

and primary hunter-gatherer of his family," was in the United States to raise money for an emergency health project and a school, as well as to lodge a protest at the United Nations and the Organization of American States against the gold prospectors who have recently invaded Yanomami territory—decidedly post-Columbian activities, one would have thought.

Though he had already played to SRO audiences in London and Oslo, in New York Kopenawa ran into problems, since he turned out to be something short of a Politically Correct Indigenous Person. For one thing, he is an unabashed racist. "Everything in the world here, everything in these countries is mixed up," he complained to the *Times*. "Nothing is separated. All the races are

mixed. They don't have blood of their own." While speaking to the reporter he lovingly eyed a poodle on the street; the animal's hair, he explained, "would substitute wonderfully for the feathers used to decorate the Yanomami head-dresses." (Animal rights activists, call your office.) Moreover, even the *Times* conceded that the Yanomami were a "fierce people" because of their tendency to, well, kill each other with axes, clubs, and long, bamboo-tipped arrows.

Anthropologist Kenneth Good, whose book on the Yanomami¹ was published earlier this year, confesses that even after living among them for several years, he found it difficult to endure cer-

¹*Into the Heart*. Simon & Schuster, 352 pp. \$21.95.

tain incidents. It was particularly stressful, for example, to "stand around with your notebook in your hand" while young braves dragged a woman into the forest for what the braves must have regarded as a bit of naughty fun. (Rape crisis activists, check your beepers.) Poor Mr. Good, trained not to "take sides and make value judgements," discovered painfully (though not as painfully as the luckless Indian woman) that his values (you know, the kind associated with Western civilization) were not current just now in the jungles of the Amazon and, as long as the Yanomami are kept in their edenic state, are not likely to be anytime soon. (Good eventually married a woman from the tribe, but they now live in the United States—in Torrance, California, I hope.)

Since the death of socialism, the only thing the left has left in this country is anti-Americanism—a provincial branch of the larger phenomenon of Self-Hatred. "The American label is not a neutral label," intoned Bryan J. Wolf, professor of American Studies and English at Yale, at a recent symposium on the American West at the Smithsonian Institution. Nobody can argue with that. But Professor Wolf and his fellow-travelers had better watch it. The Columbus celebrations may set ordinary folk to thinking about things—like comparative civilization and universal values—that might not otherwise have occurred to them. And the conclusions they reach may not be the ones printed in the Teacher's Answer Book. □

EUROPEAN DOCUMENT



THE STASI FILES

by Jeffrey Gedmin

"The Stasi is like a poisonous mushroom," the woman said in a dark, musing way to her husband as they lay in bed just before falling asleep. "A poisonous mushroom with the mycelium, the network of countless strand-like threads that run beneath the surface of the ground, stuck to nearly every one of us." It was the perfect analogy. At least that's what the officer of East Germany's Ministry for State Security (MfS) thought at the time, as he monitored the couple's conversation from his listening post. "The poisonous mushroom, the Stasi itself," he reflected, "is in fact relatively small . . . but [our] network of informers—the *Jasager*, the opportunists—is vast."

When it comes to domestic surveillance, the Stasi was likely the most impressive apparatus of its kind in the Soviet Bloc, perhaps because it was able to draw on the tradition of the Gestapo as well as that of the KGB, perhaps because a divided country gives an excuse for greater ideological vigilance. Perhaps also because German discipline and *Gründlichkeit* allowed East Germany to outpace its Slavic neighbors in most

aspects of totalitarian proficiency. An acquaintance of mine, a blacklisted academic in Erfurt, traveled every few weeks in the mid-1980s to neighboring Czechoslovakia to inspect spots along the border where he might slip into the Bavarian countryside. When I asked what made him think the Czech border guards would react any differently from their East German comrades, he answered, "Ah, but that's the law of averages I've chosen to play. I'm assuming the Czechs will feel obligated to shoot, but the Germans will consider it their duty always to hit their target."

In a country the size of Ohio, with fewer people (16.7 million) than Mexico City, the MfS employed some 85,000 staffers, with 5,000 full-time tails, 6,000 listeners, and 2,100 mail censors (600 in East Berlin alone). The Stasi bugged phones, faxes, offices, homes, hotels, restaurants, automobiles, and gas stations, even Catholic confessionals and seats in the Dresden Opera House. In a society where so much was forbidden, there was simply an abundance to keep track of. And as MfS chief Erich Mielke liked to say, "Every individual is a potential security risk." Hence "the firm" kept six million personal files (two million on West Germans), on everyone from the maintenance man at a high school in rural Thuringia to Communist leader Erich Honecker himself. Mielke

even had a tap on the phone of his number-two, the spymaster Markus Wolf, who orchestrated Stasi efforts abroad.

Even before perestroika, the MfS had taken it upon itself to serve as Communist Europe's beacon of orthodoxy. When East Berlin became impatient with the inability of Poland's regime to control the re-emerging Solidarity virus in the early 1980s, Honecker ordered the MfS to keep tabs on exiled Polish dissidents in Western Europe. Eventually the MfS decided to "show the sloppy Poles how it's done" by dispatching special units to the East German embassy in Warsaw and the consulates in Gdansk, Wrocław, and Szczecin, with orders to monitor subversive ongoings in Catholic Church and Solidarity circles. (In Poland as elsewhere, the Stasi often did proxy work for the KGB. According to one former Stasi officer, "The Soviets were never able to get themselves properly established in Poland. Anti-Russian sentiment . . . was strong, even with people in the security apparatus.")

Guided by simple, direct company slogans like "Everything is suspicious" and "Get everything," the MfS collected intelligence with great zeal: sexual habits, personal finances, medical records, books checked out from libraries (who, for instance, might express

interest in the operation of hot-air balloons or scuba gear). The Stasi wanted to know which of its citizens traveling abroad committed adultery, and who at home would steal a visit to a trash dump in search of foreign literature. (Authorities kept watch at special sites for refuse collected from the highway linking West Germany to Berlin.) In the case of Herr Honecker, Mielke sought to document the East German leader's less than heroic behavior during ten years of Nazi incarceration in Berlin and Brandenburg.

The MfS was a formidable instrument, to be sure, but the real success of the feared and despised Stasi agents, or GHG (*Gucken, Horchen, und Greifen*—watching, listening, and nabbing), as the Stasi were also known, depended on an army of *Mitläufer*—those average, respectable citizens of a dictatorship who, for a thousand reasons, some pardonable, others unforgivable, agree to surrender their consciences and collaborate with the state. In Stasi jargon, they were *die Blauen* (the Blue Ones, as their informers' files originally had blue covers) or, more romantically, *die roten Lampen*, the "little red lanterns" that kept the Communists' project aglow.

The Stasi's 20,000 case officers ran some 109,000 active informers in 1989, the year the East German regime capitulated; nearly half a million were actu-

ally on the books, and ready to be activated. One can estimate that, in due course, one out of every thirty-two East Germans served as an *inoffizielle Mitarbeiter* (IM, for "unofficial colleague") of the MfS. The Stasi kept more than three-and-a-half times the number of informers maintained by their Czechoslovak counterpart, and put a country like Hungary to shame, with Budapest's state security managing only five to ten thousand informers in a population of 10.3 million. (A retired KGB officer recently put the number of his organization's informers at 20 million, 7 percent of the Soviet population.) When 150,000 people marched in the streets of Leipzig during the 1989 revolution, chanting "We are the people," 50,000 might have intoned "We are the Stasi," since, by the MfS's own estimate, between their full-time personnel and IMs, one out of three demonstrators was linked to the firm.

Since early 1990, publishers have flooded the market with books chronicling Stasi abuses. Of these, Lienhard Wawrzyn's *The Blue One: The Informer System of the GDR*¹ is particularly illuminating. Based on Stasi documents and a collection of interviews with former East German informants and their controllers, *The Blue One* offers a glimpse of how a model police state works: how informers are cultivated, enlisted, and controlled; how they are used not only to extend the scope of the security organs' surveillance, but also to ruin the lives of "unpleasant citizens" by destroying a reputation, a marriage, a circle of friends, or the mental or physical health of the "target." Above all, Wawrzyn's documentation helps explain how informers foster mistrust and uncertainty, the glue that can hold a Communist state together. Of neighbor or colleague, friend or relative, even a spouse, "everyone was forced to consider," recalls one ex-Stasi officer, "that he might be an informer."

For the MfS the optimal age for the recruitment of an informer was 14 or 15, according to a Mielke memo, though what the Stasi specialists called the "informer mentality" was to be nurtured much earlier. "Kindergarten and primary school served as the lathe upon which we shaped our IMs," one former MfS case officer tells Wawrzyn. Here began the process of *Krümmen* ("bending"), the wringing out of the individual's integrity and will to make him pliant and acquiescent, ready for servitude to party and state.

Already in nursery school, children were weaned from their families—certain schoolrooms were designated off-

limits to parents for "reasons of hygiene." Guidelines from the Ministry of Education stipulated minutely precise measures contributing to conformity and *Ordnung*. Teachers were instructed in what manner and how many times a day children should wash their hands (eight times); or told that no child should be permitted to wave goodbye to his mother in the morning ("Otherwise all the children would want to do the same"). By high school, every adolescent was to know, as one ex-Stasi official puts it, that "nothing happened without our approval." One recently unmasked Stasi informer, a member of the state parliament of Mecklenburg, explained how he had been coerced into service at age 16. MfS officers, first approaching him under the guise of regular police after an accident with homemade firecrackers had caused serious injury to a friend, threatened him with jail and a prohibition on university study.

The MfS agents would skillfully mix carrot and stick to "bend" their candidates, and the reasons for collaborating were varied. Some IMs received small cash payments, others a phone, a car, a better job, or a chance to travel West. Those who would not bend were treated harshly. One Stasi agent recalls:

If an individual was to take a business trip [to the West], I could go to his boss and say, "Choynowski is a security risk." No one could check this out. . . . Even if the boss asked why his employee couldn't take the trip, I'd simply say I have sources and information I can't reveal. . . . There was this Choynowski who wouldn't be bent, wouldn't become my IM. He made his first trip November 9 [the day the Berlin Wall fell].

For the ever-reluctant, the Stasi could see to it that, say, medicine was withheld from a pensioner's spouse; the MfS could move behind the scenes to decide a child custody case; its agents could even threaten forced adoption to elicit cooperation.²

For efficiency, the Stasi divided its minions into seven categories according to their function: Some "colleagues" were all-purpose informers. Others were devoted to counter-intelligence. Still others managed other informers (usually three to four). "Special colleagues" penetrated leadership circles in industry, agriculture, and civil administration. Certain people put their apartments, phones, or cars at the disposal of Stasi

²Marc Fisher revealed a particularly harrowing instance of forced adoption in an August article in the *Washington Post*, and showed that West German politicians were at times guilty of turning a blind eye to the practice. Egon Franke, minister for inter-German affairs in the Social Democratic government of Willy Brandt, went so far as to deny categorically before parliament that any forced adoptions were taking place.

agents. Certain informers were party members, obliged to cooperate with the Stasi. Others were "unknown colleagues," a secret layer of informers devoted to checking the reliability of other informers.

Often, different types of colleagues would be strung together to form a net around a particular subject, as when more than a dozen informers were used to envelop East German author

Reiner Kunze in the years prior to his emigration to West Germany in 1977. In *Cover Name: "Lyrik,"* Kunze shares a portion of what he discovered in his Stasi file—a twelve-volume collection of 3,491 pages of meticulously compiled data. (Another East German writer who's already had a peek into his dossier came upon a full *thirty-one* volumes devoted to himself and his family. Eck-

¹*Deckname 'Lyrik.'* Frankfurt-am-Main; Fischer Taschenbuchverlag, 1990.

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BUD LEMLEY KATHLEEN PINTO DON YARLING RON BURR

art Werthback, head of German counterintelligence, recently told me that he had come to the conclusion that the Stasi were suffocating themselves in vast, unmanageable mounds of information they were often simply unable to process.)

Kunze first became a problem for the East German regime when he expressed his sympathy for the Prague Spring in 1968. Three years later, frustrated that "the current political situation [i.e., *détente*] does not permit us to legally bring Kunze to accountability for his literary activity," the Stasi decided to move against him under Guideline 1/76, by initiating the "systematic organization of failure, both in career and socially, with the aim of undermining the self-esteem of the individual." In casing their victim, the MfS was amply assisted. A December 1972 Stasi report reads:

Regarding the individual H. . . . he could

be used for operative tasks in Leiningen. . . . I've . . . used him often as a source. H. can see Kunze's property from his home . . . ca. 80m away. H. can also use his wife when he's at work. . . . This source informs me that the electrical work in Kunze's home was done by a certain M. . . . He could be used, through a third party, if we want to know what's inside the house. M.'s sister is married to a comrade at the police station in Greiz. . . .

Comrade R. lives across from Kunze, and by opening the window can keep watch on Nr. 10. Comrade H., . . . 68 years old, a pensioner, [also] lives across the way and has denounced Kunze in my presence. He's often at home and in the evenings can watch Kunze's front door at all times. Comrades Mr. and Mrs. F. . . . ca. 65-70 years old, live directly across the way. The wife is the sister of H.F., who works for the MfS in Gera.

The Stasi carefully outlined behavior for its IMs. A student at the university of Jena was to raise questions in dissident circles about the authenticity of the author's anti-socialist beliefs by posing

questions like "Why is it that nothing ever happens to Kunze?" IMs working with Kunze's wife Elisabeth were "to give Frau Dr. Kunze to understand that her medical colleagues do not identify with the views of her husband; that her husband's public stance does not do service to our state, and that it may have consequences for her and her medical work; that she, as a doctor and humanist, must feel obliged to deter her husband from such unreflective and impossible activity."

The harassment did not cease when the Kunzes finally emigrated to West Germany; the Stasi continued its efforts to damage the author's reputation and professional standing by using "contacts in the Western media." (There are still roughly 500 "top sources" of the old MfS on West German soil, a number of whom have been taken over by the KGB, according to German intelligence officials.) Kunze may consider himself

lucky, though. MfS boss Mielke was so personally incensed by the 1979 defection of soccer star Lutz Eigendorf that he put a contract out on Eigendorf in West Germany. Information recently uncovered in Stasi documents indicates MfS agents were to place a poisonous substance, which would enter the victim's bloodstream on contact, on the door handle of Eigendorf's car. Eigendorf died in a mysterious auto accident in 1983.

Although Stasi materials must be considered damaged assets—some files were spirited off to the Soviet Union, others were deliberately falsified, and many, of course, were destroyed—from them flow a rich, textured documentation of one of Eastern Europe's most successful totalitarian projects. And from them one begins to grasp why it will take the East Germans quite some time before they are free to leave the past behind. □

BEN STEIN'S DIARY



COMRADES AND PATIENTS

by Benjamin J. Stein

Tuesday

It's a great day. True, it's raining in the middle of July, in Los Angeles, California. True, the first call I got this morning was from Moni, the incredibly kind Iranian woman at my bank, telling me I was overdrawn. True, I woke up tired and with a sore throat.

Benjamin J. Stein is the author of Will You Still Love Me Tomorrow? (St. Martin's Press).

But the worst problems I have at this stage of my life—loneliness, general lassitude, worrying about money—are all so small by comparison with what happens to people in this world that I sometimes laugh out loud with gratitude when I think about the contrast. This is a great day.

Anyway, I wrote for a few hours about my old pal Michael M., one hell of a guy, and then I had a call from my

pal W. She is a beautiful woman of about twenty-nine from Mississippi. I was madly in love with her a few years ago, and she was staggeringly mean to me. In my whole life, no one else has ever been so sadistically cruel. Insults, belittlements, rejection, every kind of mockery, and other bad stuff.

Fate, gnarled McFate, that old nightclub stand-up act that no one can ever top, had it in for W. Two years or so ago, she was diagnosed as having multiple sclerosis and was laid up in the hospital for about a month.

She resumed work—at a job I had gotten her in a desperate effort to make her love me—and resumed her usual shenanigans of mockery and contempt, as if possibly they might help her treatment.

She was calling, in tears, to tell me that she was having a bad relapse of MS, and that she could not drive but needed to see her doctor. The physician in question was in an unnamed hospital in another part of town.

After I drove her there, W. sort of shuffled along, and I had to hold her up. She seemed so little and scared and terrified and wasted that it was hard to believe she had ever had such power over

me. The other patients in the tower, crammed into the tiny elevators—why do medical buildings and hospitals never have enough elevators?—looked literally demented with fear. I mean scared stiff, twisted, out of their minds.

As we walked down the hall, a narrow, dark hall that reminded me of the hall that the prisoner walked down en route to eternity in *Darkness at Noon*, I asked W. if we were going to see her neurologist.

"No," she said. "This is my nutritionist."

"You're kidding," I said. "You're having an attack of MS and you're going to see your nutritionist?"

"Yes, and he's also going to press my pressure points to determine if I might have some elevated levels of toxins in my system which might require a high colonic."

"W.," I said, "I'm just going to assume that you're kidding."

She wasn't. Her doctor was not only a nutritionist, but also a Sikh, an expert on toxins, an acupuncturist, and a first-class ganef as far as I was concerned. Naturally, others might have different views.

In his cavernous waiting room, there

