

Chapter 2: The Stasi's Reporting on the Federal Republic of Germany*

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<A>Introduction: Department VII and its reports

This chapter examines the reports to its political leadership of the German Democratic Republic (GDR)'s foreign intelligence service on the main subversive threat to the GDR: the Federal Republic of Germany. The GDR's main foreign intelligence service was the Main Intelligence Directorate (Hauptverwaltung Aufklärung, or HVA) of the notorious Ministry of State Security (Ministerium für Staatssicherheit, or Stasi). The HVA's reports to the leadership of the ruling Communist Party, the Socialist Unity Party (Sozialistische Einheitspartei Deutschlands, or SED) were prepared by its Department VII (Abteilung VII). The SED's leaders received these reports (*Parteiinformationen*) daily. No copies survive in the Party's archive, held in Berlin by the Stiftung Archiv der Parteien und Massenorganisationen der DDR (SAPMO-BA), because the recipients were instructed, in the interest of secrecy, to return each report. Their copies were then destroyed; the only copy which was meant to survive was that of the HVA itself. The HVA's archive was destroyed in 1990. However, some 60% of the *Parteiinformationen* have survived because the HVA was proud of its reporting and wanted to preserve it for posterity.¹ That the party archive holds so little on the leadership's relations with the security and intelligence services means that too little is known about how the SED's leaders reacted to the intelligence they received.

Department VII's principal subject was West Germany. This was so because the GDR's relationship with the Federal Republic was far and away its most important. Whatever their public pronouncements, the SED's leaders always realized

that East Germans remained part of a larger German nation. Events in West Germany affected the stability and success of the GDR. Any success for West Germany, in their eyes, menaced the GDR; any turn for the worse represented an opportunity. Ideology increased the subversive threat which the Federal Republic was considered to be. Since the SED insisted that the creation of a Communist society had eliminated the basis for any opposition in the GDR, it followed that any opposition or instability had to result from the malice of the capitalist West and first and foremost the Federal Republic. The Communist leaders were acutely sensitive to developments in West Germany. Any activities of the West German trades union movement which might appeal to East German industrial workers were alarming; the German Association of Trades Unions (Deutscher Gewerkschaftsbund, or DGB) was accordingly closely monitored by the HVA.² The SED's concern extended to events in West Germany far removed from politics. The HVA monitored carefully the Federal Republic's preparations for the Olympic Games of 1972 (held in Munich), fearing that it might add to the country's prestige.³ Young West Germans' growing hostility to serving in the Federal armed forces, the Bundeswehr, and their increasingly poor discipline as soldiers were noted.⁴

This chapter is based on Department VII's reports from four periods in the life of the GDR. The first is the period 1959-1961 when the GDR was caught up in the Second Berlin Crisis, which culminated in the closure of the Berlin sectoral border. During these years, the HVA kept Ulbricht and other top leaders supplied with a constant stream of intelligence on the Berlin Question and particularly on West German views of it. The second is 1972, when the GDR was reluctantly embracing détente. The third is 1983, when military developments made the international situation seem threatening; the SED was troubled by the deployment of medium- and

intermediate-range nuclear missiles in West Germany and other member states of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO). The HVA was also then involved in the KGB's global operation to obtain warning of a nuclear first strike by NATO (the operation was codenamed "RYaN"). The fourth is the GDR's final crisis of 1989. In all these periods the HVA was obtaining much intelligence on the Federal Republic and was reporting on it to the leaderships of the Party, the armed forces and the Stasi, as well as the leaderships of other Bloc states.

In 1989 Department VII consisted of six analytical staffs, of which one was concerned exclusively with the Federal Republic.⁵ The Department was very well-supplied with intelligence on West Germany. Over thirty years, the HVA built up a formidable capability to obtain information from within the West German government, political parties, labor movement, armed forces, media, and industrial and scientific communities. Department VII prepared reports on political, economic and military matters.⁶ Its reports are on a full range of subjects: West German party politics; foreign and defense policy; the Federal Republic's relations with its major allies and other states; developments in NATO; NATO's weaponry and forces in West Germany; other military matters; the West German labor movement; industry⁷; Western European Socialist parties and politics; international economic decision-making in which West Germany was involved; West German views of developments in the GDR and Bloc; and more besides.

A point which arises clearly from the reports is that the intelligence the HVA obtained from within the West German government, political parties and companies was also its main source of information on the wider world. It reported on what West Germany's politicians, civil servants and soldiers thought of events elsewhere. This became easier and easier as the Federal Republic increasingly became integrated into

multilateral Western structures, chief among them NATO, the European Economic Community (EEC), the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the World Bank (WB). This integration enabled the HVA to spy on the Federal Republic's Western allies.⁸ As the Federal Republic, from the late 1960s, entered into relations with the Eastern European states, the HVA was able to provide the SED leaders with information on the thinking and dealings of their Communist comrades.⁹ Its intelligence reporting was that of a parasite.

One person appears more often in these reports than any other: Willy Brandt. Brandt's dismal lot was that his rise in West German and European politics moved in step with the HVA's penetration of West German political life. Only in the late 1950s did the HVA begin to enjoy substantial success in recruiting sources in West German political parties. Its success was greatest in the West Berlin Social Democratic Party (Sozialdemokratische Partei Deutschlands, or SPD), of which Brandt was chairman. So the HVA obtained much information on him. It had increasing success in the 1960s in penetrating the West German government; Brandt, of course, became Foreign Minister in 1966 and Chancellor in 1969. At his side when he was Chancellor was an HVA spy, Günter Guillaume, whom Brandt took with him on trips around the world (some of the reports of Department VII are said to come from a "travelling companion" (*Reisebegleiter*) of Brandt¹⁰). Karl Wienand, the SPD chief whip in the Bundestag, was another top-level HVA source who reported on Brandt. Brandt resigned as Chancellor in 1974, when Guillaume was exposed, but remained Chairman of the SPD, in which the HVA still had valuable sources. He also played a prominent role in Western European Socialist politics, in which the HVA took a close interest, and in international affairs, on which Department VII also reported fully. Brandt must have been one of the most spied-on Germans in history. The HVA

followed him wherever he went. As far as West Berlin SPD politics in the late 1950s and early 1960s are concerned, the HVA quite literally followed him from meeting to meeting.

<A>The conventions which governed the HVA's reporting

Throughout the period under consideration, strict conventions governed the Stasi's intelligence reporting, including that of the HVA. These conventions were established in the 1950s and affected the Stasi's reporting on both domestic and foreign subjects. They were imposed by Erich Mielke, who was made Minister of State Security in 1957 by the SED's First Secretary Walter Ulbricht. Ulbricht was then concerned about the Stasi's reporting. In his view, it contained too much criticism. These conventions concerned both the content and the style of the reports. Reports on foreign subjects, though prepared by the HVA, went first to the Ministry's principal intelligence assessment body, the ZAIG (Zentrale Auswertungs- und Informationsgruppe), which forwarded them on to the leadership. The ZAIG also prepared reports on domestic subjects, using information provided by the Stasi's domestic security departments.¹¹

Intelligence reports could not criticize the regime or its policies or dispute the SED's legitimacy or whether it genuinely represented public opinion. If intelligence reports were too critical, they would undermine the Party's legitimacy by implying that the Party line was wrong or unpopular and that Marxism-Leninism was not as "scientific" as it claimed to be. Throughout the period 1959-89 most (72%) of the intelligence reporting to the Party leadership concerned foreign rather than domestic subjects and came from the HVA. This was so even though more of the Ministry's intelligence collection took place within the GDR than outside it. This reflects how

sensitive reporting on the GDR was. It inevitably raised difficult questions of legitimacy, popular representation and political stability.¹² An illusory justification was given for this practice. By the 1970s the Party line on détente was that the Soviet Bloc's strength had forced the West into a policy of accommodation. The corollary of this was that the GDR had achieved an unprecedented degree of stability. This meant that there was little need to report on the political situation at home.

The Department's staff took care not to criticize the Party's outlook. Reports which might displease their readers were retained within the Ministry. They can still be found in the archive, marked "nicht rausgegangen" (not gone out). Rather, they saw their job as to give the Party opportunities for action by informing it of opportunities and threats. They are better described as reporters or newsmen than analysts. Reading their reports, one cannot help but be reminded of journalists, who summarize information and pass on the news quickly. This is different from the work of an analyst, who tries to pass on understanding rather than news. Journalists also know well what news their readers expect.

A further convention was that Department VII's staff did not report on whatever they wanted to. They only reported on subjects of interest to the Party. In the early 1970s the HVA's political intelligence reporting chiefly concerned three subjects: the Federal Republic's policy towards the GDR; political developments in West Germany; and the attitude of other states, mainly in the Third World, to the diplomatic recognition of the GDR. The reports did not deal comprehensively with any particular topic; instead, they were short and concentrated on conveying information to the readers.¹³

The readership was not fixed. It was not the case that all Politburo members or all Central Committee secretaries received them. They were sent to a small and ever-

changing group of Party leaders (sometimes only a handful and never more than about twenty in number). Most were members of the Politburo. Most HVA reports also went to the KGB. The content of the report determined who received it. Political intelligence was sent to the top Party leaders. Military intelligence reports (approximately 30% of the HVA's output) were sent to the Defense Minister and leading military commanders, not the top Party figures. Economic and commercial information was sent to the leading economic officials. In the 1970s and 1980s, the principal recipient was Günter Mittag, the Central Committee Secretary responsible for the GDR's economy.

Strict conventions also applied to the use of the intelligence. No recipient knew who else had received the same report (unless one went to the General Secretary, in which case he was informed who the other recipients were). The information contained in the report could not be discussed, even in Politburo meetings. This must have greatly limited its value in decision-making, as did the fact that some members had received the information while others had not. Its influence is certainly hard to discern since, naturally, the minutes of Politburo meetings do not record members referring to it.¹⁴

The ZAIG's reporting to the political leadership on domestic matters was also selective. It reported on particular topics, usually troublesome problems, individuals or social groups (like the churches or the young). Often the reason for the report was that the Western media had already taken the issue up; the Stasi provided the leaders with an official GDR view of the matter and prepared them to respond. Because it raised sensitive questions of popular representation and legitimacy, the ZAIG's reporting on public opinion in the GDR was relatively rare. It tended to concern particular groups in society rather than East German public opinion as a whole. The

reports tended to present the situation positively. Reports making particularly sensitive findings were retained within the Stasi.¹⁵

<A>Department VII's reporting

How did these conventions affect the HVA's intelligence reporting? The Party's claim to infallibility was a heavy burden on the entire Ministry. In the 1950s, the Stasi's reporting of foreign intelligence was crude. The best example of how crude it could be comes, not from the records of the HVA's Department VII, but from those of the Ministry's main assessment body in the late 1950s, the Information Department (Abteilung Information). In 1957, the Party leadership was so alarmed at this department's reporting on public criticism of the regime that it required the Stasi strictly to restrict the dissemination of its reports, which it regarded as so subversive that they might undermine the loyalty even of Stasi officers. The Party leadership introduced strict rules of its own regarding the dissemination of the HVA's intelligence reports.¹⁶

The Information Department did try to prepare actual assessments: that is to say, information from various sources was combined to form a view of a particular problem beyond the GDR's borders which was of interest to the leadership. A report which has survived is an assessment from March 1959 of the impact on the West Berlin population of the visit of the First Secretary of the Soviet Communist Party, Nikita Khrushchev, to East Berlin. Although the Information Department's staff acted as assessors rather than newsmen, they were still not analysts in the Western sense. They did not try to reach conclusions of their own. Their approach to studying the matter was politically correct; so were their main findings, although they did not

entirely disregard the information available to them. They were careful in how they examined the matter, what they wrote and how they arranged it.

Since they were reporting to the party leadership, the view of the situation they presented was very much that which it wanted to see. They were also strongly influenced by the fact that Khrushchev was visiting the GDR to reinforce his ultimatum to the Western Allies over Berlin. They were therefore commenting on a matter on which both the Soviet Communist Party and their own had clear, aggressive policies. They knew that their job was to uphold the Party's rule and authority; they believed that the Party was always right. Consequently, they did not intend to tell it what to think. Khrushchev, as the supreme representative of the mother party of Communism, was a figure worthy of special respect.

The report crudely distorts the view of the West Berlin population about Khrushchev's visit. In so doing, it reflects the SED's policy on the Berlin Question and the basic ideas of Marxism-Leninism. Political viewpoints are tied to social class (Uta Stolle has called this "social class theater").¹⁷ Each social class is presented as holding the view Marxism-Leninism required that it should. Above all, the SED regime's standpoint is presented as attractive to the working class in West Berlin and utterly convincing for workers in East Germany. Opposition in East Germany is presented as small and confined to marginal social groups.

The visit is presented as a success with the West Berlin population (and chiefly with the workers and employees among them). These people had approved of what Khrushchev had said and how he had acted. Individuals are quoted expressing positive views; these views are said to represent those of a large part of the West Berlin workforce. This "positive reaction" came close to reflecting the SED's own policy on the German Question; the report speaks of their condemnation of the

distorted reporting of the West Berlin press on the issue and their view that there was a “need to normalize the status of West Berlin.”

The reaction of the West Berlin population is examined by social category. Bank employees are said to want to do business with the GDR, not wage war on the Soviet Bloc. Employees in administrative offices (*Verwaltungsangestellten*) are said to be troubled by Khrushchev’s visit because it showed his determination over West Berlin, which would force the Western Allies to leave it. Consequently, these people, like business and professional people, are stated to be considering moving to West Germany. The West Berlin middle class is reported to believe that the best solution to the Berlin Question was that it should become a free city (Khrushchev’s policy). American army officers and soldiers are stated to be troubled by the visit, fearing that it was a sign of worse to come. All classes of the West Berlin population are presented as thinking well of Khrushchev’s speeches.

“Negative arguments” (“negative Argumente”) are referred to in the report. However, they come in a short section at the end. They are also stated to be either merely the views of particular individuals or are simply listed as quotations which are not attributed to any person or social group. An indication of how widely these views were held is missing from the report. In sum, the report was “intelligence to please.” It represented disinformation.¹⁸

The Stasi’s reporting on the reaction of East Germans to Khrushchev’s visit was even more politically correct. It was not only crudely distorted but tended towards hyperbole. East Germans, and above all the working class, were stated to be in “joyful agreement” with Khrushchev. The views of the working class were said to be entirely in accord with the official line of the SED and with the public statements of Khrushchev and Ulbricht on the German Question. East Germans were also said to

like Khrushchev and his conduct. Many expressions of opinion are listed in the report. Not all were supportive of the regime's propaganda, but the report treats these viewpoints as unacceptable deviations from a satisfactory norm. It refers to them as "Unklarheiten" ("uncertainties," which in Communist language meant confused thinking). Hostile viewpoints are also reported but they are said to be very few in number and heavily outnumbered by supportive ones.¹⁹

The reporting of Department VII of the HVA was never so crude. It did not so slavishly reproduce the regime's propaganda. However, throughout the years 1959-89 its reporting had severe weaknesses. The reporters tried not to antagonize their readers. Their principal concession to them was to write reports which were very factual in character. They passed on information rather than an analysis. The problem with an analysis was that it might give the Party leaders the impression that the intelligence service wanted to take decisions for them. The reporters did not try to reach any conclusions which added substantially to the information they were reporting. Still less did they try to reach conclusions independent of the Party's thinking. They saw their task as to summarize the information available to them.²⁰ In the 1950s, they generally summarized reports obtained from a single source and the source's codename appears at the end of the report. By the 1970s they were increasingly blending the information available to them from more than one source. The Department's reports avoided prediction and concentrated on stating what was taking place or being planned at the time. In American terminology, they represented "current intelligence." Predictions were dangerous because they might contradict the wishful thinking of the leadership. It was safer to report on what was happening, being planned or had happened. The reporters did not recommend any course of action. Consequently, the HVA had no view of the Federal Republic which was

independent of that of the SED leadership. That view was generated by Marxism-Leninism.

Of course, it is not possible to summarize information without making judgements and Department VII did make them. However, they are better described as sub-judgements: judgements necessary to make sense of, and organize, the information they had received and were passing on. Some of these sub-judgements were important and stirred up controversy.

Another way of deferring to the leadership was to pass on to it the kind of information it wanted. Department VII's staff consistently passed on information which supported the leaders' delusion that all opposition in the GDR was inspired and directed by forces in the West. Only as the regime moved into its final crisis did this change.²¹ The Department's reports also reflect an avid interest on the part of the SED leadership in the activities of the political Left (in all its forms) in West Germany, Western Europe and elsewhere. Even though the SPD was not in power in West Germany in the years between 1949 and 1966, the HVA seems to have sent the party leadership more reports on it than on the conservative parties, the CDU/CSU and FDP. In part, of course, this reflected the sources available to it. However, in part it also reflected the SED leadership's very high opinion of the political importance of the Left everywhere. The Left was the agent of history.

The department's reporting was also tailored to the interests of particular consumers. Walter Ulbricht seems to have been particularly interested in the doings of the West German trades union movement. Reports on it were sometimes sent to him post-haste, by special courier.²² Ulbricht feared the influence on East German workers of West German trades unionists, led by the DGB. He never forgot the shock of the workers' uprising of June 1953. True believer in Communism that he was, he feared

that West German influence was luring the workers away from Communism. He was also on the watch for signs that the West German working class was turning towards Communism; it never did. The SED's leaders were also very interested in intelligence on the thoughts, plans and disputes of the West German SPD and on the activities of young Socialists in the Federal Republic. In 1959 Ulbricht and other top leaders received reports on discussions within the SPD every few days. Sometimes they received more than one report a day.²³ Even at the very end of the Cold War, the SED was still using the HVA to monitor the SPD and its electoral performance.²⁴

Department VII's concessions affected the phrasing of its reports as well. If the report was on a subject on which the Party had a definite policy, the report might make clear that the reporters respected that policy.²⁵ The reports frequently concerned people who were fiercely critical of the SED and GDR; this criticism was toned down. Politically incorrect terms, like "the freedom of Berlin" and "consistent violation of human rights" (by the GDR) are often put in inverted commas.²⁶ A very good example is a report from 1972 on ethnic Germans living in states of the Soviet Bloc who wanted to migrate to the Federal Republic. This was a very sensitive matter since only a small proportion of the Germans wanted to migrate to the GDR. The report glosses over this with the words, "For various reasons their hopes for achieving resettlement have always chiefly focused on the Federal Republic and on a significantly smaller scale on the GDR."²⁷ The General Secretary received a little flattery; the reporters wanted to make clear that they respected him.²⁸

One category of report seems to be less factual than the others. They are reports on economic developments in the capitalist world, particularly on the West German economy. They were sent to top party leaders throughout the four periods with which this paper is concerned.²⁹ The reports are distorted by a Marxist-Leninist

understanding of economics. This flaw was not confined to intelligence reports, of course. It is equally visible in public pronouncements of the regime and in the GDR press. The distortion is present in all four periods examined, though it is slight by the 1970s. Slight, of course, does not mean uninfluential: the reports' readers were such diehard Marxists that they probably seized on this kind of information.

The distortion is evident in the late 1950s. A report from March 1959 about West German Economics Minister Ludwig Erhard's tour of East Asia maintains that the tour resulted from pressure from West German monopolies which were troubled by sales difficulties and wanted to open up new markets. This report was sent to top leaders, including Ulbricht.³⁰ Only three months later Ulbricht received a report on economic differences between the United States and Canada; the authors clearly started from the Marxist premise that the struggle for markets was an inherent flaw in capitalism.³¹

Reports from 1972 on the prognoses of West Germany's Federal Association of German Industry (Bundesverband der Deutschen Industrie) for the economy display the same flaw. The reports state that these prognoses were very pessimistic. There undoubtedly was bad economic news at the time and pessimistic forecasts were made. However, nowhere in the reports do the strength of the West German economy and its weight in the international economy appear. A key feature of the Department's reporting on economic matters is what it does not say. The same bias is evident in a report from 1972 on West German thinking about international currency reform following the collapse of the Bretton Woods system the previous year. It is implicit throughout the report that the dollar had been very successful as the international economy's linchpin currency; its success points to a highly successful international capitalist economy, but nowhere is this expressly stated.³² The oil shock of the early

1970s must have greatly encouraged the Marxist-Leninists in the SED Politburo to believe that the capitalist economy was in severe and damaging crisis.³³ Some expressions in these reports smack of a Marxist understanding of economics rather than the thinking of West German industrialists. One report claims that, “aggressive, vagabond dollars are lying in wait so as to bring down the German currency market.”³⁴ By contrast, a report in 1972 to Erich Honecker, Horst Sindermann (the then Deputy Chairman of the Council of Ministers) and other leaders on West German analyses of the performance of the GDR’s economy is very superficial and tedious; it may be that the reporters were unwilling to make the leadership aware of the full contents of the West German analyses.³⁵

Another aspect of the economic reporting of the HVA is worthy of note. It reported to top leaders on very unimportant matters. This was not actually specific to its economic reporting; top leaders received reports on all sorts of trivial matters. However, the triviality of the economic reports seems to be influenced by Marxist ideas of cutthroat capitalist competition. For instance, in February 1972 Hermann Axen and others received a report on the competition between West Germany and France over making the color television system each preferred (PAL in the Federal Republic’s case, SECAM in France’s case) the more popular in the Mediterranean area. It is hard to see why the HVA would be reporting to such senior figures in the regime on such unimportant and technical matters unless the information pandered to their Marxist delusion that market competition would undermine the close relations the two partner-states had established.³⁶

The tendency to let Marxist economics infuse reports on the Western economies quickly became weaker than Department VII’s usual matter-of-fact approach. Certainly by the early 1970s, the reporting had become almost entirely

factual. It may be that the HVA had become so used to reporting on the workings of the capitalist economy that the influence of Marxism on them had declined. Its officers were also abler and better-educated than they had been previously.³⁷ Its reporting avoids crude Marxist errors, such as a tendency to consider capitalist states similar because they are all capitalist. A report from 1983 about Western sanctions on trade with the Soviet Bloc differentiates accurately between Western European and American attitudes to them. It distinguishes between the moderate Western European policy on sanctions and the more extreme American policy. It maintains that, in the United States, the Reagan Administration's policy was to reduce trade with the Soviet Bloc so as to diminish the resources available to the Soviet military-industrial complex, while Western European governments wanted to increase trade so as to enhance opportunities for exercising influence. It also states that the foundation of the Western European view was that the free world's economies were clearly superior in many respects to those of the Bloc--so superior that greater East-West trade could not undermine this superiority. Both the Western Europeans and the Americans believed that the Soviet economy suffered from severe weaknesses which could be exploited. The Reagan Administration believed that these weaknesses were so great that the USSR could be forced into undertaking economic and social reforms. The report is clearly based on reports obtained in Western capitals and NATO; facts triumphed over Marxist economics.³⁸

This was just as much the case at the very end of the GDR's life. A report from 1989, about discussions between member states of the International Monetary Fund and World Bank, reads like a minute of their discussions--so much so that it is odd to find it in a Communist archive.³⁹ Another, from September 1989, concerns the US Government's thinking about the economic potential of the Asian-Pacific region.

The information contained in the report seems to have been obtained chiefly from the National Security Council (NSC). The United States was very impressed by the region's economic potential and feared its competitive challenge. It planned to prepare itself for a "Pacific Century." The report is a well-informed survey of US foreign economic policy, very free of ideological language or assumptions. This is remarkable since it was addressed to the top leaders of the Party, including Honecker (the Party's General Secretary), Stoph (the Chairman of the Council of Ministers) and Axen (a Politburo member and the Central Committee Secretary responsible for international relations). Its description of US policy has turned out to be very accurate. The US did indeed use the crisis of the Communist Bloc to reduce the military threat to Western Europe from the Warsaw Pact and turn NATO from a military alliance into a political one. The US did plan to use the resources released by this to prepare itself for the Asian-Pacific challenge.⁴⁰

In 1989 the HVA summarized an analysis by a West German economic research institute on the Comecon states' policies on manufacturing and trading in high technology goods. The HVA was at its most matter-of-fact when summarizing reports obtained in the West; its summary was an accurate one, uninfluenced by ideology. The report contained many statements which must have made its readers swallow hard: that the Comecon states were imitators but that trends in high technology indicated that the costs of imitation were rising faster than the costs of innovation; that the GDR had rested its entire economic policy on achieving the world standard in electronics and yet in microprocessors and silicon chips it was at least a generation behind; and that the states of the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) were importing fewer high-tech goods from the Comecon states because developing countries had become more competitive.⁴¹

Nevertheless, a tendency (if only a slight one) to regard capitalist economies as crisis-racked remains evident in the reports to the very end. A report from 1983 on the EEC's initiatives to overcome the economic recession of the early 1980s used terms--"in the light of the continuing capitalist world economic crisis," "the most difficult economic crisis since the 1930s"--which will have encouraged the SED's leaders to believe that the Western world was in profound crisis. The report maintained that, "According to opinions of committed European politicians, voiced internally, the EC mechanism is showing itself in fact to be completely powerless faced with the problems of unemployment, combating the deficits and restoring the competitiveness of Western European industry." In short, it concealed the strength of the Western European economies.⁴² A report from 1983 on high-level politics in Bonn, clearly drawn from information obtained from excellent sources, maintains that, "The governing coalition's economic policy, directed at the strengthening of monopoly capital, is also leading to considerably greater social burdens on the working masses than the previous SPD-led government's policy."⁴³

The Department's reporting had strengths. It received very good intelligence from West Germany and recognized its value. Its reporting improved between the 1950s and 1980s. It was always very matter-of-fact in character. The reports from the 1970s on were good reports: though they contained some ideological language and concepts, they were overwhelmingly factual and true to the sources. The reporters claim that the HVA leadership expected them to put ideology to one side and report matter-of-factly; they largely achieved this.⁴⁴ They tried to draw on all the available information, not just one source. Very often the Department merely summarized the contents of a West German report on a particular topic. Or it set out its sources' accounts of meetings they had attended. In both cases, it made much use of reported

speech and in these cases its reports are particularly factual in character. The German language uses the present subjunctive to indicate reported speech; the Department's reports abound in its use. The reports' tendency to summarize information obtained in the West, rather reach conclusions itself, was so great that, as the GDR's Foreign Trade Minister in the 1980s, Gerhard Beil, rightly pointed out, they must have resembled those of West Germany's Federal Intelligence Service, (Bundesnachrichtendienst, BND) itself. Indeed, the better the HVA became, the more its reports resembled those of its adversary.⁴⁵

The reporters were not afraid to pass on facts which the Party leadership will not have liked. Indeed, they consistently did so.⁴⁶ The best examples are their reports on NATO's military planning, which consistently made clear that NATO expected to respond to an attack by the Warsaw Pact. This flatly contradicted the Party line that the West was the threat to peace, yet the HVA did not distort its account of NATO's assumption and planning; it did not present NATO as more aggressive than it was.⁴⁷ The HVA was just as matter-of-fact in its reporting on political matters. The West German politicians and civil servants who were its main targets had a very low opinion of the GDR. So did foreigners around the world. While the reporters toned down criticism, it still shines through the reports. Willy Brandt was quoted in a 1959 report telling his party chairman, Erich Ollenhauer, that he did not trust the USSR and considered it extremely dangerous and aggressive, to the point of being capable of going to war.⁴⁸ A report on Brandt a little later implicitly concedes that his anti-Communism increased his popularity in West Berlin.⁴⁹ A report from 1961 relates that Indian officials were not in the least supportive of the GDR's position on West Berlin.⁵⁰

A report from 1972 makes clear that the West German government, then negotiating a recognition treaty with the GDR (the *Grundlagenvertrag*⁵¹), thought the trade between the two German states insignificant for the Federal Republic, though valuable for the GDR. The readers can have been left in no doubt as to the West German view of the small size of the GDR's economy as compared with theirs.⁵² A report from the same month, June 1972, demonstrates that the French government thought little of Comecon and its chances of successfully integrating the economies of the Bloc states.⁵³ Another report from 1972, on Egyptian President Anwar Sadat's visit to Moscow, was not afraid to present the visit in a way unfavorable to the Soviet Union and thus unwelcome to the GDR. Sadat's visit was declared to be a failure; he had not obtained the support he sought. Consequently, he only had one option: to improve Egypt's relations with the United States. This was a success for President Nixon, who had seen that time was on his side in the USA's relations with Egypt. The information was obtained from sources close to Sadat's Vice-President, Dr Fawzy.⁵⁴

During Erich Honecker's leadership (1971-89), the members of the SED Politburo regularly received much information that was equally critical of the GDR in the monthly reports on West German media broadcasts about East Germany of the latter's Institute for International Politics and Economics (Institut für Internationale Politik und Wirtschaft). These reports made clear how little the West German media thought of the legitimacy and stability of the SED regime.⁵⁵

A surprising aspect of the HVA's archive is how much the SED relied on West German reports for information on Communist Rumania. A report from 1972 does not hesitate to show Ceaușescu's regime as brutally repressive (just like the SED's own). In the report appears the striking phrase, "Party and government are of course endeavoring to monitor all signs of life on the part of the population and are

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accordingly resisting all efforts at liberalization with iron resolution.”⁵⁶ Amnesty International might have been proud of this phrase. Of course, the authors of the report could only write it because there was no love lost between the Communist regimes of East Germany and Rumania.

Naturally, bad news abounds in the reports for 1989. As 1988 became 1989, the HVA was quick to obtain NATO Secretary-General Manfred Wörner’s end-of-year report. It reported accurately Wörner’s view that the Communist systems of the USSR and Eastern Europe were falling apart: political pluralism was being introduced in the Soviet Union; Communist rule was collapsing in China; and Poland and Hungary were carrying out genuine political reforms.⁵⁷ Prime Minister Stoph, Hermann Axen and others will not have enjoyed reading, in September 1989, a report, expressed very matter-of-factly, that NATO countries thought that the GDR would not follow other Bloc states in adopting reform, but would try to preserve its “inflexible command economies [sic].”⁵⁸ Indeed, by that time not even that most small-minded of dogmatists, Erich Mielke, was insisting that the ideological pieties be observed. In October 1989, a report by the HVA to the party leadership about the agrarian economies of the Communist states went out over his signature. It summarized, again matter-of-factly, the West German view that the agrarian sectors of the Communist economies were in a worse state than any others.⁵⁹

Inevitably, the Department’s reporting was not entirely of facts. Facts needed to be interpreted for a sensible report to be prepared. This required judgements about their significance. Since the Department did not intend its reports to challenge the Party’s thinking, they are better called “sub-judgements.” A good example of such a judgement is provided by a report from January 1983 on political developments in Algeria. The report maintained that the Algerian leadership was increasingly

dominated by “petit bourgeois-nationalistically oriented forces” led by the President, Chadli Bendjedid. “Nationalist-religious circles” were also on the rise. Both were gaining ground at the expense of the Marxist Left, or “the revolutionary-democratic forces,” as the report called them. Consequently, the forces in the leadership were growing which wanted to encourage private business and open the economy to the West. This would include expanding economic relations with the United States, which would use them to exercise political influence. In short, the report made use of Marxist concepts about social class but took an empirical approach to reporting on political conditions in Algeria and made statements which were unwelcome from the GDR’s perspective.⁶⁰

This report was sent to the chairman of the State Planning Commission, Gerhard Schürer, who had just returned from a visit to Algeria. There he had discussed political developments with the Soviet ambassador, Vasili N. Rykov, who was also a member of the Soviet Communist Party’s Central Committee. Rykov’s view had been different from that of the HVA. As he saw it, Algeria’s leadership, though it had been forced to make some compromises in respect of private business, was still committed to a Socialist course and opposed a pro-capitalist policy. In its foreign policy the regime still held to “fundamental anti-imperialistic positions.” Economic dependence on the USA was actually in decline.⁶¹

Schürer did not know what to make of the differences between the two views and sent the note of his conversation with Rykov to Mielke.⁶² Mielke asked Department VII to consider the note and comment. The Department defended its report, arguing that Rykov’s view was too simple and too much his own; it focused too much on how the Algerian leadership described themselves, rather than on intelligence on what it was actually doing. Intelligence received established that

“progressive” forces were actually being repressed; conservative and reactionary forces were playing significant roles in the leadership and government bureaucracy. There were policy discussions in the leadership about initiatives which were clearly not socialist. Reforms in the private sector of the economy were not mere concessions to internal and external pressure; they reflected a declining commitment to Socialism. While Rykov maintained that Algeria’s foreign policy remained anti-imperialist, the facts suggested that nationalism and pragmatism were playing a larger role in determining policy and that greater efforts were being made to expand economic relations with the West. Algeria was increasingly seeking to maintain a neutral position as between the superpowers and was pressing for such a policy within the Non-Aligned Movement.⁶³

Even at the end of the regime, though, reports suppressed truths of which the authors were aware. In October 1989, the HVA reported to Honecker, Stoph, Axen, Krenz and other party leaders about the Chinese Communist Party’s view of the drastic turn of events in the Soviet Bloc. The report was signed by Mielke (as were other reports at this time) and he clearly played a role in its drafting. Much of what the Chinese were reported to have said--that Hungary seemed to be adopting a Western political system and that Communism could be overthrown throughout Eastern Europe--is clearly an accurate report. So is the report of the Chinese view of the flood of migrants from the GDR to the Federal Republic. Mielke quoted the Chinese as saying that in every country there were people who, for personal reasons, wanted to emigrate. The Federal Republic was certainly deliberately increasing this dissatisfaction, “but,” the Chinese were reported to have said very delicately, “there had to be some other reasons for the desire of GDR citizens to leave.” Mielke was glossing over the truth, knowing full well that the crisis went deeper. Indeed, the

remark he made next points to this awareness. He wrote that, “One could therefore say that identification with the currently existing form of Socialism in the GDR was lacking among many citizens.”⁶⁴ He was deliberately deferring to Honecker’s wishful thinking about the emigration crisis. Asked by a Swedish newspaper in 1984 why so many people wanted to leave the GDR, Honecker had replied that in every country there were people who thought that they would do better elsewhere. He added that every year some 53,000 to 60,000 West Germans chose to leave the Federal Republic. In short, he used information he received to support his distorted view of reality, not to rethink it.⁶⁵

<A>Acceptance of intelligence

Every indication is that the SED leadership had a severely distorted view of political developments. A dictatorship has the power to cut itself off from reality. So it was with the GDR’s gerontocracy in the 1980s. The HVA’s last chief, Werner Großmann, maintains that the leadership was very sceptical of his service’s intelligence reports.⁶⁶ The reports on political and economic affairs evidently made little impression on their readers. Honecker’s attitude towards the emigration crisis has been mentioned above. The most cherished delusion of all Communist regimes was that dissent was stirred up from outside. Honecker took this so far that in the 1980s he insisted that the HVA find out the BND registration number of the prominent dissident, Bärbel Bohley.⁶⁷

The HVA’s reports probably made little impact on Honecker. They will have been damned by the fact that they repeated too much information which was sent to him in surveys of the Western media. This information he rejected as false and malicious propaganda. He will have been no more inclined to believe intelligence reports on the outside world. Interviewed after the regime fell, he said that he had paid

little attention to ZAIG reports on the GDR's domestic situation because they contained the same criticisms as the Western press. Foreign intelligence reports had the same flaw. All Honecker could tolerate was information he wanted to read. The analogy with the Western press applies very well to the HVA's reports: they were similar to newspapers and were based on sources in the West. Honecker was, in substance, reading a classified Western newspaper. Honecker expressed a higher opinion of information he received from the Socialist Unity Party and its Arbeiter- und Bauern Inspektion (Workers' and Peasants' Inspectorate). The latter were full of factual information on the problems of everyday life in the GDR, such as the availability of consumer goods, their poor quality and so on.⁶⁸ This was Honecker's great interest; he wanted to be seen as a man who had given East Germans a good standard of living.

Nevertheless, he was swayed by some foreign intelligence. Intelligence obtained from Günter Guillaume on Willy Brandt's Eastern policy succeeded in overcoming Honecker's strong, ideologically-influenced hostility to better relations with West Germany. Dogmatic Marxist-Leninist that he was, Honecker initially regarded Brandt's policy as hostile and reflective of a capitalist crisis in the Federal Republic; he was persuaded by the HVA's intelligence that a measure of beneficial cooperation could be achieved.⁶⁹ Late in the Cold War, he was also encouraged to support Gorbachev's first moves towards arms reduction in Europe by intelligence that the West German government did not think that high-tech conventional weapons would enable NATO to achieve any military superiority over the Warsaw Pact.⁷⁰

The principal recipient of Department VII's reports on foreign political and economic matters in the 1970s and 1980s was, not the SED General Secretary, but Hermann Axen. This was natural since, as the Central Committee Secretary for

International Relations, he held the highest foreign policy job in the GDR and played a large role in shaping the GDR's foreign policy. He was just as much a true believer in Marxism-Leninism as Honecker. His comment to the Soviet leadership, in 1984, "that we have a stronger influence on the FRG than it has on us," is proof of how deluded he was (at the time, more and more East Germans were applying to emigrate to the Federal Republic and the availability of the West German *Deutsche Mark* in the GDR was encouraging intense demand for Western consumer goods).⁷¹ At the very same time, the HVA accurately reported that the influence of the peace movement in Western Europe was declining. Axen said that the report was wrong and sent it back.⁷² Just how doctrinaire the SED's leaders were is demonstrated by the fact that their intelligence reports presented them with much Western information on the weaknesses of the Soviet Union's economy, but they still obdurately opposed reform.⁷³ They probably pounced on information which accorded with their own views, such as that mass unemployment was a terrible problem in West Germany⁷⁴, or that the peace movement was on the rise there⁷⁵.

<A>Conclusion: reporters, not analysts

Department VII's officers had a difficult job: that of reporting on what they knew to be good intelligence to people who were hostile to much of it. They took a middle course between challenging the leaders' thinking and distorting intelligence so that it reflected that thinking. The result was factual reporting, expressed in politically correct language and using politically correct concepts, which was meant to challenge the Party's thinking as little as possible. This was neither independent thinking nor intelligence to please. It lay halfway in between: it was intelligence meant to displease

as little as possible. However, the reports still did displease; the pill could not be entirely sugared. When they displeased, they were simply ignored or rejected.

The reports were too tame. Although they did not, for the most part, consciously provide information which reinforced the leaders' misconceptions, they did not try hard enough to challenge or eliminate them. The party leaders were men who deluded themselves; the Hauptverwaltung Aufklärung allowed them to do so. The HVA was a good foreign intelligence service. It consistently supplied the top leaders with intelligence relevant to their policy initiatives and concerns. It did not seek to persuade the Party because the latter did not want it to. It therefore passed on the facts of information received from its sources, introducing its own interpretation as little as possible. Its factual reporting was thorough and good. Among the facts were plenty which should have caused Axen, Honecker, Ulbricht and their colleagues to rethink their assumptions. They were never minded to do so.

The HVA itself had no view of the Federal Republic different from that of the SED leadership. That view was the official GDR view: the Federal Republic was a successor state to the Third Reich, a capitalist state which, under the leadership of American capitalism, threatened the world again with war. As a capitalist economy, it was exploitative and so had a natural tendency towards crisis.

Department VII's staff were reporters, not analysts. Analysis in the American sense--independent thinking--was precisely what the HVA was not allowed to do. Least of all was it allowed to consider major problems such as are examined in US National Intelligence Estimates. On the available evidence it was never told to pose itself the questions: "why is the West German economy such a success?," or "how will the strength of the Federal Republic's economy affect the interests of the GDR over the next ten years?." There are no such reports among those which survive.

Instead, it was told to snoop around in the West German Economics and Finance Ministries and the Bundesverband der Deutschen Industrie and report on what the officials there were saying and planning. Their reports are remarkably free of any direct discussion of West Germany's economic strength. They are very much current intelligence; they do not look deeper than what was being said or planned at that time. They avoid the major issues; these had already been decided by the principles of Marxism-Leninism.

Indeed, the hardest subjects for Department VII's officers to report on were economic. Its understanding of economics is the most obviously flawed part of Marxism. Neither the reporters nor their political leaders understood or wanted to understand how the West German or international economies worked. Nor did they seek new answers to the big economic questions. Instead, Department VII described economic plans and discussions and provided lists of statistics. Their Marxist training still influenced their economic reporting, though, and for the worse. Fact and interpretation could not be entirely separated here. The reports for the 1970s and 1980s are better than the earlier ones because the Department had learned to discuss economic and financial matters very factually; their reports read like minutes of the meetings concerned.

The easiest subjects to report on were military and scientific. They raised no political issue. Military intelligence reports were long and useful to consumers.

Department VII also reported on people in a very particular way. The Communist Party had a very special status in every Communist state. The HVA had to be careful in the way it presented Communist leaders because they dominated and represented their parties. By contrast, Willy Brandt, Helmut Schmidt, Konrad Adenauer and other West German politicians, ministers, civil servants, businessmen

and media figures appear as ordinary people in the reports because they are presented very matter-of-factly. Department VII's officers certainly had a far better understanding of them than they did of the distant and narrow-minded ideologues who abused and disregarded their reports. So much political intelligence did the HVA collect on the Federal Republic that the reader often has the sense that its staff felt more at home in the corridors of the Bundestag and Foreign Office than they would have been in those of the SED Central Committee or the GDR's Parliament, the Volkskammer.

The HVA was, actually, freer in its reporting on West Germany than it or other departments of the Stasi were in their reporting on the GDR.⁷⁶ It could and did say that West German trades unionists had voted for conservative parties. It would have been impossible to say that East German industrial workers favored "bourgeois" policies and parties. It was made even easier in West German case because it would be presented in a straightforwardly factual report; Department VII was not claiming that this was its own finding. By contrast, the HVA officers knew that they could not dispute that their regime had the support of its own working class.

The SED leaders' attitude towards foreign intelligence can be seen in these reports. Walter Ulbricht was interested in it. He received a lot of it in the late 1950s and early 1960s. However, he was a true believer in Marxism-Leninism and an utter dogmatist. Intelligence had to say the right thing. Honecker was much less interested in it. His main concern was to give East Germans a better standard of living and thus show them that they lived in a truly Socialist society. Though sensitive to what the Western media were saying about the GDR, he was, in the view of some of his Politburo colleagues, even less able than Ulbricht to tolerate criticism of the state of affairs there.⁷⁷ Hermann Axen received much more foreign political intelligence than

Honecker or any other Politburo member did. He was also a dogmatist who clearly regarded the sole function of intelligence as giving the Party opportunities for action it wanted to take. He did not see its role as being to persuade the leadership to take a view different from that it wanted to. A constant of Communism is the leaders' criticism of their intelligence services and rejection of their intelligence.

* I am grateful to Jens Gieseke for reading and commenting on this chapter in draft, and to Frank Joestel for his advice about the distribution of HVA reports.

Responsibility for all opinions expressed, and errors made, remains my own.

¹ Jens Gieseke, "East German Foreign Espionage in the Era of Détente," *Journal of Strategic Studies* 31, no. 3 (2008), 398, 408-10.

² BStU, ZA, MfS-HVA 186, Einzelinformation zur Lage in Westberlin, Westdeutschland and im kapitalistischen Ausland - Betr.: Bestrebungen der Gewerkschaftsjugend zur Kontaktaufnahme mit der DDR und Maßnahmen zur ideologischen Diversion, June 18, 1959; BStU, ZA, MfS-HVA 192, Einzelinformation über Absichten einer sogenannten marxistischen Gruppe im DGB zur Forcierung der ideologischen Diversionsarbeit gegen die DDR, May 1961. "BStU, ZA" stands for the Central Archive (Zentralarchiv) of the Bundesbeauftragter für die Unterlagen des Staatssicherheitsdienstes der ehemaligen Deutschen Demokratischen Republik, Berlin (Federal Commissioner for the Records of the Security Service of the Former German Democratic Republic).

³ BStU, ZA, MfS-HVA 382, Information über die Hilfeleistungen der Bundeswehr für die Olympischen Spiele in München und Kiel, Nr. 330/72, April 6, 1972.

⁴ BStU, ZA, MfS-HVA 382, Information über Aufgaben, politisch-moralischen und militärischen Zustand des westdeutschen Territorialheeres, Nr. 335/72, April 11, 1972.

⁵ The other five staffs were concerned with: NATO, the European Economic Community and other developed countries; the Third World east of Suez; the Third World west of Suez; military affairs; and economic affairs. Most of the intelligence on which these staffs reported was obtained from sources in West Germany or from West German sources elsewhere.

⁶ The collection and assessment of scientific and technological intelligence were matters for a separate section of the HVA, known as the Science and Technology Sector (Sektor Wissenschaft und Technik, or SWT). Three departments of the HVA formed the SWT's collection wing. A further department, Department V (Abteilung V), carried out some basic analysis in the course of its main job, which was the channelling of stolen technology and scientific secrets to East German industry.

⁷ BStU, ZA, MfS-HVA 192, Auskunft über die Lage der westdeutschen und westberliner Elektroindustrie, June 27, 1961 (sent to Ulbricht, Mielke and others).

⁸ See: BStU, ZA, MfS-HVA 382, Information über die Einschätzung aktueller Fragen der Militärpolitik und Streitkräfte Großbritanniens durch die Bundeswehrführung, Nr. 164/72, February 23, 1972; Information über die Militärpolitik und Streitkräfte der Türkei, Nr. 393/72, April 28, 1972; Information über eine Einschätzung der Innen- und Außenpolitik Großbritanniens durch westdeutsche Regierungskreise, May 3, 1972.

⁹ BStU, ZA, MfS-HVA 382, Information über die westdeutsch-rumänischen Konsultationen auf der Ebene der stellvertretenden Außenminister zu aktuellpolitischen Fragen am 21 und 22 Februar 1972 in Bonn, April 6, 1972; Information über die Ergebnisse des westdeutsch-ungarischen Meinungsaustausches am 6./7. März 1972 in Budapest, Nr. 372/72, April 21, 1972.

¹⁰ BStU, ZA, MfS-HVA 382, Information über die westdeutsch-iranischen Beziehungen und über Angriffe des Schahs auf die Politik der DDR, Nr. 398/72, May 3, 1972.

¹¹ The Stasi's first assessment department, the Information Department (Abteilung Information), came into being in the wake of the popular uprising of 17 June 1953; it had the job of reporting on public opinion (previously this job had been done by the post interception department). In 1959, the Information Department gave way to the Central Information Group (Zentrale Informationsgruppe, ZIG), which in turn became the Central Evaluation and Information Group (Zentrale Auswertungs- und Informationsgruppe, ZAIG) in 1965. The ZAIG continued in being until the Stasi's dissolution in 1989-90. For the history of the Stasi's assessment departments, see Roger Engelmann and Frank Joestel, *Die Zentrale Auswertungs- und Informationsgruppe* (Berlin: BStU, 2009).

¹² Reporting to the party leadership on the state of public opinion in the GDR was thin after the late 1950s (there were about fifteen reports every year). There was no reporting on this subject to the leadership throughout the whole of 1973 because Honecker was so hostile to it. It was thin and intermittent thereafter. See Jens Gieseke, "Bevölkerungstimmungen in der geschlossenen Gesellschaft. MfS-Berichte an die DDR-Führung in den 60er und 70er Jahren," *Zeithistorische Forschungen* 5, no. 2 (2008), 243-47.

¹³ Jens Gieseke, "Annäherungen und Fragen an die 'Meldungen aus der Republik,'" in Jens Gieseke, ed., *Staatssicherheit und Gesellschaft* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck and Ruprecht, 2007), 81-87, 92-93.

¹⁴ Ralph Jessen, "Staatssicherheit, SED und Öffentlichkeit," in Gieseke, *Staatssicherheit und Gesellschaft*, 161-62.

¹⁵ Siegfried Suckut, ed., *Die DDR im Blick der Stasi 1976: Die geheimen Berichte an die SED-Führung* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck and Ruprecht, 2009), 8-11, 16-18, 27-32.

See also Daniela Münkkel, ed., *Die DDR im Blick der Stasi 1961: Die geheimen Berichte an die SED-Führung* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck and Ruprecht, 2011) and Frank Joestel, ed., *Die DDR im Blick der Stasi 1988: Die geheimen Berichte an die SED-Führung* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck and Ruprecht, 2010).

¹⁶ Engelmann and Joestel, *Die Zentrale Auswertungs- und Informationsgruppe*, 22-25.

¹⁷ Uta Stolle, "Traumhafte Quellen. Vom Nutzen der Stasi-Akten für die Geschichtsschreibung," *Deutschland Archiv* 30, no. 2 (1997): 211.

¹⁸ BStU, ZA, MfS-HVA 184, Information Nr. 84/59, Reaktion der Westberliner Bevölkerung auf den Besuch und die Erklärungen des Gen. N. S. Chruschtschow [sic], Abteilung Information, March 9, 1959.

¹⁹ BStU, ZA, MfS-HVA 184, Bericht über die Reaktion der Bevölkerung der DDR auf den Besuch und die Erklärungen des Genossen Chruschtschow, March 7, 1959.

²⁰ This comes close to being one of the "sub-optimal" analysis strategies identified by Richards J. Heuer Jr. on page 58 of his book *Psychology of Intelligence Analysis* (New York: Novinka Books, 2006): that of "avoid[ing] judgment by simply describing the current situation, identifying alternatives, and letting the intelligence consumer make the judgment about which alternative is most likely." The HVA's practice falls short even of this since the reports do not identify alternative hypotheses. For Heuer, "The ideal is to generate a full set of hypotheses, systematically evaluate each hypothesis and then identify the hypothesis that provides the best fit to the data."

²¹ Werner Großmann, *Bonn im Blick* (Berlin: Das Neue Berlin, 2001), 174.

²² BStU, ZA, MfS-HVA 184, Unterredung des DGB-Vorsitzenden Richter mit dem Vorsitzenden des Vereins "Rettet die Freiheit," March 12, 1959; Sitzung des Geschäftsführenden DGB-Bundesvorstandes am 16. 2. 1959, March 12, 1959. See also: BStU, ZA, MfS-HVA 186, Bestrebungen zur Ablösung des Generalsekretärs des IBFG, Oldenbroek, June 17, 1959; Sitzung des DGB-Bundesvorstandes am 7.7.1959, July 17, 1959.

²³ E.g. BStU, ZA, MfS-HVA 184, Verschärfungen der Spannungen zwischen Willy Brandt und dem SPD-Parteivorstand, March 4, 1959; BStU, ZA, MfS-HVA 186, Führende westberliner SPD-Funktionäre zu evtl. Übereinkünften der Genfer Außenministerkonferenz in der Westberlinfrage, June 9, 1959; Äußerungen führender westberliner SPD-Funktionäre zur Genfer Außenministerkonferenz und zur Situation nach dem Landesparteitag, June 13, 1959; Sitzungen des westberliner SPD-Landesvorstandes am 1 und 8. 6. 1959, June 13, 1959; Frankfurter Kongreß des SDS vom 23./24. 5. 1959, June 13, 1959; Auseinandersetzungen im Westberliner SDS, June 15, 1959; Parteivorstandssitzung der SPD am 13. 6. 1959, June 17, 1959; Sekretärkonferenz der Westberliner SPD am 11. 6. 1959, June 18, 1959.

²⁴ BStU, ZA, MfS-HVA 813, Information über die Lage und die Politik der SPD nach der Europawahl sowie den Kommunalwahlen am 18. 6. 1989, Nr. 347/89 [date illegible].

²⁵ An example is disarmament: see Information über den aktuellen Vorbereitungsstand der "2. Konferenz für europäische atomare Abrüstung" in Westberlin (9.-14. 5. 1983), Nr. 109/83, April 4, 1983.

²⁶ In German: "Freiheit Berlins"; "ständige Verletzung der Menschenrechte."

²⁷ BStU, ZA, MfS-HVA 380, Information über eine westdeutsche Einschätzung der Umsiedlung und Familienzusammenführung deutscher Bürger aus den sozialistischen

Ländern, Nr. 159/72, February 22, 1972. In German: “Aus verschiedenen Gründen hätten sich die Hoffnungen auf Verwicklung des Übersiedlungswunsches in erster Linie stets auf die BRD, in erheblich geringerem Maße auf die DDR gerichtet.”

²⁸ E.g. BStU, ZA, MfS-HVA 24, Information über Äußerungen von BRD-Regierungskreisen zur weiteren Gestaltung der Beziehungen zur DDR, Nr. 94/83, April 4, 1983.

²⁹ E.g. BStU, ZA, MfS-HVA 186, Die Stellung der AEG in der westdeutschen Elektro-Industrie, [undated but evidently from June 1959].

³⁰ BStU, ZA, MfS-HVA 184, Einschätzung der Ostasien-Reise Erhards durch den FDP-Bundestagsabgeordneten Lenz, March 16, 1959.

³¹ BStU, ZA, MfS-HVA 186, Wirtschaftliche Differenzen zwischen den USA und Kanada, June 3, 1959.

³² BStU, ZA, MfS-HVA 384 (Teil 1), Information über den Stand der Diskussionen um eine Reform des imperialistischen Währungssystems, Nr. 563/72, June 16, 1972.

³³ BStU, ZA, MfS-HVA 380, Information über die Einschätzung der wirtschaftlichen Entwicklung der BRD 1972 durch die westdeutschen Unternehmerverbände, Nr. 190/72, March 2, 1972.

³⁴ BStU, ZA, MfS-HVA 380, Information über die Haltung der westdeutschen Industrie zur Konjunkturpolitik der Bundesregierung, Nr. 176/72, February 24, 1972. In German: “aggressive und vagabundierende Dollars auf der Lauer liegen, um sich auf den deutschen Devisenmarkt zu stürzen.”

³⁵ BStU, ZA, MfS-HVA 380, Information über Einschätzungen westdeutscher und westberliner Forschungsinstitutionen über die Entwicklung der Volkswirtschaft der DDR, Nr. 156/72, February 21, 1972.

³⁶ BStU, ZA, MfS-HVA 380, Information über westdeutsche Bestrebungen zur Durchsetzung des PAL-Farbf Fernseh-Systems im Mittelmeerraum, Nr. 155/72, February 21, 1972.

³⁷ Peter Siebenmorgen, *“Staatssicherheit” der DDR* (Bonn: Bouvier Verlag, 1993), 143.

³⁸ BStU, ZA, MfS-HVA 24 (Teil 2), Information über aktuelle Aspekte der imperialistischen Sanktions- und Embargopolitik gegenüber den sozialistischen Ländern, Nr. 73/83, March 3, 1983.

³⁹ BStU, ZA, MfS-HVA 813, Information über BRD-Aktivitäten zur Wahrnehmung des Außenvertretungsanspruch für Berlin (West) auf dem Gebiet des Kulturaustauschs mit der DDR, Nr. 322/89.

⁴⁰ BStU, ZA, MfS-HVA 813, Einschätzung zur Bewertung einiger Entwicklungen im asiatisch-pazifischen Raum aus amerikanischer Sicht, Nr. 405/89, September 14, 1989.

⁴¹ BStU, ZA, MfS-HVA 813, Information über BRD-Einschätzungen zu Produktion und Außenhandel der RGW-Staaten im Bereich der Hochtechnologie, Nr. 360/89 [date illegible].

⁴² BStU, MfS-HVA 24 (Teil 2), Einschätzung zu einigen aktuellen Aspekten der Lage und Entwicklung der Europäischen Gemeinschaften (EG), Nr. 50/83, February 11, 1983. In German: “angesichts der anhaltenden kapitalistischen Weltwirtschaftskrise”; “[die] schwerste Wirtschaftskrise seit den 30er Jahren”; “nach internen Äußerungen engagierter ‘Europapolitiker’ zeige sich faktisch die völlige Machtlosigkeit des EG-Mechanismus gegenüber den Problemen der Arbeitslosigkeit, zur Bekämpfung der Defizite und der Wiederherstellung der Wettbewerbsfähigkeit der westeuropäischen Industrie.”

⁴³ BStU, MfS-HVA 24 (Teil 2), Einschätzung zum innenpolitischen Kräfteverhältnis in der BRD vor der Bundestagswahl am 6. 3. 1983, Nr. 65/85, February 25, 1983. In German: “die auf eine Stärkung des Monopolkapitals ausgerichtete Wirtschaftspolitik der Regierungskoalition hat darüber hinaus eine im Vergleich zur bisherigen SPD-geführten Regierung deutlich höhere soziale Belastung der werktätigen Masse zur Folge.”

⁴⁴ Heinz Busch, “Die NATO in der Sicht der Auswertung der HVA,” in Georg Herbstritt and Helmut Müller-Enbergs, eds., *Das Gesicht dem Westen zu ... : DDR-Spionage gegen die Bundesrepublik Deutschland* (Bremen: Edition Temmen, 2003), 240.

⁴⁵ Günter Bohnsack and Herbert Brehmer, *Auftrag: Irreführung* (Hamburg: Carlsen, 1992), 251-52; Günter Bohnsack, *Hauptverwaltung Aufklärung: Die Legende Stirbt* (Berlin: edition ost, 1997), 80.

⁴⁶ The ZAIG’s reporting on domestic matters was similar. While the reporters made more use of ideological language and concepts, as they had to, from the 1970s they increasingly saw signs of crisis in East German society and gave much space to popular criticism. Of course, the reports still made criticism seem milder than it was. Knowing that there were informers among them, East Germans expressed their grievances cautiously to one another. The ideological character of the MfS’s reporting further toned their criticism down. Moreover, the Stasi never presented the majority of the population as hostile to the regime. See Gieseke, “Bevölkerungsstimmungen in der geschlossenen Gesellschaft,” 248.

⁴⁷ Gieseke, “East German Espionage in the Era of Détente,” 413-15.

⁴⁸ BStU, ZA, MfS-HVA 184, Bericht Willy Brandts über seine Reise nach den USA und den Fernen Osten, March 10, 1959.

⁴⁹ BStU, ZA, MfS-HVA 186, Äußerungen führender westberliner SPD-Funktionäre zur Genfer Außenministerkonferenz und zur Situation nach dem Landesparteitag, June 13, 1959.

⁵⁰ BStU, ZA, MfS-HVA 192, Einzelinformation über Stellungnahmen ausländischer Politiker zur Deutschland- und Westberlinfrage, May 1961.

⁵¹ *Grundlagenvertrag* means “Treaty on the Bases of Relations.” Recognition was de facto, not de jure.

⁵² BStU, ZA, MfS-HVA 384 (Teil 1), Information über Einschätzungen westdeutscher Regierungskreise zur weiteren Gestaltung der Handelsbeziehungen DDR-BRD, Nr. 552/72, June 12, 1972.

⁵³ BStU, ZA, MfS-HVA 384 (Teil 2), Information über eine Darstellung der Entwicklung des RGW aus der Sicht französischer diplomatischer Kreise, Nr. 549/72, June 9, 1972.

⁵⁴ BStU, ZA, MfS-HVA 380, Information über innen- und außenpolitische Probleme Ägyptens im Zusammenhang mit der Moskaureise von Präsident Sadat und seine sich daran anschließenden Gespräche in Jugoslawien, Syrien und Libyen, Nr. 161/72, February 22, 1972.

⁵⁵ Siegfried Suckut, “Seismographische Aufzeichnungen. Der Blick des MfS auf Staat und Gesellschaft in der DDR am Beispiel der Berichte an die SED-Führung 1976,” in Gieseke, *Staatssicherheit und Gesellschaft*, 124-25.

⁵⁶ See BStU, ZA, MfS-HVA 24 (Teil 2), Information über eine westdeutsche Einschätzung des Standes der Kulturbeziehungen zwischen der BRD und Rumänien, Nr. 452/72, May 10, 1972. In German: “Partei und Regierung seien nämlich bemüht, alle Lebensäußerungen der Bevölkerung unter Kontrolle zu halten und stemmten sich daher mit eisernem Willen gegen alle Liberalisierungsbestrebungen.”

⁵⁷ BStU, ZA, MfS-HVA 813, Information über die politische Jahreseinschätzung 1988/89 des NATO-Generalsekretärs, Nr. 363/89 [undated].

⁵⁸ BStU, ZA, MfS-HVA 813, Information über NATO-Wertungen zu den wirtschaftlichen Reformprozessen in den kleineren europäischen RGW-Staaten (Osteuropa), Nr. 419/89, September 1989. In German: “starren Kommandowirtschaften.”

⁵⁹ BStU, ZA, MfS-HVA 813, Information über die Entwicklung der Landwirtschaft in der UdSSR und in den anderen europäischen RGW-Staaten, Nr. 423/89, October 4, 1989.

⁶⁰ BStU, ZA, MfS-HVA 24 (Teil 2), Information über einige Aspekte der innen- und außenpolitischen Entwicklung Algeriens, Nr. 13/83, January 7, 1983. In German: “kleinbürgerlich-nationalistisch orientierte Kräfte”; “nationalistisch-religiöse Kreise”; “die revolutionär-demokratischen Kräfte.”

⁶¹ BStU, ZA, MfS-HVA 24 (Teil 2), Vermerk über ein Gespräch des Genossen Gerhard Schürer, Kandidat des Politbüros des ZK der SED, Stellvertreter des Vorsitzenden des Ministerrates der DDR, Vorsitzender der Staatlichen Plankommission, mit dem Mitglied des ZK der KPdSU und Botschafter der UdSSR in Algerien, Genossen Rykov, January 12, 1983, 327-32. In German: “antiimperialistische Grundpositionen.”

⁶² BStU, ZA, MfS-HVA 24 (Teil 2), letter from Schürer to Mielke, January 17, 1983, 323.

⁶³ BStU, ZA, MfS-HVA 24 (Teil 2), Zur Einschätzung der Lage in Algerien durch den sowjetischen Botschafter, Gen. Rykov, gegenüber Gen. Schürer, 324-26.

⁶⁴ BStU, ZA, MfS-HVA 813, Information über aktuelle Entwicklungen in einigen europäischen sozialistischen Staaten aus chinesischer Sicht, Nr. 425/89, October 4, 1989.

⁶⁵ Ludwig A. Rehlinger, *Freikauf: Die Geschäfte der DDR mit politisch Verfolgten 1963-1989* (Berlin: Ullstein Verlag, 1991), 116.

⁶⁶ Großmann, *Bonn im Blick*, 117-18.

⁶⁷ Jens Gieseke, *Der Mielke-Konzern* (Munich: Deutsche Verlags-Anstalt, 2006), 226.

⁶⁸ Reinhold Andert and Wolfgang Herzberg, *Der Sturz* (Berlin: Aufbau-Verlag, 1991), 312-13.

⁶⁹ Hermann Wentker, *Außenpolitik in engen Grenzen: Die DDR im internationalen System 1949-1989* (Munich: Oldenbourg Verlag, 2007), 322; Markus Wolf, *Spionagechef im geheimen Krieg* (Munich: List Verlag, 1997), 267-68.

⁷⁰ Vojtech Mastny, "On the Soviet side," in Michael Herman, J. Kenneth McDonald and Vojtech Mastny, *Did Intelligence Matter in the Cold War?* (Oslo, Norway: Institutt for forsvarsstudier, no. 1(2006)), 68.

⁷¹ Quoted in Gieseke, *Der Mielke-Konzern*, 245. In German: "daß wir heute auf die BRD stärker einwirken als sie auf uns."

⁷² Großmann, *Bonn im Blick*, 174.

⁷³ For example, see BStU, MfS-HVA 24 (Teil 2), Information über die Wirtschaftsbeziehungen BRD-USSR, Nr. 32/83, January 14, 1983.

⁷⁴ For an example of a report containing information to this effect, see BStU, MfS-HVA 24 (Teil 2), Einschätzung zum innenpolitischen Kräfteverhältnis in der BRD vor der Bundestagswahl am 6. 3. 1983, Nr. 65/85, February 25, 1983.

⁷⁵ For an example of a report containing such information, see BStU, MfS-HVA 24 (Teil 2), Information über aktuelle Entwicklungstendenzen der Friedensbewegung in der BRD und in Westberlin, Nr. 106/83, March 29, 1983.

⁷⁶ One of the Department's tasks was to report on public opinion in the GDR. In doing this job it knew that it had to conclude that the regime enjoyed strong popular support and always did so.

⁷⁷ Siegfried Suckut, "Seismographische Aufzeichnungen," 118, 124-25.