

INTRODUCTION

THE STASI AND THE HV A: CONTEMPORARY RESEARCH AND CONTEMPORARY RESONANCE

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The Stasi as Both a Point of Reference and Differentiation: Current U.S. Intelligence Activities around the World

At the beginning of the 2013 European Summit, European Commission president José Manuel Barroso proclaimed privacy a fundamental right in Europe. In his sharp repudiation of U.S. espionage against European citizens and their political representatives, namely, German chancellor Angela Merkel, Barroso added that mere decades ago “there was a part of Germany where political police were spying on people’s lives daily. . . . We know very recently [sic] what totalitarianism means. . . . We know what happens when a state uses powers that intrude on people’s lives.”¹ With this, Barroso was referring to an intense discussion in Europe on U.S. surveillance practices in the summer of 2013, when whistle-blower Edward Snowden informed civil society of NSA spying activities via the *Washington Post* and the *Guardian*.

While much of the American public has seemed not really concerned about the wide range of unconstitutional NSA activities,² and American officials denied any bad intentions, the public discourse about this in Germany has often used terms and arguments formerly only applied to communist and authoritarian states: “When the Stasi still existed, its agents gathered odor samples of its opponents. This isn’t necessary for the Americans. They don’t need to sniff under our armpits. Their algorithms allow them to crawl into our heads. They know our past, and they want to calculate our future. They aspire to total control — over every single one of us. This ambition makes the very country that stood like no other in the world for the freedom of the individual a totalitarian state.”³ The light artist Oliver Bienkowski projected the term “United Stasi of America” on the façade of the U.S. embassy in Berlin, and the director of the Stasi memorial site and former prison Berlin-Hohenschönhausen, Hubertus Knabe, pressed charges against the NSA activities in court.⁴ The key term, however, was introduced by an American expert. According to David

- 1 “EU’s Barroso Warns Spying Can Lead to ‘Totalitarianism,’” http://voiceofrussia.com/news/2013_10_24/. . . [10/24/2013].
- 2 See “DNI Clapper Declassifies Intelligence Community Documents Regarding Collection Under Section 501 of the Foreign Surveillance Act (FISA), September 10, 2013,” <http://icontherecord.tumblr.com/post/60867560465/>. . . [09/11/2013]; Ellen Nakashima, Julie Tate, and Carol Leonnig, “Declassified Court Documents Highlight NSA Violations in Data Collection for Surveillance,” *Washington Post*, Sept. 10, 2013; Barton Gellman, “NSA Broke Privacy Rules Thousands of Times per Year, Audit Finds,” *Washington Post*, Aug. 15, 2013.
- 3 Jakob Augstein, “US-Abhörskandal: Deutschland, Verbündeter 3. Klasse,” *Spiegel Online*, July 1, 2013: “Als es die Stasi noch gab, haben ihre Agenten Geruchsproben von ihren Gegnern gesammelt. Das haben die Amerikaner nicht nötig. Sie müssen nicht unter unseren Achseln schnüffeln. Ihre Algorithmen erlauben ihnen, in unseren Kopf zu kriechen. Sie kennen unsere Vergangenheit, und sie wollen unsere Zukunft ausrechnen. Sie streben die totale Kontrolle an – über jeden einzelnen von uns. Dieses Bestreben macht ausgerechnet das Land, das wie kein anderes auf der Welt für die Freiheit des Einzelnen stand, zu einem totalitären Staat.”
- 4 “Stasi-Experte Knabe zeigt die USA wegen NSA-Skandal an,” *Berliner Morgenpost*, July 8, 2013.

Ellsberg, a former whistle-blower who copied and distributed the Pentagon Papers, the “NSA, FBI, and CIA have, with the new digital technology, surveillance powers over our citizens that the Stasi . . . could scarcely have dreamed of.”⁵ As a patriot, Ellsberg supported his argument with the U.S. Constitution, namely, the Fourth and Fifth Amendments, and advocated the restoration of the protections of the Bill of Rights.

The vast majority of people in Germany rejected the U.S. surveillance practices — the symbiotic cooperation of German intelligence agencies and the similar practices of French and British intelligence services came up but never entered the core of public discussion. The Stasi legacy narrative was stronger: Former Stasi lieutenant colonel Wolfgang Schmidt, once head of Department XX of the Ministry of State Security and a central figure of GDR historical revisionism, seemed to welcome the news: “You know, for us, this would have been a dream come true.”⁶ He argued that intelligence services as such have a basic interest in collecting and using information on all citizens and that there was no structural difference between the Stasi and Western services. However, others saw this claim of equality as a kind of relativism that failed to reflect on the differences between the Stasi and its Western counterparts. Roland Jahn, head of the Stasi files agency, the Bundesbeauftragte für die Stasi Unterlagen (BStU, or the Federal Commissioner for the Stasi Records), for example, emphasized these differences: “The Stasi was a secret police service with the aim of securing the power of one party . . . The Western secret services, by contrast, have the task, or at least act as though they have the task, of protecting their citizens from restrictions on their freedom, such as through terrorism.”⁷ Journalists, for their part, highlighted typical characteristics of the Stasi including its monopoly on and secrecy of information, its suspension of human rights, and lack of oversight by courts and parliament. Information was not deleted, there were no barriers to accessing private data, and it could be used for any purpose.⁸ The Stasi had *carte blanche* as long as its members acted on behalf of the Socialist Unity Party.⁹

This debate about NSA surveillance practices and their similarities and differences to those of the Stasi is ongoing and ties in to many other debates between the Atlantic partners. Although the U.S. government has not changed its surveillance

5 Daniel Ellsberg, “Edward Snowden: Saving Us from the United Stasi of America,” *Guardian*, June 10, 2013.

6 Quoted in “Former East German Stasi Officer Expresses Admiration for, Dismay at US Government’s Surveillance Capabilities,” <https://www.techdirt.com/articles/20130627/15455123642/former-east-german-stasi-officer-expresses-admiration-dismay-us-governments-surveillance-capabilities.shtml> [06/13/2013].

7 “Die Stasi war eine Geheimpolizei mit dem Ziel, die Macht einer Partei zu sichern. . . . Die westlichen Geheimdienste hingegen haben den Anspruch oder geben ihn zumindest vor, ihre Bürger vor Einschränkungen der Freiheit, etwa durch Terrorismus, zu schützen.” “Nicht akzeptabel! Der Hüter der Stasi-Akten Roland Jahn verurteilt die Schnüffeleien der westlichen Geheimdienste, warnt aber auch davor, NSA, FBI und CIA mit der Stasi gleichzusetzen,” *Cicero*, no. 8 (2013): 68-69, here 69.

8 Christian Booß, “War die Stasi im Vergleich zur NSA nur ein Papiertiger?” *Der Tagesspiegel*, July 21, 2013.

9 Manuel Bewarder, Martin Lutz, and Uwe Müller, “Die NSA wird als neue Stasi verunglimpft,” *Die Welt*, Aug. 3, 2013.

practices in principle, and it rejected a no-spying agreement with Germany and is unwilling to conclude one with other European nations, most governments have *de facto* accepted these practices because they believe they benefit from the results. The damage to transatlantic relations, however, is immense and feeds anti-American sentiment in Europe, in general, and in Germany, in particular.¹⁰ The perception of the NSA as a technologically superior version of the Stasi is historically inaccurate but a powerful narrative for the public. Above all, it is supported by the idea that the “War on Terror” has reactivated the paradigm of Cold War confrontation in a broken way: both in the Cold War and now, very general ideas and terms — most prominently, national security — were and have been used to define and describe an enemy not present for the vast majority of the population. The terror attacks of 9/11/2001 provided new justification for the global military and surveillance presence of the U.S. — and prompted the expansion of an intelligence system unparalleled in history. The “imperial presidency” of the U.S. now risks undermining traditional constitutional checks and balances.¹¹ Fighting “terrorism,” a term without any limits or clear-cut definition, allows the U.S. administration to infringe upon civil liberties as traditionally understood.¹²

The current debate on U.S. global mass surveillance and its association with Stasi activities in East Germany and many Western states presents an important challenge to historians. It is no longer only dictatorships that breach the privacy of citizens, whether in their own territory or abroad. Rather, it now opens up comparative perspectives and forces historians to focus on the entanglement of intelligence services during the Cold War and thereafter. The present book, resulting from a conference organized by the German Historical Institute and the Woodrow Wilson Center’s Cold War International History Project in 2010, gives substantial insight into Stasi history, providing solid and empirically valid ground for analyzing the differences and similarities between East German intelligence services and the NSA.¹³ The volume presents contributions of leading German, U.S.-American, Canadian, and British scholars who give basic information on the Stasi, its place in GDR society, as well as its relation to the Socialist Unity Party and the GDR state. In addition, several contributions analyze the foreign intelligence service of the GDR, the Hauptverwaltung A (HV A), and its relation to the GDR’s Western and Eastern neigh-

10 Richard Hüttel, “Industriespionage und vieles mehr,” *Süddeutsche Zeitung*, June 6, 2013.

11 See Bernd Greiner, *9/11. Der Tag, die Angst, die Folgen* (Munich, 2011). The concept of the “imperial presidency” was introduced by historian Arthur Schlesinger Jr. in 1973. It characterizes a political system based on excessive secrecy and disregard for the rule of law. Schlesinger criticized mainly Nixon and George W. Bush for transforming the traditional political system of the U.S. Today, however, the concept is used as a general tool for structural changes in post-WWII America.

12 Cf. Bernd Greiner, Tim B. Müller, and Klaas Voß, eds., *Erbe des Kalten Krieges* (Hamburg, 2013).

13 Uwe Spiekermann, “The Stasi and Its Foreign Intelligence Service,” *Bulletin of the German Historical Institute* 47 (2010): 119–24.

bors. All in all, the volume provides the information necessary for developing a basic understanding of Stasi activities at home and abroad, but it also includes several case studies to foster a deeper understanding.

The Stasi: Research Topics and Current Debates

“The Stasi was no ordinary intelligence service but a political police with its own remand prisons, its own investigation apparatus, with enforcement employees, and with its own judges and prosecutors working in its service (A XIV).”¹⁴ It was mainly active in the GDR but also included a foreign intelligence service. It was also active in the civilian and the military sphere, included intelligence and counter-intelligence services, and had its own armed forces.¹⁵

In retrospect, the Stasi has become a symbol for the GDR and the suppression of a large number, perhaps even the majority, of East German citizens.¹⁶ This status resulted from the vigorous actions of the GDR civil rights movement, the safeguarding of and access to the Stasi files, the institutionalization of the BStU in 1991, and an intense and controversial public debate on the importance of the Stasi legacy. Although the future of the BStU is uncertain — the Stasi Files Act will expire in 2019, and perhaps the institution too will end — the Stasi files, along with the large number of public servants and academics who deal with the history of the GDR, have shaped the historiography and the public discourse in a unique way.¹⁷

The history of the Stasi is therefore not only the history of a repressive intelligence service and secret police. Rather, it must be understood within the context of the Cold War confrontation between East and West, the public debate on the peaceful revolution of 1989, and the East/West German search for identity after unification.

The Role and Function of the Stasi in the GDR

The historiography of the Stasi has ideological and political undertones: it presents a communist regime at work, a state of injustice (*Unrechtsstaat*), clearly distinguished from the Western ideal of separation of powers and the rule of law.¹⁸ The course of Stasi history also exhibits an obvious transition: in the 1950s and 1960s, the agency brutally suppressed any opposition, whereas it shifted to more

14 Karsten Dümmel, “Schild und Schwert der SED - Was war die Stasi?” in *Was war die Stasi? Einblicke in das Ministerium für Staatssicherheit der DDR*, ed. Karsten Dümmel and Melanie Piepenschneider, 4th ed. (Sankt Augustin and Berlin, 2012), 11-13, here 13.

15 Cf. Jens Gieseke, *The History of the Stasi: East Germany's Secret Police, 1945-1990* (New York and Oxford, 2014); Gary Bruce, *The Firm: The Inside Story of the Stasi* (New York and Oxford, 2010). On the military forces, see Hagen Koch and Peter Joachim Lapp, *Die Garde des Erich Mielke: Der militärisch-operative Arm des MfS. Das Berliner Wachregiment "Felix Dzierzynski,"* (Aachen, 2008).

16 The best overview of the history of the Stasi can be found in Jens Gieseke, *Die Stasi 1945-1990* (Munich, 2011). For detailed information on Stasi research, see *Bibliografie zum Staatssicherheitsdienst der DDR*, ed. BStU (Berlin, 2010).

17 “Stasi-Akten sollen auch im Bundesarchiv zugänglich sein,” *Zeit Online*, April 14, 2014. For a general overview, see *Bericht der Bundesregierung zum Stand der Aufarbeitung der SED-Diktatur*, Deutscher Bundestag 17. Wahlperiode, Drucksache 17/12115, Jan. 16, 2013.

18 Klaus Schroeder, *Der SED-Staat: Geschichte und Strukturen der DDR 1949-1990*, 3rd rev. and enlarged ed. (Cologne, Weimar, and Vienna, 2013), 557-84; David Gill and Ulrich Schröter, *Das Ministerium für Staatssicherheit: Anatomie des Mielke-Imperiums* (Berlin, 1991), 101-107.

subtle forms of maintaining power in the 1970s and 1980s.¹⁹ As the Stasi steadily gained financial and personnel resources and direct access to information about all the political and social institutions of the GDR (with the exception of the churches), it also increased its use of instruments of social engineering and turned away from direct physical violence, all of which fundamentally changed the agency. Many historians, however, discuss these changes as a kind of modernization of a dictatorship and deem the transformed GDR state as a form of “subtle totalitarianism”²⁰ or a “dictatorship of a higher order”²¹ — and therefore see these changes as evidence of its repressive and inhumane — as well as totalitarian — character. The fact that psychological expertise and deceptive measures like decomposition (*Zersetzung*, a hidden psychological destruction of the subject) came to be applied, as well as the sheer number of operative procedures, back this thesis of a second Stasi phase beginning in the mid-1970s. Other scholars, however, disagree; they refer to the agency’s limited resources for applying decomposition on a larger scale — only 1,000 to 10,000 people were directly affected²² — and conclude that such measures, although directed against proclaimed enemies, were merely used symbolically to keep up the Chekist ideal of the Stasi.²³ Such soft power was comparatively inefficient: it did not break most of the proclaimed enemies of the state but rather confirmed in some way that the Stasi was no longer using physical violence; without it, its sword became blunt. Finally, another argument against this Stasi 2.0 was the opposition — although it was constantly weakened by the sale of political prisoners to West Germany.²⁴ That it existed at all contradicts the narrative of the GDR still being “totalitarian” at that point.

The history of the Stasi is also an important component in the history of the GDR’s failure. The intelligence service provided information on events in the GDR and in Western countries in accordance with the party line and the needs for maintaining the system. The functions it did well included acquiring strategic information, supporting internal cooperation with Eastern Bloc allies and nonaligned states, and infiltration and fighting the (self-produced) opposition. This relative success story, however, was offset by an internal blockade of

19 For one view of periodizing Stasi history, see Roger Engelmann, “Funktionswandel der Staatssicherheit,” in *Repression und Wohlstandsversprechen: Zur Sta-*

bilisierung von Parteiherrschaft in der DDR und der CSSR, ed. Christoph Boyer and Peter Skyba (Dresden, 1999), 89–97. For the early period, see Karl

Wilhelm Fricke and Roger Engelmann, “Konzentrierte Schläge”: *Staatssicherheitsaktionen und politische Prozesse in der DDR 1953–1956* (Berlin, 1998).

20 Sandra Pingel-Schliemann, *Zersetzen: Strategie einer Diktatur* (Berlin, 2002), 70; idem, “Lautlose Formen der Zerstörung: Zersetzungsmaßnahmen des MfS,” *Deutschland Archiv* 36 (2003): 233–42. Cf. the reviews by Christof Geisel, *H-Soz-u-Kult*, Nov. 4, 2002, and Walter Süß, “Zersetzung als Methode. Zu Sandra Pingel-Schliemann ‘Zersetzen. Strategie einer Diktatur’,” *Horch und Guck* 11, no. 39 (2002): 71–73.

21 Hubertus Knabe, “Zersetzungsmaßnahmen?” in *Was war die Stasi?*, ed. Dümmel and Piepen-schneider, 28–34, here 34.

22 Ansgar Borbe, *Die Zahl der Opfer des SED-Regimes* (Erfurt, 2010), 66–67.

23 The Cheka, created in 1917, was the first and perhaps most criminal of the Soviet state security organizations. The KGB, created in 1954, is one of its many successors. The Chekist ideal, propagated by its leader Felix Dzerzhinsky, was to brutally combat all opponents of the ruling communist party.

24 Jan Philipp Wölbern, *Der Häftlingsfreikauf aus der DDR, 1962/63–1989: Zwischen Menschenhandel und humanitären Aktionen* (Göttingen, 2014); Hendrik von Quillfeldt, *Dissidenten für Devisen: Häftlingshandel zwischen DDR und Bundesrepublik Deutschland* (Erfurt, 2010).

one-sided, unquestioned concepts of the enemy, as well as through language and phrases antagonistic to differentiated and reasonable perceptions of events and persons. Combined with political goals and political leaders focused on confirming their perceptions and not in exploring alternative scenarios, the Stasi reinforced the resistance to reform of the Honecker era. Consequently, large parts the Stasi staff and the party elite grew increasingly alienated from one another, including the unwaveringly loyal leading cadres of the agency itself. As a result, action was blocked, the state suffered losses against the growing opposition, and many in the “firm” fell into an attitude of inward resignation. In the 1980s, the Stasi was unable to staunch the depletion of material resources for the sake of continuous expansion of the security and surveillance services. Nor was it able to prevent the emergence of a second public sphere conveyed via Western media and personal contacts. Under these circumstances, the mighty Stasi simply surrendered when the internal opposition first demanded change and reforms and, finally, a democratic alternative. The example of the Stasi reveals that intelligence services can prolong the existence of regimes, but they cannot really stop the erosion of trust in leading cadres.

The Stasi Files

Researchers have a unique source when seeking to elaborate a nuanced and empirically validated history of the Stasi. Access to the files of intelligence services is normally severely restricted; the files of the (West) German Bundesnachrichtendienst, for instance, are not available to the public, and even members of the newly established commission on the service’s post-WWII history are not allowed to publish all the details of their research. A large number of relevant personnel files were destroyed in 1996 and 2007.²⁵ Although Germany has had an *Informationsfreiheitsgesetz* — its own Freedom of Information Act — since 2006, the law restricts access to information to issues of national security, personal data, business secrets, etc. The U.S. version, by contrast, gives researchers the right of access after 25 years, even if the files continue to be contested.²⁶ While the German situation shows that the restrictive history of the authoritarian state is still present, the U.S. circumstance is much more open: the nation spent at least \$430 million enforcing the act properly in 2012.²⁷

The existence of this unique source, the Stasi files, is due to manner in which the peaceful revolution of 1989/1990 unfolded; they

25 *Kassationen von Personalakten im Bestand des BND-Archivs*, ed. Bodo Hechelhammer (Berlin, 2011).

26 See Athan G. Theophras, ed., *A Culture of Secrecy: The Government Versus the People’s Rights to Know* (Lawrence, 1998); Alasdair Roberts, *Blacked Out: Government Secrecy in the Information Age* (Cambridge, 2006).

27 Wendy Ginsberg, *The Freedom of Information Act (FOIA): Background, Legislation, and Political Issues* (Congressional Research Service 7-5700) (Washington, DC, 2014), 11.

symbolize the victory of GDR citizens over the communist regime and the concomitant promise this victory held of a more democratic and transparent future.²⁸ Open access to the files arose partly from the interest of GDR civil rights activists in the history of their state and their own repression. Yet it also derived from the aim of serving an educational purpose — the files disclose the Stasi's all-embracing management and manipulation of GDR society.²⁹

The Stasi files are special because of their exceptional size (comprising about 180 km of shelf space).³⁰ Even today, a considerable portion of the Stasi files is not yet indexed. Relatively few files have been lost; most sources are preserved in written form on paper and cover a range of activities much broader than that of other political police services.³¹ The quality of the files is also high, as the Stasi tried to guarantee a high standard of intelligence information: it drafted guidelines, with some individuals' careers revolving around their implementation. Staff members also underwent regular training, and internal checks were introduced in an effort to improve the quality of evidence received from sources. Nonetheless, the files can be limited in their usefulness for historical research because of the purpose for which they were created. For the most part, the files contain personal data and present a mosaic of repression. The investigations, operational procedures, and direct personal checking of persons they convey represent GDR history in a very specific way. Because of their existence and their sheer amount, the Stasi files deeply shape the broader history of the GDR, although it surely can't be written without the even larger quantity of additional sources from the state, the parties and mass organizations, and the churches.³² Of course, the preserved Stasi files do not comprise the entirety of the records for the Ministry for State Security.³³ The Stasi began destroying files on a regular basis before unification. Consequently, the bulk of information regarding mail, telephone, and radio surveillance was lost as well as c. 70,000 personal files. Most of the HV A files were wiped out in 1989 and 1990 — with

28 Christian Boof, "Von der Stasi-Erstürmung zur Aktenöffnung: Konflikte und Kompromisse im Vorfeld der deutschen Einheit," *Deutschland Archiv* 44 (2011): 79-87. Cf. Siegfried Suckut and Jürgen Weber, eds., *Stasi-Akten zwischen Politik und Zeitgeschichte*:

Eine Zwischenbilanz (Munich, 2003). A good example of GDR citizens' tremendous interest in the Stasi is the bestseller Armin Mitter and Stefan Wolle, eds., *Ich liebe euch doch alle! Befehle und Lageberichte des MfS Januar-November 1989*, 3rd ed. (Berlin, 1990),

which gave a first taste of the files.

29 Klaus-Dieter Henke, "Zu Nutzung und Auswertung der Unterlagen des Staatssicherheitsdienstes der ehemaligen DDR," *Vierteljahrshefte für Zeitgeschichte* 41 (1993): 575-87, here 586.

30 This is the size declared and popularized by Joachim Gauck, *Die Stasi-Akten: Das unheimliche Erbe der DDR* (Reinbek near Hamburg, 1991), 11. Today, the BStU claims to have about 111 km of written files (including 12 km of card indexes), 47 km in the form of microfilms, 1.7 million photos, 27,600 audio documents, 2,800 films, and 15,000 boxes and bags ("Überlieferungslage und Erschließung der Unterlagen. Stand: Februar 2013." http://www.bstu.bund.de/DE/Archive/Ueber-DieArchive/Ueberlieferungslage-Erschliessung/uberlieferungslage_node.html).

31 Roger Engelmann, *Zu Struktur, Charakter und Bedeutung der Unterlagen des Ministeriums für Staatssicherheit* (Berlin 1994), 6. Cf. Roland Lucht, ed., *Das Archiv der Stasi: Begriffe* (Göttingen, 2012).

32 Matthias Buchholz, "Anmerkungen zur Problematik der 'DDR-Archive'" in *Bilanz und Perspektiven der DDR-Forschung*, ed. Rainer Eppelmann, Bernd Faulenbach, and Ulrich Mählert (Paderborn, 2003), 383-90.

33 Roland Lucht, "Ablagen liquidieren – 'spezifische Vorgänge tragfähig gestalten". Schriftgutvernichtungen des MfS während der "Wende" und der Auflösungsphase der Staatssicherheit," in *Hatte "Janus" eine Chance? Das Ende der DDR und die Sicherung einer Zukunft der Vergangenheit*, ed. Dagmar Unverhau (Münster, 2003), 81-98.

the consent of the new representatives of the former GDR and the implicit support of the Western powers.³⁴

34 Hubertus Knabe, *Westarbeit des MfS: Das Zusammenspiel von 'Aufklärung' und 'Abwehr'* (Berlin, 1999), 133-34.

35 *Bericht der Bundesregierung* (2013), 16.

36 See Saskia Handro and Thomas Schaarschmidt, eds., *Aufarbeitung der Aufarbeitung: Die DDR im geschichtskulturellen Diskurs* (Schwalbach, 2011), particularly the introduction and the articles by Martin Sabrow and Thomas Großbötting.

37 See an overview of early research by Beate Ihme-Tuchel, *Die DDR* (Darmstadt, 2002), 89-100.

38 Anna Funder, *Stasiland*, 3rd ed. (Frankfurt/M, 2011) (first published in Melbourne, 2002).

39 Thomas Großbötting, "Die DDR als 'Stasi-Staat'? Das Ministerium für Staatssicherheit als Erinnerungsmoment im wiedervereinigten Deutschland und als Strukturelement der SED-Diktatur," in *Friedensnation, Leseland, Sportnation? DDR-Legenden auf dem Prüfstand*, ed. idem (Berlin, 2009), 50-73, here 53-61.

40 See Thomas Ahbe, *Ostalgie: Zum Umgang mit der DDR-Vergangenheit in den 1990er Jahren* (Erfurt, 2005).

41 Matthias Wagner, *Das Stasi-Syndrom: Über den Umgang mit den Akten des MfS in den 90er Jahren* (Berlin, 2001).

42 Karl Wilhelm Fricke, "Geschichtsrevisionismus aus MfS-Perspektive: Ehemalige Stasi-Kader wollen ihre Geschichte umdeuten," *Deutschland Archiv* 39 (2006): 490-96; Hubertus Knabe, *Die Täter sind unter uns: Über das Schönreden der SED-Diktatur* (Berlin, 2008), 253-339.

The Relevance of Stasi History for (East) German Identity

The Stasi files have generated immense and steady interest: Between 1991 and 2013, 6.7 million applications were made to access files at the BStU, 2.83 million of them by citizens with a personal interest.³⁵ Dealing with the Stasi past, however, was not mainly a private issue or the passion of a small group of civil rights activists. It was understood as a second chance: In contrast to the research on the Nazi period, which was not conducted on a large scale before the 1960s, the GDR past was to be analyzed with the help of the Stasi files from the earliest time possible.³⁶ Terms like "state of injustice" and the framework of two German dictatorships were incorporated into this research and educational project — and evinced (necessary) struggles on (East) German identity. The term "Stasi State," especially, delineated the battleground on the character of the GDR, particularly because it opened the door to a renaissance of the theory of totalitarianism.³⁷ In Germany, and above all in the Anglophone countries, Anna Funder's report *Stasiland* set the tone. In it, she analyzed the Stasi heritage and its ubiquity in East German everyday life.³⁸ Stasi history was always public history, resulting from the perception that surveillance and repression were omnipresent, the frightening immensity of the intelligence apparatus, the large number of prominent victims, and the deceptiveness of many of the Stasi measures.³⁹ Stasi history became a fashionable topic; Stasi historians became public figures. Individual persons of public interest, the simple contrast between victim and perpetrator, and the fight against Stasi revisionism and elements of *Ostalgie* were typical themes of research and public discourse in the 1990s.⁴⁰ Stasi research was often perceived as a project of the West to delegitimize the utopian idea of a better socialist Germany and to denounce the former elite of the GDR, who, among others, criticized this "Stasi syndrome" as an expression of Western supremacy and its victory in the Cold War.⁴¹

Such complaints and the rather fruitless arguments with Stasi revisionists⁴² spurred very thorough empirical research that focused on individual cases and the details of GDR intelligence activities. Such studies, however, could not be easily integrated into a broader understanding of the GDR and its legacy. At the same time, the early debates already did induce more individualized analysis and

understanding of the different Stasi experiences. Oral history interviews revealed the shame and fear people felt upon being silenced in the GDR and after unification — but they also conveyed pride and defiance. The Stasi was present in everyday life and was perceived as a Big Brother but also as a predictable element of the SED regime.⁴³ It was perceived variously as an unavoidable evil, as a necessary institution in global class struggles, as life-threatening — or it was simply ignored. The sum of such analyses and interviews was a view of the GDR past with much grayer tones, where it was clear that contradictions had to be negotiated day by day: The GDR was socially relatively homogeneous yet had quite distinct social milieus; it satisfied basic needs yet reinforced individual self-interest; it was oriented toward the West but sealed itself off. Moreover, it oscillated between formality and informality; it was progress oriented yet criticized the results of progress; it was based on traditions but destroyed them; and it was repressive and integrative at the same time.⁴⁴ Consequently, there was no single Stasi experience but multiple Stasi experiences — and any attempt to establish a dominant historical narrative will fail.

The Size of the Repression System

Questions about the Stasi as an institution accompanied this differentiation and pluralization of the perception of the Stasi and its legacy. An intense — and in some ways surprising — public debate erupted in 2013 concerning the number of Stasi personnel and the agency's internal structure. Ilko-Sascha Kowalczyk, a historian at the BStU, in his recent overview of the history of the Stasi pointed out the heterogeneous personnel structure of the surveillance service⁴⁵ and estimated that 40,000 to 50,000 of the 90,000 full-time staff were actively engaged in surveillance activities — much more than in any other Eastern bloc state.⁴⁶ While this figure was generally accepted, his recalculation of the number of unofficial collaborators incited public and academic protest. Kowalczyk emphasized that there were “hardly reliable total numbers for the unofficial collaborator network,”⁴⁷ which was characterized by high turnover, a lack of professionalism, and exaggerated numbers due to recruiters being under pressure. Complicating the calculation further, many unofficial collaborators were not hidden denunciators or snitches but worked in various functions for the Ministry of State Security, so they were counted twice in several categories or were full-time members of the Stasi. Consequently, Kowalczyk gave no precise numbers, but his point is clear: 190,000 — the number often mentioned for the total of

43 Dorothee Wierling, “Die Stasi in der Erinnerung,” in *Staatssicherheit und Gesellschaft: Studien zum Herrschaftsalltag in der DDR*, ed. Jens Gieseke (Göttingen, 2007), 187–208, here 194–99.

44 Detlef Pollack, “Die konstitutive Widersprüchlichkeit der DDR. Oder: War die DDR-Gesellschaft homogen?” *Geschichte und Gesellschaft* 24 (1997): 110–31.

45 See, e.g., Roger Engelmann et al., eds., *Das MfS-Lexikon: Begriffe, Personen und Strukturen der Staatssicherheit der DDR* (Berlin, 2011), 138–41.

46 Ilko-Sascha Kowalczyk, *Stasi konkret: Überwachung und Repression in der DDR* (Munich, 2013), 189. For a detailed overview, see Jens Gieseke, *Die hauptamtlichen Mitarbeiter des Ministeriums der Staatssicherheit* (MfS-Handbuch, part IV/1), 2nd ed. (Berlin 1996).

47 Kowalczyk, 215. Cf. Helmut Müller-Enbergs, *Die inoffiziellen Mitarbeiter* (MfS-Handbuch, part IV/2) (Berlin, 2008), who gives a total number of 620,000 unofficial collaborators from 1950 to 1989.

unofficial collaborators in the late 1980s — is far too high.⁴⁸ This does not downplay the role of the Stasi but opens a window to researchers for analyzing the whole system of suppression and surveillance in the GDR, including the police forces, the large number of mass organizations like the Freie Deutsche Jugend, the Frauenbund, the unions, and the Kulturbund, and not just the Stasi.⁴⁹ In other words, the GDR was an SED — not a Stasi — dictatorship.⁵⁰

The public response to Kowalczyk's claims, however, was ambivalent.⁵¹ Many criticized this discussion of numbers as a kind of promotion for a book: Kowalczyk was following the early dramatization of the Stasi with a more fashionable dedramatization.⁵² Others asked whether such a strategy contradicted Kowalczyk's acclaimed purpose: to focus research more particularly on the social practice of surveillance in all sectors of the GDR society and illuminate its consequences for the economy and society. Calculating the number of citizens who gave information not only to the Stasi but also to mass organizations and state institutions would lead to much higher figures, they claimed.⁵³ But this latter perspective also underestimated the structural changes in intelligence work in the age of big data. Databases and combining personal data became more and more significant for the Stasi in the 1980s.⁵⁴ In the end, the value of this discussion lies in highlighting the need to refocus historical analysis from the Stasi in particular to the whole control and repression apparatus of the GDR and its reigning party. This focus not only broadens Stasi history to a history of GDR society but also allows for a more comparative perspective. The GDR was a borderland in the Cold War and had a Western neighbor with whom it shared a language and cultural traditions. The fearful Eastern elites saw themselves as constantly under threat — and they invested even more money into national security than their Eastern allies. In addition, the GDR and its surveillance activities were transformed by technological progress, just as other nations were, so it can be analyzed as an example of how modern societies have dealt with the challenges and opportunities big data presented.

The HV A: An Ordinary and Successful Intelligence Service?

In the context of the vehement debates about the Stasi, it is surprising that the GDR's foreign intelligence service, the Hauptverwaltung A, is often perceived in a very different manner, even though it was an integral part of the "firm." Espionage, infiltration, sabotage,

48 Although most articles in the debate gave the number of c. 109,000 unofficial collaborators as Kowalczyk's own estimation, this is a misreading of his argument. He simply argues that an internal Stasi report for Erich Mielke listed 109,281 people in 1988 (Kowalczyk, 232).

49 Cf. the summary by Stefan Berg, "Die schlanke Stasi," *Spiegel Online*, Feb. 21, 2013, and the balanced reviews by Jens Giesecke, *H-Soz-u-Kult*, Sept. 5, 2013, and Peter Grimm, "Zurechtgerückt," *Horch und Guck* 22, no. 79 (2013): 68-69.

50 Ilko-Sascha Kowalczyk, "Wir haben die Logik der Stasi nicht durchbrochen," *Cicero Online*, March 15, 2013.

51 Sven Felix Kellerhoff, "Wie viele Spitzel hatte die DDR-Staatssicherheit?" *Die Welt*, March 20, 2013.

52 Christian Booß, "Zurückgeforscht: Die neue Entdramatisierung der DDR-Aufarbeitung," *Horch und Guck* 22, no. 79 (2013): 66-67.

53 See Matthias Schlegel, "Die Reduzierung auf Stasi verharmlost die Rolle der SED': Chef der Stasiunterlagenbehörde im Interview," *Der Tagesspiegel*, Feb. 27, 2013.

54 Karl Wilhelm Fricke noted these shifts already in *Die DDR-Staatssicherheit*, 3rd rev. and enlarged ed. (Cologne, 1989), 101-103.

and “active measures” are still fascinating to many, not only those who have enjoyed the modern fairy tales about James Bond and other secret agents.⁵⁵ While historians proclaim that “James Bond is dead,”⁵⁶ the general public — and many academics as well — are still attracted to the hidden world of foreign intelligence. Markus Wolf, the head of the HV A and its predecessor organizations from 1953 to 1986, was known for a long time only as “the man without a face” because he was so elusive.⁵⁷ Today, he is often still perceived as a professional and efficient spymaster, in many ways superior to his Western counterparts.⁵⁸ The HV A’s rather legendary reputation is based on some remarkable successes, in particular its infiltration of the political, military, and industrial establishment of West Germany and the low number of defectors from its ranks.⁵⁹ Many former Stasi members used these facts to proclaim that the Eastern service was similar to its Western counterparts and competitors — but simply better.⁶⁰ Many former adversaries share this myth as well, with the term “Hauptverwaltung Aufklärung” even being a West German invention: for the Stasi, the “A” did not stand for “Aufklärung” but was simply a designation.⁶¹

In his lecture at the GHI-Wilson Center conference “The Stasi and its Foreign Intelligence Service,” Dirk Dörrenberg, the former director of counterespionage and protective security at the West German Bundesamt für Verfassungsschutz (BfV, the Federal Office for the Protection of the Constitution), drew a rather different picture: From 1964 to 1989, he stated, his agency counted about 40,000 HV A operations, most of them in the military (11,200), political (10,900), and economic sectors (5,400). The BfV took note of about 14,800 recruitments, resulting in about 3,500 active spies mostly motivated by financial gain. Although Dörrenberg conceded that the HV A was able to penetrate all sectors of West German society, these penetrations were, he argued, in many cases well known to Western counterintelligence agencies. In addition, Western counterintelligence had deciphered the KGB information system in the late 1960s, allowing for the recruitment of double agents and the exposure of 450 HV A agents. Moreover, the defection of agent Werner Stiller in 1979 was a severe blow to the Eastern intelligence service. Consequently, Dörrenberg viewed the high evaluation of the HV A among many intelligence experts as inappropriate. The service was in many cases an open book to Westerners, and it failed to achieve important success in the field of economic espionage or in endangering or destabilizing the

55 It is no coincidence that the seventh chapter of Kristie Macrakis, *Seduced by Secrets: Inside the Stasi's Spy-Tech World* (Cambridge et al., 2008), is entitled “James Bond, Communist-Style.”

56 Armin Wagner and Matthias Uhl, *BND contra Sowjetarmee: Westdeutsche Militärspionage in der DDR* (Berlin, 2008), 10.

57 Markus Wolf with Anne McElvoy, *Man Without a Face: The Autobiography of Communism's Greatest Spymaster* (New York, 1997).

58 Alexander Reichenbach, *Chef der Spione: Die Markus-Wolf-Story* (Stuttgart, 1992); *Konspiration im Kalten Krieg: Deutsche Geheimdienstchefs im Kalten Krieg*, ed. Dieter Krüger and Armin Wagner (Berlin, 2003).

59 David Childs and Richard Popplewell, *The Stasi: The East German Intelligence and Security Service* (New York, 1996), 112-41.

60 Cf. Klaus Eichner and Gotthold Schramm, eds., *Top-Spione im Westen: Spitzenquellen der DDR-Aufklärung erinnern sich* (Berlin, 2008); Horst Müller, Manfred Süß, and Horst Vogel, eds., *Die Industriespionage der DDR: Die Wissenschaftlich-Technische Aufklärung der HV A* (Berlin, 2008).

61 Peter Siebenmorgen, *'Staatssicherheit' der DDR: Der Westen im Fadenkreuz der Stasi* (Bonn, 1993), viii.

Federal Republic of Germany.⁶² Lack of access to the West German files precludes checking this information in detail.

Dörrenberg also stressed the legal and institutional differences between the HV A and the West German intelligence services: The Bundesnachrichtendienst (BND, or Foreign Intelligence Service), for instance, operates on the legal basis of a special law from 1990: accordingly, it is not allowed to do intelligence work inside Germany, has no executive police rights, and is subordinated to the German Chancellery. The service is controlled by the parliamentary control commission and the G10 Commission, the Federal Audit Office, and the Federal Commissioner for Data Protection and Freedom of Information. All its operations are potentially subject to legal action. The differences between the HV A and its Western counterparts are thus obvious, at least from a normative perspective: The HV A acted both in and outside the GDR, had police enforcement rights, was active in promoting destabilization and disinformation, was controlled only by the SED, and could not be brought to court.⁶³

Such clear-cut differences, however, are diminished if one examines the often quite different actual practices of intelligence services: For instance, from 1993 to 1998, the BND kept critical journalists in West Germany under surveillance.⁶⁴ The service also provided and continues to provide the NSA with metadata — such as around 20 million telephone connections per day — and it benefits from NSA information, as well.⁶⁵ Although this practice infringes on the basic rights of Germans and citizens of other nations, it is unlikely to have negative repercussions. Scandals, a severe lack of transparency, and the close interaction between the government and the intelligence service are some of the reasons that former HV A officials give to argue absurdly that their agency was not only comparable but similar to its Western counterparts.⁶⁶ The outspoken admiration many intelligence practitioners voice for the HV A can also be interpreted as a projection, as the desire for less regulated intelligence gathering in the West. The notorious 2007 Odense conference, where former members of the Stasi/HV A and renowned Western academics — among them contributors to this volume — discussed the history of GDR foreign intelligence, was not a scandal merely because participants carried on such a conversation. Exchanging information and arguments is the essence of an open society and of academia. More problematic was the underlying general assumption that Western and Eastern

62 See Dirk Dörrenberg, "Erkenntnisse des Verfassungsschutzes zur Westarbeit des MfS," in *Das Gesicht dem Westen zu. . . DDR-Spionage gegen die Bundesrepublik Deutschland*, ed. Georg Herbstritt and Helmut Müller-Enbergs (Bremen, 2003), 72-111. Dörrenberg elected not to publish a revised version of his manuscript in this volume.

63 Cf. *Hauptverwaltung A (HV A): Aufgaben — Strukturen — Quellen*, ed. BStU (Berlin, 2013); Helge Heidemeyer, "SED und Ministerium für Staatssicherheit: 'Schild und Schwert der Partei,'" in *Die Geschichte der SED: Eine Bestandsaufnahme*, ed. Jens Gieseke and Hermann Wentker (Berlin, 2011), 114-35; Knabe, *West-Arbeit*.

64 See Gerhard Schäfer, *Gutachten* (Berlin, 2006).

65 "BND nennt Details über Datentransfer an NSA," *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*, Aug. 3, 2013.

66 Werner Großmann and Wolfgang Schwanitz, eds., *Fragen an das MfS: Auskünfte über eine Behörde*, 3rd rev. and extended ed. (Berlin, 2010), 231-63.

intelligence practices were not really different.⁶⁷ This is a real challenge for a comparative history of the Cold War because if this is true, norms and values of Western democracies are not essential but can be disposed of as necessary.

Such intellectual chumminess outrages a small group of historians who argue that the HV A infiltrated the Federal Republic of Germany and had a significant influence on political positions and the public debate.⁶⁸ This debate flared again when it became publicly known that an unofficial Stasi collaborator, Karl-Heinz Karras, had murdered West Berlin student Benno Ohnesorg on June 2, 1967.⁶⁹ Public historians announced: “From the 1950s on, the MfS and its employer, the SED, helped to shape the politics of the Federal Republic — by means of public campaigns and conspiratorial exertion of influence, through spies and allies.”⁷⁰ The key problem of such statements is that they exaggerate individual cases and neglect the results of a broader *Gesellschaftsgeschichte* or social history, and ignore the multi-sided entanglement of both German states.

The discussion of the HV A emphasizes basic questions of modern surveillance history. Although the SIRA databases and the Rosenholz files are important tools for serious research, and additional information is available in other archives, there are clear limits to what can be empirically validated.⁷¹ What is typical of many other branches of historiography becomes a more serious problem in intelligence history: Extreme positions and even conspiracy theories are not uncommon because it is not always possible to falsify them easily. The HV A was not merely an intelligence service like others, it affected but did not infiltrate West Germany, and there is no real thrill in its history but a simple mixture of successes and failures. Although it was successful from the perspective of the SED regime, the information it acquired did not stop the economic and the political decline of the GDR, and its limited successes in infiltration were often counterproductive. The HV A until 1989 loyally executed SED prerogatives without contradictions; it was an integral part of the sclerosis and the collapse of the GDR.

Towards an Integrative Social History (or Gesellschaftsgeschichte) of the GDR

Social history and *Gesellschaftsgeschichte* have been important elements of the historiography of the GDR and the Stasi since the early 1990s. The Center for Contemporary History in Potsdam under Jürgen

67 Klaus Eichner and Gotthold Schramm, eds., *Hauptverwaltung A. Geschichte, Aufgaben, Einsichten: Referate und Diskussionsbeiträge der Konferenz am 17./18. November in Odense* (Berlin, 2008).

68 Hubertus Knabe, *Die unterwanderte Republik* (Berlin, 2001), argues this most prominently. Jürgen Schreiber, *Die Stasi lebt: Berichte aus einem unterwanderten Land* (Munich, 2009), is similar.

69 Armin Fuhrer, *Wer erschoss Benno Ohnesorg? Der Fall Kurras und die Stasi* (Berlin, 2009).

70 Sven Felix Kellerhoff, *Die Stasi und der Westen: Der Kurras-Komplex* (Hamburg, 2010), 310.

71 Helmut Müller-Enbergs, “Was wissen wir über die DDR-Spionage,” in *Das Gesicht dem Westen zu. . .* ed. Herbstritt and Müller-Enbergs (Bremen, 2003), 34-71. SIRA stands for System of Information Research (System zur Informationsrecherche der HV A), a system of individual databases on the HV A’s Western activities. The Rosenholz files include data of sources, targets, employees, and supporters of the HV A. For details, see Helmut Müller-Enbergs, “Rosenholz: Eine Quellenkritik,” 2nd ed. (Berlin, 2007).

72 Hartmut Kaelble, Jürgen Kocka, and Hartmut Zwahr, eds., *Sozialgeschichte der DDR* (Stuttgart, 1994); Konrad Jarausch, ed., *Dictatorship as Experience: Towards a Socio-Cultural History of the GDR*, (New York and Oxford, 1999).

73 Mary Fulbrook, *The People's State: East German Society from Hitler to Honecker* (New Haven and London, 2008), 4. Similar research was done before by Lutz Niethammer, e.g., Lutz Niethammer, "Erfahrungen und Strukturen: Prolegomena zu einer Geschichte der Gesellschaft der DDR," in *Sozialgeschichte der DDR*, ed. Kaelble et al. (Stuttgart, 1994), 95-115; and Dorothee Wierling, *Gebo- ren im Jahr Eins: Der Jahrgang 1949 in der DDR und seine historischen Erfahrungen* (Berlin, 2002).

74 Fulbrook, *People's State*, 12. See also Mary Fulbrook, *Anatomy of a Dictatorship: Inside the GDR, 1949-1989* (Oxford et al., 1995).

75 See Paul Betts, *Within Walls: Private Life in the German Democratic Republic* (Oxford and New York, 2011).

76 Andrew I. Port, *Conflict and Stability in the German Democratic Republic* (Cambridge et al., 2007); idem, *Die rätselhafte Stabilität der DDR: Arbeit und Alltag im sozialistischen Deutschland* (Bonn, 2010).

77 Gary Bruce, "The GDR as a Responsive Dictatorship," *H-German* (Oct. 2007).

78 Stefan Wolle, *Die heile Welt der Diktatur: Alltag und Herrschaft in der DDR 1971-1989*, 2. rev. ed. (Bonn, 1999); idem, *Aufbruch nach Utopia: Alltag und Herrschaft in der DDR 1961-1971* (Bonn, 2011); idem, *Der große Plan: Alltag und Herrschaft in der DDR 1949-1961* (Berlin, 2013).

Kocka, Christoph Kleßmann, and later Konrad Jarausch and Martin Sabrow, for example, has been an important locus of such research.⁷² During the last decade, however, new books on the social and everyday history of the East German state have called the Stasi-centered focus of GDR research profoundly into question. It does not seem coincidental that Anglo-Saxon scholars are at the head of this shift.

Mary Fulbrook, for example, argued that Stasi research didn't really get at the "widespread acceptance of the general parameters of life" in the GDR and that the regime was able to "involve a large number of its citizens in its political structures and measures."⁷³ The GDR functioned as a "participatory dictatorship," a term that underlines "the ways in which the people themselves were at one and the same time both constrained and affected by . . . the ever changing social and political system of the GDR."⁷⁴ Repression and disciplining was normal, but people dealt with it in active and quite individual ways. The Stasi was not strictly separated from society but an integral element of normalcy.⁷⁵

The GDR was a modern industrial society and consequently deeply affected by class differences. Andrew Port, in his detailed analysis of social conflicts and political governance in the district of Saalfeld, stressed the regime's efforts to satisfy the basic needs of workers as well as farmers and rural laborers.⁷⁶ This responsiveness on the part of (local) SED representatives created trust and used long-standing differences of class and milieu to reciprocally block oppositional action. This "responsive dictatorship"⁷⁷ often acted as a moderator and used violence only after trying to integrate the demands of society. The Stasi was therefore not only an element of repression but an important source of information on the daily needs and long-term interests of different groups of citizens.

Fulbrook's and Port's contributions to East German history have been criticized for underrating the repressive element of the dictatorship. But this argument misrepresents their work because neither of them denies the ubiquitous presence of violence or the Stasi's function as the big stick of the regime. GDR and Stasi history can't be written only from the top down but must be balanced with a bottom-up perspective. The most popular endeavor in this direction is Stefan Wolle's trilogy on everyday life and power in the GDR.⁷⁸ Based on his private experiences and detailed knowledge of everyday culture, he presents his Eastern fatherland as a terrible idyll where people could live in peace and happiness, but where the regime systematically

exploited individual desires.⁷⁹ Wolle also refers to the utopian idea of a better socialist society, which was an important point of reference and justification both for loyal and oppositional people and all the citizens in between.

The most ambitious and considered claim for an integrative social history of the Stasi, however, was formulated by Jens Gieseke — not only in his contribution to this volume. Similar to the historiography of the Nazi period, in which the analysis of the regime’s destructive and repressive institutions is now embedded into the larger history of German society, culture, and economy, the Stasi, he argues, can’t be understood without detailed reference to East German and German society and the rich tradition of sources on other GDR institutions.⁸⁰ Obviously, Stasi research is in transition.

Stasi Research as Part of a Comparative Analysis of Cold War History

While early Stasi research was effective at clarifying the fundamental normative differences between the dictatorship and democracy, between a state of injustice and states of law, Cold War history research has turned this black-and-white picture into ideology over the last decade.

In 2012, historian Josef Foscchepoth declared that “the old Federal Republic, throughout its existence, was a veritable surveillance state that disregarded the Basic Law, and the constitutional state was infiltrated — not by communists but at the instigation of Konrad Adenauer.”⁸¹ From 1955 to 1972, not less than 109.26 million postal items were confiscated by Western agencies. In 1955, more than 5 million telephone calls were monitored. The secrecy of the post — Article 10 of the indispensable basic rights of the Basic Law — was suspended for the sake of “needs” of a higher order of West Germany and its Western allies. The BND, Militärischer Abschirmdienst [Military Counterintelligence], BfV, and the NSA cooperated closely and were not controlled by any parliamentary commission. Although the surveillance of postal items from the GDR was cut back in 1972, when the Basic Treaty improved German-German relations, the surveillance practices of Western intelligence services has not been restricted reliably by any West German administration since Willy Brandt’s chancellorship:⁸² “The NSA is allowed to do anything in Germany. Not only because of the legal situation but above all because of the intensive cooperation of the services, which, after all, was always desired and was politically accepted on whatever scale.”⁸³

79 Stefan Wolle, “Es gab eine Idylle, doch sie war fürchterlich,” *GeoEpoche*, no. 64 (2013): 158-61, here 160. I’m thankful to Leonard Schmieding for giving me a copy of this interview.

80 Jens Gieseke, “Staatssicherheit und Gesellschaft — Plädoyer für einen Brückenschlag,” in *Staatssicherheit und Gesellschaft: Studien zum Herrschaftsalltag in der DDR*, ed. idem (Göttingen, 2007), 7-20.

81 Franziska Augstein, “Die nie ganz souveräne Republik,” *Süddeutsche Zeitung*, Nov. 13, 2012. The book in question is Josef Foscchepoth, *Überwachtes Deutschland. Post- und Telefonüberwachung in der alten Bundesrepublik* (Göttingen, 2012).

82 Josef Foscchepoth, “Die USA dürfen Merkel überwachen,” *Zeit Online*, Oct. 25, 2013.

83 Josef Foscchepoth, “Die NSA darf in Deutschland alles machen,” *Süddeutsche Zeitung*, July 9, 2013.

It is obvious that German administrations have failed to uphold the basic rights not only of their brothers and sisters behind the Wall but also of their own citizens. The Cold War led to the partial suspension of such rights all around the Western world — and it is difficult to fairly assess the extent of the unconstitutional activities by Western governments because sources are lacking.⁸⁴ The history of U.S. intelligence, however, makes it clear that the differences between Western and Eastern intelligence services are, indeed, only in degree rather than substance. The FBI's COINTELPRO program and the CIA's CHAOS program, for instance, allowed for the mostly illegal surveillance and discrediting of participants in the Civil Rights and the anti-Vietnam War movements.⁸⁵ The Senate Select Committee to Study Governmental Operations with Respect to Intelligence Activities, known as the "Church Committee" after its chairman Senator Frank Church and institutionalized after the Watergate scandal, provided evidence of a large number of assassination and attempted assassination operations of figures such as Fidel Castro, Patrice Lumumba, Rafael Trujillo, René Schneider, and Ngo Dinh Diem carried out on behalf of the U.S.⁸⁶ In the late 1970s, such practices were forbidden, and the intelligence services were reorganized, better coordinated, and more tightly controlled. The current debates on the NSA, however, suggest that there is no effective control and regulation of mass surveillance in or outside the U.S. It seems that those in power during the Cold War and afterwards publicly proclaim the idea of freedom while denying it in practice. The price of freedom is that we are not allowed to do everything that is possible. We have to take into consideration the basic rights of all citizens, even of opponents. A state of law is based on the idea that every accusation must be examined before action is taken.

84 See Josef Foschepoth, "Geheimes Deutschland: Ist die Geschichte der Bundesrepublik schon geschrieben?" in *Zeitgeschichte, Archive und Geheimschutz. Ressourcen und Konflikte bei der Nutzung von Quellen*, ed. Rainer Hering and Robert Kretzmar (Stuttgart, 2013), 9-18.

85 Ward Churchill and Jim Vander Wall, *The COINTELPRO Papers: Documents from the FBI's Secret Wars against Dissent in the United States*, 2nd ed. (Cambridge, 2002); the reports of the Rockefeller Commission are available at http://www.maryferrell.org/wiki/index.php/Rockefeller_Commission.

86 The reports are available at http://www.aarclibrary.org/publib/contents/contents_church.htm.

Structure and Content of the Volume

This volume includes a wide range of contributions. Although quite heterogeneous in their methodology, their sources, and their understanding of Stasi history, they all share an interest in analyzing and explaining the specific character of the East German political police and intelligence service. The Stasi is not understood here as an East German institution but as a border-crossing one that was active in the Western sphere and associated closely with its Eastern allies, particularly with the Soviet intelligence service, the KGB. This volume is directed predominantly at an American audience seeking reliable information on this particular field of East German history and the history of the Cold War.

This is the reason Robert Gerald Livingston's essay "America's Relationship with the GDR" stands at the beginning. In it, the prominent analyst of German-American relations supports a surprising thesis: for nearly two-thirds of its existence the GDR was "a nullity for United States policymaking" and even later "remained of but tangential importance" for the U.S. It was not the GDR but the Soviet Union that was perceived as the main competitor and partner for maintaining the status quo in Europe. Although the Berlin question often caused trouble in U.S.-GDR relations, the U.S. dealt directly with the GDR only on special issues, even after a U.S. embassy was established in East Berlin in 1974. This stance developed not only out of fierce anti-communism in the U.S. as well as anti-American propaganda in the GDR but also from the rather negative public perception of East Germany in the U.S. and the lack of any relevant immigrant community.

In accordance with the current research debates concerning the Stasi, the first section of this volume deals with "The Stasi and East German Society." Gary Bruce, in his contribution "Participatory Repression? Reflections on Popular Involvement with the Stasi," shares some results from his detailed regional analysis of the two Brandenburg districts of Gransee and Perleberg. He shows that the Stasi's effectiveness depended on broad support from ordinary citizens. This close interaction between society and the political police carried on a historical tradition that extended back to the Nazi period and even before. Denunciation, Bruce argues, can be understood as a form participation in a dictatorship, although it was most prominent in the formative years of the GDR. In spite of significant differences, both the Stasi and the Gestapo won some trust from society, enabling them to use active and reactive measures to gather information and to combat deviant activities. Case studies like these help us to learn more about the micro-level of power. Jens Gieseke, in "The Stasi and East German Society: Some Remarks on Current Research," examines the interactions of the Stasi, the SED state, and society in a more general but also subtle way. He criticizes the myth of the omnipresent Stasi and offers detailed insights into the people's perception of the intelligence service and its relevance to everyday life. This interaction provoked a specific form of social life that should not be glorified but analyzed as an integral part of a long-lasting tradition of submission. The perception of the Stasi and its long shadow on German history is also the focus of Konrad Jarausch's "Between Myth and Reality: The Stasi Legacy in German History." He makes a strong plea for

demythologizing the Stasi: its assumed and perceived omnipresence was part of its real power and generated a way of life characterized by fear and uncertainty. “De-Stasification” was crucial for the opposition and one of its important successes — but this narrow focus on the political police still flowed from a specific understanding of how GDR society functioned. Jarausch discusses the enormous social and private costs of the “poisoned legacy” of the Stasi. Although it had not infiltrated every element of life, it forced GDR citizens constantly to negotiate their position in state and society. He advocates a research agenda focusing on these issues that includes a historicization of the Stasi, the use of Stasi files as “normal” ones, a comparative analysis of East and West, and of different time periods and social regimes, thus fostering understanding of the Stasi’s effect on society and everyday life, as well as of repression and surveillance and their impact more generally in modern times.

The second part, “The Stasi and the GDR State,” explores whether the intelligence service was a state within a state or merely a loyal executor of the directions of the SED. Walter Süß, addressing “The Socialist Unity Party (SED) and the Stasi: A Complex Relationship,” gives a detailed overview of and a periodization of the history of the Stasi. Defined as the sword and shield of the SED, the Stasi, in his view, was the most important tool of the communist leadership. Trained in the tradition of the Soviet political police, the Stasi in its early period had to balance out a dual loyalty to the East German and the Soviet communist parties. Conflicts and the dismissal of the early Stasi ministers Wilhelm Zaisser and Ernst Wollweber were the result. From 1957 on, when Erich Mielke led the Stasi, the German leadership came increasingly to dominate the political police. While Süß offers an analytical overview from the outside, Jefferson Adams’s “The Stasi and the Party: From Coordination to Alienation” focuses on the ways that Stasi personnel defined and perceived themselves from within. Most of them saw themselves as the backbone of the communist state, and not less than 90 percent were members of the SED. They established their own historical tradition based on the achievements (i.e., the terror) of the Soviet Cheka and the establishment of the first socialist state in German history. This historical tradition was not upheld when the service changed in the 1970s, but loyalty to the SED was always maintained. The decline of the GDR and the rise of opposition groups incited severe alienation from the party, which was neither willing nor able to fight them in a harsh and brutal way.

The generalizations in these contributions are possible on the solid ground of the Stasi files. This is not the case with the history of the HV A. Consequently, the third part, “The HV A: Insights,” offers some case studies that give at least an idea of the function of the GDR’s foreign intelligence service and its changing history. Douglas Selvage looks at tradition in a very different way from the Stasi officers. In his article “SA-CIA-HV A: Dr. Emil Hoffmann and the ‘Jungle of the Secret Services’ (1934-1985),” he traces the biography of a German journalist and businessmen who was a Nazi propagandist in the Propaganda Ministry and the Foreign Office and worked after WWII first for the British MI6 service, despite having been active as a national revolutionary in the tradition of Gregor Strasser. After the British released him, he moved to the emerging field of East-West trade, and both the CIA and Soviet intelligence tried to recruit him. Beginning in 1956, the HV A tried to hire Hoffmann, giving up in the early 1960s, but finally managed to recruit him after his retirement in 1976. Selvage’s detailed and lucid analysis presents a story of shifting and unclear loyalties and commitments. Clearly, a Nazi past and active work for the West German New Right was no barrier to working for the HV A, and engagement for the other side, as Hoffmann’s case shows, made some people even more interesting for the intelligence services of the other. This deconstruction of the normative façade of intelligence services makes it clear that their analysis needs to be detailed and nuanced, focusing especially on their internal dynamics: Georg Herbstritt, in “Aspects of Crisis and Decline of the East German Foreign Intelligence in the 1980s,” presents the HV A as a chameleon with goals that shifted in different time periods. While recruitment in the 1950s and even 1960s was relatively easy, social and cultural changes in both German societies undermined the agency’s traditional strategies for placing spies in West Germany. From the late 1970s on, HV A officials complained of a lack of flexibility and loss of energy, which led to stagnation and even decline in the 1980s. The erosion of the GDR was not only caused by the rising opposition and effective counterespionage but by frustration and disillusion inside the HV A, as well.

The fourth and final part of the volume, “The HV A and KGB,” looks at the interaction of the East German and the Soviet intelligence services. This is not only necessary for understanding specific cultures of intelligence but also for examining the differences between Eastern and Western intelligence — in theory and in practice. Benjamin B. Fischer’s *“Bruderorgane: The Soviet Origins of East German*

Intelligence” starts with the basic assumption that the HV A was a Soviet creation. Its tradition can be traced back to the 1920s, when German and Soviet communists cooperated in fighting both the democratic Weimar Republic and its main competitor in the early 1930s, the NSDAP. This led to intense exchanges and to training in the Soviet Union. Fischer analyzes the creation of the Foreign Policy Service, the predecessor of the HV A, in 1951, and gives credit to its head, Markus Wolf, who came back to the GDR after living as an expatriate in the Soviet Union. Fischer presents the main activities and targets of the HV A and assesses its success: the East German service was successful in a professional sense — although it earned no gratitude from its big brother in the East. Finally, Paul Maddrell examines this “Cooperation between the HV A and the KGB, 1951-89.” The HV A was particularly useful to the KGB, Maddrell informs us, for infiltration and subversion tactics, based on the large number of immigrants and remigrants between the two Germanys. Common cultural ties to West Germans made the HV A a perfect tool for the Soviet KGB. The erection of the Berlin Wall made this business more complicated, contributing to relations between the two services becoming less hierarchical. Based on early recruitments and the use of informants, the HV A was able to deliver important political, economic, and military information to the KGB. This led to growing self-confidence and independence, although the KGB’s higher status was never really questioned. The KGB was mainly interested in military information but used secret political information as well to generate several scandals in the West. Economic information was of high importance but could not be used effectively due to the structural problems of the planning systems. The rapid growth of both the KGB and the HV A from the 1970s on broadened their sphere of activities to the “Third World” — and changed the organizations’ and their members’ sense of identity in the GDR and the Soviet Union. Whereas Maddrell has an open eye for the large number of successes of the Eastern services, he also makes it clear that all the information they provided was not enough to compensate for the structural deficits of these socialist, authoritarian regimes.

Why the History of the Stasi Still Matters

The Stasi is gone, although we are still struggling with its legacy. The articles of this volume will contribute to understanding Stasi activities at home and abroad and the ongoing controversies about this contested past. Today, the disclosures concerning the unconstitutional

and illegal activities of the NSA and many other intelligence services goad the public to take a different reading of this legacy.⁸⁷ Talking about the Stasi is tantamount to talking about the often contradictory goals of intelligence communities and of a democratic and lawful state that respects the individual rights of its citizens.

When dissident Rolf Henrich published his critical report *The Custodial State* in West Germany in April 1989, he wrote: “secret police activity seeks in the end to take control of every imaginable behavior, but a relationship can be found in anything that could put an end to the power of the Politbüro.”⁸⁸ If we substitute the term “national security” for “power of the Politbüro,” this seems to be a warning for current times as well. A modern comparative history of the Stasi and other intelligence services not only has the potential to present an unbiased picture of the ways that the Cold War warped all involved but can also serve the political needs of our times. Intelligence services are a necessary evil that tends to slip beyond the control of society and democratic institutions. Historical research can give insight into the ways and reasons that small groups, either in the intelligence community or in government positions, have suspended basic rights for whatever purpose.

The history of the Stasi shows that freedom is not only, and perhaps not predominantly, endangered by a specific type of communist party state — although there is no doubt that this sort of institution is hostile towards the individual and his liberty. The history of the Stasi gives us an idea of how a state can act against pluralism, heterogeneous traditions, and alternative interpretations it does not sanction. Although there is a need for self-defense of all societies, the state and elites can become problematic when left unquestioned. In this sense, the Stasi epitomized a threat and a danger that we still face today.

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87 Gleen Greenwald, *No Place to Hide: Edward Snowden, the NSA, and the U.S. Surveillance State* (New York, 2014).

88 Rolf Henrich, *Der vor-mundschäftliche Staat: Vom Versagen des real existierenden Sozialismus* (Reinbek near Hamburg, 1989), 189.

