundle of motives was usually in operation.

As ‘true believers’ were expected to be the most productive and the most committed workers, the Stasi was keen to recruit those who were well

³⁷ Cited in Geiger H. 1993: 56. Our translation.

³⁸ Miller B. 1999: 39.

³⁹ Müller-Enbergs H. 1996: 212.

⁴⁰ Cited in Miller B. 1999: 81.

⁴¹ This argument is developed in Rieker P. 1998: 308–22.

⁴² Müller-Enbergs H. 1995b: 106.

disposed to the GDR's brand of socialism or who, in Stasi jargon, held Marxist-Leninist convictions and had a scientifically founded image of the enemy. This might be expressed as a pride in the GDR as an anti-fascist, socialist state, supposedly committed to equality, peace and social progress. Even if prospective IMs did not fully subscribe to the GDR's political system and goals, the MfS appreciated that some could be enticed through appeals to their anti-fascist sentiments.⁴³ According to one internal report dating from 1968, political conviction was instrumental in the collaboration of 81 per cent of IMs in Karl-Marx-Stadt.⁴⁴ Given the above-average number of functionaries and SED members who served as IMs, it is perhaps not surprising that this kind of motivation was widespread. And, certainly, many ex-informers continue to stress their high level of support for the GDR system. One IM, Kerstin Kaiser-Nicht, born in 1960 into a family of SED parents, progressed through the Thälmann Pioneers and the FDJ and was recruited while she was a university student. After German unification, she entered the Bundestag as a member of the Party of Democratic Socialism, but stepped down under pressure from her own party when her collaboration became public. When interviewed in 1995, she admitted to regarding her activities on behalf of the Stasi as 'the most normal thing in the world'.⁴⁵ It should also be recalled that several committed communists, for example Robert Havemann and Wolfgang Templin, both of whom later became prominent dissidents, spied for the Stasi.

Whereas the Stasi liked to stress the high ideals of its IMs, it was coy in attributing a significant role to various forms of coercion – whether blackmail, bribery or fear. Internal documents avoided a term like blackmail, opting for euphemisms like 'atonement' for a transgression. The 1958 guidelines advised, in the case of 'negative and hostile' individuals, that coercion should be used only when there was no alternative, and the 1979 guidelines required recruiters to obtain approval from their superiors if they intended to recruit on the basis of 'atonement'.⁴⁶ However, internal materials show that the Stasi was not averse to taking advantage of human weaknesses such as envy, hatred and vanity in the recruitment process⁴⁷ and to recommending recruiters to take advantage of cases where a misdemeanour had not come to light.⁴⁸ So-called 'compromising materials', which were used, for example, in recruiting IMs from 'hostile-negative groups', included 'dependence on drugs, abnormal sexual inclinations and undetected crimes'.⁴⁹

⁴³ MfS ZA, JHS, no. 24069, 'Lehrmaterial', p. 27. This material demonstrates clearly that the MfS readily utilised a range of predispositions, both positive and negative.

⁴⁴ Miller B. 1999: 41.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, 32–3, 41–2.

⁴⁶ Müller-Enbergs H. 1996: 213, 349.

⁴⁷ Richter H. 2001: 273.

⁴⁸ See the training manual, MfS ZA, JHS, no. 24069, 'Lehrmaterial', p. 36.

⁴⁹ Cited in Richter H. 2001: 276. Our translation.

Most young IMs were recruited from among those with previous convictions or the ones who did conform to official norms.⁵⁰ An example of coercion concerns R., a young punk from Halle, who became IMS 'Klaus Müller'. He had received a suspended sentence of one-and-a-half years for trying to escape to the FRG via Czechoslovakia before a second encounter with the authorities after stealing a moped in 1984. Gradually he was drawn into the Stasi net. After an initial meeting with a recruiting officer, the Stasi intervened with the public prosecutor to secure a suspended sentence of two years' instead of seven months' imprisonment. After a period in which he submitted verbal reports on a religious community in Halle, which was a meeting point for punks, he agreed, in 1985, to present written reports under a cover name. In 1988, he became a skinhead, although this did not prevent him from continuing to spy on his friends. He fled to West Germany in September 1989.⁵¹ In general, older people were not so easy to coerce as these younger East Germans as they felt less vulnerable to the failure to 'atone' for past misdemeanours.⁵² The Stasi also preyed on other human frailties. Fear of the disclosure of an adulterous relationship left many vulnerable to blackmail, and jealousy of a neighbour or work colleague persuaded others to enlist.

How compelling were pecuniary rewards, career opportunities and a higher status? Some young people certainly derived a boost from the approaches of the MfS. 'Now I am really important', wrote IM Sandra in her diary.⁵³ Others derived personal satisfaction from their involvement in the state's apparatus of repression. The bait of a university place or a much coveted job tempted some young East Germans into promising to serve the Stasi later in their career. Material rewards, a variety of services, foreign travel and status enhancement appealed to others. Given the shortages endemic in GDR society, many candidates were lured by the promise of a car, an apartment, a telephone or a holiday place. Cash payments were not necessarily a powerful incentive and were frowned upon by the thrifty Stasi. In their 1973 dissertation, three Stasi researchers, Korth, Jonak and Scharbeth, were highly critical of material interests, which they denounced as an egoistic striving for advantage. A stable motivational framework could not be built, so they asserted, 'on such egoistic needs, since they must constantly be fed by ever new rewards'.⁵⁴ One officer, Dirk Kreklau, admitted that material incentives merely reinforced the impression among young football hooligans that 'snooping' was equivalent to 'doing the dirty' on their friends.⁵⁵

⁵⁰ Gries S. and Voigt D. 1998: 117.

⁵¹ Ahrberg E. 1998: 199–207.

⁵² *Ibid.*, 118.

⁵³ Rieker P. 1998: 315.

⁵⁴ Miller B. 1999: 45.

⁵⁵ MfS ZA, JHS, no. 21466, 1989, p. 31. This refers to the recruitment of IMs from among the hooligan element of the Lok Leipzig football club.

IM candidates received a small basic sum of about 20 GDR Marks in return for the use of their apartment for clandestine meetings. This kind of sum could be topped up by payments to IMs of 50, 100 or more Marks for good quality work and information. Considerably higher sums of between 700 and 900 Marks were handed over to some of the collaborators in the GDR opposition. Presents and awards were also forthcoming. Joachim Walther has undertaken a careful assessment of payments to IMs working for Main Department XX/7 in the cultural sphere. According to his findings, regular payments such as the salary of 400 GDR Marks for Reiner Schedlinski from 1985 onwards were not the norm but material rewards undoubtedly helped to reinforce cooperation. The total financial outlay by Main Department XX/7 on IMs in terms of salaries, bonuses, the costs of meetings, payments for the use of a safe house and so forth amounted to 62,100 GDR Marks in 1974. This was above average as the figure tended to hover around 40,000 GDR Marks per annum until 1989.⁵⁶

Since the end of SED rule, some IMs connected with the churches, like Manfred Stolpe, and members of grassroots groups have contended that their dialogue with Stasi officers emanated from a genuine desire to 'prevent the worst', that is, to protect individuals, to promote reform and to improve church-state relations. From this perspective, the Stasi functioned as a substitute for an effective public system of communication feedback. Some former IMs also claim that they sought to use their Stasi contacts in order to alert the authorities to defects in the supply situation, environmental pollution, labour problems, and, in the later 1980s, public support for Gorbachev's reforms. While this blend of altruism and political calculation undoubtedly motivated some IMs, it was usually self-delusion. The Stasi was adept at encouraging IMs to believe that they could indeed influence policy. In fact, IMs who sought to instrumentalise the Stasi were involved in an unequal relationship; they, not the Stasi, were usually the manipulated. There was also the attendant risk of entering into a labyrinth of double allegiance in which friend and foe, as well as the private and the political, became inextricably entwined.

Finally, whereas some candidate IMs enjoyed the thrill of doing glamorous-sounding secret work, others were attracted by feelings of security and a sense of belonging. Once again, Stasi recruitment officers and handlers skilfully manipulated these needs, as Klaus Behnke has illustrated from the biography of a former IM, Renate. She was recruited at the age of 17 with the promise of help in obtaining a study place. Renate informed on the activities of an ecological group. Her work as an IM and the contacts with her MfS officer provided her, at first, with the emotional security which was missing in her family life. Her parents quarrelled frequently and she lacked a close emotional bond with them.⁵⁷ She had no positive role models and as a child was

afraid of coming into conflict with the authorities. As she stated in a post-1989 interview: 'I have always done what I was told'.⁵⁸ Analogous to Renate's experiences is the well-known case of Monika Haeger, who spied on the Initiative for Peace and Human Rights in East Berlin. An orphan with a disturbed childhood, she also found emotional security and recognition in the MfS. As she explained in an interview shortly after the collapse of the GDR: '... the Stasi gave me roots. It seemingly gave me security... Day and night I could ring and my contact officer Detlef always had time for me'.⁵⁹

It is extremely difficult to determine the relative weighting of the various types of motives for becoming an agent whether from IM statements or from their own Stasi files. It is, however, clear that a combination of motives was usually behind collaboration and, secondly, that the Stasi's search for true believers enjoyed some success. Helmut Müller Enbergs, a member of the Gauck Authority's research team, has uncovered a 1967 dissertation which emanated from the Law School. The empirical work was based on what was claimed by the author, M. Hempel, to be a representative sample of IMs in the Stasi's Potsdam Regional Administration. A clear majority identified political-ideological factors as decisive for their collaboration. A 'recognition of societal needs' was mentioned by 60.5 per cent (83 per cent by those who were SED members), followed by a frequency of 49.1 per cent (68.5 per cent by SED members) for 'moral constraints and duty'. Only 27.4 per cent specified 'personal advantages' and 23.4 per cent 'experience of pressure and duress'. However, if one adds the 22.1 per cent who mentioned the latter as a secondary element in their motivation, then almost half were motivated by fear and pressure.⁶⁰ There are a number of comments and qualifications to be made about these findings: they refer to only one investigation in one region in the later 1960s and it is therefore difficult to draw generalisations for other areas and time periods; and the high rating for political motives accords perhaps too conveniently with official positions. However, the data are by no means an unvarnished replication of official norms and goals, as can be seen in the Stasi author's reference to 'experience of pressure and duress' as 'unexpectedly high'.⁶¹

Hempel's dissertation is also valuable for the attention it draws to the changes in motivation during the period of collaboration. At the time of the field study, the 'recognition of societal needs' had risen to 78 per cent and 'experience of pressure and duress' had fallen to 12.6 per cent as main elements of motivation since recruitment; and the number of IMs who originally had harboured reservations had fallen from 50 per cent to 28.6 per

⁵⁶ Walther J. 1996: 506.

⁵⁷ Fuchs J. 1998: 178-82.

⁵⁸ Fuchs J. 1998: 193.

⁵⁹ Cited in Dennis M. 2000: 220.

⁶⁰ Müller-Enbergs H. 1995b: 120-22.

⁶¹ *Ibid.*, 121.

cent.⁶² Such positive results notwithstanding, the turnover of the ministry's stock of IMs was relatively high. Between 1985 and 1988, about 10 per cent of IMs ceased to work for the Stasi; they were, however, replaced by a similar proportion. Thus in 1985, 11,749 new IMs were recruited and 11,335 departed.⁶³ When an IM broke off contact with the Stasi, this did not automatically result in some form of punitive action but it did entail the loss of many advantages, whether the prospect of a flat, a better job or financial rewards.⁶⁴ During the 1980s, several investigations in Regional Administrations revealed that the Stasi itself was responsible for the majority of terminations. Of the recorded terminations in the Frankfurt/Oder Regional Administration between 1981 and 1985, an unofficial collaboration was broken off in 63 per cent of the cases because the IM was unsuitable for operational work on account of age, illness and similar reasons; 10 per cent of the terminations resulted from a loss of cover and 11 per cent from the agent's dishonesty or unreliability.⁶⁵ Poor quality intelligence was another major factor.

THE WORK OF AN IM

An IM could expect to meet his or her contact officer every few weeks; sometimes, this had to be more frequent. While most meetings took place in 'safe houses', restaurants and parks were also used. These clandestine meetings were the main form of communication between controller and IM. The officer prepared each meeting in advance and sought to steer the IM towards the relevant issues. Usually well versed in the arts of human management, the officer was often successful in establishing a relationship of trust and dependence on the part of the IM.⁶⁶ Time and again, MfS training materials and dissertations on work with IMs emphasise the importance of close and regular contacts between controller and agent for a productive collaboration. But too positive a picture should not be painted as contact between controller and IM was frequently disrupted by informers failing to keep appointments. Additional problems included controllers' lack of empathy with their charges on account of discrepancies in age and personality, the 'necessary evil' of a change of controller, and a failure to define tasks precisely.⁶⁷ IMs, too, fell foul of the GDR's elastic penal code, committing a variety of offences for which they were interrogated by the officers of Main Department IX.⁶⁸

⁶² Müller-Enbergs H. 1995b: 122.

⁶³ Ibid., 123; Müller-Enbergs H. 1993: 8. The 1985 figures relate to the IMS, IMB, IME and FIM categories.

⁶⁴ Müller-Enbergs H. 2000: 192-4; also Schröter U. 1994: 11.

⁶⁵ Müller-Enbergs H. 1995b: 124.

⁶⁶ Ibid.

⁶⁷ MfS ZA, JHS, no. 20113, 1984, pp. 17-19, 24, 28, 31, 33, 42, 47.

⁶⁸ MfS ZA, VVS JHS 00001-343/84, 1985, pp. 54, 75, 93-4.

The reports of the meeting or *Treff*⁶⁹ could be delivered in various forms, depending on the situation and the individuals concerned. Written reports were signed in the IM's cover name and put in his/her file. A second option, a tape-recorded document, could be used by the contact officer as the basis of his final report; the source is identified by the IM's cover name. A controller sometimes assembled information from various reports. Initially, if an IM provided information over the telephone, this was registered as a telephone report (*telephonische Mitschrift*). Reports on meetings compiled by controllers are not always reliable as the officer may have misunderstood the IM or simply compiled an inaccurate record. While the contents of reports were often banal, they could be highly damaging as they sometimes contained intimate details on individuals. Only a small number of IMs, perhaps 5 per cent in the later 1980s, were engaged in highly elaborate campaigns such as OV's and OPK's.⁷⁰ IMs were subject to stringent security checks. Their reports were compared with those of other IMs and should they be suspected of unreliability, then their mail might be opened and their apartments bugged.

The ratio of IMs⁷¹ to control officers fluctuated between 11 in 1985 and 9 in 1988. The main burden of IM work fell on the shoulders of the Regional and District Service units. *In toto*, 12,000 Stasi officers controlled the ministry's IMs; about 50 per cent were run by the regions and districts, the remainder by the central departments in East Berlin. Considerable regional variations prevailed: in 1986, the ratio of IMs to controlling officers in the Regional Administrations was 13.4 in Cottbus, 10.1 in Erfurt and 7.4 in Gera.⁷² How often did IMs and contact officers meet? No definitive answer can be given, but materials from the local units provide some idea. The District and Object Service Units in Jena had an average of 646 IMs/GMS in January-September 1989 and 3,920 meetings are recorded. In the Jena District, an IM/GMS met with a contact officer once in every six weeks. Almost half of the meetings took place in a safe house. The Stasi judged that about 25 per cent of information supplied by informers was of operational significance.⁷³

A SOCIETY OF SPIES AND INFORMERS?

With over 250,000 agents and officers working for the Stasi in any given year in the later 1980s and with many others cooperating at various times as informers not only for the ministry but also for the party and the Criminal

⁶⁹ For the following details, see Krone T., Kukutz I. and Leide H. 1997: 20 and Geiger H. 1993: 63-4.

⁷⁰ Ibid., 63.

⁷¹ The sub-IM categories consist of IMS, IMB, IME and FIM.

⁷² Müller-Enbergs H. 1993: 10-11; also Geiger H. 1993: 46.

⁷³ Müller-Enbergs H. 1993: 13-14.

Police, East Germans appeared to be a nation of spies. Whatever an individual's motives, the SED had created a system which was conducive to collaboration with the MfS as well as conformity in public by prioritising the collective over the individual, by the sanctioning of actions which violated certain basic moral codes and by fostering the belief that 'Big Brother was watching'. As long as the Soviet Union was determined to maintain its East German outpost and while the Western powers condoned Soviet hegemony there – as in 1953 and 1961 – then most East Germans had little option but to come to some kind of arrangement with the state. Indeed, most opted for outward conformity which, in the case of those like the biologist Jens Reich who were not conformists out of conviction, meant having to live with various forms of inner conflict.⁷⁴ But like Reich, most East Germans were not Mielke's willing operatives and many rejected the wooing of recruiting officers. For example, in the Neubrandenburg Regional Administration, out of 5,764 efforts to enlist new IMs between 1970 and 1980, 1,851 collapsed.⁷⁵ Unfortunately, it cannot be said how many East Germans were *refuseniks* (*Verweigerer*) as the MfS did not carry out any comprehensive statistical analyses. Where reliable records do exist, for example, for the preliminary stage of recruitment, some Regional Administrations registered minors as contact persons, not as IMs. Moreover, it is frequently difficult to determine the precise nature of the termination of a contact between an officer and a potential IM when an approach never went beyond the initial feelers.⁷⁶

Numerous counterstrategies were implemented by potential IMs who had been targeted by the Stasi. The first example concerns an engineer who, in 1962, had been imprisoned as a student on account of an unauthorised visit to the West. When, 11 years later, he was imprisoned for his part in the collapse of a bridge, he refused to work as an informant in return for his release.⁷⁷ Although outright refusal to serve as an IM was not the norm, examples can be found in the Stasi files, such as the statement 'I will not work with the red Gestapo' recorded by a recruitment officer.⁷⁸ The Stasi records also reveal 'Tomzig' refusing to become an IM as he had devoted his life to God and 'Oswald' protesting he would never 'do the dirty on his mates'.⁷⁹ In the autumn of 1971, MfS officers sought to recruit a medical student by threatening him with the charge of incitement hostile to the state on account of his sympathy for the Prague Spring. He refused to collaborate: 'I cannot reconcile that with my conscience. They have got incriminating material against me. I have put it in writing myself and then they can do with

me what they like, lock me up, that is better for me than cooperating with them'.⁸⁰ Political reasons have also been unearthed. A punk, 'Karl', made no secret of his negative attitude towards the state and the MfS.⁸¹ However, as in the case of the engineer cited above, resisting the Stasi's embrace required courage, determination and deviousness and it often resulted in periods of acute stress. Refusal, even when outright, was normally couched in a guarded manner in order to avoid negative repercussions. Ill-health was a common pretext.⁸²

Andreas Schmidt has uncovered other examples of IM candidates who told the recruiting officer that they had no interest in cooperating with the Stasi, found excuses for not keeping appointments, withheld confidential information, provided only positive reports about their contacts, or dragged things out.⁸³ Many simply did not want to 'snoop' or, as one candidate exclaimed, to grass on close friends and relatives. By refusing to collaborate with the Stasi, it has been argued by Jürgen Fuchs that some East Germans were unwilling to work with a traitor, that is, with themselves. Schmidt quotes from the report of a recruiting office on the cat-and-mouse game played by one potential recruit. In order to avoid collaboration, he invited his wife to sit in on the discussions, insisted that the officer leave the house when his cup of tea arrived, and claimed to have no worthwhile information.⁸⁴ A married couple, the 'Radebeuls' employed similar tactics when a recruiting officer sought to use their apartment for clandestine meetings. They pleaded that this was inappropriate as they were about to refurbish the apartment and their children were in the habit of visiting them unannounced.⁸⁵ A doctor, who had been observed while making preparations for flight to the West, was pressed into service in 1975 as IMS 'Wolf'. During his meetings with MfS controllers over the next two years, he spent most of the time trying to withdraw from collaboration. The ministry's final report in 1977 included a reference to these tactics as well as to his bourgeois views, his church connections and his questioning of the leading role of the SED.⁸⁶ Another tactic was to declare a willingness to cooperate formally but not to do so in a conspiratorial manner as, in the case of 'Hermann', this did not accord with his moral standards.⁸⁷

One favourite method was to break the conspiracy and reveal the Stasi's overtures to parents, work colleagues, teachers and so forth. Sonia Süß has described conspiracy as 'the elixir of life' of an unofficial collaboration.⁸⁸ In

⁷⁴ Reich became one of the co-founders in 1989 of the opposition group New Forum.

⁷⁵ Müller-Enbergs H. 1995a: 9.

⁷⁶ Müller-Enbergs H. 2000: 167–71.

⁷⁷ Gauck J. 1998: 10.

⁷⁸ Müller-Enbergs H. 2000: 175.

⁷⁹ *Ibid.*, 184.

⁸⁰ Cited from the final report on OV 'Foto' by Süß S. 1999: 256. Our translation.

⁸¹ Müller-Enbergs H. 2000: 188.

⁸² *Ibid.*, 176.

⁸³ Schmidt A. 1995: 170–73.

⁸⁴ *Ibid.*, 175–6.

⁸⁵ Müller-Enbergs H. 2000: 177–8.

⁸⁶ Süß S. 1999: 255–6.

⁸⁷ Müller-Enbergs H. 2000: 182.

⁸⁸ Süß S. 1999: 256.

the case of the 16-year-old 'Igel', his mother went directly to the local District Service Unit to express her objections. The recruitment officer commented in his report that 'Igel's immaturity and the negative political influence of his parents meant that he would not be able to preserve the necessary secrecy and was therefore unsuitable as an IM'.⁸⁹ The failure to meet a candidate's needs can also be found in the sources as a reason for termination. 'Ernst' withdrew his offer to cooperate when he discovered that he would not be able to leave the GDR to spy in West Germany.⁹⁰

Most of these cases demonstrate that East Germans had not surrendered their individuality and their moral scruples and that it was possible to frustrate the Stasi.⁹¹ Refusing to work for the Stasi did not usually lead to transparent disadvantages, with the notable exception of cadres whose work required them to visit the West. However, there can be no doubt that targets were worried about the negative repercussions, a factor which recruiting officers sought to turn to their advantage, sometimes threatening their targets with the possibility of criminal prosecution. While this was rather of psychological than of practical significance after the erection of the Berlin Wall, IMs who, especially in the 1950s, broke their cover were charged with the betrayal of secrets. Moreover, since the disappearance of the GDR, some refuseniks believe that they were disadvantaged, even though this often cannot be substantiated by archival material.

Part IV

HUNTING FOR THE ENEMY

⁸⁹ Müller-Enbergs H. 2000: 180–81. Our translation.

⁹⁰ *Ibid.*, 190.

⁹¹ See Geiger H. 1993: 55, Miller B. 1999: 48; Müller-Enbergs H. 2000: 180–82, 190, 194.