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## Living with the Stasi: Experiences and Opinions of East Germans, 1945-90

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# Living with the Stasi: Experiences and Opinions of East Germans, 1945-90

In the months after the Berlin Wall fell, Stasi offices across East Germany were occupied by protestors and the true extent of Stasi surveillance became clear.<sup>1</sup> This new information understandably coloured how East Germans remembered their experience under the Stasi and created a modern perception of the Stasi as an all-encompassing, hated aspect of East German life – the “scapegoat for the evils of the East German system”.<sup>2</sup> However, this perception was formed in retrospect, with much more evidence than was available to East Germans at the time. While the Stasi were generally disliked by East Germans at the time, many East Germans were discontent with the GDR state as a whole with no particular dislike of the Stasi. The Stasi also evolved considerably throughout its lifetime, shifting its focus from repression to surveillance, making timing an important factor in considering how East Germans understood the Stasi. Furthermore, East Germans’ experience of the Stasi, although broadly similar, differed widely depending on factors like career, religion, or political opinion. Yet most Germans, to some degree, did not like the presence of the Stasi. Why, then, did so many citizens become informers (IMs) for an organization they disliked? Broadly, reasons ranged from ideology, a sense of belonging, fear, material gain, – or, most likely, some combination of these factors.

On the broadest possible level, East Germans feared the Stasi. Three East Germans interviewed about their experiences recount lowering their voices when telling political jokes.<sup>3</sup> Many East Germans also kept a careful eye on their children, fearing Stasi reprisal if they made the wrong friends.<sup>4</sup> Similarly, news outlets had as a “code of self-censorship” – while authors

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<sup>1</sup> Joachim Gauck and Martin Fry ‘Dealing with a Stasi Past’, *Daedalus*, Vol. 123, no. 1, (Winter 1994): 277-278.

<sup>2</sup> Anne McElvoy, *The Saddled Cow: East Germany’s Life and Legacy* (London: Faber and Faber Limited, 1992), 107.

<sup>3</sup> Interviews with Carola Koehler, Katharina Furian, and Mirko Sennewald in Hester Vaizey, *Born in the GDR* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014), 47, 104, 137.

<sup>4</sup> Vaizey, *Born in the GDR*, 63.

at the time ascribed this to party loyalty, this loyalty was very likely paired with fear of Stasi reprisal, especially since the Stasi were active in censoring other media like film.<sup>5</sup> Furthermore, rumours about Stasi officers living in buildings and massive stacks of files helped create an atmosphere of suspicion in East Germany, with East Germans fearing the Stasi might be watching.<sup>6</sup> This suspicion proved fatal for many political groups, which collapsed due to internal suspicion of informers.<sup>7</sup> East Germans became wary; West German author Anne Armstrong describes how people she passed on the street kept their eyes down to avoid her gaze when she visited East Berlin.<sup>8</sup> Fear of the Stasi dictated the behaviour of many East Germans.

Naturally this fear was paired with anger and disrespect towards the Stasi. During the June 1953 uprising against the Communist government, protestors in Görlitz and Bitterfeld carried out attacks on Stasi premises, destroying officials' offices – in Görlitz, even assaulting the Stasi city department chief.<sup>9</sup> Stasi headquarters were again stormed during the fall of the Berlin Wall, with protests countrywide centred around their offices, rallying around slogans like “put the Stasi men to work in the factories”.<sup>10</sup> Even in less revolutionary moments, East Germans thought ill of the Stasi. One joke describes how Erich Honecker, head of the ruling socialist party, realizes he is missing his watch. He calls the Stasi to organize a search. He later realizes he has left it under his pillow, but when he calls the Stasi back to call off the search, they reply; “Too late, we have already arrested ten people, all of whom have confessed!”<sup>11</sup> The

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<sup>5</sup> Hans Werner Schwarze, *The GDR Today*, trans. John M. Mitchell (London: Oswald Wolff Publishers Limited, 1973), 32; Simone Barck, Cristoph Classen and Thomas Heimann “The Fettered Media,” in *Dictatorship as Experience*, ed. Konrad H. Jarausch (New York; Oxford: Berghahn Books, 1999), 230.

<sup>6</sup> David Childs, *The GDR: Moscow's German Ally* (London: Unwin Hyman Limited, 1988), 289.

<sup>7</sup> Mike Dennis, *The Rise and Fall of the German Democratic Republic, 1945-1990* (Harlow: Pearson Education Limited, 2000), 42.

<sup>8</sup> Anne Armstrong, *Berliners* (New Brunswick: Rutgers University, 1973), 112-113.

<sup>9</sup> Vasilii Sokolovskii, Vladimir Semyonov, and Pavel Yudin “On the Events of 17-19 June in Berlin and the GDR and Certain Conclusions from These Events”, 23 June 1953, in Christian F. Ostermann, *Uprising in East Germany, 1953* (Budapest; New York: Central European University Press, 2001), 267-269.

<sup>10</sup> Gauck and Fry, p.278.

<sup>11</sup> Vaizey, *Born in the GDR*, 142.

head of the Stasi, Erich Mielke, was treated with similar derision during his retirement speech – as he described how the Stasi had “extremely intensive contact with all working people” and how he “loved everyone”, crowds laughed at his trivialised account of the fear of living under the Stasi.<sup>12</sup> Such mockery of the Stasi highlights real discontent with the Stasi’s grip on Germany.

However, some of this anger and discontent was being directed at the whole East German state – not just the Stasi. In the June 1953 uprising, much of the protest was anti-government rather than specifically anti-Stasi. Although protestors in Görlitz and Bitterfeld targeted the Stasi, those in Halle, Magdeburg, Leipzig, Gera, and Dresden did not.<sup>13</sup> Slogans during the uprising included “*Butter statt Kanonen*” (butter, not arms) and “*Nieder mit der Regierung*” (down with the government), suggesting a broad discontent with the government and economy as a whole rather than just the Stasi.<sup>14</sup> Furthermore, many of East German interviewee Carola Koehler’s concerns were about the basic failings of the East German state – shortages of tomatoes, ketchup, and oil.<sup>15</sup> Demands were largely aimed at a broad economic and political reform – workers at the Thälmann plant in Magdeburg called for improved workers’ rights and a new government.<sup>16</sup> Mirko Sennewald, another interviewee, disliked the militarism of the regime and, similar to Carola, looked to West Germany and wondered why it was so much more modernised than the East.<sup>17</sup> While the Stasi were certainly unpopular, one must avoid retroactively reading a uniquely anti-Stasi message into complaints about government failings as a whole.

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<sup>12</sup> Erich Mielke’s resignation speech, 13 November 1989, in McElvoy, *The Saddled Cow*, 93-94.

<sup>13</sup> Sokolovskii, Semyonov, and Yudin, in Ostermann, *Uprising in East Germany*, 264-266.

<sup>14</sup> Ostermann, *Uprising in East Germany*, p.164.

<sup>15</sup> Koehler in Vaizey, *Born in the GDR*, 47-48.

<sup>16</sup> Sokolovskii, Semyonov, and Yudin, in Ostermann, *Uprising in East Germany*, 270.

<sup>17</sup> Sennewald in Vaizey, *Born in the GDR*, 137.

East German dislike of the Stasi was also by no means universal; a sizeable minority of East Germans were dedicated to the socialist cause and the East German state, and the Stasi along with it. An interviewee named Peggy M. felt overall content with the state of East Germany and believed that the rat race of capitalism in the West was more worrying than the Stasi ever were.<sup>18</sup> Another interviewee, Robert, felt it wrong to overemphasise the impact that the Stasi had in East Germany.<sup>19</sup> He remained “absolutely convinced” by the Stasi and East German state until its fall, and found needing to self-censor political topics “pretty easy”.<sup>20</sup> Even some East Germans who did not support the State or Stasi did not necessarily dislike them, either. According to German historian Hester Vaizey, who interviewed East Germans after the fall of the Berlin wall, “many claim that they had no idea of the extent to which the Stasi was intertwined with daily life, and therefore they do not remember the GDR in this [Stasi-centric, negative] way.”<sup>21</sup> This may seem at odds with rumours circulating in print at the time claim that “one hears from individuals who claim to know that they have a full-time operative living in their particular block of flats” and “occasionally one hears claims of the massive number of reports”.<sup>22</sup> However, while these rumours contributed to creating an atmosphere of suspicion in East Germany, massive numbers of reports being considered mere “claims” highlights just how little information about the extent of Stasi activity some East Germans had. That a single full-time Stasi operative was considered notable, when over 81,000 existed in East Germany by the publishing of the rumours in 1983, further suggests that although East Germans were aware of the Stasi’s presence, they did not know its true scale or reach.<sup>23</sup> Whether due to socialist loyalty or lack of awareness about the extent of Stasi

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<sup>18</sup> Interview with Peggy M., in Vaizey, *Born in the GDR*, 157.

<sup>19</sup> Interview with Robert, in Vaizey, *Born in the GDR*, 115-116.

<sup>20</sup> Robert in Vaizey, *Born in the GDR*, 118.

<sup>21</sup> Vaizey, *Born in the GDR*, 163.

<sup>22</sup> Childs, *The GDR: Moscow’s German Ally*, p.289.

<sup>23</sup> David Childs and Richard Popplewell, *The Stasi* (New York: New York University Press, 1996), 82.

surveillance, a sense of “acceptance, rather than hostility” characterised the experience of some East Germans.<sup>24</sup>

Furthermore, East German perception of the Stasi changed dramatically as the Stasi reorganized several times during their existence. After the June 1953 uprising, the Stasi hired more spies and informants but also changed their strategy, shifting from violent repression to surveillance so as to be prepared for potential future uprisings.<sup>25</sup> To this end, the Stasi began hushing up their executions.<sup>26</sup> In 1968, the Stasi also engaged in a rebranding effort to make their activities seem more palatable to East Germans. Stasi informants, previously called GIs (*Gehime Informatoren*, meaning “secret informer”), were renamed IMs (*Inoffizielle Mitarbeiter*, meaning “unofficial collaborators”).<sup>27</sup> This change was designed to stop informing seem “not nice”<sup>28</sup> The Stasi also rebranded recruitment “under pressure” using “compromising material”, now calling it “promoting the will to make amends”<sup>29</sup> Likewise, language was softened to create a sort of equality between informers and handlers, since IMs were “collaborators”. This idea resurfaced in Erich Mielke’s much-ridiculed retirement speech, wherein he euphemistically described Stasi espionage by claiming that his employees had an “exceptionally high contact with all working people.”<sup>30</sup>

Although some East Germans saw through this image rehabilitation program, dislike of the Stasi still waned somewhat after it was implemented in 1968; Stasi activities, although increased in scope, were less brutal and further removed from the public eye.<sup>31</sup> “The second German state became post-totalitarian,” Konrad Jarausch writes, “since it largely replaced brute

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<sup>24</sup> Vaizey, *Born in the GDR*, 164.

<sup>25</sup> Jens Gieseke, *The History of the Stasi: East Germany’s Secret Police, 1945-1990* (New York; Oxford: Berghahn Books, 2014), 50.

<sup>26</sup> Gieseke, *The History of the Stasi*, 143.

<sup>27</sup> Childs and Popplewell, *The Stasi*, 83.

<sup>28</sup> Childs and Popplewell, *The Stasi*, 83.

<sup>29</sup> Gieseke, *The History of the Stasi*, 79.

<sup>30</sup> Mielke, in Gieseke, *History of the Stasi*, 80.

<sup>31</sup> Gieseke, *The History of the Stasi*, 79.

force with indirect incentives.”<sup>32</sup> In doing so, the Stasi became less of a deterrent to opposition than they had been in their earlier days, and the image of a threatening Stasi was largely an image of the past.<sup>33</sup> *The GDR Today*, written in the 1970s, described an East Germany with notably few references to the Stasi – and the few present are in the past tense, implying that the Stasi were no longer seen as a significant factor in East German life.<sup>34</sup> While Germans were fearful of the violent repression which characterised the Stasi early in their development, they were less concerned, if not unconcerned, by the surveillance activity which replaced it.

East Germans’ careers also significantly influenced how they perceived the Stasi. In the medical field, towing the party line sometimes came at the expense of actual medicine; interviewee Dr Luise was frustrated with “party hacks who knew nothing about medicine or, for that matter, about children” who took over the administration of her children’s’ hospital.<sup>35</sup> However, the medical field was not a primary Stasi target. East Germany desperately needed doctors, and so although the Stasi gained some informers within hospitals, the overall rate of informers was low (under 5%).<sup>36</sup> Furthermore, most doctors kept their medical oath to privacy and refused Stasi requests for patient records.<sup>37</sup> The Stasi faced similar difficulties in infiltrating psychiatry on any useful scale.<sup>38</sup> Doctors’ medical knowledge afforded them a higher level of immunity and autonomy than other careers.

Churches, which were often critical of the East German government, faced higher scrutiny.<sup>39</sup> Although the East German state did not ban church services, the Stasi harassed churches, reducing the influence of religion in society – what was described at the time as a

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<sup>32</sup> Jarausch, *Dictatorship as Experience*, 6.

<sup>33</sup> Jarausch, *Dictatorship as Experience*, 38.

<sup>34</sup> Schwarze, *The GDR Today*, 39.

<sup>35</sup> Interview with Dr Luise, in Armstrong, *Berliners*, 171.

<sup>36</sup> Childs and Popplewell, *The Stasi*, 93.

<sup>37</sup> Childs and Popplewell, *The Stasi*, 93.

<sup>38</sup> Childs and Popplewell, *The Stasi*, 94.

<sup>39</sup> Childs and Popplewell, *The Stasi*, 106-107.

policy of “harassment rather than domination”.<sup>40</sup> This harassment led preachers to bite their tongues – interviewee Pastor Carl described how preachers “have to be very careful about what they preach”.<sup>41</sup> Sources at the time explain that although not all East Germans had to withdraw from the church, those who wanted to study in a good high school or university had to leave.<sup>42</sup> The Stasi harassment caused many East Germans to avoid church altogether; By 1970, only 3% of East German children got baptised and only 15% wanted a church wedding.<sup>43</sup>

Artists, writers, musicians, and other intelligentsia received more harassment still. On 24 November 1987, the Stasi raided the Umweltbibliothek, publishing house for both the *Umweltblätter* (an environmentalist newspaper) and the political group IFM’s journal *Grenzfall*.<sup>44</sup> The Stasi also limited things like film clubs and cinema – something East Berliner Hans described as “damned dull” due to the heavy restriction.<sup>45</sup> Artists and musicians were also highly persecuted; pop musician Wolf Biermann was deprived of his citizenship, fiction writer Stefan Heym was fined heavily for the content of his book *Collin*, and Walter Loewig was charged with anti-state agitation for his paintings.<sup>46</sup> Writers were arrested, had their works banned, or were expelled from the Writer’s Union.<sup>47</sup>

Political dissent was perhaps the most obvious – and drastic – way in which East Germans bumped heads with the Stasi. For those dissenting against the State, the Stasi’s motto of being the “sword” of the State rang very true, best exemplified by their harassment and brutal treatment of prisoners, dissenters, and even their own informants.<sup>48</sup> A full 40% of the political group IMF (*Initiative für Frieden und Menschenrechte*, meaning Initiative for Peace

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<sup>40</sup> Schwarze, *The GDR Today*, 42.

<sup>41</sup> Interview with Pastor Carl, in Armstrong, *Berliners*, 265.

<sup>42</sup> Schwarze, *The GDR Today*, 44; Pastor Carl, in Armstrong, *Berliners*, 266.

<sup>43</sup> Schwarze, *The GDR Today*, 42.

<sup>44</sup> John C. Torpey, *Intellectuals, Socialism, and Dissent* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1995), 105.

<sup>45</sup> Interview with Hans, in Armstrong, *Berliners*, 186

<sup>46</sup> Childs and Popplewell, *The Stasi*, 102-103.

<sup>47</sup> Dennis, *The Rise and Fall of the German Democratic Republic*, 222.

<sup>48</sup> McElvoy, *The Saddled Cow*, 94.



and Human Rights) were informers – 8 times the level of surveillance experienced by doctors.<sup>49</sup> When interviewee Mario refused to collaborate with the Stasi, he was harassed by them as a result.<sup>50</sup> Eventually, this harassment became so bad that he tried to flee East Germany but was caught and taken to prison.<sup>51</sup> When planning his escape, Mario thought that he would either escape or be shot – illustrating the extent he would go to escape Stasi persecution.<sup>52</sup> While physical abuse was ended in the 1950s as the Stasi rebranded, those in Stasi custody like Mario still faced endemic psychological abuse.<sup>53</sup> Ultimately many Stasi prisoners attempted suicide.<sup>54</sup> While fear and suspicion characterised most East Germans’ perceptions of the Stasi, for dissenters the dominant emotion was usually trauma.

Yet by the late 1980s the Stasi maintained a legion of over 170,000 informers, regarded as “main weapon in the fight against the enemy.”<sup>55</sup> How did such a large number of informers emerge from a society which was largely wary of or angry at the Stasi? There could be many reasons for this seeming contradiction. It is firstly worth remembering that while many East Germans disliked the Stasi, not all did – many informed out of a sense of loyalty to the East German state. Others were pressured into informing, and others still were bribed or encouraged into informing.

For East Germans loyal to the state ideology, choosing to inform was an easy decision. According to Mary Fulbrook, “Many informants were committed and loyal citizens of the GDR.”<sup>56</sup> Furthermore, informing was portrayed as a civic duty – Erich Mielke claimed that “our party regards safeguarding the state security of the GDR not just the obligation of

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<sup>49</sup> Torpey, *Intellectuals, Socialism, and Dissent*, 96.

<sup>50</sup> Interview with Mario Röllig, in Vaizey, *Born in the GDR*, pp.69-73.

<sup>51</sup> Röllig, in Vaizey, *Born in the GDR*, 71.

<sup>52</sup> Röllig, in Vaizey *Born in the GDR*, 71.

<sup>53</sup> Gieseke, *History of the Stasi*, 140.

<sup>54</sup> Gieseke, *History of the Stasi*, 145.

<sup>55</sup> Gieseke, *History of the Stasi*, 79; Dennis, *The Rise and Fall of the German Democratic Republic*, 213.

<sup>56</sup> Mary Fulbrook, *The People’s State* (New Haven; London: Yale University Press, 2005), 242.

specifically designated organization, but rather as the civic and social concern... of every citizen”<sup>57</sup> Members of the SED (*Sozialistische Einheitspartei Deutschlands*, meaning Socialist Unity Party of Germany – the ruling party in East Germany) were overrepresented as IMs, making up about one-tenth of the population but found to be making up one-third of IMs in a 1962 spot check in Neubrandenburg.<sup>58</sup> This overrepresentation was present even after Stasi officials had been repeatedly instructed not to recruit SED members as informers.<sup>59</sup>

Even for those less dedicated to the socialist cause, the bribes that Stasi members offered were tempting. In a 1967 survey by the Stasi, 27% of respondents said that “personal gain” was a reason they informed for the them, and 40% said that “practical life objectives” were a factor.<sup>60</sup> Becoming an informer was seen as low-risk way to advance one’s prospects – or those of ones’ children – a prominent clergyman was convinced to inform in exchange for a guarantee that his children would be given a good reference for university.<sup>61</sup> Sometimes arrested people were given their freedom in exchange for working as informers.<sup>62</sup> Some dissident artists became informers, betraying their colleagues or friends in exchange for being able to continue their own work undisturbed.<sup>63</sup> Most obviously, some informants were recruited through the promise of payment – although this was phrased as “material interestedness” to make it sound less mercenary.<sup>64</sup>

Not all Stasi informers were so enthusiastic. Many East Germans cooperated with the Stasi out of fear, which Mike Dennis describes as a “primary motive” for collaborating with

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<sup>57</sup> Henry Kirsch, *The German Democratic Republic: The Search for Identity* (Boulder: Westview Press, 1985) p.134.

<sup>58</sup> Dennis, *The Rise and Fall of the German Democratic Republic*, p.7; Gieseke, *The History of the Stasi*, 82, 87.

<sup>59</sup> Gieseke, *The History of the Stasi*, 87.

<sup>60</sup> Gieseke, *The History of the Stasi*, 91.

<sup>61</sup> Childs and Popplewell, *The Stasi*, 83.

<sup>62</sup> Childs and Popplewell, *The Stasi*, 84.

<sup>63</sup> Corey Ross, *The East German Dictatorship: Problems and Perspectives in the Interpretation of the GDR* (London; New York: Hodder Headline Group; Oxford University Press, 2002), 124.

<sup>64</sup> Gieseke, *The History of the Stasi*, 79.

the Stasi.<sup>65</sup> It was certainly an effective motivator in the case of “junior” informants recruited from the army, usually with threat of military discipline.<sup>66</sup> More generally, although some estimates claim 7.7% of informants were recruited by “clear coercion”, other polls this figure at 23% with a further 22% citing it as a secondary factor in their recruitment.<sup>67</sup> The true number is likely higher still since these figures were both from internal Stasi polls or estimates. When the Stasi had compromising information on a prospective informant, they could simply blackmail their target into service.<sup>68</sup>

Potential informers’ vulnerabilities were also exploited to get them to sign up. Although the Stasi were unable to infiltrate psychiatrists’ clinics, they still used psychological research to try and target reliable informers, often preying on vulnerable people to do so.<sup>69</sup> Monika Haeger, a former East German informant, described herself as “tailor-made for the Stasi” because she was both committed to the East German state and psychologically vulnerable as an orphan with a difficult childhood.<sup>70</sup> In an interview after the fall of the Berlin Wall, she described how her contact officer was always available to talk, offering security and connection she had previously been missing.<sup>71</sup> By awarding medals for service, the Stasi cultivated a sense of achievement in its informers.<sup>72</sup> The Stasi aimed to make its members feel special and exclusive, and earned itself the nickname “the family” partly for this reason; there was even a Stasi choir.<sup>73</sup> The Stasi also made informing seem like an exciting opportunity for people like writer Brigitte Reimann, who found herself “attracted by the adventure” and described

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<sup>65</sup> Dennis, *The Rise and Fall of the German Democratic Republic*, 219.

<sup>66</sup> Gieseke, *The History of the Stasi*, 88.

<sup>67</sup> Fulbrook, *The People’s State*, 243, Gieseke, *The History of the Stasi*, 92.

<sup>68</sup> Vaizey, *Born in the GDR*, 86.

<sup>69</sup> Dennis, *The Rise and Fall of the German Democratic Republic*, 219.

<sup>70</sup> Interview with Monika Haeger, in McElvoy, *The Saddled Cow*, 103.

<sup>71</sup> Dennis, *The Rise and Fall of the German Democratic Republic*, 220.

<sup>72</sup> Haeger, in McElvoy, *The Saddled Cow*, 104.

<sup>73</sup> Haeger, in McElvoy, *The Saddled Cow*, 103-104.

informing as “this game of playing Indians – code names, secret apartments, and so on.”<sup>74</sup> The prospect of knowing hidden information was alluring – for those seeking a sense of place or purpose, the Stasi’s offer was hard to refuse.

With the exception of committed SED members, many East Germans informed for the Stasi either because they felt they had to, or because they stood to gain from it. Many did not enjoy their time as informers – Brigitte Reimann, although initially tempted by the excitement of helping socialism, later expressed misery at the Stasi “swines” she felt she was stuck informing for.<sup>75</sup> Many tried to be dropped as informers. It was possible to quit, but for those understandably scared of this approach, one could either “accidentally” let slip that they were an informant, or simply give the Stasi such useless information and be dropped in this way.<sup>76</sup> Christina Wolf did exactly this – in her three years as a collaborator, she only ever reported on one person and was so unforthcoming with information that when she moved cities in 1962 the Stasi dropped her.<sup>77</sup> Even among those who did inform, “it seems”, Jan Gieseke writes, “there was never such a willingness among East Germans to denounce other people to the secret police.”<sup>78</sup>

The East German experience of living under and informing for the Stasi was complex. There is a tendency to remember East Germany as a “Stasi-state” where every aspect of life was monitored and controlled by Stasi agents.<sup>79</sup> Perhaps the same “adventure” of “code names, secret apartments, and so on” which enticed Brigitte Reimann historians too.<sup>80</sup> However, Germans’ experiences with the Stasi varied much more than the universal narrative of a hated

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<sup>74</sup> Brigitte Reimann, *Ich bedauere nichts: Tagebücher, 1955-1963* (Berlin: Aufbau Verlag, 1997), 73, entry of 28 September 1957, in Fulbrook, *The People’s State*, 244.

<sup>75</sup> Reimann, p.83, entry of 25 January 1958, in Fulbrook, *The People’s State*, 244.

<sup>76</sup> Fulbrook, *The People’s State*, 244-245.

<sup>77</sup> Ross, *The East German Dictatorship*, p.185.

<sup>78</sup> Gieseke, *History of the Stasi*, p.84.

<sup>79</sup> Ross, *The East German Dictatorship*, p.30.

<sup>80</sup> Reimann, p.83, entry of 28 September 1957, in Fulbrook, *The People’s State*, 244.

Stasi-state implies. Some East Germans were discontent not with the Stasi, but the whole East German government. Others, albeit a minority, saw nothing wrong with the system and accepted the Stasi as a needed part of life. Career and time were other factors in determining how one might perceive the Stasi – an artist in the 1950s would face much more persecution than a doctor in the 1980s, for example. Reasons for informing were equally complex – again, a sizeable minority did so out of genuine loyalty to East Germany, but money, fear, or a sense of belonging were also common. Yet although East Germans’ experiences and opinions were disparate, a general thread of mistrust, wariness, and fear of the Stasi – and lack of willingness to inform for them – is the best way to characterize East Germans’ feelings towards this notorious spy agency.