

# Stasi

The **Ministry for State Security** (German: *Ministerium für Staatssicherheit*, **MfS** (German: [ˈmɛfˈʔɛs] ⓘ<sup>ⓘ</sup> listen)) or **State Security Service** (*Staatssicherheitsdienst*, SSD), commonly known as the **Stasi** (German: [ˈʃtaːziː] ⓘ<sup>ⓘ</sup> listen)),<sup>[n 1]</sup> was the official state security service of the German Democratic Republic (East Germany, GDR). It has been described as one of the most effective and repressive intelligence and secret police agencies ever to have existed.<sup>[3][4][5][6][7][8]</sup> The Stasi was headquartered in East Berlin, with an extensive complex in Berlin-Lichtenberg and several smaller facilities throughout the city. The Stasi motto was *Schild und Schwert der Partei* (Shield and Sword of the Party), referring to the ruling Socialist Unity Party of Germany (*Sozialistische Einheitspartei Deutschlands*, SED) and also echoing a theme of the KGB, the Soviet counterpart and close partner, with respect to its own ruling party, the Communist Party of the Soviet Union (CPSU). *Erich Mielke* was the Stasi's longest-serving chief, in power for 32 of the 40 years of the GDR's existence.

One of the Stasi's main tasks was spying on the population, primarily through a vast network of citizens turned informants, and fighting any opposition by overt and covert measures, including hidden psychological destruction of dissidents (*Zersetzung*, literally meaning "decomposition"). It arrested 250,000 people as political prisoners during its existence.<sup>[9]</sup> Its Main Directorate for Reconnaissance (*Hauptverwaltung Aufklärung*) was responsible both for espionage and for conducting covert operations in foreign countries. Under its long-time head Markus Wolf, this directorate gained a reputation as one of the most effective intelligence agencies of the Cold War. The Stasi also maintained contacts, and occasionally cooperated, with Western terrorists.<sup>[10][11]</sup>

Numerous Stasi officials were prosecuted for their crimes after 1990. After German reunification, the surveillance files that the Stasi had maintained on millions of East Germans were opened, so that all citizens could inspect their personal file on request. These files are now maintained by the *Stasi Records Agency*.

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## Ministry for State Security

*Ministerium für Staatssicherheit (MfS)*



Seal of the Ministry of State Security of the GDR



Flag of Stasi



Part of the former Stasi compound in East Berlin, with "Haus 1" in the centre

### Agency overview

<b>Formed</b>	8 February 1950
<b>Dissolved</b>	13 January 1990 <sup>[1]</sup>
<b>Type</b>	Secret police, Intelligence agency
<b>Headquarters</b>	Lichtenberg, East Berlin, German Democratic Republic
<b>Motto</b>	<i>Schild und Schwert der Partei</i> (Shield and sword of the Party)
<b>Employees</b>	91,015 regular employees, 174,000 informal employees (or IMs) (1989) <sup>[2]</sup>
<b>Agency executives</b>	<i>Wilhelm Zaisser</i> (1950–1953) <i>Ernst Wollweber</i> (1953–1957) <i>Erich Mielke</i> (1957–1989) <i>Wolfgang Schwanzitz</i> (1989–1990)

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## Creation

The Stasi was founded on 8 February 1950.<sup>[12]</sup> Wilhelm Zaisser was the first Minister of State Security of the GDR, and Erich Mielke was his deputy. Zaisser tried to depose SED General Secretary Walter Ulbricht after the June 1953 uprising,<sup>[13]</sup> but was instead removed by Ulbricht and replaced with Ernst Wollweber thereafter. Following the June 1953 uprising, the Politbüro decided to downgrade the apparatus to a State Secretariat and incorporate it under the Ministry of the Interior under the leadership of Willi Stoph. The Minister of State Security simultaneously became a State Secretary of State Security. The Stasi held this status until November 1955, when it was restored to a ministry.<sup>[14][15]</sup> Wollweber resigned in 1957 after clashes with Ulbricht and Erich Honecker, and was succeeded by his deputy, Erich Mielke.

In 1957, Markus Wolf became head of the *Hauptverwaltung Aufklärung* (HVA) (Main Reconnaissance Administration), the foreign intelligence section of the Stasi. As intelligence chief, Wolf achieved great success in penetrating the government, political and business circles of West Germany with spies. The most influential case was that of Günter Guillaume, which led to the downfall of West German Chancellor Willy Brandt in May 1974. In 1986, Wolf retired and was succeeded by Werner Grossmann.

## Relationship with the KGB

Although Mielke's Stasi was superficially granted independence in 1957, until 1990 the KGB continued to maintain liaison officers in all eight main Stasi directorates, each with his own office inside the Stasi's Berlin compound, and in each of the fifteen Stasi district headquarters around East Germany.<sup>[16]</sup> Collaboration was so close that the KGB invited the Stasi to establish operational bases in Moscow and Leningrad to monitor visiting East German tourists and Mielke referred to the Stasi officers as "Chekists of the Soviet Union".<sup>[16]</sup> In 1978, Mielke formally granted KGB officers in East Germany the same rights and powers that they enjoyed in the Soviet Union.<sup>[16]</sup>

## Organization

The Ministry for State Security was organized according to the *Line principle*. A high-ranking official was in charge of a particular mission of the Ministry and headed a division in the **Central Apparatus** (*Zentrale*). A corresponding division was organized in each of the 15 **District Departments for State Security** (*Bezirksverwaltungen für Staatssicherheit* in the Berlin Capital Region and 14 regional districts (*Bezirke*)). At the local level the Stasi had **Area Precincts for State Security** (*Bezirksverwaltungen für Staatssicherheit* — one each for the 227 cities and municipal districts and the 11 city boroughs (*Stadtbezirken*) of East Berlin). A single case officer held responsibility for the particular mission in each area precinct. The line principle meant that the case officers were subordinated to the specialized divisions at the district departments. The specialized divisions at the district departments were subordinated to the specialized division in the central apparatus and the whole line was under the direct command and control of the high-ranking Stasi officer in charge of the mission. The Stasi also fielded **Location Detachments** (*Objektdienststellen*) at state-owned enterprises of high importance (such as the joint USSR-East German Wismar uranium mining company). Shortly before the transformation of the Stasi into the Office of National Security the Ministry had the following structure:

### Ministry for State Security

- Minister for State Security
- Policy Board (*Kollegium des MfS*, including the Minister and his deputies)

### Central Apparatus (*Zentrale*)

Divisions directly subordinated to the Minister Army general Erich Mielke (*Dem Minister für Staatssicherheit direkt unterstellte Dienstseinheiten*)

- Office of the Minister (*Sekretariat des Ministers*)
- Main Division II (*Hauptabteilung II*) - Counter-intelligence
  - Division M (*Abteilung M*) - Postal control
- Main Division IX (*Hauptabteilung IX*) - Investigative body
- Division X (*Abteilung X*) - International liaison with partner agencies from the Socialist Bloc
- Division XIV (*Abteilung XIV*) - Criminal prosecution and Stasi prisons
- Executive Group of the Minister (*Arbeitsgruppe des Ministers*)
  - Felix Dzerzhinsky Guards Regiment (*Wachregiment Berlin "Feliks E. Dzierzynski"*)
- Finances Division (*Abteilung Finanzen*)
- Bureau for Policies Implementation (*Büro der Leitung*)
- Central Management Bureau of the SV Dynamo (*Büro der Zentralen Leitung der SV Dynamo*)
- Main Division for Cadre and Education (*Hauptabteilung Kader und Schulung*)

- Central Medical Service (*Zentraler Medizinischer Dienst*)
- Stasi High School (*Hochschule des MfS*)
- Main Division for Close Protection (*Hauptabteilung Personenschutz*)
- Central Group for Computing and Information (*Zentrale Auswertungs- und Informationsgruppe*)
  - Division XII (*Abteilung XII*) - Central information service and archive
  - Division XIII (*Abteilung XIII*) - Central computing station
  - Legal Office (*Rechtsstelle*)

Divisions directly subordinated to the Deputy Minister Colonel General Werner Großmann (*Dem Stellvertreter GO Großmann unterstellte Dienstseinheiten*) (his predecessor was the legendary Colonel general Markus Wolf)

- Office of the Deputy Minister Colonel General Großmann (*Sekretariat des Stellvertreters des Ministers GO Großmann*)
- Main Directorate for External Intelligence (*Hauptverwaltung A*)

Divisions directly subordinated to the Deputy Minister Colonel general Rudi Mittig (*Dem Stellvertreter GO Mittig unterstellte Dienstseinheiten*)

- Office of the Deputy Minister Colonel general Mittig (*Sekretariat beim Stellvertreter des Ministers GO Mittig*)
- Central Operational Staff of the Stasi (*Zentraler Operativstab*)
- Central Executive Group for Protection of Classified Information (*Zentrale Arbeitsgruppe Geheimnisschutz*)
- Executive Group for *Commercial Coordination* (*Arbeitsgruppe Bereich Kommerzielle Koordinierung*)
- Executive Group E (*Arbeitsgruppe E*)
- Main Division XVIII (*Hauptabteilung XVIII*) - Security of the People's economy
- Main Division XIX (*Hauptabteilung XIX*) - Surveillance of the transport, post and media
- Main Division XX (*Hauptabteilung XX*) - Surveillance of the state apparatus, cultural and religious institutions and underground movements
- Rear Services Directorate (*Verwaltung Rückwärtige Dienste*)

Divisions directly subordinated to the Deputy Minister Lieutenant general Gerhard Neiber (*Dem Stellvertreter GL Neiber unterstellte Dienstseinheiten*)

- Office of the Deputy Minister Lieutenant general Neiber (*Sekretariat des Stellvertreters des Ministers GL Neiber*)
- Central Coordination Group (*Zentrale Koordinierungsgruppe*)
- Main Division I (*Hauptabteilung I*) - Counter-intelligence in the National People's Army and the Border Troops
- Main Division VI (*Hauptabteilung VI*) - Passport control, surveillance of tourists and the state-owned Interhotel chain
- Main Division VII (*Hauptabteilung VII*) - Counter-intelligence in the Ministry of the Interior and the Volkspolizei
- Main Division VIII (*Hauptabteilung VIII*) - Surveillance and covert following of suspicious citizens
- Executive Group XVII (*Arbeitsgruppe XVII*) - Surveillance of citizens of West Berlin visiting the East German part of the city
- Main Division XXII (*Hauptabteilung XXII*) - Counter-terrorism

Divisions directly subordinated to the Deputy Minister Lieutenant general Wolfgang Schwanitz (*Dem Stellvertreter GL Schwanitz unterstellte Dienstseinheiten*) (Schwanitz was appointed as the chief of the Stasi successor agency - the Office for National Security)

- Office of the Deputy Minister Lieutenant general Schwanitz (*Sekretariat des Stellvertreters des Ministers GL Schwanitz*)
- Main Division III (*Hauptabteilung III*) - Signals intelligence and counter-measures
- Division XI (*Abteilung XI*) - Cipher service
- Division 26 (*Abteilung 26*) - Phone-tapping
- Signals Division (*Abteilung Nachrichten*)
- Armament and Chemical [Nuclear, Chemical and Biological Defence] Service (*Abteilung Bewaffnung / Chemischer Dienst*)
- Operational Technical [Equipment] Sector (*Operativ-Technischer Sektor*)

## District Departments and Area Precincts

- District Department for State Security Berlin (*Bezirksverwaltung für Staatssicherheit Berlin (BVfS-Berlin)*)
  - 11 Area Precincts for State Security (*Kreisdienststellen (KD)*): KD Friedrichshain, KD Hellersdorf, KD Hohenschönhausen, KD Köpenick, KD Lichtenberg, KD Marzahn, KD Mitte, KD Pankow, KD Prenzlauer Berg, KD Treptow, KD Weissensee
- District Department for State Security Cottbus (*Bezirksverwaltung für Staatssicherheit Cottbus (BVfS-Cottbus)*)
  - 14 Area Precincts for State Security (*Kreisdienststellen (KD)*):
    - 1 city precinct: KD Cottbus
    - 13 rural precincts: KD Calau, KD Finsterwalde, KD Forst, KD Guben, KD Herzberg, KD Hoyerswerda, KD Jessen, KD Bad Liebenwerda, KD Luckau, KD Lübben, KD Senftenberg, KD Spremberg, KD Weißwasser
- District Department for State Security Dresden (*Bezirksverwaltung für Staatssicherheit Dresden (BVfS-Dresden)*)
  - 16 Area Precincts for State Security (*Kreisdienststellen (KD)*):
    - 2 city precincts: KD Dresden-Stadt, KD Görlitz
    - 14 rural precincts: KD Dresden-Land, KD Bautzen, KD Bischofswerda, KD Dippoldiswalde, KD Freital, KD Großenhain, KD Kamenz, KD Löbau, KD Meißen, KD Niesky, KD Pirna, KD Riesa, KD Sebnitz, KD Zittau

- Location Precinct Technical University and Other Institutions of Higher Education (*Objektdienststelle Technische Universität / Hochschulen*) - surveillance of university professors and students for dissenter tendencies
- District Department for State Security Erfurt (*Bezirksverwaltung für Staatssicherheit Erfurt (BVfS-Erfurt)*)
  - 13 Area Precincts for State Security (*Kreisdienststellen (KD)*):
    - 2 city precincts: KD Erfurt, KD Weimar
    - 11 rural precincts: KD Apolda, KD Arnstadt, KD Eisenach, KD Gotha, KD Heiligenstadt, KD Langensalza, KD Mühlhausen, KD Nordhausen, KD Sömmerda, KD Sondershausen, KD Worbis
- District Department for State Security Frankfurt (Oder) (*Bezirksverwaltung für Staatssicherheit Frankfurt (Oder) (BVfS-Frankfurt (O))*)
  - 13 Area Precincts for State Security (*Kreisdienststellen (KD)*):
    - 3 city precincts: KD Frankfurt (Oder), KD Eisenhüttenstadt, KD Schwedt
    - 8 rural precincts: KD Angermünde, KD Beeskow, KD Bernau, KD Eberswalde, KD Bad Freienwalde, KD Fürstenwalde, KD Seelow, KD Strausberg
- District Department for State Security Gera (*Bezirksverwaltung für Staatssicherheit Gera (BVfS-Gera)*)
  - 11 Area Precincts for State Security (*Kreisdienststellen (KD)*):
    - 2 city precincts: KD Gera, KD Jena
    - 9 rural precincts: KD Eisenberg, KD Greiz, KD Lobenstein, KD Pößneck, KD Rudolstadt, KD Saalfeld, KD Schleiz, KD Stadtroda, KD Zeulenroda
- District Department for State Security Halle (Saale) (*Bezirksverwaltung für Staatssicherheit Halle (Saale) (BVfS-Halle (Saale))*)
  - 23 Area Precincts for State Security (*Kreisdienststellen (KD)*):
    - 3 city precincts: KD Halle, KD Halle-Neustadt, KD Dessau
    - 20 rural precincts: KD Artern, KD Aschersleben, KD Bernburg, KD Bitterfeld, KD Eisleben, KD Gräfenhainichen, KD Hettstedt, KD Hohenmölsen, KD Köthen, KD Merseburg, KD Naumburg, KD Nebra, KD Quedlinburg, KD Querfurt, KD Roßlau, KD Saalkreis, KD Sangerhausen, KD Weißenfels, KD Wittenberg, KD Zeitz
- District Department for State Security Karl-Marx-Stadt (*Bezirksverwaltung für Staatssicherheit Karl-Marx-Stadt (BVfS-Karl-Marx-Stadt)*)
  - 22 Area Precincts for State Security (*Kreisdienststellen (KD)*):
    - 3 city precincts: KD Karl-Marx-Stadt/Stadt, KD Plauen, KD Zwickau
    - 19 rural precincts: KD Annaberg, KD Aue, KD Auerbach, KD Brand-Erbisdorf, KD Flöha, KD Freiberg, KD Glauchau, KD Hainichen, KD Hohenstein-Ernstthal, KD Karl-Marx-Stadt/Land, KD Klingenthal, KD Marienberg, KD Oelsnitz, KD Reichenbach, KD Rochlitz, KD Schwarzenberg, KD Stollberg, KD Werdau, KD Zschopau
- District Department for State Security Leipzig (*Bezirksverwaltung für Staatssicherheit Leipzig (BVfS-Leipzig)*)
  - 13 Area Precincts for State Security (*Kreisdienststellen (KD)*):
    - 1 city precinct: KD Leipzig-Stadt
    - 12 rural precincts: KD Leipzig-Land, KD Altenburg, KD Borna, KD Delitzsch, KD Döbeln, KD Eilenburg, KD Geithain, KD Grimma, KD Oschatz, KD Schmöln, KD Torgau, KD Wurzen
- District Department for State Security Magdeburg (*Bezirksverwaltung für Staatssicherheit Magdeburg (BVfS-Magdeburg)*)
  - 20 Area Precincts for State Security (*Kreisdienststellen (KD)*):
    - 1 city precinct: KD Magdeburg
    - 19 rural precincts: KD Burg, KD Gardelegen, KD Genthin, KD Halberstadt, KD Haldensleben, KD Havelberg, KD Kalbe Milde, KD Klötze, KD Oschersleben, KD Osterburg, KD Salzwedel, KD Schönebeck, KD Staßfurt, KD Stendal, KD Tangerhütte, KD Wanzleben, KD Wernigerode, KD Wolmirstedt, KD Zerbst
- District Department for State Security Neubrandenburg (*Bezirksverwaltung für Staatssicherheit Neubrandenburg (BVfS-Neubrandenburg)*)
  - 14 Area Precincts for State Security (*Kreisdienststellen (KD)*):
    - 1 city precinct: KD Neubrandenburg
    - 13 rural precincts: KD Altentreptow, KD Anklam, KD Demmin, KD Malchin, KD Neustrelitz, KD Pasewalk, KD Prenzlau, KD Röbel, KD Strasburg, KD Templin, KD Teterow, KD Ueckermünde, KD Waren
- District Department for State Security Potsdam (*Bezirksverwaltung für Staatssicherheit Potsdam (BVfS-Potsdam)*)
  - 15 Area Precincts for State Security (*Kreisdienststellen (KD)*):
    - 2 city precincts: KD Potsdam, KD Brandenburg
    - 13 rural precincts: KD Belzig, KD Gransee, KD Jüterbog, KD Königs Wusterhausen, KD Kyritz, KD Luckenwalde, KD Nauen, KD Neuruppin, KD Oranienburg, KD Pritzwalk, KD Rathenow, KD Wittstock, KD Zossen
- District Department for State Security Rostock (*Bezirksverwaltung für Staatssicherheit Rostock (BVfS-Rostock)*)
  - 10 Area Precincts for State Security (*Kreisdienststellen (KD)*):
    - 4 city precincts: KD Rostock, KD Greifswald, KD Stralsund, KD Wismar
    - 6 rural precincts: KD Bad Doberan, KD Grevesmühlen, KD Grimmen, KD Ribnitz-Damgarten, KD Rügen, KD Wolgast
- District Department for State Security Schwerin (*Bezirksverwaltung für Staatssicherheit Schwerin (BVfS-Schwerin)*)
  - 10 Area Precincts for State Security (*Kreisdienststellen (KD)*):

- 1 city precinct: KD Schwerin
  - 9 rural precincts: KD Bützow, KD Gadebusch, KD Güstrow, KD Hagenow, KD Lübz, KD Ludwigslust, KD Parchim, KD Perleberg, KD Sternberg
- District Department for State Security Suhl (*Bezirksverwaltung für Staatssicherheit Suhl (BVfS-Suhl)*)
  - 8 Area Precincts for State Security (*Kreisdienststellen (KD)*):
    - 1 city precinct: KD Suhl
    - 7 rural precincts: KD Bad Salzungen, KD Hildburghausen, KD Ilmenau, KD Meiningen, KD Neuhaus, KD Schmalkalden, KD Sonneberg

Selected Stasi departments:

- *Administration 12* was responsible for the surveillance of mail and telephone communications.
- *Administration 2000* was responsible for the reliability of National People's Army (*Nationale Volksarmee*, NVA) personnel. *Administration 2000* operated a secret, unofficial network of informants within the NVA. *Administration 2000* was the name of the division in NVA documentation. Its actual Stasi name was *Main Division I*.
- *Administration for Security of Heavy Industry and Research* and *Main Administration for Security of the Economy*: protection against sabotage or espionage.
- *Division of Garbage Analysis*: was responsible for analyzing garbage for any suspect western foods and/or materials.
- *Felix Dzerzhinsky Guards Regiment*: the armed force at disposal of the ministry, named for the founder of the *Cheka*, the Bolshevik secret police. The members of this regiment, who served at least three years, were responsible for protecting high government and party buildings and personnel. The regiment was composed of six motorized rifle battalions, one artillery battalion, and one training battalion. Its equipment included PSZH-IV armored personnel carriers, 120 mm mortars, 85 mm and 100 mm antitank guns, ZU-23 anti-aircraft guns, and helicopters. A Swiss source reported in 1986 that the troops of the Ministry of State Security also had commando units similar to the Soviet Union's *Spetsnaz GRU* forces. These East German units were said to wear the uniform of the airborne troops, although with the violet collar patch of the Ministry for State Security rather than the orange one of paratroopers. They also wore the sleeve stripe of the Felix Dzerzhinsky Guards Regiment.<sup>[17]</sup>
- *Guard and Security Unit (Wach- und Sicherungseinheit (WSE))* each of the 15 district departments had its own GSU, directly subordinated to the district department chief. The manpower of the units ranged roughly between 200 and 400 men. They had four roles - security of the Stasi headquarters in the district, combat training of personnel of the district department, initial posting for newly appointed Stasi officers for a couple of years until their careers advance to specialized positions and (most importantly) Quick Reaction Alert tactical intervention units. As such the GSUs were armed and equipped as motor rifle units with APCs, automatic rifles, grenade launchers etc.
- HVA: focused its efforts primarily on *West Germany* and the *North Atlantic Treaty Organization*, but it also operated East German intelligence in all foreign countries.
- *Main Administration for Struggle Against Suspicious Persons* was charged with the surveillance of foreigners—particularly from the West—legally traveling or residing within the country. This included the diplomatic community, tourists, and official guests.
- *Main Coordinating Administration of the Ministry for State Security*: coordinated its work with Soviet intelligence agencies.
- *Main Department for Communications Security and Personnel Protection*: provided personal security for the national leadership and maintained and operated an internal secure communications system for the government.
- *Penal System*: to facilitate its mission of enforcing the political security of East Germany, the Stasi operated its own penal system, distinct from that of the Ministry of the Interior. This system comprised prison camps for political, as opposed to criminal, offenders.

## Operations

### Personnel and recruitment

Between 1950 and 1989, the Stasi employed a total of 274,000 people in an effort to root out the class enemy.<sup>[18][19][20]</sup> In 1989, the Stasi employed 91,015 people full-time, including 2,000 fully employed unofficial collaborators, 13,073 soldiers and 2,232 officers of GDR army,<sup>[21]</sup> along with 173,081 unofficial informants inside GDR<sup>[22]</sup> and 1,553 informants in West Germany.<sup>[23]</sup>

Regular commissioned Stasi officers were recruited from conscripts who had been honourably discharged from their 18 months' compulsory military service, had been members of the SED, had had a high level of participation in the Party's youth wing's activities and had been Stasi informers during their service in the Military. The candidates would then have to be recommended by their military unit political officers and Stasi agents, the local chiefs of the District (*Bezirk*) Stasi and *Volkspolizei* office, of the district in which they were permanently resident, and the District Secretary of the SED. These candidates were then made to sit through several tests and exams, which identified their intellectual capacity to be an officer, and their political reliability. University graduates who had completed their military service did not need to take these tests and exams. They then attended a two-year officer training programme at the Stasi college (*Hochschule*) in Potsdam. Less mentally and academically endowed candidates were made ordinary technicians and attended a one-year technology-intensive course for non-commissioned officers.

By 1995, some 174,000 *inoffizielle Mitarbeiter* (IMs) Stasi informants had been identified, almost 2.5% of East Germany's population between the ages of 18 and 60.<sup>[18]</sup> 10,000 IMs were under 18 years of age.<sup>[18]</sup> From the volume of material destroyed in the final days of the regime, the office of the Federal Commissioner for the Stasi Records (BStU) believes that there could have been as many as 500,000 informers.<sup>[18]</sup> A former Stasi colonel who served in the counterintelligence directorate estimated that the figure could be as high as 2 million if occasional informants were included.<sup>[18]</sup> There is significant debate about how many IMs were actually employed.

### Infiltration

Full-time officers were posted to all major industrial plants (the extent of any surveillance largely depended on how valuable a product was to the economy)<sup>[19]</sup> and one tenant in every apartment building was designated as a watchdog reporting to an area representative of the *Volkspolizei* (Vopo). Spies reported every relative or friend who stayed the night at another's apartment. Tiny holes were drilled in apartment and hotel room walls



Bautzen prison

through which Stasi agents filmed citizens with special video cameras. Schools, universities, and hospitals were extensively infiltrated,<sup>[24]</sup> as were organizations, such as computer clubs where teenagers exchanged Western video games.<sup>[25]</sup>

The Stasi had formal categorizations of each type of informant, and had official guidelines on how to extract information from, and control, those with whom they came into contact.<sup>[26]</sup> The roles of informants ranged from those already in some way involved in state security (such as the police and the armed services) to those in the dissident movements (such as in the arts and the Protestant Church).<sup>[27]</sup> Information gathered about the latter groups was frequently used to divide or discredit members.<sup>[28]</sup> Informants were made to feel important, given material or social incentives, and were imbued with a sense of adventure, and only around 7.7%, according to official figures, were coerced into cooperating. A significant proportion of those informing were members of the SED. Use of some form of blackmail was not uncommon.<sup>[27]</sup> A large number of Stasi informants were tram conductors, janitors, doctors, nurses and teachers. Mielke believed that the best informants were those whose jobs entailed frequent contact with the public.<sup>[29]</sup>



The main entrance to the Stasi headquarters in Berlin

The Stasi's ranks swelled considerably after Eastern Bloc countries signed the 1975 Helsinki accords, which GDR leader Erich Honecker viewed as a grave threat to his regime because they contained language binding signatories to respect "human and basic rights, including freedom of thought, conscience, religion, and conviction".<sup>[30]</sup> The number of IMs peaked at around 180,000 in that year, having slowly risen from 20,000 to 30,000 in the early 1950s, and reaching 100,000 for the first time in 1968, in response to *Ostpolitik* and protests worldwide.<sup>[31]</sup> The Stasi also acted as a proxy for KGB to conduct activities in other Eastern Bloc countries, such as Poland, where the Soviets were despised.<sup>[32]</sup>

The Stasi infiltrated almost every aspect of GDR life. In the mid-1980s, a network of IMs began growing in both German states. By the time that East Germany collapsed in 1989, the Stasi employed 91,015 employees and 173,081 informants.<sup>[33]</sup> About one out of every 63 East Germans collaborated with the Stasi. By at least one estimate, the Stasi maintained greater surveillance over its own people than any secret police force in history.<sup>[34]</sup> The Stasi employed one secret policeman for every 166 East Germans. By comparison, the Gestapo deployed one secret policeman per 2,000 people. As ubiquitous as this was, the ratios swelled when informers were factored in: counting part-time informers, the Stasi had one agent per 6.5 people. This comparison led Nazi hunter Simon Wiesenthal to call the Stasi even more oppressive than the Gestapo.<sup>[35]</sup> Stasi agents infiltrated and undermined West Germany's government and spy agencies.

In some cases, spouses even spied on each other. A high-profile example of this was peace activist Vera Lengsfeld, whose husband, Knud Wollenberger, was a Stasi informant.<sup>[29]</sup>

## Zersetzung

The Stasi perfected the technique of psychological harassment of perceived enemies known as *Zersetzung* (pronounced [t͡sɛɐ̯ˈzɛt͡sʊŋ]) – a term borrowed from chemistry which literally means "decomposition".

By the 1970s, the Stasi had decided that the methods of overt persecution that had been employed up to that time, such as arrest and torture, were too crude and obvious. It was realised that psychological harassment was far less likely to be recognised for what it was, so its victims, and their supporters, were less likely to be provoked into active resistance, given that they would often not be aware of the source of their problems, or even its exact nature. *Zersetzung* was designed to side-track and "switch off" perceived enemies so that they would lose the will to continue any "inappropriate" activities.

...the Stasi often used a method which was really diabolic. It was called *Zersetzung*, and it's described in another guideline. The word is difficult to translate because it means originally "biodegradation". But actually, it's a quite accurate description. The goal was to destroy secretly the self-confidence of people, for example by damaging their reputation, by organizing failures in their work, and by destroying their personal relationships. Considering this, East Germany was a very modern dictatorship. The Stasi didn't try to arrest every dissident. It preferred to paralyze them, and it could do so because it had access to so much personal information and to so many institutions.

—Hubertus Knabe, German historian <sup>[36]</sup>

Tactics employed under *Zersetzung* generally involved the disruption of the victim's private or family life. This often included psychological attacks, such as breaking into homes and subtly manipulating the contents, in a form of gaslighting – moving furniture, altering the timing of an alarm, removing pictures from walls or replacing one variety of tea with another. Other practices included property damage, sabotage of cars, purposely incorrect medical treatment, smear campaigns including sending falsified compromising photos or documents to the victim's family, denunciation, provocation, psychological warfare, psychological subversion, wiretapping, bugging, mysterious phone calls or unnecessary deliveries, even including sending a vibrator to a target's wife. Usually, victims had no idea that the Stasi were responsible. Many thought that they were losing their minds, and mental breakdowns and suicide could result.

One great advantage of the harassment perpetrated under *Zersetzung* was that its subtle nature meant that it was able to be plausibly denied. This was important given that the GDR was trying to improve its international standing during the 1970s and 80s, especially in conjunction with the *Ostpolitik* of West German Chancellor Willy Brandt massively improving relations between the two German states.

## International operations

After German reunification, revelations of the Stasi's international activities were publicized, such as its military training of the West German Red Army Faction.<sup>[37]</sup>

### Examples

- Stasi experts helped train the secret police organization of Mengistu Haile Mariam in Ethiopia.<sup>[38][39]</sup>
- Fidel Castro's regime in Cuba was particularly interested in receiving training from the Stasi. Stasi instructors worked in Cuba and Cuban communists received training in East Germany.<sup>[40]</sup> The Stasi chief Markus Wolf described how he set up the Cuban system on the pattern of the East German system.<sup>[41]</sup>
- Stasi officers helped in initial training and indoctrination of Egyptian State Security organizations under the Nasser regime from 1957 to 58 onwards. This was discontinued by Anwar Sadat in 1976.



- The Stasi's experts worked with building secret police systems in the [People's Republic of Angola](#), the [People's Republic of Mozambique](#), and the [People's Republic of Yemen](#) (South Yemen).<sup>[39]</sup>
- The Stasi organized and extensively trained [Syrian intelligence services](#) under the regime of [Hafez al-Assad](#) and [Ba'ath Party](#) from 1966 onwards and especially from 1973.<sup>[42]</sup>
- Stasi experts helped to set up [Idi Amin's secret police](#).<sup>[39][43]</sup>
- Stasi experts helped the President of Ghana, [Kwame Nkrumah](#), to set up his secret police. When Nkrumah was ousted by a military coup, Stasi Major Jürgen Rogalla was imprisoned.<sup>[39][44]</sup>
- The Stasi sent agents to the West as sleeper agents. For instance, sleeper agent [Günter Guillaume](#) became a senior aide to social democratic chancellor Willy Brandt, and reported about his politics and private life.<sup>[45]</sup>
- The Stasi operated at least one [brothel](#). Agents were used against both men and women working in Western governments. "Entrapment" was used against married men and homosexuals.<sup>[46]</sup>
- [Martin Schlaff](#) – According to the German parliament's investigations, the Austrian billionaire's Stasi codename was "Landgraf" and registration number "3886-86". He made money by supplying embargoed goods to East Germany.<sup>[47]</sup>
- [Sokratis Kokkalis](#) – Stasi documents suggest that the Greek businessman was a Stasi agent, whose operations included delivering Western technological secrets and bribing Greek officials to buy outdated East German telecom equipment.<sup>[48]</sup>
- [Red Army Faction](#) (Baader-Meinhof Group)—A terrorist organization which killed dozens of West Germans and others, which received financial and logistical support from the Stasi, as well as shelter and new identities.<sup>[49][10][11]</sup>
- The Stasi ordered a campaign in which cemeteries and other Jewish sites in West Germany were smeared with swastikas and other Nazi symbols. Funds were channelled to a small West German group for it to defend [Adolf Eichmann](#).<sup>[50]</sup>
- The Stasi channelled large amounts of money to [Neo-Nazi](#) groups in West, with the purpose of discrediting the West.<sup>[51][10]</sup>
- The Stasi allowed the wanted West German Neo-Nazi [Odfried Hepp](#) to hide in East Germany and then provided him with a new identity so that he could live in the Middle East.<sup>[10]</sup>
- The Stasi worked in a campaign to create extensive material and propaganda against Israel.<sup>[50]</sup>
- [Murder of Benno Ohnesorg](#) – A Stasi informant in the West Berlin police, [Karl-Heinz Kurras](#), fatally shot an unarmed demonstrator, which stirred a whole movement of Marxist radicalism, protest, and terrorist violence.<sup>[52]</sup> *The Economist* describes it as "the gunshot that hoaxed a generation".<sup>[53][54]</sup> The surviving Stasi Records contain no evidence that Kurras was acting under their orders when he shot Ohnesorg.<sup>[55][56]</sup>
- [Operation Infektion](#)—The Stasi helped the KGB to spread HIV/AIDS disinformation that the United States had created the disease. Millions of people around the world still believe in these claims.<sup>[57][58]</sup>
- [Sandoz chemical spill](#)—The KGB reportedly ordered the Stasi to sabotage the chemical factory to distract attention from the [Chernobyl disaster](#) six months earlier in Ukraine.<sup>[59][60][61]</sup>
- Investigators have found evidence of a death squad that carried out a number of assassinations (including assassination of Swedish journalist [Cats Falck](#)) on orders from the East German government from 1976 to 1987. Attempts to prosecute members failed.<sup>[62][63][64]</sup>
- The Stasi attempted to assassinate [Wolfgang Welsch](#), a famous critic of the regime. Stasi collaborator Peter Haack (Stasi codename "Alfons") befriended Welsch and then fed him hamburgers poisoned with [thallium](#). It took weeks for doctors to find out why Welsch had suddenly lost his hair.<sup>[65]</sup>
- Documents in the Stasi archives state that the KGB ordered Bulgarian agents to assassinate [Pope John Paul II](#), who was known for his criticism of human rights in the Communist bloc, and the Stasi was asked to help with covering up traces.<sup>[66]</sup>
- A special unit of the Stasi assisted Romanian intelligence in kidnapping Romanian dissident [Oliviu Beldeanu](#) from West Germany.<sup>[67]</sup>
- The Stasi in 1972 made plans to assist the [Vietnam People's Public Security](#) in improving its intelligence work during the Vietnam War.<sup>[68]</sup>
- In 1975, the Stasi recorded a conversation between senior West German CDU politicians [Helmut Kohl](#) and [Kurt Biedenkopf](#). It was then "leaked" to the *Stern* magazine as a transcript recorded by American intelligence. The magazine then claimed that Americans were wiretapping West Germans and the public believed the story.<sup>[69]</sup>

## Fall of the Soviet Union

Recruitment of informants became increasingly difficult towards the end of the GDR's existence, and, after 1986, there was a negative turnover rate of IMs. This had a significant impact on the Stasi's ability to survey the populace, in a period of growing unrest, and knowledge of the Stasi's activities became more widespread.<sup>[70]</sup> Stasi had been tasked during this period with preventing the country's economic difficulties becoming a political problem, through suppression of the very worst problems the state faced, but it failed to do so.<sup>[19]</sup>

Stasi officers reportedly had discussed re-branding East Germany as a democratic capitalist country to the West, which in actuality would have been taken over by Stasi officers. The plan specified 2,587 OibE officers (*Offiziere im besonderen Einsatz*, "officers on special assignment") who would have assumed power as detailed in the Top Secret Document 0008-6/86 of 17 March 1986.<sup>[71][72]</sup> According to [Ion Mihai Pacepa](#), the chief intelligence officer in [communist Romania](#), other communist intelligence services had similar plans. On 12 March 1990, *Der Spiegel* reported that the Stasi was indeed attempting to implement 0008-6/86.<sup>[71]</sup> Pacepa has noted that what happened in Russia and how KGB Colonel [Vladimir Putin](#) took over Russia resembles these plans.<sup>[72]</sup> See [Putinism](#).

On 7 November 1989, in response to the rapidly changing political and social situation in the GDR in late 1989, Erich Mielke resigned. On 17 November 1989, the Council of Ministers (*Ministerrat der DDR*) renamed the Stasi the "Office for National Security" (*Amt für Nationale Sicherheit* – AfNS), which was headed by *Generalleutnant* [Wolfgang Schwanz](#). On 8 December 1989, GDR Prime Minister [Hans Modrow](#) directed the dissolution of the AfNS, which was confirmed by a decision of the *Ministerrat* on 14 December 1989.

As part of this decision, the *Ministerrat* originally called for the evolution of the AfNS into two separate organizations: a new foreign intelligence service (*Nachrichtendienst der DDR*) and an "Office for the Protection of the Constitution of the GDR" (*Verfassungsschutz der DDR*), along the lines of the West German *Bundesamt für Verfassungsschutz*, however, the public reaction was extremely negative, and under pressure from the "Round Table" (*Runder Tisch*), the government dropped the creation of the *Verfassungsschutz der DDR* and directed the immediate dissolution of the AfNS on 13 January 1990. Certain functions of the AfNS reasonably related to law enforcement were handed over to the GDR Ministry of Internal Affairs. The same ministry also took guardianship of remaining AfNS facilities.

When the parliament of Germany investigated public funds that disappeared after the Fall of the Berlin Wall, it found out that East Germany had transferred large amounts of money to Martin Schlaff through accounts in Vaduz, the capital of Liechtenstein, in return for goods "under Western embargo".

Moreover, high-ranking Stasi officers continued their post-GDR careers in management positions in Schlaff's group of companies. For example, in 1990, Herbert Kohler, Stasi commander in Dresden, transferred 170 million marks to Schlaff for "harddisks" and months later went to work for him.<sup>[47][73]</sup> The investigations concluded that "Schlaff's empire of companies played a crucial role" in the Stasi attempts to secure the financial future of Stasi agents and keep the intelligence network alive.<sup>[47]</sup> The *Stern* magazine noted that KGB officer (and future Russian President) Vladimir Putin worked with his Stasi colleagues in Dresden in 1989.<sup>[73]</sup>

## Recovery of Stasi files

During the Peaceful Revolution of 1989, Stasi offices and prisons throughout the country were occupied by citizens, but not before the Stasi destroyed a number of documents (approximately 5%)<sup>[74]</sup> consisting of, by one calculation, 1 billion sheets of paper.<sup>[75]</sup>

### Storming the Stasi headquarters

With the fall of the GDR the Stasi was dissolved. Stasi employees began to destroy the extensive files and documents they held, by hand, fire and with the use of shredders. When these activities became known, a protest began in front of the Stasi headquarters.<sup>[76]</sup> The evening of 15 January 1990 saw a large crowd form outside the gates calling for a stop to the destruction of sensitive files. The building contained vast records of personal files, many of which would form important evidence in convicting those who had committed crimes for the Stasi. The protesters continued to grow in number until they were able to overcome the police and gain entry into the complex. Once inside, specific targets of the protesters' anger were portraits of Erich Honecker and Erich Mielke which were trampled on or burnt. Among the protesters were former Stasi collaborators seeking to destroy incriminating documents.



Citizens protesting and entering the Stasi building in Berlin; the sign accuses the Stasi and SED of being Nazi-like dictators (1990)

### Controversy of the Stasi files

With the German reunification on 3 October 1990, a new government agency was founded called the *Federal Commissioner for the Records of the State Security Service of the former German Democratic Republic* (German: *Der Bundesbeauftragte für die Unterlagen des Staatssicherheitsdienstes der ehemaligen Deutschen Demokratischen Republik*), officially abbreviated "BStU".<sup>[77]</sup> There was a debate about what should happen to the files, whether they should be opened to the people or kept closed.

Those who opposed opening the files cited privacy as a reason. They felt that the information in the files would lead to negative feelings about former Stasi members, and, in turn, cause violence. Pastor Rainer Eppelmann, who became Minister of Defense and Disarmament after March 1990, felt that new political freedoms for former Stasi members would be jeopardized by acts of revenge. Prime Minister Lothar de Maizière even went so far as to predict murder. They also argued against the use of the files to capture former Stasi members and prosecute them, arguing that not all former members were criminals and should not be punished solely for being a member. There were also some who believed that everyone was guilty of something. Peter-Michael Diestel, the Minister of Interior, opined that these files could not be used to determine innocence and guilt, claiming that "there were only two types of individuals who were truly innocent in this system, the newborn and the alcoholic". Other opinions, such as the one of West German Interior Minister Wolfgang Schäuble, believed in putting the Stasi behind them and working on German reunification.

Others argued that everyone should have the right to see their own file, and that the files should be opened to investigate former Stasi members and prosecute them, as well as not allow them to hold office. Opening the files would also help clear up some of the rumors that were currently circulating. Some also believed that politicians involved with the Stasi should be investigated.

The fate of the files was finally decided under the Unification Treaty between the GDR and West Germany. This treaty took the Volkskammer law further and allowed more access and use of the files. Along with the decision to keep the files in a central location in the East, they also decided who could see and use the files, allowing people to see their own files.

In 1992, following a declassification ruling by the German government, the Stasi files were opened, leading people to look for their files. Timothy Garton Ash, an English historian, after reading his file, wrote *The File: A Personal History*.<sup>[78]</sup>

But why did the Stasi collect all this information in its archives? The main purpose was to control the society. In nearly every speech, the Stasi minister gave the order to find out who is who, which meant who thinks what. He didn't want to wait until somebody tried to act against the regime. He wanted to know in advance what people were thinking and planning. The East Germans knew, of course, that they were surrounded by informers, in a totalitarian regime that created mistrust and a state of widespread fear, the most important tools to oppress people in any dictatorship.

—Hubertus Knabe, German historian<sup>[96]</sup>

Between 1991 and 2011, around 2.75 million individuals, mostly GDR citizens, requested to see their own files.<sup>[79]</sup> The ruling also gave people the ability to make duplicates of their documents. Another big issue was how the media could use and benefit from the documents. It was decided that the media could obtain files as long as they were depersonalized and not regarding an individual under the age of 18 or a former Stasi member. This ruling not only gave the media access to the files, but also gave schools access.

### Tracking down former Stasi informers with the files

Even though groups of this sort were active in the community, those who were tracking down ex-members were, as well. Many of these hunters succeeded in catching ex-Stasi; however, charges could not be made for merely being a member. The person in question would have to have participated in an illegal act, not just be a registered Stasi member. Among the high-profile individuals who were arrested and tried were Erich Mielke, Third Minister of State Security of the GDR, and Erich Honecker, head of state for the GDR. Mielke was sentenced to six years prison for the murder of two policemen in 1931. Honecker was charged with authorizing the killing of would-be escapees on the east–west frontier and the Berlin Wall. During his trial, he went through cancer treatment. Because he was nearing death, Honecker was allowed to spend his final time in freedom. He died in Chile in May 1994.



## Reassembling the destroyed files

Reassembling the destroyed files has been relatively easy due to the number of archives and the failure of shredding machines (in some cases "shredding" meant tearing paper in two by hand and documents could be recovered easily). In 1995, the BStU began reassembling the shredded documents; 13 years later, the three dozen archivists commissioned to the projects had reassembled only 327 bags; they are now using computer-assisted data recovery to reassemble the remaining 16,000 bags – estimated at 45 million pages. It is estimated that this task may be completed at a cost of 30 million dollars.<sup>[80]</sup>

The CIA acquired some Stasi records during the looting of the Stasi's archives. West Germany asked for their return and received some in April 2000.<sup>[81]</sup> See also Rosenholz files.

## Museums

There are a number of memorial sites and museums relating to the Stasi in former Stasi prisons and administration buildings. In addition, offices of the Stasi Records Agency in Berlin, Dresden, Erfurt, Frankfurt-an-der-Oder and Halle (Saale) all have permanent and changing exhibitions relating to the activities of the Stasi in their region.<sup>[82]</sup>



Part of the former Stasi compound in Berlin, with "Haus 1" in the centre

### Berlin

- **Stasi Museum (Berlin)** - This is located at Ruschestraße 103, in "Haus 1" on the former Stasi headquarters compound. The office of Erich Mielke, the head of the Stasi, was in this building and it has been preserved along with a number of other rooms. The building was occupied by protesters on 15 January 1990. On 7 November 1990, a Research Centre and Memorial was opened, which now called the Stasi Museum.<sup>[83]</sup>
- **Berlin-Hohenschönhausen Memorial** - A memorial to repression during both the Soviet occupation and GDR era in a former prison that was used by both regimes. The building was a Soviet prison from 1946, and from 1951 until 1989 it was a Stasi remand centre. It officially closed on 3 October 1990, the day of German reunification. The museum and memorial site opened in 1994. It is in Alt-Hohenschönhausen, in Lichtenberg in north-east Berlin.<sup>[84]</sup>

### Erfurt

Memorial and Education Centre Andreasstrasse - a museum in Erfurt which is housed in a former Stasi remand prison. From 1952 until 1989, over 5000 political prisoners were held on remand and interrogated in the Andreasstrasse prison, which was one of 17 Stasi remand prisons in the GDR.<sup>[85][86]</sup> On 4 December 1989, local citizens occupied the prison and the neighbouring Stasi district headquarters to stop the mass destruction of Stasi files. It was the first time East Germans had undertaken such resistance against the Stasi and it instigated the take over of Stasi buildings throughout the country.<sup>[87]</sup>



The former Stasi Prison, Erfurt

### Dresden

Gedenkstätte Bautzner Straße Dresden (The Bautzner Strasse Memorial in Dresden) - A Stasi remand prison and the Stasi's regional head office in Dresden. It was used as a prison by the Soviet occupying forces from 1945 to 1953, and from 1953 to 1989 by the Stasi. The Stasi held and interrogated between 12,000 and 15,000 people during the time they used the prison. The building was originally a 19th-century paper mill. It was converted into a block of flats in 1933 before being confiscated by the Soviet army in 1945. The Stasi prison and offices were occupied by local citizens on 5 December 1989, during a wave of such takeovers across the country. The museum and memorial site was opened to the public in 1994.<sup>[88]</sup>



Cells in Bautzner Strasse Memorial, Dresden

### Frankfurt-an-der-Oder

Remembrance and Documentation Centre for "Victims of political tyranny" - A memorial and museum at Collegienstraße 10 in Frankfurt-an-der-Oder, in a building that was used as a detention centre by the Gestapo, the Soviet occupying forces and the Stasi. The building was the Stasi district offices and a remand prison from 1950 until 1969, after which the Volkspolizei used the prison. From 1950 to 1952 it was an execution site where 12 people sentenced to death were executed. The prison closed in 1990. It has been a cultural centre and a memorial to the victims of political tyranny since June 1994, managed by the Museum Viadrina.<sup>[89][90]</sup>

### Gera

Gedenkstätte Amthordurchgang, a memorial and 'centre of encounter' in Gera in a former remand prison, originally opened in 1874, that was used by the Gestapo from 1933 to 1945, the Soviet occupying forces from 1945 to 1949, and from 1952 to 1989 by the Stasi. The building was also the district offices of the Stasi administration. Between 1952 and 1989 over 2,800 people were held in the prison on political grounds. The memorial site opened with the official name *"Die Gedenk- und Begegnungsstätte im Torhaus der politischen Haftanstalt von 1933 bis 1945 und 1945 bis 1989"* in November 2005.<sup>[91][92]</sup>

### Halle (Saale)

The **Röter Ochse** (Red Ox) is a museum and memorial site at the prison at Am Kirchtor 20, Halle (Saale). Part of the prison, built 1842, was used by the Stasi from 1950 until 1989, during with time over 9,000 political prisoners were held in the prison. From 1954 it was mainly used for women prisoners. The name "Roter Ochse" is the informal name of the prison, possibly originating in the 19th century from the colour of the external walls. It still operates as a prison for young people. Since 1996, the building which was used as an interrogation centre by the Stasi and an execution site by the Nazis has been a museum and memorial centre for victims of political persecution.<sup>[93]</sup>

## Leipzig

- **Gedenkstätte Museum in der „Runden Ecke“** (Memorial Museum in the "Round Corner") - The former Stasi district headquarters on *am Dittrichring* is now a museum focusing on the history and activities of the organisation. It is named after the curved shape of the front of the building. The Stasi used the building from 1950 until 1989. On the evening of 4 December 1989, it was occupied by protesters in order to stop the destruction of Stasi files. There has been a permanent exhibition on the site since 1990. The building also houses the Leipzig branch of the Stasi Records Agency, which holds about 10 km of files on its shelves.<sup>[94]</sup>
- **Stasi-Bunker Lübschützer Teiche** (Stasi Bunker Museum) - The Stasi Bunker Museum is in *Machern*, a village about 30 km from Leipzig. It is managed by the Runde Ecke Museum administration. The bunker was built from 1968 to 1972, as a fallout shelter for the staff of the Stasi's Leipzig administration in case of a nuclear attack. It could accommodate about 120 people. The bunker, which was disguised as a holiday resort on 5.2 hectares of land, was only discovered in December in 1989. It is completely preserved in its original state. "The emergency command centre was a secretly-created complex, designed to maintain the Stasi leadership's hold on power, even in exceptional circumstances." The whole grounds are classified as a historic monument and are open to the public on the last weekend of every month, and for pre-arranged group tours at other times.<sup>[95]</sup>
- **GDR Execution site** - The execution site at Alfred-Kästner-Straße in south Leipzig, was the central site in East Germany where the death penalty was carried out from 1960 until 1981. It remains in its original condition. The management of the "Runde Ecke" Museum opens the site once a year on "Museum night" and on special state-wide days when historic buildings and sites that are not normally accessible to the public are opened.<sup>[96]</sup>



Entrance to the "Runde Ecke" museum, Leipzig, 2009

## Magdeburg

**Gedenkstätte Moritzplatz Magdeburg** - The memorial site at Moritzplatz in Magdeburg is a museum on the site of a former prison, built from 1873 to 1876, that was used by the Soviet administration from 1945 to 1949 and the Stasi from 1958 until 1989 to hold political prisoners. Between 1950 and 1958 the Stasi shared another prison with the civil police. The prison at Moritzplatz was used by the Volkspolizei from 1952 until 1958. Between 1945 and 1989, more than 10,000 political prisoners were held in the prison. The memorial site and museum was founded in December 1990.<sup>[97]</sup>

## Potsdam

- **Gedenkstätte Lindenstraße** The memorial site and museum at Lindenstraße 54/55 in Potsdam, examines political persecution in the Nazi, Soviet occupation and GDR eras. The original building was built 1733-1737 as a baroque palace; it became a court and prison in 1820. From 1933, the Nazi regime held political prisoners there, many of whom were arrested for racial reasons, for example Jews who refused to wear the yellow star on their clothing.<sup>[98]</sup>

The Soviet administration took over the prison in 1945, also using it as a prison for holding political prisoners on remand. The Stasi then used it as a remand prison, mainly for political prisoners from 1952 until 1989. Over 6,000 people were held in the prison by the Stasi during that time. On 27 October 1989, the prison freed all political prisoners due to a nationwide amnesty. On 5 December 1989, the Stasi Headquarters in Potsdam and the Lindenstrasse Prison were occupied by protesters. From January 1990 the building was used as offices for various citizens initiatives and new political groups, such as the *Neue Forum*. The building was opened to the public from 20 January 1990 and people were taken on tours of the site. It officially became a Memorial site in 1995.<sup>[98]</sup>



Façade of the Memorial Site, Lindenstrasse, Potsdam

## Rostock

- **Documentation Centre and Memorial site, former Stasi remand prison, Rostock** - The memorial site is in a former Stasi remand prison at Hermanstrasse 34b. It is on what was part of a Stasi compound in Rostock, where its district headquarters were also located. Most of the site is now used by the Rostock county court and the University of Rostock. The complex was built 1958–1960. The remand prison was used by the Stasi from 1960 until 1989. About 4,900 people were held in the prison during that time, most of them were political prisoners.<sup>[99]</sup> Most of prisoners were released after an amnesty issued on 27 October 1989. The Stasi prison in the Rostock compound was occupied by protesters on 4 December 1989 following a wave of such occupation across East Germany starting in Erfurt on the same day.<sup>[100]</sup>

The prison closed in the early 1990s. The state of *Mecklenburg-Vorpommern* took ownership of it in 1998, and the memorial site and museum were established in 1999. An extensive restoration of the site began in December 2018.<sup>[101]</sup>

## Stasi officers after the reunification

### Recruitment by Russian companies

Former Stasi agent *Matthias Warnig* (codename "Arthur") is currently the head of *Nord Stream*.<sup>[102]</sup> Investigations have revealed that some of the key *Gazprom Germania* managers are former Stasi agents.<sup>[103][104]</sup>

## Lobbying

Former Stasi officers continue to be politically active via the *Gesellschaft zur Rechtlichen und Humanitären Unterstützung* (GRH, Society for Legal and Humanitarian Support). Former high-ranking officers and employees of the Stasi, including the last Stasi director, Wolfgang Schwanitz, make up the majority of the organization's members, and it receives support from the German Communist Party, among others.

The impetus for the establishment of the GRH was provided by the criminal charges filed against the Stasi in the early 1990s. The GRH, decrying the charges as "victor's justice", called for them to be dropped. Today the group provides an alternative if a somewhat utopian voice in the public debate on the GDR legacy. It calls for the closure of the Berlin-Hohenschönhausen Memorial and can be a vocal presence at memorial services and public events. In March 2006 in Berlin, GRH members disrupted a museum event; a political scandal ensued when the Berlin Senator (Minister) of Culture refused to confront them.<sup>[105]</sup>

Behind the scenes, the GRH also lobbies people and institutions promoting opposing viewpoints. For example, in March 2006, the Berlin Senator for Education received a letter from a GRH member and former Stasi officer attacking the Museum for promoting "falsehoods, anti-communist agitation and psychological terror against minors".<sup>[106]</sup> Similar letters have also been received by schools organizing field trips to the museum.<sup>[107]</sup>

## Stasi agents

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- Christel Boom
- Gabriele Gast
- Günter Guillaume
- Karl-Heinz Kurras
- Lilli Pöttrich
- Rainer Rupp
- Hans Sommer
- Werner Teske

## Alleged informants

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- Vic Allen, University of Leeds professor.<sup>[108]</sup>
- Helmut Aris, co-founder of the Association of Jewish Communities in the GDR.<sup>[109]</sup>
- Horst Bartel, Marxist–Leninist historian.<sup>[110]</sup>
- Almuth Beck, SED/PDS politician.<sup>[111]</sup>
- Jutta Braband, civil rights activist and PDS politician.<sup>[112]</sup>
- Siegfried Brietzke, three-time gold medal-winning Olympic rower.<sup>[113]</sup>
- Harald Czudaj, bobsledder.<sup>[114]</sup>
- Richard Clements, adviser to Neil Kinnock.<sup>[108]</sup>
- 18 of the 72 players (every fourth player) who played at least once for football team Dynamo Dresden between 1972 and 1989 were listed as unofficial collaborators (IM).<sup>[115][116]</sup>
- Gwyneth Edwards<sup>[117]</sup>
- Uta Felgner, hotel manager.<sup>[118]</sup>
- Eduard Geyer, former football coach at Dynamo Dresden.<sup>[119]</sup>
- Horst Giese, actor.<sup>[120]</sup>
- Paul Gratzik, communist writer.<sup>[121]</sup>
- Victor Grossman, American publicist.<sup>[122]</sup>
- Gerhart Hass, Marxist historian.<sup>[123]</sup>
- Brigitte Heinrich, Alliance 90/The Greens politician.<sup>[124]</sup>
- Anetta Kahane, journalist, activist and founder of the Amadeu Antonio Foundation.<sup>[125][126]</sup>
- Heinz Kahlau, socialist writer.<sup>[127]</sup>
- Heinz Kamnitzer, Marxist–Leninist academic.<sup>[128]</sup>
- Sokratis Kokkalis<sup>[129][130][131]</sup>
- Karl-Heinz Kurras, policeman and shooter of Benno Ohnesorg.
- Christa Luft, left-wing politician.<sup>[132]</sup>
- Lothar de Maizière, last prime minister of East Germany.<sup>[133]</sup>
- Thomas Nord, Left Party politician.<sup>[134]</sup>
- Helga M. Novak, writer.<sup>[135]</sup>
- Robin Pearson (Lecturer at the University of Hull)<sup>[136]</sup>
- Aleksander Radler, Lutheran theologian.<sup>[137]</sup>
- John Roper, Baron Roper of Thorney Island<sup>[138]</sup>
- Bernd Runge, CEO of Phillips de Pury auction house<sup>[139]</sup>
- Martin Schlaff, billionaire businessman.<sup>[140]</sup>
- Holm Singer<sup>[141]</sup>
- Ingo Steuer, figure skater and now trainer<sup>[142]</sup>

- Barbara Thalheim, popular singer and songwriter.<sup>[143]</sup>
- Christa Wolf, socialist writer.<sup>[144]</sup>

## See also

- Barkas (van manufacturer)
- *Deutschland 83*, *Deutschland 86* and *Deutschland 89*
- Felix Dzerzhinsky Guards Regiment
- Stasi Records Agency
- *Stasiland*
- *The Lives of Others*, movie centered on the Stasi
- *Weissensee*, TV series

## Notes

- ↑ An abbreviation of *Staatssicherheit*.

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