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To Know Everything and to Report Everything Worth Knowing: Building the East German Police State, 1945-1949

Norman M. Naimark
Stanford University

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Abbreviations in Footnotes and Text

ACC — Allied Control Council

AVPRF — Arkhiv Vneshnoi Politik Rossiiskii Federatsii (Foreign Policy Archive of the Russian Federation)

BStU — Bundesbeauftragte fuer die Unterlagen des Staatssicherheitsdienstes der ehemaligen Deutschen Demokratischen Republic

CIC — Command Intelligence Center

DVdI — Deutsche Verwaltung des Innern (German Administration of the Interior)

ECIC — European Command Intelligence Center

FES — Friedrich Ebert Stiftung (SPD Archives)

GARF — Gosudarstvennyi Arkhiv Rossiiskoi Federatsii (The State Archive of the Russian Federation)

GTUAU — German Territory Under Allied Occupation

HIA — Hoover Institution Archives

KPD — Kommunistische Partei Deutschlands (Communist Party of Germany)

MfSZ — Ministerium fuer Staatssicherheit Zentralarchiv (Central Archives of the Ministry for State Security)

MGB — Ministerstvo Gosudarstvennoe Bezopasnosti (Ministry of State Security of the Soviet Union)

MVD — Ministerstvo Vnutrennikh Del (Ministry for Internal Affairs of the Soviet Union)

NA — National Archives

RG — Record Group

RTsKhIDNI — Rossiiskii Tsentr Khraneniia i Izucheniia Dokumentov Noveishei Istorii (Russian Center for the Preservation and Study of Contemporary Historical Documents)

SAPMO-BA — Stiftung Archiv der Parteien und Massenorganisationen der DDR im Bundesarchiv (The Foundation for the Archives of the GDR's Parties and Mass Organizations).

SBZ — Sowjetische Besatzungszone (Soviet Zone of Occupation)

SED — Sozialistische Einheitspartei Deutschlands (Socialist Unity Party)

SPD — Sozialdemokratische Partei Deutschlands (Social Democratic Party of Germany)

SVAG — Sovetskaia Voennaia Administratsiia v Germanii (Soviet Military Administration in Germany)

VVN — Vereinigung der Verfolgten des Naziregimes (Union of the Victims of the Nazi Regime)

ZPA — Zentral Parteiarchiv (Central Party Archives, KPD/SED)

Few historical subjects have attracted more public attention in Germany recently than the East German police regime and the "Stasi"—the Staatsicherheitsdienst (State Security Service).[1] Exposés of Stasi activity regularly appear in German newspapers, magazines, and television. A special German government commission under the leadership of the Bundestag representative Rainer Eppelmann has been set up to investigate the totalitarianism system in the East.[2] A new federal office was created, with the impossible name of the "Bundesbeauftragte fuer die Unterlagen des Staatssicherheitsdienstes der ehemaligen Deutschen Demokratischen Republik" (Federal Commissioner for the Documents of the Former GDR's State Security Service; the office is called simply the "Gauck Behoerde" (Gauck Authorities) after its chief, the former East German pastor and human rights activist Joachim Gauck), which is specifically charged with making Stasi documents available both to its victims and its historians. Yet, despite the public fascination with the Stasi, scholars have written relatively little of substance about its past. Part of the reason is historiographical: before the fall of the Berlin Wall and the unification of the two Germanys, it was considered politically inappropriate for West German scholars in particular to dwell on the totalitarianism of the East and the mechanisms of repression that East German citizens were forced to endure.[3] Part of the reason also relates to the absence of good documentation available on the Stasi during the pre-1990 period, though those scholars who wanted to write about the subject were able to do so through access to first-hand testimonies and even some archival collections, such as the papers of the West German Social Democratic Party (SPD) Ostbuero (Eastern Bureau), which closely followed the Stalinization of East German life.[4] With the opening of the archives of the former GDR Ministry of State Security, and the establishment of the Section of Education and Research in the "Gauck Behoerde" to foster scholarly research, an important step has been taken in developing resources for the study of the Stasi.[5]

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[1] The research for this section of my larger work on the Soviet occupation of Germany, 1945-49, was carried out primarily in the archives of the postwar German Administration of the Interior, located in the Section for Education and Research (Abteilung Bildung und Forschung) of the "Gauck Behoerde" in Berlin. I am grateful to Walter Suess, Klaus-Dietmar Henke, Siegfried Suckut and Monika Tantscher of that institution for their encouragement and assistance. I also am glad to acknowledge the support of the Historische Kommission zu Berlin.

[2] The commission has conducted hearings about the nature of the East German system. Some of the most interesting have been published in *Deutschland Archiv* over the past year under the name "Anhoerung der Enquete-Kommission."

[3] For a lament on this fact, see my "Is It True What They're Saying About East Germany?" *ORBIS* 23:3 (Fall 1979), 549-77.

[4] See the work of Karl Wilhelm Fricke, especially his *Die DDR-Staastssicherheit. Entwicklung, Strukturen, Aktionsfelder* (The GDR's State Security Service. Development, Structure, Field of Action), 2nd ed. (Cologne: Verlag Wissenschaft und Politik, 1984).

[5] See Klaus-Dietmar Henke, ed., *Wann bricht schon mal ein Staat zusammen: Die Debatte ueber die Stasi-Akten auf dem 39. Historikertage 1992* (When After All Does a State Collapse: The Debate about the Stasi Documents at the 39th Historians Congress 1992) (Munich: Deutscher Taschenbuch Verlag, 1993).

Despite these new sources of information, significant impediments to studying the origins of the East German police state still exist. First, the extent to which the history of the Stasi remains a political issue in the new German state has undermined the ability of scholars to survey the past with calm and detachment. Second, problems with documentation persist. The archives of the Soviet KGB (Committee on State Security) and MVD (Ministry of Internal Affairs) remain closed to researchers of the postwar era.[6] Without access to documents from the Soviet security services, only part of the story of the origins of the East German police state can be told. Soon, however, new joint projects between German scholars and the Russian state archives, which hold NKVD documents on the system of Soviet special camps (*spetslager*) in the Soviet zone of occupation, should provide a fuller picture of police repression in eastern Germany.[7] In addition, U.S. military intelligence reports are helpful in filling in some of the "blank spots," as are other documents from American, British, SPD and SED archives. At the same time, it is a worthwhile lesson in Soviet history to note that materials thus far made available in the archives of those institutions which had so much to do with Soviet policies in the eastern zone—the Central Committee (RTsKhIDNI), the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (AVPRF), and the Soviet Military Government itself (GARF)—scarcely mention the question of East German internal security, leaving that to the security organs themselves, about whom very little is said.

As a result, this article should be seen as an exploratory attempt to reconstruct the beginnings of the East German police state. A companion article, now in preparation, examines the role of Soviet intelligence organizations in eastern Germany, in particular the MVD operations groups, and documents the development of the *spetslager* in the zone. This article focuses on the two principal German organizations that eventually merged into the Stasi: K-5 of the Criminal Police, and the Intelligence and Information section of the German Administration for the Interior (DVdI). It also examines the beginnings of several other police organizations in the Soviet zone, including the "Alert Police" (*Bereitschaften*), which served as the foundations of the National People's Army (NVA).

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[6] New opportunities for research in selected NKVD/MVD papers have just been made available at GARF. See V.A. Kozlov and S.V. Mironenko, eds., *Archive of Contemporary Russian History*, vol. 1, *"Special Files" for I.V. Stalin: Materials of the Secretariat of the NKVD-MVD of the USSR, 1944-1953* (Blagovest, Ltd.: Moscow, 1994). Similar volumes should soon be available for the files of Beria and Molotov. For information on obtaining the volumes in the United States, contact the Russian Publications Project, Center for Russian and East European Studies, University of Pittsburgh, Pittsburgh, PA 15260.

[7] See "Zur Herausbildung und Organisation des Systems von Speziallagern des NKVD der UdSSR in der sowjetischen Besatzungszone Deutschlands im Jahre 1945" ("On the Development and Organization of the System of NKVD/USSR Special Camps in the Soviet Occupied Zone of Germany in the Year 1945"), *Deutschland Archiv* 6 (June 1993), 723-35, and "On the Russian Archives: An Interview with Sergei V. Mironenko," *Slavic Review* 52:4 (Winter 1993), 841.

This kind of investigation is useful for two purposes. First, it makes clear that just as the Stasi formed the backbone of the German Democratic Republic and permeated the country's every aspect, it did so as an integral part of the historical emergence of the country. In other words, the Soviets and the SED did not create the Stasi as an afterthought for securing the East German state structure and protecting its accomplishments. Rather, from the very beginning, security concerns within the German communist party and the Soviet military government helped create an East German state that was inseparable from its internal police functions. Second, it is worth reflecting upon Moscow's general policy considerations in light of the Soviet Military Administration's systematic efforts to build up secret police and paramilitary police units. There is no reason to doubt the sincerity of Soviet statements (and actions) intended to foster the unity of Germany and the end to Four-Power occupation in the immediate postwar period. At the same time, the way in which Soviets and the their German communist comrades constructed the police structure in eastern Germany corroborates the argument that plans were in the making for the permanent Sovietization of the zone.

Stunde Null — **Zero Hour**

From the perspective of the Soviets, no single administrative task in occupied Germany after the defeat of Hitler was more important in May 1945 than reorganizing the German police. For the German Communist Party (KPD) and in particular for its leader, Walter Ulbricht, getting police in the streets was also a critical first step in reestablishing order. Therefore it is no wonder that neither the Soviets nor the German communists looked too closely at the antifascist credentials of the newly recruited policemen in the Soviet zone of occupation. Not only Nazis and Wehrmacht veterans were able to join up, but significant numbers of former SS and SA members found their way into the police.[8] Certainly, the communists sought to control the leadership of the police from the very beginning. In Berlin, three KPD veterans who had been in Brandenburg prison were placed in strategic posts in the Berlin Police Presidium. One was Walter Mickinn, who became an important contributor to the development of the postwar communist police. Mickinn was soon joined by Erich Mielke, who had spent much of the Nazi era in the Soviet Union. Accused of (and tried in 1993-94 for) having been a member of a communist gang that killed two German policemen in 1931, Mielke attended the Lenin School in

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[8] "Ob ustranenii nedostatkov v rabote politsii" ("On the elimination of shortcomings in the work of the police"), Order no. 112, 23 May 1946, GARF, fond (f.) 7184, opis (op.) 2, delo (d.) 2, list (l.) 249.

the Soviet Union before participating in the Spanish Civil War, going underground in France, and fighting with the Red Army during the war.[9]

If, as the German communists later complained, "hundreds of fascists, criminals and unworthy elements" found their way into the police after the war, it was also the case that a combination of new communist police experts—some who had suffered at the hands of the Gestapo (like Mickinn), and some who had had direct experience with the NKVD and Soviet military intelligence (like Mielke)—immediately began transforming the police into a central fighting instrument of the antifascist democratic order.[10] In the new Soviet socialist state established after the Bolshevik revolution, victims of the tsarist police became the commissars of the police; Felix Dzierzynski, head of the Cheka, was only the best known. Similarly, after 1945, police matters were placed principally in the hands of victims of fascism, like Mickinn and Erich Reschke, who became the first president of the German Administration of the Interior (DVdI). Similarly, police schools were often run by communists who had been interned in Nazi prisons, many of whom were also members of the Union of the Victims of the Nazi Regime (the VVN). But always in the background were loyal Moscow servants like Mielke and Kurt Fischer, who was Interior Minister in Saxony before taking over for Reschke in the summer of 1948.

During the first months of the occupation, however, there could be no talk of a communist police force. If any party held sway in the police bureaucracy, it was the SPD, many of whose members had worked for the police before and sometimes after 1933. The biggest problem in the police at the outset of the Soviet occupation was not political, but rather the fact that police units were disorganized and sometimes engaged in illegal activities. Formally, they were under the command of the local Soviet commandants, who used them for specific tasks, ranging from guard duty and patrols to raids on local red-light establishments. But without provincial, not to mention zonal oversight, the police were easily susceptible to corruption and extortion.[11] The police initiated their own investigations, confiscating materials and goods without reporting them to higher authorities. In many cases, police simply resold the goods that they seized. Sometimes they kept regular hours; sometimes they did not. The Soviets were particularly frustrated by the

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[9] In January 1946, Mielke held the post of "ZK Mitarbeiter [Central Committee functionary] for Police and Justice." "Protokoll ueber die Sitzung der Genossen der Berliner Justiz und der ZVfI" ("Protocol of the meeting of the comrades of the Berlin Justice department and the ZVfI"), 19 January 1946, BStU, MfSZ, 230/66, blatt (b.) 4. In the same source, Mickinn was referred to as "Trade Union Secretary of the Police Union group in Berlin and Chairman of the Police Section of the Berlin Union."

[10] "Rechenschaftsbericht ueber die bisher geleistete gewerkschaftliche Arbeit in der Berliner Polizei" ("Assessment of the union work carried out up to this point in the Berlin police"), BStU, MfSZ, 230/66, b. 71.

[11] B. Levitskii, "Unter sowjetischem Befehl" ("Under Soviet command"), HIA, Nicolaevsky, Series 236 (411-13), p. 1.

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numerous cases in which the police walked away from guard duty whenever they tired of it.[12] The police were also not averse to abusing their connections with the NKVD operations groups, settling personal grudges through denunciations and arrests.[13]

Theese excesses reportedly reached their worst extreme in Mecklenburg and Brandenburg. There, police engaged in a wide variety of criminal activities which the Soviets had no way to curtail. In Saxony, on the other hand, police matters were put under the control of Kurt Fischer, who was able to centralize the provincial police administration almost from the first days after his arrival in Dresden as a member of Anton Ackermann's "initiative group." When the Americans pulled out of Thueringen and the province of Saxony (Saxon-Anhalt) at the end of June 1945, the Soviets already had two months of experience in organizing police activities. In Saxon-Anhalt, for example, they brought in the communist Robert Siewert, a former Buchenwald internee and VVN member, to run the police as vice president of the province. Siewert recalled that opponents of the Soviet occupation called the new police "Vice President's Siewert's Billyclub Guard."[14]

At first, Allied agreement prohibited German police from carrying firearms. They rarely had uniforms and were identifiable only by their armbands, billyclubs, or sometimes their hats. They took a terrific beating at the hands of armed "bandits," who were sometimes Germans, but more often than not Soviet soldiers or deserters. Gangs of drunken soldiers frequently terrorized urban and rural populations in the summer of 1945 and the fall and winter of 1945-46. Attempts by German police to intervene in the activities of these "bandits" could result in tragedy. Not only did police take their lives in their hands if they tried to seize Soviet soldiers for their misdeeds, but even if the police were able to catch the culprits, they had to turn the soldiers over to their Russian commanders, who routinely took no action against them.[15] In fact, large numbers of German policemen lost their lives in the struggle against bandits during the fall and winter of 1945-1946.[16] No issue frustrated the new police all over the zone more than the fact that they were forbidden to carry weapons. A criminal police (Kripo) report of 21 January 1946 made the

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[12] "Ob ustranenii nedostatkov v rabote politsii" ("On the elimination of shortcomings in the work of the police"), Order no. 112, 23 May 1946, GARF, f. 7184, op. 2, d. 2, l. 250.

[13] Baumann, "Aufbau des Informationsdienstes der Provincialregierung Brandenburgs" ("The building of the information service in the Brandenburg provincial government"), Abschrift (Copy), HIA, Sander, box 2, folder 5, p. 3.

[14] SAPMO-BA, ZPA, EA 0890/2 (Robert Siewert), b. 259.

[15] In many of these cases, the German police were not even allowed to take down the names of the criminals. BStU, MfSZ, 400/66, b. 31.

[16] "Protokoll ueber die Sitzung der Genossen von der Berliner Polizei beim Gen. Ulbricht" ("Protocol of the meeting of comrades from the Berlin police with Comrade Ulbricht"), 18 January 1946, BStU, MfSZ, 230/66, b. 112. Hereafter, "Protokoll... 18 January 1946."

point that they would continue to be paralyzed in the struggle with bandits and gangs unless they were allowed to use firearms.[17]

The situation changed after 1 January 1946, when the Allied Control Council lifted the ban on the use of weapons by the German police forces.[18] The Soviets then supplied some pistols and guns to selected police detachments, but, as Mickinn told Ulbricht, in "absolutely insufficient" quantities. Ulbricht responded: "There must be forthwith a complete arming [of the police]. Where are there more weapons?"[19] But Ulbricht should have known that weapons themselves were not the answer, at least not in the case of dealing with crimes by Soviet soldiers. German police forces were not allowed to use weapons against Allied soldiers, even if they were caught red-handed. In fact, German police sometimes found themselves in the embarrassing position of being disarmed by the Soviet "bandits."[20] By the late spring of 1946, however, armed German police detachments fought alongside Soviet soldiers and MVD operations groups to subdue gangs of criminals, some German, some Russian. Even heavy weapons were used on both sides, recalled Walter Besenbuch, a communist police veteran, and many policemen lost their lives.[21]

According to SVAG Order no. 112 of 23 May 1946, which sought to eliminate deficiencies in police work in the zone, the problem with the police was not the absence of weapons but rather a lack of organization and discipline. Despite the increase of resources directed to police work, crime was rising. Police solved only 40 percent of crimes, a rate the Soviets attributed primarily to poor coordination between the criminal police (Kripo) and the civil police (Schutzpolizei, Schupo), between judicial and police organs, and between police organizations within the different provinces, not to mention between provinces.[22] Some relief in this situation was expected from the formal creation—long kept secret—of the German Administration of the Interior (DVdI) on 30 June 1946.[23] But so long as the local and regional

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[17] BStU, MfSZ, 238/66, b. 349

[18] Some units were armed for special missions already in the fall of 1945. Alexander Fischer, "Die Entmilitarisierung und Wiederaufruestung in der sowjetischen Besatzungszone Deutschlands und in der Deutschen Demokratischen Republik (1945-1956)" ("The Demilitarization and Rearmament of the Soviet Zone of Occupation in Germany and in the German Democratic Republic (1945-1956),"), *Vortraege zur Militaergeschichte: Entmilitaerisierung und Aufruestung in Mitteleuropa* (*Lectures on Military History: Demilitarization and Rearmament in Central Europe*) (Herford, Bonn: E. S. Mitter und Sohn), 46.

[19] ("Protokoll... 18 January 1946)", BStU, MfSZ, 230/66, b. 112.

[20] Report of 14 January 1946, BStU, MfSZ, 238/66, b. 440.

[21] SAPMO-BA, ZPA, EA 0059 (Walter Besenbuch), bb. 5-6.

[22] GARF, f. 7184, op. 2, d. 2, ll. 249-250.

[23] On the issue of secrecy, see Dieter Marc Schneider, "Innere Verwaltung/Deutsche Verwaltung des Innern (DVdI)" ("Interior Administration/The German Administration for the Interior (DVdI)"), in Martin Broszat and Herman Weber, eds., *SBZ Handbuch: Staatliche Verwaltungen, Parteien, gesellschaftliche Organisationen und ihre Fuehrungskraefte in der Sowjetischen Besatzungszone Deutschlands 1945-1949* (The SBZ [Soviet zone of

police bodies were responsible to the provincial governments, the DVdI would not be able to develop the level of control and coordination that the KPD (and later SED) insisted was critical.

Subsequently, in December 1946, the SED's Ulbricht and Fechner met with Fischer, Warnke, Bechler, and Siewert, who represented a variety of communist police interests, as well as with the presidents of the Interior ministries, to straighten out the problem of reporting. The SED's priorities were transparent. They wanted the DVdI to assume responsibility for police activity throughout the zone, while the budgets of the police would still be formally under the provinces. All laws on the police passed by the provincial legislatures would have to be agreed to beforehand by the DVdI. All police appointments, transfers, and firings also had to be approved by both the provincial Soviet military organizations (SVA), and the president of the DVdI. The SED also sought to assert special prerogatives when it came to Interior Ministry matters. "All important questions that have to do with the activities of the Ministries of the Interior, should be agreed to by both party chairmen of the lands and provinces with the SED comrades who are Ministers of the Interior."[24]

Until the opening of the KGB and MVD archives, it will be difficult to describe with precision the nature of reporting between the German police and the Soviet officials in their Karlshorst headquarters. Certainly, the president of the DVdI, Erich Reschke (and later Kurt Fischer), reported directly to the Internal Affairs administration of SVAG. One can also assume that informally many DVdI leaders and rank and file reported directly to the Soviets, whether in the MVD (the Ministry of Internal Affairs, until 1946 the NKVD), the MGB (the Ministry of State Security), the GRU (Military Intelligence), or in a variety of other Soviet intelligence organizations in the zone. One could be almost sure that this arrangement included Erich Mielke, who seemed to be the Soviets' man in the DVdI. We know, for example, that he had a direct cable telephone hookup with Karlshorst.[25] There is also considerable evidence that Mielke upheld the interests of the Soviets even when the SED might have been compromised by doing so.

Throughout the period of the Soviet occupation, Mielke's overt role seemed to be one of trying to increase the political content of police work. In one of his speeches to the police, for example, he argued that there was nothing wrong with politically tendentious police activity. In his view, it was their duty to be tendentious. The hypothetical example he used made a mockery

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Occupation] Handbook: State Institutions, Parties, Social Organizations and their Leaderships in the Soviet Zone of Occupation in Germany, 1945-1949) (Munich: R. Oldenbourg Verlag, 1990), 211.

[24] Protocol of 20 December 1946 meeting, SAPMO-BA, ZPA, NL 182/1192 (Ulbricht), bb. 191-192.

[25] Secretariat of the Minister, BStU MfSZ, 333, b. 10. See also BStU, MfSZ, 238/66, b. 215.

of the severe fate met by opponents of communist control in the East. Still, Mielke made his point. Two drivers of cars were detained because of moving violations for which they could have been fined fifty marks or more apiece:

> In one case we are dealing with an honored worker or workers' functionary and the other person is known to us as an archreactionary. It would be idiotic and shows nothing about democratic consciousness if we would treat both cases democratically "the same." It is clear that we take care of the case with the worker through a few friendly words and we jack up the fine as high as possible for the enemy of the democratic development.[26]

Of course, Mielke very much joined company with Soviet officers in his attitude towards "bourgeois objectivity." A SVAG Justice official, Major Nikolai, stated the case even more clearly at a meeting of German Justice department functionaries in March 1948. Too much attention was paid to so-called "personal freedom," he told them. One cannot guarantee personal freedom for "Nazi activists, blackmarketeers or racketeers, but only for the democratic strata of the population."[27]

K-5

The fifth department (*dezernat*) of the Criminal Police, K-5, was the first German political police to operate in the eastern zone after the war. The organization began in Saxony in the late summer of 1945, evolving out of the "Surveillance department" of the Dresden city government's personnel administration. Under Kurt Fischer, Saxony had become the model for police organization in the zone. (The communists often recognized Saxony's traditions as an independent princedom by giving it pride of place over the other provinces in the zone.) By September 1945, Saxony had a provincial criminal police administration with five departments, including K-5, whose function was initially to investigate police officials in the administration and eventually to keep tabs on the police force as a whole.[28] K-5 also took responsibility for providing surveillance of officials in the Judicial department, preparing dossiers on every judge

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[26] "Rededisposition zur Frage der Kultur-massenarbeit und der kommender Aufgaben der Polizei" ("Speaking points on the question of mass culture work and the coming tasks of the police"), September 1948, BStU, MfSZ, Sekretariat d. Ministers, AS 323, p. 29.

[27] "Bericht ueber die Laenderkonferenz in der Deutschen Justizverwaltung," ("Report on the provinces conference in the Justice administration"), 12 March 1948, BStU, MfSZ, AS 230/66, b. 53.

[28] "1947 Jahresbericht Dezernat K 5 im Lande Sachsen" ("1947 Annual report of the K 5 section in the state of Saxony"), BStU, MfSZ, AS 229/66, b. 364.

and prosecutor and forwarding them to the MVD and MGB in the zone.[29] By the beginning of 1947, K-5 in Saxony already had 160 employees and had spread its network to the other provinces of the zone.

From the very beginning, K-5 was seen by the communists as different from other branches of the police. No one from the pre-1945 cadres of the police was allowed to join the new watchdog of the administration, and previous models of German political police were explicitly rejected. Yet almost by osmosis K-5 began to take on some of the characteristics of its Third Reich predecessors, to the point where even the SED complained that the criminal police were getting a terrible reputation in the zone for brutal methods and were "as feared as the Gestapo was."[30] Some police officials even spoke positively about the "exactness and cleanness" with which the Nazi police did their job. They knew how to strike quickly without waiting, noted one Schwerin official, while the police chief of Ruegen suggested that a lot could be learned about police work by studying the archives of the previous system.[31]

Once the DVdI was formed, its K-5 department put together a central information file that contained detailed biographical information on Interior Ministry employees, including the police, from all over the zone. Along with biographical and political information, the files contained anti-SED or anti-Soviet statements made by the "targets," which could be used at any time by the MVD and MGB for recruiting, blackmailing, purging, or punishing Interior police employees.[32]

The DVdI was also able to take strong measures in Mecklenburg and Saxon-Anhalt, where the police had resisted K-5's influence, removing the criminal police chiefs in the two provinces because "they were not real democrats." By March 1947, the DVdI had successfully centralized criminal police activity under its section K in Berlin.[33] K-5's power within the Interior administration was evident from the fact that its provincial chiefs were automatically made deputy chiefs of the provincial police offices. U.S. intelligence reported that "if the Chief of the

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[29] 7707 European Command Intelligence Center, RT-359-48, 7 October 1948, box 24, Records of the Office of the Military Government, U.S. (OMGUS), RG 260, NA.

[30] "Protokoll der Tagung ueber den Befehl 201 am 22 Dez. 1947" ("Protocol of the Meeting about Order no. 201 on 22 December 1947"), SAPMO-BA, ZPA, IV 2/13/2, b. 5.

[31] BStU, MfSZ, 400/66, bb. 124-125.

[32] FES, SPD Ostbuero, 0046 A-G, 27 May 1949.

[33] "Jahresbericht: Deutsche Verwaltung des Innern in der Sowjetischen Besatzungszone, 1946-1947" ("Annual Report: The German administration of the Interior in the Soviet Zone of Occupation, 1946-1947"), BStU, MfSZ, AS 99/58, b. 27.

Provincial police office was not considered politically reliable, his Deputy had the authority to prevent him from learning all details about the 'K-5' sections."[34]

The development of K-5 and the political police in the zone received a powerful impetus from Order no. 201 of August 1947 on de-Nazification. By this order, the Soviets gave K-5 primary responsibility for eliminating all former active Nazis from the state administration and leadership in the economy and society. To carry out the task, K-5 was given authorization to recruit large numbers of new cadres from the "working class," and to set up special schools to train the recruits in the fine points of enforcing the order. K-5 specialists were trained for the "penetration and investigation" (*Durchdringung und Durcharbeitung*) of the growing state and provincial apparatus in the Soviet zone. This meant undercover work, as well as learning the specialized methods of police investigations.[35]

Order no. 201 also served as an important weapon for politicizing the police. For example, the provincial police chief in Saxony took his K-5 section to task for processing too many workers, small business owners, and middle-level employees for Nazi activities (50 percent of the 5,000 cases), and exhorted his charges to turn their attention to the *real* Nazis, "who were able to gain personal advantages and secure material and financial support under fascism as a result of their economic situation."[36] Ulbricht, too, repeatedly emphasized the importance of arresting those former Nazis who had been (and sometimes still were) economically powerful and to leave the workers and everyday employees alone, unless they had committed war crimes.[37] Ulbricht even wanted major show trials of Nazi capitalists, but the Soviets vetoed his idea, arguing that show trials would cause unnecessary turmoil among the Germans. In fact, given the upheaval caused by Order no. 201, both the Soviets and the SED looked to wrap up de-Nazification as soon as possible.

Meanwhile, K-5 had become the central organ for the political activities of police authorities in the zone. According to its organizational chart of 8 January 1948, K-5 was an all-purpose unit divided in sections according to the kinds of political crimes it was designated to investigate and prevent: 1) Violations of SVAG orders, including direct charges from SVAG

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[34] CIC, "Organization of the Political Police in the Soviet Zone," Report RP-174-48, p. 2, box 24, RG 260, NA.
[35] BStU, MfSZ, AS 229/66, b. 470; "Jahresbericht Dezernat K 5" ("Annual Report of the K 5 section"), in BStU, MFSZ, AS 229/66, b. 346.
[36] Ibid., b. 605.
[37] "Protokoll ueber die Sitzung der Genossen von der Berliner Polizei beim Gen. Ulbricht" ("Protocol of the meeting of comrades from the Berlin police with Comrade Ulbricht"), 18 January 1946, BStU, MfSZ, AS 230/66, b. 112.

itself; 2) Violations of Control Council orders; 3) Sabotage of the Rebuilding; 4) Anti-democratic activity; and 5) Technical.[38] The last section dealt with surveillance methods, data collection, and postal interference. The other four sections focussed on the prevention of a variety of political crimes. Those most often mentioned included assassinations, sabotage, public demonstrations, and underground resistance, and any pro-fascist or anti-Soviet activity, including the tearing down of posters or the destruction of "democratic" literature. At the same time, as an SPD Ostbuero report noted, "all the leading personages in public life [in the eastern zone] are subject to constant surveillance," a huge job given the rest of K-5's responsibilities.[39]

Not surprisingly, Erich Mielke looked at K-5 as an incipient office of state security. Its job, he stated, was "to defend democratic institutions, their further development and the economic rebuilding of the SBZ from attempts to undermine them [*Stoerversuche*]." "Enemies" had made their way into the political parties and mass organizations, Mielke continued. Agents of the Soviets' nemesis, the Western SPD leader Kurt Schumacher, were everywhere, trying to undermine the democratic rebuilding, and K-5's task, he declared, was to uncover their plans and disrupt their activities.[40] But K-5 was also an office of state security that operated on the Soviet model, meaning it carried out its mandate on behalf of a ruling political party, in this case the SED. As a K-5 veteran reported:

> Members of the SED, who were expelled [from the party], would in any case be processed by K-5. If the SED had a political enemy, whom it was difficult to compromise, K-5 would receive orders to "construct" a case. Those who left the SED on their own volition were also watched by K-5. SED politicians are the confidants [*Vertrauensleute*] of the K-5. They had to work with us whether they wanted to or not.[41]

In some cases SED officials even took direct part in the K-5 interrogations of political opponents.[42]

Despite the SED's growing influence in K-5 affairs, it was clear to everyone that the Soviet authorities, in particular the MVD and MGB offices in the zone, were directly responsible for K-5's activities. Not only that, from the very beginning K-5 was tasked with carrying out

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[38] "Aufgabengebiet und Struktur der Einheiten K 5 fuer das Land Sachsen ab 1.1.1948" ("The scope and structure of the K 5 units for the state of Saxony from 1 January 1948"), BStU, MfSZ, AS 229/66, b. 372.

[39] "Die Kommissariat K 5" (The Commissariat K 5"), 13 July 1949, FES, SPD Ostbuero, 0046 A-G.

[40] "Allgemeines ueber die Aufgaben und das Arbeitsbereich des Kommissariats 5" ("Generalities about the tasks and the competencies of the Commissariat 5"), BStU, MfSZ, AS 238/66, b. 343.

[41] Report of 27 May 1949, FES, SPD Ostbuero, 0046 A-G.

[42] CIC, Report R-579-48, 11 October 1948, p. 2, box 24, RG 260, NA.

specific missions for the Soviet military government. K-5 offices vied with one another to bring in the best information or most outstanding German operatives to the attention of the Soviets. Soviet intelligence officers directed and advised their K-5 subordinates on every level. The most important interrogations were supervised by the Russians. In fact, German K-5 police officials could undertake no serious investigation without the prior approval of the responsible SVAG office.[43]

Even the resolution of cases was expressly in Soviet hands. In thousands of cases from the immediate postwar period contained in the archives of the Ministry for State Security having to do with every kind of political issue from the spread of illegal posters and pamphlets to the seizure of underground weapons, K-5 routinely turned over their completed investigations to the Soviets for resolution. This often meant perfunctory prosecution by Soviet Military Tribunals and detention in camps and prisons.[44] Sometimes alleged criminals were placed in the special camps on the administrative order of the MVD or MGB; no judicial procedures were necessary at all. It was also the case that K-5 could not countermand Soviet orders. One former K-5 operative in Kyritz reported that his group would often simply sign forms given them by the MVD stating that a particular individual had fled to the West. "These are people, who disappear, and we don't know what the circumstances are and [we] must—without asking—sign."[45]

In the spring of 1949, K-5 achieved complete independence from the German provincial authorities and worked exclusively with the Soviets and with the DVdI in Berlin. Even the small amount of control exerted by the provincial Ministers of Interior was removed. By this point K-5 papers were kept completely separate from the rest of the police and no non-K-5 members were allowed to interfere with (or even ask questions about) its activities.[46] In 1948 and 1949, as the MGB assumed control over more Soviet intelligence activity in the zone, K-5 became a specialized MGB task force among the German population. (Already, in May 1946, the Third Directorate of the MGB had taken over most of SMERSH's counterintelligence operations in the zone, which focussed on the Soviet military and civilian population.) K-5 offices routinely carried out Soviet orders for investigations, though the arrests were often left to the MGB and MVD, because, from the Soviet point of view, arrests by German institutions might disturb the work of

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[43] DVdI, Abteilung K, Communication with Saxon-Anhalt, 13 April 1948, BStU, MfSZ, AS 282/67, b. 12.
[44] BStU, MfSZ, AS 229/66, bb. 477-479, 556-558.
[45] Report, 27 May 1949, FES, SPD Ostbuero, 0046 A-G.
[46] K 5 Saxon-Anhalt, "Aenderung des Verhaeltnisses des Sachgebietes K 5 innerhalb der Polizeibehoerde" ("Changing the relations of the competencies of K 5 within the police authorities"), 13 May 1949, BStU, MfSZ, AS 364/66, b. 151.

"other agencies."[47] Of the 51,236 cases processed by the K-5 in Saxony in 1948 (which, significantly, was twice as many as in 1947), 14,137 were tasked to them by the Soviets and 1,318 by the German authorities. The rest resulted from normal investigations and surveillance carried out by both Soviet and German authorities.[48]

Information Service

Evaluations of K-5 activity in 1948 and 1949 often came to the conclusion that the police section had too few operatives and that the ones they had were not adequately trained. Reports that K-5 policemen were being lost to other branches of the police and civil service also leads one to suspect that the Soviets were siphoning off the best agents to serve directly in their intelligence services. (By late 1948, the Soviets were drastically short-handed in the zone.) As a result, K-5 was badly overworked and understaffed, and it was apparent that it could not report the kind of information about society as a whole—"information about the mood of the people and that which is connected to it"—that the SED felt was necessary for its political control of the zone.

Initially, the information offices in the provinces had concentrated primarily on collecting materials from newspapers and the media and distributing press releases for journalistic consumption. Each provincial office did something slightly different. In Thueringen, the information office simply distributed press releases, while in Saxony and Saxon-Anhalt, the offices collected material and produced analyses of the public mood. In these latter cases, the information office reported to the Ministers of Interior, in the case of Thueringen to the Press Ministry.[49] While the information offices worked on spreading SED propaganda, as early as the summer of 1946 the police were warning private citizens that receiving "reactionary" mail, meaning subscriptions to Western newspapers like the *Tagesspiegel* or *Telegraf* from Berlin, could result in punishment.[50]

By the summer of 1947, there were sentiments expressed in the DVdI for the creation of a zone-wide information service, sentiments which seemed to reverberate positively in the Soviet Military Administration. At a conference of Ministers of the Interior in October 1947, Ulbricht suggested that after consultations with the appropriate SVAG authorities, an information service

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[47] "Jahresbericht Dezernat K 5 im Lande Sachsen" ("Annual Report of section K 5 in the state of Saxony"), 1948, BStU, MfSZ, AS 229/66, b. 599.
[48] Ibid., bb. 596-97.
[49] Duebow to Mielke, 29 July 1947, BStU, MfSZ, Sekretariat d. Ministers, AS 324, b. 23.
[50] BStU, MfSZ, 400/66, b. 126.

should be set up under Mielke's supervision in the DVdI.[51] (Mielke at this point was vice minister and controlled several branches of police work, including K-5.) The Soviets gave their approval, and on 11 November 1947, Mielke set up a new "Department for Intelligence and Information" (*Nachtrichten und Information*) in the DVdI.

According to Mielke, the justification for the new department was self-evident: to counter the nefarious activities of the reactionaries, who did not hesitate to exploit all kinds of "subjective or objective" difficulties in order to slander and disrupt the development of democracy in the zone. In Mielke's view, these agents sowed rumors and spread illegal propaganda, permeated the zone with sabotage and spying on their agenda, and had even carried out their first successful assassination attempts. As a result, a two-fisted information policy needed to be carried out. On the one hand, the public needed to be better informed about the political and administrative measures undertaken by the German government in the East. On the other, the government needed "to be constantly informed about the positive as well as the negative occurrences in the country, in order to be able to undertake when appropriate the necessary decisions and measures."[52]

Strikingly, many of the prescribed activities of Mielke's new department in late 1947 presaged the work of disinformation, spying, and intrigue that characterized the Stasi operations supervised by the GDR's Ministry of State Security, of which Mielke was the last and most influential chief. Like the Stasi, the section was created to influence public opinion by sponsoring the writing and planting of articles, reports, news, and photographs in the press in order to inspire the population to think positively about the government and the SED. The press itself was to be under the firm hand of the new section, one of whose goals was

> the influencing of the attitude and reporting of the press through the closest personal dealings with reporters and editors, [carrying out] individual and group discussions with them about the... important questions of the day.

But also like the Stasi, the section sought much more than simply the control of the press. It was mandated to collect information about any body or group working against "democratic developments," in short, "about any intentional or unintentional activities that are designed to hurt us," including gathering information about reactionary intentions from the Western zones.

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[51] "Innenminister Konferenz am 12. Oktober 1947 in Rehfelde/Sachsen" ("Conference of Ministers of the Interior on 12 October 1947 in Rehfelde, Saxony"), RTsKhIDNI, f. 17, op. 128, d. 354, l. 13.

[52] "Aufbau einer Abteilung *Nachrichten und Information* [N/I] in der D.V.d.I." ("Building of a Department for *Intelligence and Information* [N/I] in the D.V.d.I."), 11 November 1947, BStU, MfSZ, AS 229/66, bb. 266-267.

For securing the quickest possible communication of such ongoing information, it is necessary to form a comprehensive and as seamless as possible *network of confidants and informants*, who, with the single goal of serving the democracy, rationally formulate their reports with great objectivity and without consideration of their personal or other views.

A number of permanent and occasional informants had already been turning over material to the police. Now the idea was to turn them and other recruits into a permanent service of information sources in all branches of the economy, society, mass organizations, and political parties. There would be informants, as well, in the German government at all its levels, in Berlin and in the provinces. The task of the provincial information offices, to use Mielke's inimitable language, was "to know everything and to report everything worth knowing...."[53]

The former information agencies in the provinces that had dealt with press releases and newspaper policy were now ordered to call themselves "press agencies," and, in fact, the task of monitoring and guiding the press was given over to them. Some of the information offices that had been maintained by the DVdI, like N-2 (political information) and N-2b ("observation of countercurrents and underground movements"), were melded into the new Intelligence and Information section.[54] Mielke's attitude towards the new organization was duplicitous in the extreme. In a public speech, he told his listeners that it made no sense in an antifascist state "to build up a huge police and spy apparatus" because every decent German citizen "could sing a song" about such organizations from the Hitler times. Yet, he insisted that reporting to the police about what one's fellow citizens were doing should not be considered denunciation, but rather "antifascist vigilance."[55]

Politkultur

By the middle of 1948, the Soviets and SED leaders looked at the "People's Police" as much more than an institution for maintaining order and suppressing real and potential political opposition to the communist domination of the zone. Mielke wrote: "The police ... is the sharpest political military fighting weapon of the working class." As the "heartbeat of the democratic

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[53] Ibid., bb. 52-64. Emphasis in the original.

[54] "Geschaeftsverteilungsplan des Landesnachrichtenaemter [H.Abt.N.] in den Innenministerien der Laender" ("Plan for the division of work of the provincial intelligence offices [H.Abt.N.] in the Interior ministries of the provinces"), BStU, MfSZ, AS 230/66, vol. 2, bb. 42, 124.

[55] E. M. [Mielke], "Polizei und Bevoelkerung" ("Police and the people"), manuscript, BStU MfSZ, AS 238/66, bb. 204-205.

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order," the police should increase its awareness of the political tasks of fighting secret agents, provocateurs and Schumacherites, and worry less about normal crime, which had been brought under control.[56] Also indicative of changes in police practices was the appointment of Kurt Fischer, the communist police specialist from Saxony, to become the new president of the DVdI in September 1948. Fischer, a trusted Moscow communist, replaced Erich Reschke, who had developed his antifascism in Buchenwald, but was now relegated to the post of commander of the Bautzen prison.

New political tasks required new personnel policies. According to Mielke's instructions of 28 June 1948, all employees of the DVdI who had been members of the Nazi party or its allied organizations (not including the Nazi youth groups) were to be released from the police. Typically, though, there was a clause that made it possible for highly desirable ex-Nazis to continue their work: Mielke's new order exempted those "who have demonstrated their antifascism by putting their lives on the line." At the same time, no one who maintained "ties to the enemies of the democratic order" could remain on the force.[57] These instructions led to a widespread purge in the police. In August and September 1948, purges engulfed approximately 20 percent of the police organizations in the provinces, 10 percent of the police force in the Soviet zone of Berlin and 5 percent of the DVdI, as well as several senior police officers, some of whom were tied to Reschke. The personnel of a number of police districts in the zone that had been run by non-SED members were completely replaced.[58] Every policeman who had been in a Western POW camp or who had relatives in or contacts with the West was to be checked out carefully and placed under special surveillance. Mielke also insisted that all former members of the National Committee for Free Germany, of whom there were substantial numbers in the police forces, were also to be kept under surveillance.[59]

Mielke simultaneously sought to raise the political level of the police through intense schooling. His idea was to create "in every police force member a conscious enemy [crossed out was the word 'hater'] of [crossed out 'international'] imperialism and reaction...."[60] Ulbricht, Mielke, and the Soviets were determined to raise both the ideological content of police work and

[56] "Rededisposition zur Frage der Kultur-massenarbeit..." ("Speaking points on the question of mass culture work..."), August-September, 1948, b. 26; "Die Aufgaben der Volkspolizei" (The tasks of the People's Police"), 15 October 1948, b. 8, in BStU, MfSZ, Sekretariat d. Ministers, AS 323.

[57] "Instruktion...," 28 June 1948 [also in Russian], BStU, MfSZ, Sekretariat d. Ministers, AS 331, b. 1.

[58] POLAD Secret Intelligence Report no. 495, "Police Developments in the Russian Zone," 10 September 1948, NA, RG 59, 740.00119, Control (Germany), 9-1048, p. 1.

[59] "Instruktion...," 28 June 1948, BStU, MfSZ, Sekretariat d. Ministers, AS 331, b. 1.

[60] "Richtlinie zur weiteren Festigung der Volkspolizei" ("Guidelines for the further strengthening of the People's Police"), 27 June 1949, BStU, MfSZ, Sekretariat d. Ministers, AS 323, b. 22.

the fighting spirit of the police force. Consequently, they introduced into every police unit a political cultural (*Politkultur*) officer, whose job—like the political officers in the Red Army—was to insure a high level of readiness and political watchfulness. Under the eyes of Major General S. F. Gorokhov and Colonel A. M. Kropychev from SVAG's Internal Affairs administration, the DVdI set up a special institute to train the Politkultur officers for their tasks: to make sure that every policeman learned devotion to the working class and

> pitiless opposition [*Feindschaft]* to the forces of reaction... to teach the members of the police to recognize the enemy, to provide the People's Police with concrete examples of the activity of the enemy, to explain the methods of activity of the enemy counterintelligence and counter-counterintelligence [*Gegenabwehr*].[61]

The Politkultur officers were also given intensive courses on nineteenth and twentieth-century Russian history, as well as on the tenets of Marxism-Leninism-Stalinism.

From Mielke's point of view, it was extremely important that the Politkultur officers, like the police as a whole, be chosen only from "the best and most reliable sons of the working class."[62] Mielke himself was put in charge of the Politkultur section, and the leading positions in the section's bureaucracy had to be confirmed by the Central Secretariat of the SED. By mid-July 1948 there were 720 Politkultur officers in the DVdI, one for every 100-110 policemen in the zone. The creation of this new section to exert political leadership among the police gave Mielke just the chance he was looking for to get rid of the Workers' Councils *(Betriebsraete)* in the police. Initially, the councils had served the positive functions of helping to politicize and de-Nazify the police, and even more important, of increasing the role of the central German authorities versus the provincial and local governments in police matters. But by the summer of 1948, the Workers' Councils served as a brake on the executive power of the DVdI. As vice president of the DVdI in charge of the "Main Polit-Kultur Directorate," Mielke was able to use the support of the Central Secretariat of the party to force officials of the zone's labor union, the FDGB, to give up "as superfluous" its organizations within the police.[63]

Defense of the Economy

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[61] "Vorlaeufiges Statut: der Leiter der Kultur-Massenarbeit in der deutschen Polizei der SBZ und Gross Berlin" "Preliminary Statute: the Leader of the Cultural-Masses Work in the German Police of the SBZ and Greater Berlin", apparently fall 1948, BStU, MfSZ, Sekretariat d. Ministers, AS 323, bb. 1-4.

[62] "Die Aufgaben der Volkspolizei" ("The tasks of the People's Police"), 15 October 1948, BStU, MfSZ, Secretariat d. Ministers, AS 323, b. 8.

[63] BStU, MfSZ, Sekretariat d. Ministers, AS 323, bb. 48, 52, 59.

It should be apparent that in the case of the Politkultur section of the DVdI, as well as in the police force as a whole, the Soviets exerted total political control by the summer of 1948. Also, virtually all the materials, the land, the buildings, and the weapons for police schools were supplied by the Soviets. Even the regular budget of the police came in good measure from direct Soviet sources.[64] It is hardly surprising, then, that the SED leaders regularly informed Moscow about the development of their police work. During one of their trips to the Soviet capital, from 12 to 14 December 1948, communist leaders Wilhelm Pieck, Otto Grotewohl, Walter Ulbricht, and Fred Oelssner reported to Stalin great successes with the program of political cultural education among the police. They also called attention to another important change in the organization of police activity in the zone—to purge the criminal police and to improve its ideological quality, the SED reported, the K-5 section would be dissolved and replaced by a "Main Directorate for the Defense of the Economy and the Democratic Order" in the DVdI.[65] This new directorate also took cadres and methods from a similar body that had been formed in the German Economic Commission (DWK) in May 1948.[66]

In theory, then, the Main Directorate for the Defense of the Economy and the Democratic Order succeeded K-5 as the political branch of the Criminal Police. In fact, K-5 continued to exist as a specialized organ of the DVdI for personnel issues in the East German government apparatus as a whole. Since both organizations were under Mielke's direct control, there appeared to be no difficulty transferring earlier K-5 functions and operatives to the new Directorate.[67] The SED explained to their Soviet comrades:

> Among its [the new Main Directorate's] tasks [are included] the defense against sabotage... assassinations and other endeavors, explosives and weapons violations, the struggle against illegal organizations, as well as the fight against antidemocratic activity. Bureaucratically, this Main Directorate belongs to the Criminal Police. But in fact it works independently under the direction of the Soviet occupation authorities, as well as the President of the DVdI and the provincial chiefs of police.[68]

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[64] "Besprechung zwischen General Kotikow und Vizepraesident Mielke" ("Discussion between General Kotikov and Vice President Mielke"), 30 March 1947, BStU, MfSZ, Secretariat d. Ministers, AS 322, bb. 1, 17. For 1947 budget figures in German and in Russian, see ibid., bb. 74-111.

[65] "Antwort auf die Frage zur Besprechung am 18 Dez. 1948" ("Answer to the question about the discussion on 18 December 1948"), SAPMO-BA, ZPA, NL 36/695 (Wilhelm Pieck), b. 56.

[66] *SBZ Handbuch,* 215.

[67] SAPMO-BA, ZPA, EA 1275/1 (Heinrich Fonferra), bb. 149-150.

[68] "Antwort auf die Frage zur Besprechung am 18 Dez.1948" ("Answer to the question about the discussion on 18 December 1948"), SAPMO-BA, ZPA, NL 36/695 (Wilhelm Pieck), b. 56.

Mielke himself interpreted the activities of the "class enemy" so broadly that the mandate of the new directorate was virtually unlimited. "Enemy" activities could be clandestine or open, Mielke asserted. Every factory fire and explosion needed to be investigated as the possible work of saboteurs. At the same time, the "enemy" could conceal its counterrevolutionary activities behind the promotion of "lazy work habits" and "undisciplined attitudes," all of which also needed to be countered by the police.[69]

With the foundation of the German Democratic Republic in October 1949, the Main Directorate, still commanded by Mielke, was included in the new Ministry of the Interior, headed initially by the former Social Democrat, Dr. Carl Steinhoff. But such a situation could not last long. After a virulent campaign of exposing alleged spies and saboteurs in the GDR, the Soviets, Mielke, and the SED created in February 1950 a Ministry of State Security headed by Wilhelm Zaisser. The new ministry came primarily from Mielke's Main Directorate for the Protection of the Economy, but also absorbed the personnel and functions of K-5, the Intelligence and Information service, and the Politkultur section. After the June 1953 uprising, the Ministry for State Security was reincorporated into the Ministry of Interior, but again became an independent ministry in 1955, a situation that lasted until the end of the German Democratic Republic.

Alert Police (*Bereitschaften*)

Two sets of state functions were performed by the police in the eastern zone. One had to do with "security" needs of the sort that infused communist systems wherever they emerged: fighting internal enemies, collecting information, ferreting out alleged saboteurs and smashing clandestine political opposition, whether real or imagined. The second set of functions performed initially by the police in the eastern zone had to do with organizing the armed force of the state on behalf of its preservation, against both internal and external foes. In fact, almost from the moment the police forces could be armed by Allied agreement at the beginning of 1946, the Soviet military government looked to form disciplined and hierarchically organized paramilitary brigades out of the rag-tag police units that had been assembled in the provinces and Berlin. During the summer of 1946, the Soviets helped provide the police with new uniforms and regular weapons and took "a stronger hand" in the organization of the police by introducing a rigid system of ranks, as well

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[69] "Die Aufgaben der Volkspolizei" ("The tasks of the People's Police"), 15 October 1948, BStU, MfSZ, Sekretariat d. Ministers, AS 323, b. 8.

as the duty to salute. Soviet officers also sometimes taught the police close-order drill and techniques for handling their weapons.[70]

In the fall of 1946, according to Order no. 0155, the Soviets turned over the functions of border control to local German Schutzpolizei (civil police) units. But under the orders of five different provincial governments, the units lacked coordination and a consistent set of guidelines for their activities. In August 1947, SVAG issued orders to its provincial administrations to unify the border police into a single service, outfitting them with distinct green uniforms and providing them with pistols, rifles, and machine guns. However, they were still under the command of local Soviet army detachments and provincial police officials.[71] With the concurrence of its Soviet advisors, the DVdI took the initiative to centralize the Border Police both organizationally and budgetarily under the Interior administration. At the same time, the Border Police increasingly recruited young unmarried workers from all over the zone to its ranks. The recruits were placed in barracks and garrisons and given specialized military training. Although within the organizational structure of the DVdI, the Border Police were under operational orders from local Soviet military authorities and could be used any time by the Soviets as special police commandos. This became especially important during the 1948-49 Berlin Blockade, when brigades from the Border Police reinforced by a substantial number of civil police units played an important role in encircling West Berlin.[72]

The formation of the DVdI in the fall of 1946 also accelerated the development of centralized Alert Police units. The communist veteran of Buchenwald, Willi Seifert, was very important in the efforts to create a centrally directed force, as were Erich Mielke and Wilhelm Zaisser, a veteran of the Spanish Civil War and former chief of the German section of the antifascist schools in the Soviet Union. The leaders of the Berlin police force, Paul Markgraf and Richard Gyptner, defiantly rebuffed protests from within the Interior administration about the militarization of the police: "It is obvious," they wrote, "that pacifist ideas within the People's

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[70] U.S. military intelligence Report R-430-48, p. 2, box 24, RG 260, NA. See also B. Levitskii, "Unter sowjetischem Befehl" ("Under Soviet Command"), 1948, HIA, Nicolaevsky, Series no. 236/ 411-13.

[71] "Jahresbericht: Deutsche Verwaltung des Innern in der sowjetischen Besatzungszone, 1946-1947" ("Annual Report: The German Administration for the Interior of the Soviet zone of occupation, 1946-1947"), BStU, MfSZ, AS 99/58, b. 35. See also Levitskii, "Unter sowjetischem Befehl," p. 5.

[72] During the blockade, the number of Border Police grew from 7,500 to 10,000. Many of the additional police were brought into Berlin from Saxony. HQ ECIC, "Border Police Garrison Battalions," 26 October 1948, NA, RG 260, box 24; Office of Intelligence Research, Department of State, "The Militarization of the German Police in Eastern Germany," Report 4798, NA, RG 59, p.1. See also Brewster Morris, Memo no. 347, 21 April 1948, NA, RG 260, Office of the Director of Intelligence, box 27, p. 2; and "Formation of Paramilitary Police," U.S. Political Advisor for Germany to Secretary of State, 17 September 1948 and, NA, RG 59, 740.00119 Control (Germany), 9-1748.

Police cannot be tolerated.... The uproar about a supposed 'Militarism' from among imperialists and warmongers in and outside [the zone] means we are doing things right."[73] It was not until the spring and summer of 1948 that a series of changes in the organization of the police prepared the way for the formation of a paramilitary force. First, the president of the DVdI, Erich Reschke, was forced to resign his post. Though known for his "blind loyalty" to the Soviets, Reschke's lack of Moscow experience clearly made it difficult for him to anticipate the Soviets' needs, as could Mielke or his eventual replacement, Kurt Fischer.[74] Fischer had undergone military training in the Soviet Union and fought in the Spanish Civil War, qualifications that were more to the point than Reschke's experience as a "victim of fascism." Zaisser, who also had Spanish Civil War experience under the name of "Gomez," was made deputy minister of the DVdI.

With this new team in place by July 1948—Mielke, significantly, was the only holdover— the Soviets could go ahead with their plans to establish an Alert Police force (*Bereitschaften*), armed units which were housed in barracks and trained in military fashion. Later known as "the Barracked People's Police," these units became the bases of the East German National People's Army (NVA), formed in 1955. Like the NVA, the Alert Police was founded as part of the general Soviet effort to bolster the combat readiness of its own forces in the zone by developing a German auxiliary.[75] At the time of their formation, each of the forty units of the Alert Police in the zone consisted of 250 men, making a combined force of roughly 10,000 "soldiers." Many of the officers and men were recruited from German prisoners-of-war in the Soviet Union. In some cases, POWs already on their way home were offered a choice at the transfer station in Frankfurt-Oder to work in the mines in the Erzgebirge or join the Alert Police. In other cases, the POWs were recruited after being interrogated in the Soviet Union itself. It was reported, for example, that some 1,000 Germans who worked in the mines in Stalino were selected to serve in these new units.[76]

Even the commanders of the Alert Police were selected from the graduates of antifascist courses in the POW camps. The Reichswehr Lieutenant Hermann Rentzsch, who had served on the Stalingrad front, became the Chief Inspector (Police General) of the Department of Border and Alert Police. The former Luftwaffe Major General Hans von Weech was made the chief of supply for the new armed police units. Former Reichswehr Lieutenant General Vincenz Mueller

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[73] Markgraf and Gyptner, "Richtlinie zur weiteren Festigung der Volkspolizei" ("Guidelines for the further strengthening of the People's Police"), n.d., BStU, MfSZ, Sekretariat d. Ministers 323, b. 15.

[74] Reschke was demoted to being the commandant of the Bautzen prison camp. Apparently, he was at one point caught selling favors to the prisoners in Bautzen. B. Levitskii, "Unter sowjetischem Befehl," 2.

[75] Military Intelligence Report R-579-48, 11 October 1948, NA, RG 260, box 24, p. 2.

[76] "Recruitment and Preliminary Training of Alert Police," Report RP-231-48, NA, RG 260, box 24, p. 2.

helped the DVdI (and later the NVA) organize its military staff operations.[77] The Soviets had not been satisfied with the first commanders of the Alert Police, who had the appropriate political credentials as victims of fascism, but did not know how to conduct proper drills. At the same time, Walter Mickinn, who as chief of the Personnel (P) section of the DVdI played such an important role in the de-Nazification of the police apparatus, apparently argued with Fischer about the wisdom of appointing former Wehrmacht officers to such important posts. Mickinn was removed in October 1948 and sent to the Karl Marx Higher Party School for a six month course, no doubt to improve his understanding of the dialectics of using the talents of those who fought for the Third Reich to build socialism in the zone. For similar reasons, Robert Bialek was forced out of his position as head of the police section of the Central Secretariat of the SED.[78]

At a meeting on 11 September 1948, attended by Ulbricht and Fischer, as well as by Colonel Sergei Tiul'panov, chief of the Information administration of SVAG, Fischer reportedly told the former Wehrmacht officers: "You, dear Sirs, now have to turn your attention to restoring military discipline among the police."[79] In the fall and winter of 1948-49, German factories and SED officials turned over weapons to the new paramilitary units in a series of ceremonies marked both by militaristic speeches that emphasized the aggressive intentions of the West and effusive thanks to the Soviet military authorities for showing such confidence in the new German democracy.[80] Between the fall of 1948 and the summer of 1949, reports poured into Washington from U.S. military intelligence sources that the Alert Police regularly engaged in field exercises, target practice, and close order drills of the sort characteristic of standing military formations. In Mecklenburg, the Alert Police were reported to have engaged in military training with various infantry weapons, as well as with automobiles requisitioned from the civilian economy. In some exercises, the Americans noted, police were trained in the use of mortars, machine guns, and anti-tank weapons. Reports came in from Cottbus that German and Soviet medium and heavy tanks were used in police training and that Soviet officers took a prominent role in the exercises.[81]

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[77] Mueller was described by American military intelligence as an "energetic pro-Communist; opportunist, who would defect...; former commanding officer German XII Corps; acting commander of German Fourth Army; former member of the NKFD [National Committee for Free Germany]." HQ 7707 ECIC, Report RT-771-48, 21 December 1948, NA, RG 260, box 94, p. 7.

[78] HQ 7707 ECIC, "Reorganization of the German Ministry of the Interior," Report RP-263-48, 16 December 1948, NA, RG 260, box 110, p. 10.

[79] "Deutsche Generale fuer die Ostpolizei" ("German generals for the eastern police"), *Der Kurier* (Berlin), 3 November 1945, in FES, SPD Ostbuero, 0043 01/IM.

[80] SAPMO-BA, ZPA, EA 0890/2 (Robert Siewert), b. 260; Riddleberger to the Secretary of State, 19 October 1948, NA, RG 59, 740.00119 Control (Germany), 10-1948.

[81] See, e.g., 7854th MID, Report R-424-48, October 1948, NA, RG 260, box 24, pp. 1-3; "Training of German Police," RP-249-49, NA, RG 260, box 110; HQ 7707 ECIC, RT-329-49, 18 March 1949, NA, RG 260, box 94.

All of these reports indicated that the Alert Police was not a police force at all, but rather a paramilitary formation that was armed for special missions. Eventually, the troops received excellent rations and a special allocation of ten cigarettes per day. At the outset, there were serious problems with desertion, but the improvement of the conditions of service and the introduction of strict military regulations by the former Wehrmacht officers stabilized the Alert Police force, at least to the extent that it could be considered a reliable ally of the Soviet occupation army. The gradual centralization of the Alert Police also contributed to its usefulness to the Soviet authorities. In November 1948, the DVdI took over full responsibility from the provincial authorities for the Alert Police (and the Border Police).

In July 1949, the eastern German Interior administration recognized that the Alert and Border police performed essentially different functions than the other police forces and joined them in the so-called Administration for Schooling, a cover name for the paramilitary section of the DVdI commanded by Zaisser. The budget of the new administration was handled strictly within the DVdI, unlike other branches of the police, which were funded at least formally through the provinces. In contrast to the regular police, units of the new administration would also be under "strict military discipline" and their training would differ substantially from that given the regular police. Reportedly, the Alert Police took an oath to fight together with the troops of the People's Democracies to repel attacks by the "reaction."[82] American intelligence materials observed that some of the Alert Police units on parade marched in goose-step, sometimes "bringing cheers from the crowd." Roughly 200 of the Alert Police's leading officers, including Rentzsch, Paul Markgraf (chief of the Berlin police), and Richard Staimer (Pieck's son-in-law), were sent for a year to Soviet military academies for further training. All of these changes in the Alert Police were correctly interpreted in the West as the beginning of the development "of a cadre communist army," complete with tanks and armored vehicles.[83]

The Soviets also reorganized the way they dealt with police units in the zone. Initially, Major General P. M. Malkov, head of SVAG's Administration for Internal Affairs, commanded the police; he was succeeded in 1948 by Major General S. F. Gorokhov, who initiated the

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[82] CIC Report RP-221-49, p. 2, NA, RG 59, 740.00119, Control (Germany), 8-2349. The oath ("Eidesstattliche Verpflichtung") signed by the People's Police stated only that the police were bound "to defend the interests of the German working people from fascist, reactionary and other enemy and criminal elements" and to serve as "a dependable bulwark of the democratic development in the eastern zone, as well as also in the struggle for a unified Germany." FES, SPD Ostbuero, 0005 (Police).

[83] Office of Intelligence Research, Dept. of State, Report no. 4798.3, NA, RG 59, p. 3; U.S. Political Advisor for Germany to the Secretary of State, 2 August 1949, NA, RG 59, 740.00119 Control (Germany), 8-149; CIC Report RP 220-49, NA, RG 59, 740.00119 Control (Germany), 8-2349. See also Levitskii, "Unter sowjetischem Befehl," 14.

formation of the Alert Police that summer. (It is perhaps indicative of the importance of the change that Malkov was a specialist in internal security and Gorokhov had worked in SVAG's kommandantura organization.) But in August 1949, reflecting the changes in the DVdI, a new "Section for Military Affairs" was formed in SVAG, commanded by Major General Petrakovskii. Zaisser, then, reported directly to Petrakovskii, who treated the Alert and Border Police as subordinate military units of the Soviet forces in the zone. In fact, with twenty tanks, large trucks, armored personnel carriers and 20-millimeter artillery pieces, Zaisser's Alert Police units began looking more and more like miniature army divisions.[84]

Despite the impressive growth of the paramilitary police in the east, U.S. State Department analysts were correct in their fall 1949 assessment of the military balance that the Alert Police's "military value is still insignificant and its political reliability untested."[85] Plans to expand the size of the individual units were frustrated by a severe shortage of reliable personnel, many of whom preferred to serve in the burgeoning state apparatus. In fact, Alert Police inductees were frequently recruited by the other branches of state service. The serious security problems that resulted from desertions also meant that long and painstaking procedures were required before new members could be recruited. DVdI Vice President Seifert admitted to Lieutenant Colonel Solov'ev of SVAG's Internal Affairs department that the Germans were "encountering great difficulty in finding the appropriate number of personnel for the police service."[86] Nevertheless, the Alert Police provided a valuable function in the occupation period by helping the SED maintain order in the east zone without having to rely on a demonstrable show of force from Soviet troops. Like the Barracked People's Police and the National People's Army after it, the Alert Police fulfilled important internal security functions, as well as providing a defense force for the zone. At least until the uprising of June 1953, when the internal security function of the Soviet Army was demonstrated with brutal clarity, the Alert Police also served as a putative manifestation of the independent power of the leading political force, the SED, in guiding the destiny of Germans in the zone.

The Police State

Despite a high rate of turnover and constant recruiting problems, especially for its barracked units of Alert Police and Border Police, the Soviets constructed an impressive police system in the zone in a very short time indeed. Each province maintained five police groups:

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[84] "Reorg. der Polizei in der SBZ" ("Reorganization of the police in the SBZ"), p. 1, FES, SPD Ostbuero, 0043.

[85] Office of Intelligence Research, State Department, Report 4798.3, p. 4, NA, RG 59.

[86] External Survey Detachment no. MGB-7483, 28 October 1948, p. 3, NA, RG 84, CGC, box 226, folder 24.

Administrative Police, Criminal Police, Civil Police, Railway Police, and Alert Police—a total of some 80,971 men and women as of September 1948 if one includes 6,700 Border Police and 800 special DVdI police that were used to protect the Interior administration's buildings and installations. The number also included K-5 and the special intelligence and information service, whose existence was supposed to be kept secret from the West because of Allied Control Council regulations abolishing "all German police agencies and bureaus which have as their purpose the supervision or control of the political activities of persons within Germany."[87]

The Soviets understood that they had created a potential military strike force on German soil, and therefore control of the Alert Police, in particular, was "of paramount importance." Colonel General Serov's successor as head of the MGB in the zone, N. K. Koval'chuk, warned fellow SVAG officials in March 1949 that enemies had "wormed their way" into police force units. A reparations official and important CPSU(b) apparatchik in the zone by the name of Lebedev used the telling analogy of the barbarian invasions of Rome to remind his comrades of the dangers of not paying sufficient attention to the armed police.

> We cannot allow the kind of situation like the one used by the Teutons against the Romans, when they stabbed them in the back. We should not be like the Romans, and [we] should not forget that were are in the country of the Teutons. We have to keep our eyes wide open. We give weapons to the police, and [we] must deal with them strictly and watch [them] carefully.[88]

The SED leadership also realized the importance of having armed forces under their command. At the First Party Conference in 1949, Erich Mielke let his comrades know in no uncertain terms that these forces were critical to the party's calculus of building its influence in East German society. The People's Police was "an essential part" of the state apparatus, Mielke noted, and "the instrument of the dominant [working] class."[89] Everything the police did was in the name of the working class, and every effort had to be made to convince the workers of this fact.

In preparation for the May Day holiday in 1949, Mielke made sure that the police units sang the right fighting songs and gave the right speeches. He wanted policemen to appear sober, correct, disciplined, and in full uniform to celebrate the holiday with workers in the factories and

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[87] See ACC Law no. 31 in *Official Gazette of the Control Council for Germany*, no. 8, 1 July 1946, p. 54, in HIA, GTUAU, box 30.

[88] Russov to Suslov, "Protokol sobraniia partiinogo aktiva... SVAG" ("Protocol of the meeting of party activists... SVAG"), 9 March 1949, RTsKhIDNI, f. 17, op. 128, d. 682, l. 123.

[89] BStU, MfSZ, Sekretariat d. Ministers, AS 327, b. 93.

mass organizations. They should, he directed, march in unbroken ranks and leave the impression of complete control.[90] That they were well on their way to this control was certainly the case. But in the occupation period, just as later, there were chinks in the armor of the "German Chekists." Despite good pay and generally good working conditions, the morale of rank-and-file policemen was often low. Constant political education did not go over well.[91] It seemed that there was a steady flow of People's Police who defected to the West. In the end, the police could not control the masses and the SED leaders could not control the police. Mielke lost his war to create an infallible police state and a new communist thousand-year Reich. But many suffered and died before the last battle.

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[90] "Anmerkung zur Vorbereitung und Durchfuehrung der l. Mai" ("Observations on the preparation and carrying out of 1 May"), 9 April 1949, and "Mai-Aufmarsch der Volkspolizei" ("The May-March deployment of the People's Police"), 14 April 1949, BStU, MfSZ, Sekretariat d. Ministers, AS 337, bb. 37-42, 47.
[91] FES, SPD Ostbuero, 0046 A-G, 27 May 1949.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Norman M. Naimark is Professor of History and Director of the Center for Russian and East European Studies at Stanford University. He is also Senior Fellow (by courtesy) of the Hoover Institution. An earlier version of this paper was presented at a March 1994 conference on postwar Eastern Europe held at the Academy of Sciences in Moscow and sponsored by the Joint Committee on Eastern Europe (ACLS/SSRC) and IREX. This working paper is part of a larger study, *The Russians in Germany: The History of the Soviet Zone of Occupation, 1945-49*, scheduled for publication in 1995 by Harvard University Press.