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THE STASI: MYTH AND REALITY

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PREFACE

At the end of August 1989, ten weeks before the fall of the Berlin Wall, the veteran Minister of State Security, Erich Mielke, anxiously asked a group of his leading officers if an uprising on the scale of 17 June 1953 was imminent. The spectre of another major revolt against communist rule was hovering over the leaders of the GDR¹ confronted with the escalation of protests on the streets and the flight of East Germans to the West. Mielke may have drawn some comfort from his colleagues' assurance that this would not occur as the Stasi was well prepared to protect state and party. In more stable times the officers' optimism would have been justified, for the ministry, a central prop of communist rule for almost 40 years, had created a system of panopticism par excellence. Its foreign agents were entrenched in the economic, political, scientific and industrial nerve centres of West Germany, the nemesis and main adversary of the East German state. In any given year throughout the 1980s, about one in 50 of the country's 13.5 million adults were working for the Stasi on the home front, either as an officer or as an informer, thus enabling Mielke's security forces not only to penetrate the niches of East German society but also to maintain the reputation of the GDR as one of the most stable states in the Soviet Union's East European empire. Drawing on the rich vein of original sources in the archive of the former Ministry of State Security, this book will examine how the Stasi was able to invade people's lives and all spheres of society – whether the alternative sub-cultures of punks, skins and ecologists or the state-run factories and sports institutions. It will also investigate the Stasi's organisational structure, the ideological faith of officers, the motivation and activities of the army of 176,000 informers and the monitoring of the opinions and attitudes of ordinary East Germans.

But the book will also explore a paradox, that is, the ministry's 'weakness in omnipotence', in particular during the years from 1971 to 1989 when the autocratic Erich Honecker ruled over the GDR. The central paradox lay in the contrast between, on the one hand, the ubiquitous Stasi's all-pervasive system of surveillance and its extensive powers of interrogation and coercion and, on the other hand, a security force bedevilled not only by the problems endemic in any overbloated bureaucracy but also by its symbiotic links to the ruling Communist party. Take the first point. Whereas the Stasi had collected

¹ GDR is the abbreviation for the German Democratic Republic which existed as a separate state between 1949 and 1990.

a mountain of data on its own citizens as part of the minister's aim 'to know everything and to report on everything worth knowing',² Mielke and his colleagues should have taken note of the inherent constraints on the pursuit of omniscience encapsulated in the admonition of Dean Rusk, President Kennedy's Secretary of State, that: 'Providence has not provided human beings with the capacity to pierce the fog of the future'.³ And even though East Germany's leaders were so well informed and their population in general quiescent, they themselves did not sleep easily at night for they could not ignore the greater appeal of the West for their own citizens. It was this fundamental legitimacy deficit of the GDR – the less prosperous and the more repressive of the two German republics – which would cause the party and the Stasi to come tumbling down after the fall of the Berlin Wall, the ugly symbol of the Cold War and the GDR's ultimate protective barrier.

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² Naimark N. M. 1995: 366.

³ Cited in Johnson L. K. 1996: 204.

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

AKG	Auswertungs- und Kontrollgruppe (Assessment and Control Group)
AG	Arbeitsgruppe (Working Group)
BfV	Bundesamt für Verfassungsschutz (Federal Office for the Protection of the Constitution – West Germany)
BND	Bundesnachrichtendienst (Federal Intelligence Service – West Germany)
BStU	Bundesbeauftragte für die Unterlagen des Staatssicherheitsdienstes der ehemaligen Deutschen Demokratischen Republik (Federal Commissioner for the Records of the State Security Service of the Former German Democratic Republic)
BV	Bezirksverwaltung (Regional Administration)
CC	Central Committee
CDU	Christlich-Demokratische Union (Christian Democratic Union)
CIA	Central Intelligence Agency (America)
COCOM	Coordinating Committee for Multilateral Export Controls
COMECON	Council for Mutual Economic Aid
CPSU	Communist Party of the Soviet Union
DVU	Deutsche Volkunion (German People's Party)
DHfK	Deutsche Hochschule für Körperkultur (German College of Higher Education for Physical Culture)
DM	Deutsche Mark (West German currency)
DTSB	Deutscher Turn- und Sportbund der Deutschen Demokratischen Republik (German Gymnastics and Sports Association of the GDR)
DVdI	Deutsche Verwaltung des Innern (German Administration of the Interior in the Soviet Zone of Occupation)
ECCI	Executive Committee of the Comintern
EU	European Union
EV	Ermittlungsverfahren (Preliminary Criminal Proceeding)
FBI	Federal Bureau of Investigation (America)
FDGB	Freier Deutscher Gewerkschaftsbund (Confederation of Free German Trade Unions)
FDJ	Freie Deutsche Jugend (Free German Youth Organisation)
FDP	Freie Demokratische Partei (Free Democratic Party)

FIM	Inoffizieller Mitarbeiter für Führung anderer Inoffizieller Mitarbeiter (Unofficial Collaborator in Charge of other Unofficial Collaborators)
FKS	Forschungsinstitut für Körperkultur und Sport (Research Institute for Physical Culture and Sport)
FRG	Federal Republic of Germany
GDR	German Democratic Republic
GI	Geheimer Informator (Secret Informer)
GMS	Gesellschaftlicher Mitarbeiter für Sicherheit (Societal Collaborator for Security)
GPU	Soviet Secret Police
GST	Gesellschaft für Sport und Technik (Society for Sport and Technology)
HA	Hauptabteilung (Main Department)
HIM	Hauptamtlicher Mitarbeiter (Full-time Collaborator)
HV A	Hauptverwaltung Aufklärung (Main Administration for Reconnaissance)
HVzSV	Hauptverwaltung zum Schutz der Volkswirtschaft (Main Administration for the Protection of the National Economy)
IFM	Initiative Frieden und Menschenrechte (Initiative for Peace and Human Rights)
IM	Inoffizieller Mitarbeiter (Unofficial Collaborator)
IMB	Inoffizieller Mitarbeiter zur unmittelbaren Bearbeitung im Verdacht der Feindtätigkeit stehender Personen (Unofficial Collaborator for Dealing with Persons under Suspicion of Hostile Activity)
IME	Inoffizieller Mitarbeiter für einen besonderen Einsatz (Unofficial Collaborator for a Special Task)
IMK	Inoffizieller Mitarbeiter zur Sicherung der Konspiration und des Verbindungswesens (Unofficial Collaborator for Aiding Conspiracy and Securing Communications)
IMS	Inoffizieller Mitarbeiter zur politisch-operativen Durchdringung und Sicherung des Verantwortungsbereiches (Unofficial Collaborator for the Political-Operative Investigation and Securing of an Area of Responsibility)
IMV	Inoffizieller Mitarbeiter mit vertraulichen Beziehungen zu im Vorgang bearbeiteten Personen (Unofficial Collaborator with Close Contact to Persons under Investigation; from 1979 IMB)
K-5	Kommissariat 5
KD	Kreisdienststelle (District Service Unit)
KGB	Soviet Committee of State Security
KoKo	Kommerzielle Koordinierung (Commercial Coordination)

KPD	Kommunistische Partei Deutschlands (Communist Party of Germany)
MFS	Ministerium für Staatssicherheit (Ministry of State Security – also Stasi)
MGB	Soviet Ministry of State Security
MVD	Soviet Ministry of Internal Affairs
NATO	North Atlantic Treaty Organisation
NES	New Economic System of Planning and Management
NKGB	People's Commissariat of State Security (Soviet)
NKVD	People's Commissariat of Internal Affairs (Soviet)
NSDAP	Nationalsozialistische Deutsche Arbeiterpartei (National Socialist German Workers' Party)
NVA	Nationale Volksarmee (National People's Army)
OD	Objektdienststelle (Object Service Unit)
OG	Operationsgebiet (Operation Area)
OibE	Offizier im besonderen Einsatz (Officer on Special Assignment)
OPK	Operative Personenkontrolle (Operational Personal Check)
OV	Operativer Vorgang (Integrated Operational Clandestine Campaign or Operational Case)
PDS	Partei des Demokratischen Sozialismus (Party of Democratic Socialism)
PID	Political-Ideological Diversion
RAF	Red Army Faction (West German terrorist group)
Rechtsstaat	A state under the rule of law
RIAS	Radio in the American Sector (West Berlin)
SAPMO	Stiftung Archiv der Parteien und Massenorganisationen der DDR (Berlin Branch of the Federal Archive of the Foundation for the Parties and Mass Organisations of the GDR)
SD	Sicherheitsdienst (Nazi Security Service)
SED	Sozialistische Einheitspartei Deutschlands (Socialist Unity Party of Germany)
SMAD	Soviet Military Administration in Germany
SMD	Sportmedizinischer Dienst (Sports Medical Service)
SPD	Sozialdemokratische Partei Deutschlands (Social Democratic Party of Germany)
SOUND	KGB-administered computerised storage of intelligence data
Stasi	see MFS
SVP	Sachverhaltsprüfung (Check on the Facts of a Case)
SWT	Sektor Wissenschaft und Technik (Scientific and Technical Section)
Unrechtsstaat	A state not under the rule of law
VKU	Vorkommnisuntersuchung (Enquiry into an Incident)

THE STASI

ZA	Zentralarchiv (Central Archive)
ZAIG	Zentrale Auswertungs- und Informationsgruppe (Central Assessment and Information Group)
ZKG	Zentrale Koordinierungsgruppe (Central Coordinating Group)
ZOV	Zentraler Operativer Vorgang (Central Operational Case)

Note: Where reference is made in the footnotes to MfS ZA, this denotes the central archival materials of the Ministry of State Security held by a special federal agency, the BStU.

INTRODUCTION

AN ORWELLIAN NIGHTMARE

The Ministry of State Security,¹ popularly known as the Stasi, was an integral element of communist rule in the German Democratic Republic between the ministry's establishment in 1950 to its dissolution in 1989. The GDR itself was founded in 1949, as Stalin's 'unwanted child' of the Cold War. Despite the popular uprising in 1953 against the Stalinist system which had been imposed on the GDR and despite the mass exodus of East Germans to the West, the new state managed to survive until its next major test in 1961. The Berlin Wall, erected by the East German communists with Soviet endorsement, arrested in a brutal manner the haemorrhaging of the population, thereby stabilising the system behind the ugly barrier which soon came to symbolise the totalitarian nature of communism. A combination of social incentives, economic growth and more subtle forms of coercion subsequently enabled the GDR's rulers to consolidate their position and, in the era of superpower détente, to gain international recognition for their country. However, the Soviet Union's retreat from empire under Gorbachev and the GDR's chronic economic malaise exposed the frail legitimacy of the communist social and political order. When the Berlin Wall eventually fell, on the evening of 9–10 November 1989, it was an act of desperation by East Germany's bewildered rulers to save an obsolescent system which neither they nor their security and military forces could prevent from disintegrating under the twin pressures of popular demonstrations and mass flight.

Following in the footsteps of its Soviet counterpart, the KGB, the Ministry of State Security functioned for almost four decades as the sharp sword and trusty shield of the GDR's key institution, the ruling Socialist Unity Party (SED).² Such was the ministry's power and ubiquity that one author, Alexandra

¹ The German term is *Ministerium für Staatssicherheit*, abbreviated to MfS.

² The SED was founded in the Soviet zone of occupation in 1946 as the result of a merger between the German Communist Party (KPD) and the Social Democratic Party