

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.

MONITOR AND FIREFIGHTER

A UBIQUITOUS ENEMY

Chapters 8 to 11 are designed to assess the Stasi's role on the home front as an organ of surveillance, repression and ideological policing as well as its function as an economic firefighter and moral guardian. Whereas Chapters 8 and 9 concentrate on the Stasi's surveillance and protection of spheres which come broadly under the umbrella of the public sector such as culture, sport and the economy, Chapters 10 and 11 focus on those areas and groups which lay outside the immediate domain of the party and state administration, notably the evangelical churches, the Jehovah's Witnesses, the peace movement and fringe youth sub-cultures. The linkage between the four chapters is the Stasi's tunnelling into all sectors of society and its ruthless determination to expose and, where necessary, thwart all enemies, whether potential or actual, of the socialist order. The Stasi dictionary of political-operational terms compiled for officers described this vital task as follows:

As a whole, fulfilling the main task of the MfS must produce results to put strategic and tactical information at the disposal of the party, to expose the enemy in his bases in the Operation Area, to disrupt and combat him, to prevent hostile activities directed against the GDR, to unmask internal enemies and to ensure the security of the GDR in all situations and to prevent damage and actions hostile to the GDR by means of preventive measures, greater vigilance, discipline and order.¹

The same source also provided staff with the authoritative definition of the enemy as:

Persons who in groups or as individuals intentionally develop political-ideological attitudes and views that are alien to socialism and who strive to implement these attitudes and views in practice by deliberately creating occurrences and conditions that endanger or damage the socialist state and society generally or specifically.²

¹ Cited in Suckut S. 1996: 169. Our translation.

² Cited in *ibid.*, 121. Our translation.

The lexicon's militant language was a legacy of the fierce struggle between the German Communists and National Socialists and of the imprint of Stalinist totalitarianism on the mentality of members of the East German service class. It was also a product of the titanic clash between communism and capitalism during the Cold War, at least until the onset of détente moderated the language of political conflict of the SED, if not of the Stasi.³ On the border between the two antagonistic systems, the GDR was ultra-sensitive to shifts in East-West relations and, uncomfortably aware of the many attractions of the West German model for East Germans, its leaders were constantly looking for signs of infiltration by the West. Even in the later 1980s, the MfS was still adhering to a simplistic and outmoded explanation of the causes of opposition and widespread popular dissatisfaction, attributing it to deliberate targeting by the imperialists. While the Stasi lexicon and official guidelines were written in bureaucratic and soulless jargon, the language could be crude and emotional when the mask slipped. An off-the-record statement by Mielke at a service meeting in February 1988 illustrates this point. Putting his manuscript to one side, he denounced would-be emigrants as 'bandits';⁴ 18 months later, he was even coarser, referring to them as 'filthy swine'.⁵

The image of the 'enemy' encompassed a wide range of non-conformist behaviour which was regarded by the ministry as having 'hostile-negative' potential but which in a less authoritarian society would be far less likely to attract the attention of the secret police state. The MfS understood by 'negative' persons all those who were 'deviants from the party line, held different views and were unreliable and uncommitted'.⁶ Although a distinction was drawn between loosely structured 'negative groups' and the more tightly organised 'hostile groups', in practice it was difficult to keep them separate and the Stasi often used the hyphenated term 'hostile-negative'. 'Negative' groups were described in the dictionary as: 'loose associations of mostly young people with relatively similar interpretations of life and morals that deviate from the socialist way of life and also with views lacking clarity and conviction that are in part politically-ideologically negative'.⁷ These groups were unstable and the youngsters belonging to them typically gathered together on street corners and in pubs, parks and clubs. In the eyes of the Stasi, their 'spontaneous' behaviour represented a danger for public order and safety which could rapidly develop into acts of terror and 'attacks on the state border'. A 'hostile' group, which was regarded by the Stasi as posing the greater threat, was defined as a 'number of people who aim to carry

out acts hostile to the Constitution or together plan, prepare, attempt or perpetrate one or more crimes against the state. Hostile groups are in direct communication with each other and, over time, develop a group structure'.⁸

Notions of the 'enemy', as internalised by MfS officers, reinforced stereotyping and served as an instrument of repression. A physicist at the University of Leipzig, Günter Fritsch, was told by MfS prison staff: 'You are wrong, in here there is no democracy, dictatorship rules in our state, the dictatorship of the proletariat. This is irreconcilable class war. You are our class enemy'.⁹ This kind of antagonism was upheld as one of the main characteristics of a Chekist. Hatred was described in the MfS dictionary as 'an essential determining component of Chekist feelings, one of the decisive bases for the passionate and irreconcilable struggle against the enemy', a struggle which was not just simply a matter of loathing but was bound up with the need to 'destroy' or to 'harm' him.¹⁰

The Stasi image of the enemy was grounded in the theory that psychological characteristics are determined by external conditions and influences rather than by internal or cognitive factors. While in accordance with the regime's Marxist-Leninist ideology in that socialist society allegedly provided the pre-conditions for the development of all-round and productive personalities, the MfS, like other state and party bodies, had to account for behaviour and attitudes which deviated from the norm and made people susceptible to the influence of the enemy. Among the factors identified by the Stasi as conducive to such actions and attitudes were petty bourgeois egoism and careerism, anti-social or criminal behaviour and grumbling.¹¹ Those conditions in the GDR which enabled the imperialists to conduct political-ideological subversion against socialist society were regarded primarily as the 'relics' of the exploitative capitalism of an earlier age. Although the MfS stubbornly persisted in this interpretation, it was, however, difficult to explain away the country's problems simply by reference to the capitalist legacy and to external steering by the imperialist enemy. A recognition of this dilemma can be seen in several dissertations written by officers during their studies at the Stasi Law School which tentatively acknowledged that GDR society produced a number of internal 'contradictions' which caused distortions in the development of personality. Among these contradictions were poor quality accommodation, restrictions on travel and inadequate services. Such contradictions were not deemed to be 'antagonistic' in Marxist-Leninist terms but as capable of being rectified within the parameters of the existing social and political order.

³ See Suckut's observations in Suckut S. 1996: 18–19.

⁴ Bergmann C. 1997: 29.

⁵ Mitter A. and Wölle S. 1990: 134.

⁶ Bergmann C. 1997: 30–31.

⁷ Suckut S. 1996: 166. Our translation.

⁸ Suckut S. 1996: 163. Our translation.

⁹ Cited in Bergmann C. 1997: 33. Our translation.

¹⁰ Suckut S. 1996: 168. Our translation.

¹¹ Richter H. 2001: 160–62, 165.

TACKLING THE ENEMY – QUIET REPRESSION AND PREVENTIVE DECOMPOSITION

In the age of détente, the Stasi's main method of combating subversive activity was 'operational decomposition' (*operative Zersetzung*), which was the central element in what Hubertus Knabe has called a system of 'quiet repression' (*lautlose Unterdrückung*).¹² This was not a new departure as 'dirty tricks' had been widely used in the 1950s and 1960s. The distinctive feature was the primacy of operational decomposition over other methods of repression in a system to which historians have attached labels such as post-totalitarianism and modern dictatorship. This form of rule emerged out of the Stalinist era and, although the methods of control were less brutal and repressive than in the late 1940s and the 1950s, the GDR of the Honecker years was nevertheless a dictatorship of the party elites in which coercion and injustice were endemic. The concentration on so-called 'softer forms' of control in the 1970s and 1980s can be attributed to a series of interrelated factors: the stabilisation of the GDR since the mid-1960s; the greater sensitivity of SED leaders to the population's needs, not least the desire for a higher standard of living; the counterproductive nature of terroristic methods; the frail legitimacy of the less prosperous 'other Germany' in the East; and the GDR's search for international recognition. Although the GDR succeeded in ending its diplomatic isolation in the first half of the 1970s, closer relations with the West were a mixed blessing as it produced a massive increase in Western visitors. Furthermore, the signing of the Helsinki Accords of 1975 committed the GDR leaders to tolerating even greater movement across borders as well as guarantees for human rights. In this context, arbitrary acts and open repression appeared to threaten the gains derived from détente. Even Mielke had to adapt to the need for a more flexible system of control. He put this in his usual blunt fashion in a speech delivered in 1985: 'You know that, for political as well as operational reasons, we cannot immediately arrest all enemies, although the purely legal prerequisites exist. We know these enemies, have them under control and know what they are planning'.¹³ Operational decomposition was particularly appropriate for tackling those opposition groups who were associated with the churches or who had links with the West and therefore had a limited protection from more blatant forms of state repression.

The MfS dictionary summarised the goal of operational decomposition as 'splitting up, paralysing, disorganising and isolating hostile-negative forces in order, through preventive action, to foil, considerably reduce or stop completely hostile-negative actions and their consequences or, in a varying

¹² Knabe H. 2000: 92.

¹³ Cited in Knabe H. 2000: 94. Our translation.

degree, to win them back both politically and ideologically'.¹⁴ The kind of measures which the ministry employed can be found in documents such as the 1976 guidelines on operational cases,¹⁵ and included: the systematic compromising and isolation of a target by means of rumour, disinformation and deception concerning alleged immorality, excessive drinking, an 'unclean past' and spying for the West; undermining their professional and personal reputation; creating fear and uncertainty through frequent telephone calls at night, inserting fictitious adverts in newspapers, sending anonymous letters, and burglary. Some victims have claimed that the MfS deliberately poisoned food and drove its 'targets' to contemplate suicide.¹⁶ Other nefarious methods involved telephone tapping and the interception of mail, dangling the bait of travel to the West and promotion at work, provoking disagreements among opposition groups, and the criminalisation of offences such as alleged tax evasion and the disturbance of public order. Targets were also subjected to restrictions on their movement, the withdrawal of a driving licence and illegal house searches.

OPERATIONAL MEASURES

As discussed in Chapter 5, the search for more flexible and more efficient forms of control resulted in the widespread use of operational personal checks (*Operative Personenkontrollen* – OPKs) and integrated operational clandestine campaigns or, for short, operational cases (*Operative Vorgänge* – OV). If initial enquiries revealed indications of hostile-negative attitudes or of a crime, an operational person check could be instigated. In 1988, the MfS carried out 19,169 such cases. Of some 8,000 which were concluded, 87.5 per cent failed to produce evidence of 'undesirable' attitudes or actions, 4 per cent formed the basis for the recruitment of an informer and 8.5 per cent led to an operational case.¹⁷ Although the most important sources of information were IMs, the German People's Police, local authority departments and state enterprises also helped out. Lars Klinberg, a student at the Humboldt University in East Berlin, was the target of an operational personal check. IM reports revealed that he was opposed to the GDR election system and military training and an admirer of the West German Greens.¹⁸ A check, initiated in 1986, sought to expose the nature of his contacts with the West, to ascertain whether he had committed a criminal offence, and to discover whether he was in possession of 'pseudo-pacifist' literature and fascist texts such as *Mein Kampf*. Although the Stasi was convinced that Klinberg held negative views,

¹⁴ Suckut S. 1996: 422. Our translation.

¹⁵ The relevant sections are printed in Gill D. and Schröter U. 1991: 390–91.

¹⁶ Knabe H. 2000: 100.

¹⁷ Vollnhals C. 1994: 510–11.

¹⁸ See Raschka J. 2001: 22, 152–65.

the enquiry failed to produce evidence of a crime. Consequently, although the MfS Department XX/3 in East Berlin, which was responsible for Klinberg's case, was unable to implement measures designed to 'prevent' an offence, Klinberg was disciplined by his university department and forced to participate in a military training course.

If an operational personal check discovered evidence of hostile-negative actions or an intention to commit an offence which infringed the Criminal Code, then an operational case (OV) could be initiated to furnish proof. This was the most elaborately organised and comprehensive form of surveillance conducted by the ministry and was usually the culmination of a series of checks and enquiries. An operational case could also be set in motion even if the names of the persons who had committed an offence were unknown. Sometimes several cases were combined together in what the Stasi called a central operational case (*Zentraler Operativer Vorgang* – ZOV). As with an operational personal check, a detailed plan set out the goals of the OV, the measures to be implemented, the forms of cooperation with other organs of state, and how informers were to be used. Enemy intentions and actions, it was stressed, were to be identified and dealt with as quickly as possible.¹⁹ Between 1985 and 1988, the Stasi conducted about 4,500 to 5,000 OVs per year.²⁰

The MfS bureaucracy devoted its usual attention to detail in ministerial guidelines no. 1/76 on the 'Processing of Operational Cases'.²¹ The guidelines stressed the need for smooth cooperation between controlling officers and IMs – the main instrument for carrying out a case – and for ensuring that the data gathered by informers shed light on the motives of persons under surveillance. Through bureaucratic precision, the ministry aimed to obtain 'value for money' from all the effort expended on accumulating the vast amount of information in an OV.

The decomposition measures referred to earlier were an essential ingredient of OVs and, according to the 1976 guidelines, were 'to be applied, extended and further developed in a creative and differentiated' manner according to the 'concrete conditions' of each case.²² An OV was terminated either when proof of a crime was obtained or if an offence could be prevented. In the harsh language of a 1985 regulation relating to a central operational case, the criteria for termination included 'undermining, paralysing or rendering harmless the hostile forces in such a way that they only carry out their hostile activities at a low level of intensity and danger to society or they are not capable of any acute subversive activity so that they can be dealt with or controlled by different methods'.²³

¹⁹ Suckut S. 1996: 281.

²⁰ Raschka J. 2001: 23.

²¹ See Fricke K. W. 1991: 114, 123, 127.

²² *Ibid.*, 127.

²³ Cited in Fuchs J. 1997: 12–13. Our translation.

The nature of the more sophisticated though insidious methods of the Honecker era can be appreciated from the final report compiled in 1984 on OV 'Kreuz' against pastor Dietmar Linke. The document, which was compiled by the Strausberg District Service Unit in the Frankfurt/Oder Regional Administration, listed some of the measures used against Linke and his wife:

The Linkes lost their credibility as Christians and holders of Church office when they were targeted by measures to incriminate them. So recently there have been more and more rumours about selfishness, embezzlement and the venality of the Linkes... The proof of the hostile-negative activities of the Linkes was documented and prepared as decomposition and differentiation measures to stir up dissension within the Church...²⁴

Although the MfS was unable to discredit Linke in the eyes of his congregation and it decided not to initiate criminal proceedings for fear of turning him into a martyr, the pressures exerted by the state and the Stasi's decomposition measures forced the Linkes into leaving the GDR. The report concluded, not without a note of sadistic satisfaction: 'Both are unemployed in West Berlin and have no fixed abode. They receive support only from the Church'.²⁵

Like the Linkes, other victims of operational cases often had to cope for many years with surveillance and discrimination and frequently suffered from persecution mania and other symptoms which damaged their health. Among the many notable instances of this type of campaign were OV 'Lyrik' and OV 'Ecke' against the writers Reiner Kunze and Gabriele Eckart respectively. Kunze came into conflict with the SED over his positive attitude towards the Prague Spring and over his publications, notably *Die wunderbaren Jahre*. The latter, a collection of short stories and poems concerning the everyday problems of young East Germans, confirmed the Stasi in its view of Kunze as an enemy of the GDR. The publication of excerpts from his Stasi files in 1990 reveal that his phone had been tapped, his mail intercepted, his foreign contacts scrutinised, his movements observed by his neighbours and his wife's professional reputation besmirched.²⁶ Gabriele Eckart, who, ironically, had once spied on Kunze, became a Stasi target herself on account of her 'negative-hostile' attitude in association with a book published in West Germany – *So sehe ich die Sache* – which provided a realistic picture of GDR workers on a fruit farm. Before finally receiving permission to leave the GDR, she suffered several house searches and physical attack.²⁷

²⁴ Cited in Raschka J. 2001: 173. Our translation.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, 174. Our translation.

²⁶ See *Deckname 'Lyrik'* 1990.

²⁷ Walther J. 1996: 710–12.

WRITERS AND ARTISTS

The surveillance of culture and the mass media was the responsibility of four desks of Department 7 within Main Department HA XX, which worked together with regional units to combat political-ideological diversion and political underground activity. In the eyes of the Stasi – as well as of the party leadership – cultural and political issues were intertwined. SED leaders like Honecker fondly hoped that the cultural intelligentsia would be fervent protagonists of peace and socialism among the masses. The relationship between party and writers did not accord with this idyll and cultural policy fluctuated between periods of thaw and frost. Mielke and his Stasi colleagues regarded many of the GDR's writers as Trojan horses of 'counterrevolution', fearing that the enemies of the GDR might persuade the writers that socialism could be made 'more humane' by open criticism and by the formation of an internal opposition. The Hungarian Uprising of 1956 and the Prague Spring of 1968 were cited as examples of how 'hostile-negative forces' conducted political-ideological diversion among writers and artists in order to foster revisionism and counterrevolution.²⁸ Mielke's perception of the potential threat posed by critical GDR writers is reflected in a pronouncement made in 1966: 'If Heym and his ilk and artists were in power, then we would soon see the GDR gobbled up'.²⁹ It is not surprising that Stefan Heym, Christa Wolf and other critical writers and artists were treated as actual or potential enemies despite professions of loyalty to socialism and to the GDR. However, the MfS had to move cautiously as these writers were well known in the West and their work helped to boost the GDR's international reputation.

The MfS did not develop a special unit devoted to writers until Main Department XX/7 was founded in late 1969. The impact of détente and the furore surrounding the expatriation in 1976 of Wolf Biermann, a highly satirical writer and singer and a *bête noire* of the Stasi, culminated in the creation two years later of a special desk in the Main Department, which was responsible until 1982 for the key areas of publishing and the Writers' Union. During the 1980s, desk 4 of Main Department XX/7, desk 7 in the Regional Administrations and Main Department XX/9 investigated political underground activity in the literary sphere. In terms of numbers, the 27 full-time officials employed by Main Department XX/7 in 1980 rose to 40 in 1989, that is, from 8.7 per cent to 9.7 per cent of all officials in the department.³⁰ Joachim Walther has uncovered 379 IMs who worked for Main Department XX/7 in 1975 and about 600 IMs at regional level in 1968. To these should be added approximately 500 in the District Service Units. The estimated total of about 1,500 IMs in the cultural sphere probably changed little throughout

the Honecker era. The Stasi's thorough infiltration of the literary sphere can be illustrated in many ways. For example, in 1989, 49 out of the 123 members of the executive of the Writers' Union had been or still were Stasi collaborators, and 12 out of the 19 members of the Presidium were former or current IMs.³¹ Hermann Kant, who was President of the Writers' Union from 1978 to 1990 and the writer of several highly-regarded novels, notably *Die Aula* (1965) and *Der Aufenthalt* (1976), served as a Stasi informer for many years.³² IMs were installed in *belles lettres* publishing houses such as *Aufbau Verlag* and *Mitteldeutscher Verlag* in order to influence publishing programmes. One notable IM, Paul Wiens, was the editor-in-chief of the GDR's most important literary journal, *Sinn und Form*. As IM 'Dichter', he spied on fellow East German writers such as Christa Wolf, Volker Braun and Stephan Hermlin.

One of the most notorious informers, Sascha Anderson (IMB 'Fritz Müller'), belonged to the pearls among informers – the IMBs – whose various tasks accorded with the ministry's strategy of silent repression and operational decomposition. They were to paralyse, undermine and disrupt the structure of a particular group or individual. Anderson, a gifted poet, was groomed by the Stasi for his future role. In the early 1980s, he established contact with East Berlin's alternative sub-cultures and by about the middle of the decade had become one of the most influential figures among the writers and artists in the Prenzlauer Berg area. Anderson's main goal was the de-politicisation of this artistic community. He eventually moved to West Berlin where he spied on the city's colony of former GDR artists and opposition figures such as Roland Jahn and Jürgen Fuchs.

Not only did the MfS pursue writers in the public arena but the heterogeneous alternative sub-cultural scene in the Prenzlauer Berg district of East Berlin and other cities of the GDR, notably Leipzig and Dresden, also attracted its attention. Artists, musicians and writers struggled to create a counter-public in private houses, galleries and churches for the production of ideas and forms of expression which did not conform to official concepts of culture and, in the eyes of the Stasi, represented a conduit for political-ideological diversion and political underground activity. According to Klaus Michael, an estimated 5 to 10 per cent of members of the sub-cultural scene worked for the ministry,³³ and in some cases the Stasi even created its own alternative groupings.

The cooperation of so many writers and cultural functionaries with the security forces is not peculiar to the GDR; Western agencies also covertly funded and co-opted writers, painters and musicians, both at home and abroad. Why so many East German writers collaborated with the MfS can be explained by reference to the complex of motives identified elsewhere in this

²⁸ Walther J. 1996: 33.

²⁹ Cited in *ibid.*, 51. Our translation.

³⁰ *Ibid.*, 179.

³¹ Walther J. 1996: 557–8.

³² Corino K. 1995.

³³ Kaiser P. and Petzold C. 1997: 84.

book, although it is extremely difficult to pinpoint the actual drives behind an individual's collaboration. For example, claims since 1990 by some writers that they were working, through their MfS contacts, for the higher goal of constructing socialism may be little more than an exercise in self-deception and self-justification. On the other hand, it seems that the GDR's most famous writer, Christa Wolf (IM 'Margarete'), collaborated for a brief period, between 1959 and 1962, out of a somewhat naïve ideological conviction and with little apparent benefit to the Stasi. Her thin IM file contrasts sharply with the voluminous files which the Stasi later kept on her and her husband Gerhard for over three decades as part of the ministry's OV 'Doppelzüngler'. Meetings with her controllers were infrequent and she was not implicated in any denigration or harassment of her fellow writers.³⁴ What does jar, however, is the belated recovery of her memory of her Stasi past after initial denials. Another well-known woman writer, Monika Maron, claims that her collaboration was prompted by a wish to construct a more humane socialism as an alternative to capitalism.³⁵ Working for the Stasi could bring material benefits: a visa for a journey to the West, a better apartment, a higher publishing run, loans, financial bonuses and presents. Regular payments such as the 400 GDR Marks to Rainer Schedlinski from 1985 onwards were not the norm but material rewards undoubtedly helped to reinforce cooperation. In 1974, the total financial outlay by Main Department XX/7 on IMs in terms of salaries, bonuses, the cost of meetings, payments for the use of an apartment and so forth amounted to 62,100 GDR Marks; the figure tended to hover around a lower total of about 40,000 GDR Marks per annum until 1989.³⁶

SAFEGUARDING THE ECONOMY

The GDR's highly centralised economy was structured around an elaborate planning mechanism and public ownership of most of the means of production. If Honecker's SED were to sustain its paternalistic social welfare system and the informal social contract with the population, much would depend on the capacity of the economic system to deliver high rates of economic growth and labour productivity. Economic performance was also crucial to the legitimacy of the entire socialist system in view of the popular appeal of West Germany's social market economy. Thus, given the cardinal importance of the economy, the MfS was called upon to protect it against the GDR's enemies, whether internal or external. At first, the main responsibility for safeguarding the economy fell to Main Department III and then from 1964 onwards to the newly formed Main Department XVIII. However, especially

during the 1950s and 1960s, all the ministry's other counterintelligence units were engaged in the uncovering of sabotage and espionage in the economic sphere. The creation of Main Department XVIII boosted the Stasi's role in securing the economy in conjunction with the launching of the New Economic System of Planning and Management (NES) in 1963. The greater autonomy granted to the enterprises and the more sophisticated methods of economic management in the age of the scientific-technical revolution required, or so it was claimed, a more extensive system of surveillance.³⁷

Main Department XVIII's relatively small staff constituted a mere 1.5 per cent of the Stasi's central administrative apparatus at the end of the 1980s. Its significance is better measured by other indicators, however. For example, 11 per cent of the 3,310 operatives of the Halle Regional Administration worked on security matters relating to the economy, as did 23 per cent of the 1,099 staff in the District Service Units and the 'objects'.³⁸ At the end of the 1960s, their main responsibilities were identified as the protection of the country's major economic structural projects, basic research, military production and foreign trade; the surveillance of Western businessmen; and unravelling the causes of serious economic crimes and of accidents at work. In institutional terms, this meant keeping watch over public enterprises, the central state organs and mass organisations such as the Confederation of Free Trade Unions (FDGB). In order to carry out these tasks, the network of IMs was expanded and Officers on Special Assignments or OibEs were created by a 1966 regulation. The most prominent OibE was Harry Möbis, the head of the Department of Inspection in the state economy.³⁹

Despite the reassertion of central control of the economy after Honecker came to power in 1971, the perceived dangers of closer contacts with the West and the urgent need to fulfil productivity targets ensured that surveillance of the economy remained all-pervasive. And, as ever, the Stasi was on the lookout for signs of sabotage and economic espionage by the imperialist foe. As late as 1988, the paranoia endemic in the ministry is observable in the dissertation of a trainee officer, Marian Schöne, of Schwerin's Regional Administration. The enemy, he alleged, is making every effort to disrupt economic and social policy and, through political-ideological diversion, to demoralise researchers by trying to convince them of the superiority of the research capacity of capitalist firms.⁴⁰

After several years of growth, the GDR's economic position began to deteriorate in the wake of the explosion of world raw material and energy prices after the Yom-Kippur war of 1973. However, it was not until the second price escalation of 1979 that the highly industrialised GDR felt the

³⁷ Haendke-Hoppe-Arndt M. 1997: 121.

³⁸ Hertle H.-H. and Gilles F.-O. 1995: 118-19.

³⁹ Haendke-Hoppe-Arndt M. 1997: 47-8, 50, 66.

⁴⁰ MfS ZA, JHS, no. 21188, 1988, pp. 10-11, 13.

³⁴ Vinke H. 1993: 9-17, 111-40.

³⁵ Walther J. 1996: 515.

³⁶ *Ibid.*, 506.

full impact. Poorly endowed in raw materials, the GDR was also hit by the rising price of Soviet oil and Moscow's sharp reduction in oil supplies in 1982. With the terms of trade so unfavourable, the GDR soon ran into a deficit in its trade with the West and built up an appreciable hard currency debt. While the serious liquidity crisis of 1982 was overcome with the aid of credits from the FRG, the GDR was plagued by hard currency indebtedness for the remainder of the 1980s. The heavy investment in microelectronics and other key technologies, which overstretched the country's limited resources and also diverted investments from the necessary modernisation of the communications system, would be a significant factor in the collapse of SED rule.

Under these circumstances, the MfS, and in particular Main Department XVIII, was caught on the horns of a dilemma: the imperialist saboteur and enemy was also the capitalist sibling and neighbour whose financial assistance was crucial for the stability of the GDR at a time when fraternal help from the Soviet Union was declining. It was therefore called upon to perform a plethora of tasks as guardian of the economy: the safeguarding of vital areas such as microelectronics, the ailing energy sector, the chemical industry and foreign trade; the protection of key personnel and groups; the uncovering of enemy plans and activities in enterprises and institutions at home as well as those of enemy secret services in the Operation Area, especially the FRG; ensuring a stable balance of payments; comprehensive surveillance of would-be émigrés and East German citizens who had contacts with Westerners; monitoring the general political-operational and economic situation; and the prevention of unrest, strikes, fires and damage to plant and equipment.⁴¹

The sheer range and complexity of their duties often turned the Stasi's operatives into economic firefighters who, while they might douse the flames in some areas, were unable to tackle the basic causes of the conflagration. The latter can be illustrated quite literally by the ministry's investigations into fires and accidents at work. These checks usually revealed that faulty and out-of-date equipment was the cause, not 'hostile-enemy' forces. In November 1987, at a meeting of top officers of Main Department XVIII/3, which was responsible for metallurgy, power and light industry, it was concluded that 'accidents and disruption to the electricity supply are often attributable to out-of-date plant and, in part, to the over-utilisation of this technology'.⁴² In 1989, in carrying out Main Department XVIII's host of tasks, including 17 operational cases, 157 top agents were assisted by 2,138 IMs and 509 other types of informers.⁴³ However, departmental leaders were by no means satisfied with the operational 'value' obtained from the heavy investment in

IMs.⁴⁴ Among the improvements suggested was the replacement of older IMs by younger and more adaptable ones.⁴⁵

HIGH TECHNOLOGY

As space does not permit an examination of all HA XVIII's activities, the remainder of this section will focus on the surveillance of the high-tech sector and the ministry's internal assessment of economic performance and popular reactions to SED social and economic policies. The research and development (R&D) sector was not immune to the general dissatisfaction with conditions in the GDR and researchers were among the would-be émigrés. From the point of view of the MfS, applications to leave the GDR, in conjunction with the increase in the number of exchange visits by scientists after the Helsinki Accords, represented a grave security risk and the loss of human capital and scientific intelligence. The ministry was also most concerned about GDR citizens who 'misused' officially approved visits to stay in the West. Out of the 1,299 who remained in the FRG in 1986, 215 were from the scientific-technical sector. Several of the defectors had worked for the Stasi as IMs or in a similar capacity.⁴⁶

While SED leaders regarded microelectronics as the most important of all the new technologies, others such as biotechnology, industrial robots, nuclear energy research and electronic data processing were also necessary for economic progress and the financing of the social welfare and social security budgets. The significance of science and technology is reflected in the development of Departments 5 and 8 in HA XVIII. The former had most of the country's scientific and technical elites in its sights, and the latter was responsible for electronics. Both Departments cooperated closely and ensured that personal communications were shrouded in secrecy in the top research centres of combines like Carl Zeiss Jena and Robotron as well as the Central Institute for Cybernetics and Information Processes.⁴⁷

Department 5, in conjunction with the local service units, was responsible for the political-operational protection of over 100 institutions and 30,000 employees in science and technology. East Berlin was the focal point as the Academy of Sciences of the GDR and the Ministry of Science and Technology were located there. In June 1989, Department 5 had at its disposal over 54 full-time staff and 15 OibEs and was subdivided into five desks. As one controlling officer had to run between 16 and 20 IMs, the Department

⁴¹ Haendke-Hoppe-Armdt M. 1997: 5, 80.

⁴² MfS ZA, HA XVIII, no. 6886, 'Protokoll', 1978, p. 76.

⁴³ Haendke-Hoppe-Armdt M. 1997: 12, 1001-11. The IM figures relate to 1988.

⁴⁴ MfS ZA, HA XVIII, no. 415, 'Protokoll', 1986, p. 16.

⁴⁵ MfS ZA, HA XVIII, no. 6400, 'Einschätzung', 1986, p. 13. This was recommended by Colonel Roigk in July 1986.

⁴⁶ Buthmann R. 2000: 31-4, 45-6.

⁴⁷ Ibid., 10.

regarded itself as seriously understaffed.⁴⁸ During the 1980s, microelectronics and optoelectronics were by far the Department's most important areas of operation, followed by space research and then, at a distance, by nuclear research and biotechnology. Departmental work was not confined to the home front as it gathered intelligence in the FRG in order to counter enemy threats to the GDR's nuclear energy programme, cosmos research and basic research in nuclear physics.

Department 8, officially established in 1970, was HA XVIII's largest unit and was responsible for security in 'objects' such as the Ministry of Electrical and Electronic Engineering, the Carl Zeiss Jena, Robotron Dresden and Erfurt Microelectronics combines and the cumbrously named Trade Section 4 of the Foreign Trade Enterprise Electronics Export-Import. It also kept watch over the many cadres whose work required them to travel abroad; about half of the Department's informers came from this group. Contacts between East and West German scientists, firms and academic institutions were anathema as, in the eyes of the MfS, they provided the West with opportunities to disrupt and perhaps even destroy the GDR's research and development capacity. In 1981, the Department was responsible for about 25 per cent of the entire research and development potential of the GDR economy. As the GDR's economic problems mounted in the 1980s, the Department sought in vain for remedies. It was deployed to combat serious economic crimes, prevent the leaking of intelligence to the West and to help break the COCOM embargo on the export of high-tech goods and know-how to Eastern Europe.⁴⁹

IMs were indispensable, with Department 5 deploying as many as 306 in 1986. While not all institutions were penetrated, some, like the Central Institute for Optics and Spectroscopy and Trade Section 4, were firmly in the grip of the ministry's 'hidden hands'. As the political and ideological reliability of the GDR's top researchers was a constant concern, IMs monitored them not only at work but also in their leisure time. Indicators of unreliability which were deemed to require vetting were a lack of 'revolutionary vigilance', Western contacts, belittling the achievements of the socialist countries in science and technology, a fondness for drink and women, and 'abnormalities in the sexual sphere'.⁵⁰

Were the Stasi's efforts worthwhile? Official SED publications and statements in the later 1980s sought to give the impression that the GDR was in the vanguard of the scientific-technical revolution. The country's 1986-90 Economic Plan envisaged a tripling of production in biotechnology and the manufacture of 80,000 industrial robots. In 1986, a 16-bit microprocessor

was first exhibited at the Leipzig trade fair and two years later the prototype of the 1-megabit chip was unveiled amid much ballyhoo. The SED leadership's efforts to achieve technological autarchy in selected components and products was determined by the urgent need to cope with rising energy prices, shortfalls in Soviet oil supplies, over-dependence on the West, the Eastern bloc's lack of innovative stimuli and flagging regime legitimacy. However, the view of one former official on reactions to SED propaganda in the media is perhaps an accurate reflection of popular opinion: 'We have trouble filling our shopping baskets. Pretty soon they'll just give us all a microchip instead of something to eat'.⁵¹

The GDR was palpably unable to close the technological gap with leading Western and Japanese firms. For example, NEC of Japan was already producing 2 million 1-megabit chips in mid-1988 and 4 million per month by the end of the year.⁵² In order to overcome some of their problems, GDR enterprises turned to illegal imports and to copying Western software programmes such as the 32-bit computer of the American firm Digital Equipment Corporation. By 1987, it was anticipated that an overall investment of 300 million GDR Marks and 85 million Valuta Marks would lead to the production of the computers from the initial pilot production. Although IMs with expertise in this area regarded the target date as unrealistic, Department 8 was of a different opinion. By the close of 1985, security checks had been carried out on 170 of the 600 cadres who were to work on the project.⁵³

Stasi intrusion was a millstone round the necks of researchers. The 45 volumes of one operational case - OV 'Molekül' - graphically illustrate how research potential could be undermined and destroyed by the imperatives of security. The case was initiated in 1965 against Professor Werner Hartmann, an expert in molecular electronics and a pioneer in microelectronics. While the MfS was unable to uncover any criminal offence, Hartmann's views on the inherent risks of innovation were not to the taste of Department 8. He was relieved of his post in 1974.⁵⁴ Hartmann's subsequent complaints failed to strike a sympathetic chord, Rudi Mittig denouncing him in May 1975 as 'a bourgeois scientist with an anti-Communist and anti-Soviet attitude'.⁵⁵ A clear statement of the primacy of politics over science!

The illegal procurement of know-how, which dated back to the 1950s, was a complex operation involving the Scientific and Technical Section (SWT) of HV A, Department 8 of Main Department XVIII, Commercial Coordination and Trade Section 4. Other partners were the special directorate

⁴⁸ Cited in Geipel G. L. 1999: 243.

⁴⁹ Dennis M. 1993: 38.

⁵⁰ Buthmann R. 2000: 202. One Valuta Mark was equivalent to one DM.

⁵¹ *Ibid.*, 67-9.

⁵² Cited in *ibid.*, 68.

⁴⁸ On Department 5, see Buthmann R. 2000: 40, 42-3, 126.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, 60, 73, 81. COCOM, the Coordinating Committee for Multilateral Export Controls, was founded in Paris in 1949.

⁵⁰ MfS ZA, JHS, no. 2188, 1988, pp. 20, 55-62.

in the Microelectronics combine and the Ministry of Electrotechnology and Electronics. SWT had an intelligence evaluation team and three operational Departments, which covered basic and applied research in atomic physics, microelectronics, electronics technology, armaments and economic espionage in banks. By the end of the 1970s, the acquisition of computer technology was one of the top priorities.⁵⁶ Embargoed computers and high-tech goods were also procured on the black market by Alexander Schalck-Golodkowski's pseudo-trading empire Commercial Coordination (*Kommerzielle Koordinierung* – KoKo), which had been set up in 1966 to procure hard currency. Schalck-Golodkowski, a Stasi Officer on Special Assignment and with a doctorate from the ministry's Law School, became known as the 'currency procurer' in recognition of the latter role. With an array of front companies extending throughout Western Europe, KoKo used its political and business contacts to generate legal trade, such as the sale of meat, but was also engaged in the illegal sale of arms and state-held art treasures to Western dealers in order to bankroll the economy. In 1983, it was Schalck-Golodkowski's political contacts in the FRG, notably the Bavarian leader Franz-Josef Strauß, who helped secure a massive loan to relieve the state debt.

Efforts to circumvent the West's embargo enjoyed only mixed success. A secret deal with Toshiba in 1986 to avoid the embargo on 256-kilobit chips ran into difficulties when the Japanese firm's links with Eastern bloc countries leaked out. Illegal imports became even more difficult from the mid-1980s onwards when COCOM tightened restrictions on technology transfers to the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe. There was, however, no alternative for the GDR but to pull out all the stops to break the embargo as, in the view of Department 8, the GDR was continuing to fall even further behind in the field of microelectronics.⁵⁷ The MfS managed to pepper the West German computer industry with well-placed spies such as Gerhard Arnold ('Sturm'). Arriving in the FRG as a 'refugee' in 1957, Arnold rapidly rose in the ranks of the German branch of IBM, passing research on computer systems and software to East Berlin throughout his career. Markus Wolf later commented that the GDR electronics combine Robotron was so dependent on IBM technology that 'it became a sort of illegal subsidiary'.⁵⁸

Internal assessments indicated that both the Scientific and Technical Section and Trade Section 4 recorded a 'profit' on their transactions. On 3 November 1989, it was estimated that the annual value of Trade Section 4's imports was between 9 and 10 million Valuta Marks per member of staff.⁵⁹ While such figures are impressive – if they are reliable – and while the GDR was able to take advantage of its intelligence data to purchase atomic power

plant and gas pipelines at below world prices,⁶⁰ the full costs of the operations have to be taken into account and the illegal imports did not necessarily have a beneficial effect. In many enterprises new technologies were not fully integrated into the production process, bureaucratic procedures slowed down the diffusion of basic research, and the illegal imports from more highly developed countries and the isolation of so many GDR researchers reduced much of the GDR's research effort to imitation and redevelopment. One former SWT officer was scathing when interviewed about the scientific and technological espionage programme. In his opinion, its goal was to 'make gold out of shit'.⁶¹ Furthermore, the security mania suffocated creativity and innovation. This was, as Förtsch points out, at the heart of the modernisation paradox:

On the one hand, the political leadership proclaimed 'scientific and technological progress' as the watchword of social development, and propagated its advancement, without limits or alternatives. . . . On the other hand, however, the political establishment continued to see itself as the supreme authority and to act accordingly, imposing limits on activities and creative processes. Whenever it saw its authority threatened (and that was most of the time), it interfered in and restricted efforts to modernize.⁶²

There was yet another drawback: the GDR's ambitious microelectronics programme deprived other sectors of much-needed investments. Although the high-tech sphere was plagued by many problems, they were of a different quality and magnitude from those industries which had to stagger along with out-of-date equipment and plant. The chemical industry in the Halle region, a major economic development area in the 1950s and 1960s, is typical.⁶³ The Halle Regional Administration had three special service units at the giant Bitterfeld, Leuna and Buna combines. In 1989, 40 full-time officers and about 260 IMs kept watch over the Buna combine. As in the high-tech field, the MfS concentrated on securing the combine by carrying out security checks on employees and by keeping a tight control over cadres with the right to travel abroad. It also made strenuous efforts to prevent staff from disclosing information to Western agencies and to stem applications to leave the GDR. But the problems posed by Buna extended beyond normal operational work as its capital stock, with a few exceptions, dated back to the 1930s and 1940s. In 1987, a Stasi report judged the technical equipment in elastometers, carbides and thermoplastics to be almost unworkable and that the high pollution level endangered the health of many of the workers. This kind of insight notwithstanding, the Stasi's Buna unit continued to use its IMs in obsolete areas of production as part of the campaign against underfulfilled

⁵⁶ Macrakis K. 1999: 85–6, 94–6.

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, 115–16; Buthmann R. 2000: 275, 277.

⁵⁸ Wolf M. 1997: 187.

⁵⁹ Buthmann R. 2000: 286.

⁶⁰ Stokes R. G. 2000: 170.

⁶¹ Cited in Macrakis K. 1999: 82.

⁶² Förtsch E. 1999: 42.

⁶³ See Hertle H-H. and Gilles F-O. 1995: 123–4, 129–30.

plan targets, breaches of factory regulations and management failure to implement order and security. Over 100 IMs were used to help discipline those responsible for breaches of security. But, as Hertle and Gilles have pointed out, the real enemy was an inefficient economic system, not the external foe. The MfS could only paper over the cracks; it could not compensate for underinvestment and the lack of modernisation of worn-out stock.⁶⁴

ECONOMIC PROBLEMS

Stasi evaluation groups, such as the Central Assessment and Information Group (ZAIG), were fully aware of widespread popular dissatisfaction with work organisation, wage levels, poor quality housing, the numerous shortages typical of a highly centralised economy and the restrictions on travel to the West. The chronic state of the economy in the summer of 1989 is captured vividly in a Stasi report on the Elbe dockyard at Boizenburg. The problems at the dockyard were legion: the inadequate coordination of work planning and the provision of materials; a shortage of urgently needed parts and work standstills of two to three days; the manipulation of work performance data; and foremen's indifference towards 'negative' behaviour among the workforce, such as deliberately failing to meet performance targets and leaving the dockyard early. Other frequent misdemeanours included drinking and falling asleep at work. Foremen were reluctant to take action for fear that the workers would simply walk out!⁶⁵

In summary, there is good reason to regard the Stasi as omniscient in the economic arena. Departments 5 and 8 were au fait with the country's technological gap with the West and Japan. The hard currency foreign trade deficit, production shortfalls and popular dissatisfaction with working and living conditions are also well documented in the Stasi files. However, even though the Stasi might try and shape decisions through the transmission of selected data to the party leaders and by virtue of Mielke's membership of the SED Politbüro, the Stasi was not an economic decision-making body. The limitations of the Stasi's influence in the economic field, as well as of a general failure to reflect critically on its own role, can be gauged by the fate of a report drawn up in the early 1980s by four members of Department 4 of HA XVIII. On the basis of materials of the State Planning Commission and discussions with economic experts, they concluded that not only was the hard currency deficit running out of control but that the GDR was on the verge of economic collapse in 1980. Reprimanded by Mielke, they resorted to more guarded comments, thus disappointing those economic functionaries who had hoped to utilise the MfS to help solve the pressing problems in the

enterprises.⁶⁶ In the final analysis, the Stasi's 'safeguarding' of the economy served primarily to prop up the SED's political power monopoly and the avoidance of risky reforms, thereby blocking, as the East German sociologist Detlev Pollack has observed, the autonomy of the individual sub-systems such as the economy and science which was essential for a competitive economy and the modernisation of society.⁶⁷

FOREIGN WORKERS AS SECURITY RISKS

Main Department XVIII was not only responsible for securing the economy but was also in charge of coordinating operations relating to foreign workers in the GDR. A 1982 service instruction defined the department's tasks in typical ministerial jargon as the frustration of enemy plans to utilise foreign workers for subversive activities, the detection and prevention of hostile-negative acts by foreign workers, and the clearing up of offences committed by GDR citizens against foreigners.⁶⁸ Although foreign workers as a proportion of the total East German population was a low 0.65 per cent in 1989, it was nevertheless the highest among COMECON member states.⁶⁹ The 380,000 members of the Group of Soviet armed forces and their 120,000 family dependants formed the largest contingent of foreigners in the GDR. In addition to this group, the records of the State Secretariat for Labour and Wages indicate that, in June 1989, about 154,000 foreign workers were resident in the country, most of them on fixed contracts. Numbers had risen sharply since the middle of the 1980s: from about 83,900 in 1986 to about 128,500 in 1988. In 1989, some 85,020 foreigners had the status of contract workers (*Vertragsarbeiter*) whose terms of employment and residence were regulated by intergovernmental agreements. Most contract workers were from Vietnam (52,130), Mozambique (15,300) and Cuba (9,600). Others stemmed from Angola, China, Mongolia and elsewhere. In addition to the contract workers, over 32,000 workers, mainly Poles, were engaged in the building and assembly trades as a result of arrangements between firms. Finally, another group, about 19,130, mainly from Poland, Hungary and other East European socialist countries, had the right of permanent residence in the GDR.⁷⁰

The recruitment of foreign labour from the 'fraternal countries' commenced in the mid-1950s and from 1966 onwards was based on bilateral

⁶⁴ Haendke-Hoppe-Armdt M. 1997: 75-6; Haendke-Hoppe-Armdt M. 1995: 125-6; and the interview with Roigk in Karau G. 1995: 26-8.

⁶⁵ Pollack D. 1999: 30-31.

⁶⁶ MfS ZA, HA XVIII, no. 13130, '5. Durchführungsbestimmung', 1983, pp. 97-8.

⁶⁷ Spennemann N. 1997: 8.

⁷⁰ MfS ZA, ZAIG, no. 20646, 'Jahreseinschätzung', 1989, pp. 20-21. Although these statistics may slightly underestimate the actual numbers, they do provide a reliable record of the general trend.

⁶⁴ Hertle H-H. and Gilles F-O. 1995: 131-2.

⁶⁵ MfS ZA, ZAIG, no. 17253, 'Information', 1989, pp. 5-9.

agreements between states. In these early years, the emphasis was on education and training programmes. An acceleration in the numbers of the contract workers occurred in the 1970s and 1980s, increasing rapidly from 1985–86 onwards as the SED sought desperately to alleviate the severe and growing labour shortage in the GDR. Most contract workers were relatively young males who were assigned to shift work in heavily industrialised regions like Karl-Marx-Stadt (now Chemnitz), Dresden, Halle, Leipzig, East Berlin, Cottbus and Erfurt; however, they were poorly represented in the predominantly agricultural areas of Schwerin and Neubrandenburg.⁷¹ The Vietnamese and the Mozambicans were employed primarily in light industry, especially textiles, machine construction and heavy industry.⁷²

The contract workers from Vietnam, Cuba, Mozambique and Angola were employed on four-year contracts, although there were limited opportunities for a short extension and, in 1987, the Vietnamese were granted the right to remain for an additional year.⁷³ A contract could be terminated prematurely if a contract worker committed an offence or failed to fulfil work norms. Until the beginning of 1989, if a female worker became pregnant, she either had to undergo an abortion or face deportation. Workers enjoyed the right to send money and goods back to their homeland. The Vietnamese and the Cubans were allowed to transfer 60 per cent of their net income above the sum of 350 GDR Marks, although they had to pay for transfers into the currency of their own country. This was one reason why many workers opted to despatch goods instead. While the Vietnamese preferred to send clothing, electrical appliances and household goods to meet the needs of their families, the Cubans, Angolans and Mozambicans despatched larger items such as refrigerators, television sets or motor bikes. A former Vietnamese contract worker and engineer explained the importance of his work in an interview in 2001: 'When I returned to Haiphong after my first two year contract my family begged me to go back to the GDR again . . . They were dependent on my wages to live. My mother was ill and needed my earnings to buy medicines. There was very little money for food'.⁷⁴

Although the contract workers did enjoy a number of other guarantees, such as that of equal pay to East Germans for the same job, their situation has been likened to that of modern wage slaves.⁷⁵ They were concentrated in multi-shift systems and performed low-level tasks on the assembly line and old equipment. The warden-controlled hostels provided by enterprises and local authorities were, in relative terms, more expensive and less spacious than the apartments of East Germans, rooms were often overcrowded and access by visitors was severely restricted, leading to ghettoisation and

⁷¹ Müggenberg A. 1996: 5; MfS ZA, ZAIG, no. 20646, 'Jahreseinschätzung', 1989, p. 21.

⁷² Elsner E.-M. and Elsner L. 1992: 58.

⁷³ On the terms of the contracts, see Müggenberg A. 1996: 9, 16, 21, 25–7.

⁷⁴ Interview in the *Financial Times*, 22 September 2001, p. 24.

⁷⁵ Schüle A. 2002: 92.

marginalisation. Sometimes, workers were able to circumvent the restrictions because the janitors were unable to distinguish one Vietnamese from another.⁷⁶ In 1991, a Mozambican worker reflected on some of the problems:

Our life in the workers' hostel was to a large extent governed by the hostel rules. As a result, for example, we could only have visitors from 6.00 to 22.00. The visitors had to prove their identity to the porter and they had to be at least 18 years old. In practice this is what happened: between 22.00 and 6.00 checks were carried out by the staff in the hostel. If a German woman was found in the room of an African man after 22.00, he got a first warning from his firm. If it happened a second time he was sometimes even sent home. The woman was forbidden to enter the hostel again or she was taken straightaway to the police. Naturally, this regulation deterred many Germans from visiting us at all.⁷⁷

Stasi records from the 1960s and 1970s reveal considerable popular animosity towards foreign workers. Violence occasionally erupted between East German youths and the foreigners, whether Mozambicans, Poles or Algerians, at pubs, discos and in the vicinity of hostels. In the town of Stollberg in the Karl-Marx-Stadt region, a series of clashes between Mozambicans and East Germans culminated, in June 1988, in the death of an East German youth as a result of injuries suffered after a dance.⁷⁸ In the following year, violent clashes between GDR citizens and Mozambique workers caused such an uproar among the public in eastern Saxony that the Mozambicans were moved to other regions and replaced by Vietnamese.⁷⁹ Although the number of incidents escalated at the end of the 1970s, for example against Algerian workers,⁸⁰ it was not until the later 1980s that the Stasi noted, with a degree of alarm, a rise in xenophobia. This was partly related to the greater numbers of workers from Vietnam and Mozambique and to what East Germans regarded as an exacerbation of the poor supply situation in the south of the country. Foreign workers were accused of hoarding and buying up goods, either legally or illegally, and Polish and Vietnamese workers, in particular, were criticised for stripping shops bare.⁸¹ In 1989, the Stasi Central Assessment and Information Group referred to popular perceptions of the Vietnamese as leading a parasitical life-style and as glorifying capitalism; their living quarters were likened to warehouses.⁸² In addition to problems in the leisure sphere and consumer envy, the contract workers represented, according to the Stasi materials, a disruptive influence at work. Some East German workers

⁷⁶ Schüle A. 2002: 98.

⁷⁷ Cited in Schmidt I. 1992: 68–9. Our translation.

⁷⁸ MfS ZA, HA XX, no. 3035, 'Information', 1988, p. 77.

⁷⁹ MfS ZA, ZAIG, no. 20646, 'Jahreseinschätzung', 1989, p. 30.

⁸⁰ Müggenberg A. 1996: 30. The Algerian government withdrew its workers from the GDR as a result of the mistreatment of its workers: Spennemann N. 1997: 9.

⁸¹ Müggenberg A. 1996: 27.

⁸² MfS ZA, ZAIG, no. 20646, 'Jahreseinschätzung', 1989, pp. 26–7.

accused the Vietnamese and Mozambicans of poor work discipline and unreasonable wage demands.⁸³ In a shortage economy like that of the GDR, labour migrants, although from countries with even greater economic problems, were not welcome. At the same time, it should be remembered, East Germans were moving to West Germany, partly in search of a higher standard of living and better jobs.

Although the MfS was fully aware of the Vietnamese workers' right in accordance with their contracts to send goods home and that these goods and their wages were crucial for their families and the Vietnamese economy, the ministry was more anxious to appease East Germans by increasing the supply of consumer goods than to improve the lot of contract workers who were perceived primarily as a security problem.⁸⁴ While the SED leaders were unwilling to open a public debate on the complexities of the situation and on the details of the contractual arrangements and they most certainly did not wish to provide Western critics with ammunition,⁸⁵ the problems of the contract workers could not be concealed. In the late 1970s, but especially towards the end of the 1980s, the matter was raised at church synods and in newspapers such as *Die Kirche* as well as by Second/Third World groups within the alternative political culture. Although the SED did eventually allow the media to broach the issue of violence against foreigners, it lacked the nerve to prepare East Germans in advance for the arrival of foreign workers. The official line continued to laud the employment of foreign labour as part of the GDR's solidarity with foreign citizens and its friendship with the fraternal socialist countries.

Some idea of the general level of popular antipathy can be gleaned from studies conducted soon after the end of SED rule. One investigation carried out on behalf of the German Ministry for Labour and Social Affairs revealed that 'only one quarter of foreigners in the sample had not been insulted or sworn at' and one-fifth reported that they had been 'physically attacked' by East Germans.⁸⁶ At the extreme end of the attitudinal spectrum stood the visceral hostility of the extreme skinheads who not only regarded foreigners as parasites on the social welfare system but, above all, as a threat to a German ethnic identity.⁸⁷ Chauvinism and negative perceptions of the 'exotic foreigner' as the 'other' were not just an individual problem and restricted to militant skinheads, but they were reinforced by the authorities' 'demarcation' policy which sought to wall off the GDR from the undesirable influences of the external world, whether saboteurs and enemy agents or Western political-ideological diversion. As Marianne Krüger-Potratz has observed,⁸⁸

'the exclusion of everything "alien," or more precisely, of everything defined as alien' was one of the means whereby GDR society sought to sustain its identity. This is particularly pertinent to the Stasi, which inculcated a sharp friend-foe image and deployed its agents in the relentless search for hostile-negative forces and incidents, thereby precluding a culture of tolerance.

⁸³ MfS ZA, ZAIG, no. 20646, 'Jahreseinschätzung', 1989, pp. 26, 28.

⁸⁴ *Ibid.*, 27.

⁸⁵ MfS ZA, HA XX, no. 3035, 'Information', 1988, p. 95; also Kolinsky E. 2000: 150.

⁸⁶ Ross G. C. 2000: 165.

⁸⁷ Müggenberg A. 1996: 18.

⁸⁸ Krüger-Potratz M. 1991: 59-60.