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The main reason for the closure of the East–West sectoral border in Berlin on 13 August 1961, and the ensuing construction of the Berlin Wall, was to prevent refugees from fleeing the German Democratic Republic and so keep the Communist state in being. However, new evidence shows that the border was also closed for security reasons, as the Communists claimed – they called it 'the securing of the state border' ('die Sicherung der Staatsgrenze'). The open border with the West in Berlin was the main cause of the GDR's intense security crisis in the 1950s and its closure gave the state greater stability. The security advantages to the Communists of closing the border were so obvious that the Western secret services had long feared that they would do precisely this. In particular, the West's spy chiefs saw that Khrushchev's ultimatum of November 1958 over Berlin was in part designed to put an end to their operations. Although they did not see precisely what action would be taken, they expected some measure or other to deprive them of their base in West Berlin; they saw also that the closure of the sectoral border was a distinct possibility. Far from being unanticipated, the security measure taken by the Communists in August 1961 was one of the most long-expected and carefully-prepared-for events of the twentieth century.

In this paper I seek to make four points. The first is that border security was essential to the Communist police state. The police state of the German Democratic Republic (GDR) did not function properly in the years before 1961 because East Germans could escape it – either for a day or two, or forever. This is established by records of East Germany's Ministry of State Security (*Ministerium für Staatssicherheit*, or MfS) and, in particular, by records of its *Hauptabteilung IX* (Main Department IX). This was the

Ministry's 'investigation unit' (*Untersuchungsorgan*); among other things, it was responsible for interrogating arrested spies. Its records are the principal source for this paper and they put the Second Berlin Crisis of 1958–63 in a new light. Espionage and subversion against the GDR were organized from a safe haven located right next to it and conducted over a border it had not yet managed to close. This was a challenge which the Soviet security service had not faced since the Bolshevik regime had signed the Treaty of Brest–Litovsk in 1918. In the Treaty's wake, the Bolsheviks had closed their state's western border.

From this follows the second point, which is that the Second Berlin Crisis had a security dimension which has not been explored until now. Admittedly, the Communists' principal motive for closing the sectoral border in Berlin was to stop the flight of refugees and so prevent the GDR from collapsing. However, the border closure was also motivated by security considerations, as the Communists claimed at the time. Moreover (my third point), in closing the border the Communists achieved their objective: the GDR's security against espionage and subversion was decisively increased. Lastly, I answer the question: did the Western secret services fail to anticipate and prepare for the closure of the sectoral border? Was this, as it has been depicted, an 'intelligence failure', since warning was not given of a profound change in the international political situation?[1] I will prove that the Western secret services did not fail to see what might happen. Although they did not specifically predict to their governments that the border would be closed, they realized that this was possible and made extensive preparations to ensure that their operations could continue in the harder conditions which would ensue.

The open border between the Soviet and Western sectors of Berlin in the years 1945–61 enabled the Western secret services to undertake mass espionage and very threatening subversion throughout East Berlin and East Germany. These operations depended largely on freedom of movement over the sectoral border.[2] This had four benefits above all for the Western secret services. Firstly, it meant that refugees could leave the GDR via West Berlin. This was the main escape route for the majority of them. There they were interrogated by the intelligence services and asked to name people still in East Germany, usually colleagues at work or friends, who would be willing to act as spies. Widespread anti-Communism among East Germans allowed plenty of spy candidates to be nominated. Contact was then made with those named, again exploiting the open border in Berlin. The refugee wrote a letter to the targeted person, inviting him (or her) to a meeting in West Berlin. The letter was sent to the target. To prevent interception, it was either posted in the GDR by a courier who crossed over to it from West Berlin, or delivered to the target by a courier. The reports of *Hauptabteilung IX* indicate that the overwhelming majority of the spies arrested by the MfS were recruited in this

way.[3] So the refugee stream, passing largely through West Berlin, and the fact that West Berlin was accessible to East Germans, were the key factors which enabled spying to be undertaken on a large scale in the GDR.

The accessibility of West Berlin also enabled spies to communicate with their controllers quickly, safely and fully. The dominant method of communication until the sectoral border was closed, in the case of all the major Western services, was a personal meeting between the two, which usually took place in West Berlin. At these meetings, the spy passed on his information and the controller issued new instructions. He also trained the spy in spying techniques and security methods. If the spy needed particular equipment (for example, a radar detection device so that he could locate surface-to-air missile installations), he could be supplied with it at the meeting. This was the best form of communication from the perspective of both. It ensured that as much information as possible was taken from the spy, often with little delay after it had been obtained. Many of the most important targets of Western espionage were just across the sectoral border – for example, the ministries of the Socialist Unity Party (SED[4]) regime and many of the leading factories and scientific research laboratories. Spies in such targets often met their controllers very frequently indeed – as often as once a fortnight.[5] The personal meeting was also the safest method of communication. It was easy for the spy to slip across the sectoral border unnoticed. Many streets running from East into West Berlin were open and identity documents were checked on very few of them; there were no checks at all on the Underground. The alternative forms of communicating intelligence were all less safe, for reasons which appear below.[6]

The open border in West Berlin and the flight of refugees to West Germany (generally over this border) were also essential to Western subversion of the GDR. The flight of refugees was the best possible propaganda for the West: if the Communists were creating a just and equal society, why were so many fleeing from it? Among those who came over were defectors (defectors, of course, are simply refugees of particular intelligence value). Western governments, and above all the United States government, seized the opportunity provided by the open border in West Berlin to encourage and induce flight and thus undermine the young and vulnerable Communist state. The full extent of the measures the United States took is still unclear. However, at the very least, Radio in the American Sector (RIAS), a 'grey' radio station broadcasting under its overall direction, deliberately encouraged East Germans, and particularly well-qualified people, to flee.[7] It also sought to stimulate a spirit of resistance to Communism. In June 1953, following the popular uprising in East Germany, the National Security Council, in NSC-158, tried to exploit the crisis by ordering US intelligence to 'intensify defection programs, aimed at satellite police leaders and military personnel

(especially pilots) and Soviet military personnel' and 'launch black radio intruder operations to encourage defection'.[8]

Efforts were made to persuade specific categories of East Germans to defect, not only at this one time of crisis, but throughout the 1950s. With NSC-86/1, signed by President Truman in April 1951, the National Security Council ordered that efforts be made to induce 'key personnel' in East Germany and the other satellites to defect.[9] One defection plan approved in December 1952 pursuant to NSC-86/1 was 'A National Psychological Plan with Respect to Escapees from the Soviet Orbit'; it was codenamed 'Engross'. Phase 'B' (i.e. Part 'B') prescribed measures to induce defection; a summary of psychological warfare plans describes it as 'concerned with the stimulation of defection and examination of the psychological and subsidiary military advantages which would result from the proper utilization' of the defectors.[10] The first targets were soldiers: the Truman Administration's psychological plan for Germany, codenamed 'Plutonic', provided that policy was 'to encourage . . . defection from the Soviet and East German military or paramilitary forces'.[11] British and American records establish that scientists, engineers and technicians were also important targets from the early 1950s until at least 1958. They were either offered specific jobs in the West (usually West Germany) or given a guarantee that employment would be found for them. Inducing their defection was intended to hamper the GDR's ability to develop its science and industry and so diminish the assistance it could give to the USSR in the latter's efforts to compete with the United States in the arms race. The chief targets were scientific workers who had been compelled to work in the Soviet Union in the late 1940s and 1950s and had been returned to their country between 1950 and 1958 (these people were called the 'SU-Spezialisten' by the East German government). They were given good jobs in the GDR to keep them there; indeed, many joined the new state's scientific and industrial élite.[12] Between 1951 and 1952 there was a big increase in the number of defections of SU-Spezialisten induced by the Americans, which probably reflected the impact of NSC-86/1 and the 'Engross' Plan. By November 1952 a British intelligence officer involved in cooperation with the Americans described their practice as 'a wholesale exploitation on mass production lines'.[13] MfS records indicate that induced defection continued after all these people had returned home. In November 1958 the MfS received information that efforts would be made the following year by both the Americans and the West Germans to induce the defection of key workers in the GDR aircraft industry.[14] Those induced to defect, like refugees simply encouraged to flee, usually made their way West over the Berlin sectoral border.

Lastly, the open border in Berlin enabled resistance fighters acting on behalf of West German resistance organizations to enter the GDR and

give support to the organizations' members and sympathizers there. These organizations were, as a rule, funded by the Western secret services, which thus kept an anti-Communist resistance in being in the GDR.[15] The organizations were also largely made up of refugees and tended to be based in West Berlin. Thus West Berlin and the exit route from the GDR and the Bloc which it provided were inseparably connected challenges for the Soviet and East German regimes and their security services; together they caused the GDR an intense security crisis which was only brought under control when the sectoral border was closed. In the whole history of states, it is hard to think of a state which has suffered an espionage and subversion crisis as grave as that which gripped the GDR in the years up to 1961. Of West Berlin, an officer of West Germany's *Bundesnachrichtendienst* (BND[16]) wrote in 1968, 'The history of spying knows no better base'.[17]

PREPARATIONS FOR A SOVIET AND EAST GERMAN INITIATIVE TO DEPRIVE THE WESTERN SECRET SERVICES OF WEST BERLIN

So heavily did the Western secret services' operations depend on the sectoral border remaining open that they constantly feared that the Communists would try to close it. They were right to fear this: it has been claimed that in the early 1950s the first Minister of State Security, Wilhelm Zaisser, drew up a plan for the construction of a wall between the two halves of Berlin.[18] The Western services prepared throughout the 1950s both for the closure of the border and for war. Both would deprive them of their perfect base, West Berlin. Evidence of their preparations is to be found in the *Tätigkeits- und Auswertungsberichte* (Progress and Assessment Reports) of the MfS's *Hauptabteilung IX*. Among other tasks, the 'investigation unit' interrogated arrested spies and reported on what they had been told by their controllers. Thus the HA IX's reports are a valuable source on the operations of the Western secret services.

In 1957, the MfS arrested a road worker who had in 1952 been recruited to spy on the Soviet army in the GDR on behalf of the embryonic West German Defence Ministry, the *Amt Blank* (Blank Office). He was controlled from West Berlin. The HA IX learned from him that, after the June 1953 uprising, he had been informed that an alternative means of communicating with him, using dead letter boxes[19] filled and emptied by couriers, would be created. This means of communication would be used 'if West Berlin were blockaded'; it would enable intelligence to be transferred if the sectoral border were closed and he could no longer reach West Berlin.[20] Stricter Soviet security had made spying more difficult during the blockade of 1948–49, though movement between East and West Berlin had remained possible.[21] The sectoral border was closed briefly in 1953, 1957 and 1960,

which kept the danger alive in their minds.[22] The Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) was 'haunted' by the prospect and even opposed the US Government's humanitarian distribution of food to East Germans after the 1953 uprising on the ground that the latter would rush to West Berlin to collect it, which would give the Soviets an excuse to close the border.[23] It advised the government in that year that 'preparations for sealing off West Berlin from East Germany and East Berlin have been substantially completed'.[24] Although it considered a complete sealing of the border to be impossible, the CIA still thought that an effort might be made to close it, which might be effective enough to stop any significant traffic over it.

The spy Gisela Zurth, an agent of a West German service the MfS believed to be the West Berlin *Landesamt für Verfassungsschutz* (State Office for the Protection of the Constitution), was likewise told in either 1956 or 1957 to create a dead letter box, just in case the 'sectoral borders' were sealed off. The verb used in the MfS report on this case, as in its reports on others, is *abriegeln*, which means to seal, cordon or block off.[25] In August or September 1958, the BND gave one of its spies a radio with which he was to transmit intelligence 'if West Berlin were sealed off'.[26] Franz Brehmer, an important CIA spy, was told in April 1958, well in advance of Khrushchev's ultimatum, that he was no longer to come to West Berlin to meet his controller. Instead, he was to receive his instructions by radio and provide intelligence by dead letter box or by secret writing in a letter.[27] He was informed by radio of cover addresses to which to send reports.[28] Britain's Secret Intelligence Service (SIS) also took precautions well before Khrushchev's ultimatum. In 1959 the MfS arrested one of its spies, a housewife who spied on military targets. She passed on her information both in letters to cover addresses and in meetings with her controller. During the winter of 1957–58 she received a message from her controller that 'it was necessary to prepare for the possibility that the state and sectoral borders might be sealed'. If this happened, she was to pass on her intelligence by secret writing.[29] A military spy of the BND collected a radio set and transmitter from a dead letter box in August or September 1958; he was told to use it to transmit information if the border around West Berlin were closed (again, the word used is *Abriegelung*).[30]

The Western secret services also prepared for war throughout the 1950s. The Gehlen Organization was even in the early 1950s doing so by laying dead letter boxes and equipping agents with radio transmitters. In 1953 it even tried secretly to lay telephone cables between East and West Berlin.[31] In the years 1953–55 the MfS carried out arrests of spies, resistance fighters and other suspicious characters in three well-organized and large-scale operations, respectively codenamed 'Feuerwerk' (Firework), 'Pfeil' (Arrow) and 'Blitz' (Lightning). Soviet security officers played a large role in the

planning of these operations and, indeed, the Soviet security service, the Komitet Gosudarstvennoi Bezopastnosti (KGB) later claimed in an internal report that, thanks to information provided by its penetration agents in SIS and the Gehlen Organization, it had 'achieved the elimination of the adversary's agent network in the GDR in 1953–55' (this was an exaggeration).[32] In April 1955 Erich Mielke, the Stasi's deputy chief, reported on 'Blitz' to the SED Central Committee. He noted that most of the arrested agents and resistance fighters had met their controllers in West Berlin. However, he added that the Western secret services feared war and had distributed radio sets to their agents to ensure that they could still communicate with them if West Berlin were overrun by the Warsaw Pact.[33]

KHRUSHCHEV'S ULTIMATUM OVER BERLIN

In November 1958 the USSR's leader, Nikita Khrushchev, issued his ultimatum over Berlin. This was his attempt to settle both the Berlin and German questions on terms favourable to the Soviet Union. He demanded negotiations leading to a peace treaty with both German states. By signing it, the Western Allies would implicitly recognize the German Democratic Republic. This treaty would end the Allies' access rights to West Berlin, from which they would withdraw completely. West Berlin would become a 'free' and demilitarized city. In reality, it would be 'free' in name only, since it would not inherit the Allies' rights of transit to it from West Germany. Any such new rights would have to be conceded by the GDR. These transit rights were crucial to West Berlin, which depended on imported food and coal to survive. To ensure that the Western secret services could not operate against the GDR and the rest of the Bloc from West Berlin, Khrushchev insisted that the new 'free' city would have to undertake not to allow 'any hostile subversive activity' against East Germany. Anti-Soviet organizations – that is to say, the Western secret services' partner organizations – were to be suppressed. Finally, he demanded that a peace treaty be signed within six months. If this did not happen, he threatened to sign a separate peace treaty with the GDR, which, as he saw it, would end the Western Allies' rights of access to West Berlin and give the GDR control of all transport routes over its territory. This would start a blockade of West Berlin. He threatened that the Warsaw Pact would respond with force if the West tried to break it.[34] However, the Western Allies did not yield to the ultimatum. Khrushchev only 'solved' the Berlin problem when, in August 1961, the SED regime closed the sectoral border. Of course, by so doing it merely exchanged one problem for another. The closed border, which turned into the Berlin Wall, became the most potent symbol of the repressiveness of Communism.[35] In practice, it also ended the crisis over Berlin without resort to war; as a solution to the

crisis it was not unwelcome to the United States. As President Kennedy observed, 'It's not a very nice solution, but a wall is a hell of a lot better than a war'.[36]

The Western governments racked their brains to work out how Khrushchev intended to solve the Berlin problem. Although they were surprised in August 1961 by the border closure, this was not for want of thought. The conclusion of the American and West German governments was that the likeliest Soviet initiative was a blockade of West Berlin. This was a worst-case analysis since to make a blockade effective the Soviets would have to deprive them of their access routes to West Berlin. This they could do easily and without using force. They could cut the air routes by making Allied flights to West Berlin very dangerous (for example, using electronic interference or by filling the routes with their own planes). The land and water routes could simply be closed. In practice, the loss of these routes meant the Allies' expulsion from the city, which was what they feared most. They were also too influenced by the ultimatum, which indicated that Khrushchev was determined to deprive them of these vulnerable access routes and thus expel them from the city. Both the Americans and the West Germans saw a border closure as unlikely. Consequently, NATO military planning focused on ways of breaking a blockade.[37] Military intelligence was influential. There was a lot of it on the strength and movements of Soviet forces in East Germany; it indicated that a blockade was possible.[38]

The CIA, advising the US Government, considered the possibility of a closure of the sectoral border but thought that complete closure would be impossible. Early in 1959 it argued that 'police, border guards and workers' militiamen could be posted at strategic points, but it would be impossible to seal the dividing line effectively'.[39] Its reports stress the importance of preparing to break a blockade; they do not mention a wall. General war was considered very unlikely.[40] President Kennedy showed more foresight; he remarked to his adviser Walt Rostow shortly before the border was closed, 'Khrushchev is losing East Germany. He cannot let that happen. If East Germany goes, so will Poland and all of Eastern Europe. He will have to do something to stop the flow of refugees – perhaps a wall'.[41] But, when he set out the 'Three Essentials' of his Berlin policy, on 25 July 1961, he did not forbid the construction of a wall; however, he did insist that the Allies retain unhindered access to West Berlin.[42]

Rumours of plans to prevent refugees from crossing into West Berlin did circulate. Only days before the border was closed, Western foreign ministers, meeting in Paris, discussed whether such a measure might provoke a popular uprising. Warning of the border closure was given by an informant of the West German Social Democratic Party's Eastern Bureau (*Ostbüro*), who had on 4 August attended a meeting in the GDR Health Ministry at which

preparations for the imminent closure were discussed. The Eastern Bureau sent copies of the report to the BND and representatives of the three Western Powers. The BND's President, Reinhard Gehlen, himself delivered it immediately to the Federal Government in Bonn.[43] The US Government was surprised both by the measure taken and by its timing. It had expected a clash with the Soviets over Berlin in the winter; it feared that Khrushchev would then try to restrict the Allies' access to West Berlin.[44] The closure of the entire sectoral border also surprised the Allied Commandants in West Berlin, who had made no plans for this eventuality.[45]

However, although a border closure might not be fully effective, it might still be attempted. The Western secret services had to prepare for all eventualities, not only for what was likely. There were three possible resolutions to the crisis; all would make West Berlin of much less use to them. Firstly, the Western Allies might yield to the ultimatum. As a matter of international law, their secret services would therefore have to withdraw from the city. Even if they remained, their secret stations would find it much harder to operate from Berlin. The ban on 'hostile subversive activity' would either end clandestine operations altogether or severely restrict them. The MfS and the KGB, would be on the watch for any infringement of the East–West agreement. Secondly, West Berlin might be fully blockaded; the sectoral border would be closed as part of this. East Germans would therefore no longer be able to reach West Berlin, which would cease to be useful as a place for recruiting and communicating with spies and resistance fighters. Thirdly, the crisis might lead to war (for example, if the Western Powers sought to break a blockade by force). In the event of war, Warsaw Pact forces would overrun West Berlin and any Western spying there would have to take place in much more difficult conditions. The MfS records show that the Western secret services prepared for all of these possibilities.

The ultimatum had an immediate impact on all the Western services, particularly those of the United States and the BND. An MfS report describes the reaction of Western intelligence officers to it: 'Immediate reaction on the part of all intelligence services, particularly Americans and *Bundesnachrichtendienst* – officers disturbed, confused – however, unlike politicians of the Western Powers [they] evaluated the situation relatively realistically – that means: comprehensive reordering of their operations'.[46] For the next three years, this reordering focused chiefly on their communication methods with their agents.

Since West Berlin provided their principal way of communicating with their spies, the immediate priority was to arrange alternative means of communication. They therefore supplied their spies with equipment making alternative forms of communication possible. Over the next several years, the

MfS managed to arrest many spies who had received such supplies. Some spies were expressly told that they were being prepared for an attempt to close the sectoral border, which was therefore seen as a distinct possibility. The BND arranged with one of its spies that, in the words of one MfS report, 'if the state border between the GDR and West Berlin were closed, he would be charged with leading a so-called BND headquarters on the territory of the GDR'.[47]

The means of communication they prepared to use was that the secret service would communicate by radio and the spy by secret writing in a letter; this was the communication system put into action after 13 August 1961. The secret service would transmit encoded instructions by radio at agreed times. Each spy would identify his call number and take down and decode his instructions. To send information, the spy would write in invisible ink on to a letter specially prepared for him by the secret service. He would encode information which could lead to his identification. He would sign the letter using a false name and send it to a cover address, usually in West Germany or West Berlin but also in other countries like Denmark or Greece. This address would be a very ordinary one. Spies were informed of cover addresses before the border was closed; they were also given special paper and trained and equipped to encode secret writing.[48] Many were already sending intelligence by post. (This was particularly the case with those who spied on the Soviet and East German armed forces and had therefore to supply a steady stream of intelligence.) However, the post was a secondary form of communication before the border closure. After it, the overwhelming majority of spies used this method – in 1965, 94 per cent of the captured military spies who had operated in the Potsdam area.[49] The numbers of letters, postcards and packages passing from the GDR to the Federal Republic – more than 100 million letters alone every year by the 1980s – made it the safest method; it was impossible to examine all of them.[50] Of course, secret writing had disadvantages. It was slow and the intelligence received by the secret service was often out of date. However, intelligence of military movements had to be passed on quickly; to obtain it, the BND had to use agents with radios or travelling spies.[51] Furthermore, secret writing only allowed a small amount of intelligence to be communicated.

Shortwave converters were issued to spies which they could plug into radio sets, thus enabling them to receive shortwave transmissions from their controlling service. Alternatively, spies were told to buy radio sets considered appropriate. The BND distributed many converters, as HA IX's reports for the years 1959–65 show. They contain very many examples of agents who were suddenly told that the communication methods in use would have to change. For example, a husband-and-wife team which spied for the BND in Frankfurt an der Oder were in 1959 given a shortwave converter and shown

how to use it 'in the event that their connection with West Berlin were cut'.[52] A spy working for the British and observing military bases and movements in the Dresden area had by 1960 long been sending his information to West German addresses in secret writing; in the spring of 1960 he was given a converter to attach to a radio set so that he could receive instructions from SIS.[53] Another husband-and-wife team spying for the BND, this time on the docks in Wismar, received a shortwave converter in the autumn of 1959. To communicate intelligence if war came, they also laid a dead letter box in a nearby graveyard.[54] A BND military spy in Magdeburg was given a converter in the summer of 1958. In December he was given a radio set allowing him to transmit; he was told to use it for communication if the borders were closed.[55]

   Cases of arrested spies show that the Western services were preparing for all three possible eventualities: war, withdrawal from West Berlin, and the closure of the sectoral border. In the Leipzig area a BND spying team made up of a wartime intelligence officer and his ex-wife supplied military intelligence. The husband was twice told to prepare for war by laying dead letter boxes in the vicinity of Leipzig – the first time in 1956 and the second time in 1960. Shortly before his arrest in May 1960, his controller contacted him to say that, to prepare for a possible Allied withdrawal from West Berlin, a dead letter box had been laid there. The controller explained that even if West Berlin became a free city it would be easier for a spy to reach than West Germany.[56] Two BND military spies in Groitzsch (again a married couple) were told at the beginning of 1959 to lay dead letter boxes in their area and in West Berlin, to prepare for the possibility that West Berlin might become a 'free' city. The wife introduced her brother to her controller; the brother was recruited as a spy. He was informed by the controller that, to provide for a closure of the entire border around West Berlin, he was to be trained as a radio operator.[57] An American spy whose house lay right next to the sectoral border was given a radiotelephone with a range of 3,000 metres in March 1959. She was told to use it if the border were closed; she was also sent parts of a radio set so that she could transmit intelligence if war broke out.[58]

   The Second Berlin Crisis lasted long enough for some spies to be prepared twice for the loss of access to West Berlin. One spy, representative of several in the HA IX's reports, was supplied in 1959 by the BND with a radio transmitter adapted for rapid transmission. Early in 1961 he was told to destroy it and was given a newer model.[59] Agents with two-way radio sets were often meant to transmit intelligence if war came; this only represented an intensification of preparations which the Western services had been making for years. Using such radio sets was dangerous because the transmissions could be detected; or an MfS informer might learn of the

radio. To defeat detection efforts, the BND distributed transmitters which transmitted very quickly (in 20 to 30 seconds). The Americans and French gave their spies tape recorders on which they were to record their messages. The tape recorders played what was recorded fast, enabling the spies to transmit a message much faster than normal. Spies were also trained to encode transmissions. Dead letter boxes, like radio transmitters, were in addition meant to be used in wartime to convey intelligence.[60] The BND appointed some spies to act as 'emergency radio operators' (*Ernstfallfunker*). They would only start transmitting in an emergency, taking intelligence from the dead letter boxes and passing it on by radio to West Germany.[61] Both the American secret services and the BND created groups of agents equipped with powerful radios suited to war conditions. Groups were formed so that the members could give support to one another; the controller would no longer be able to support them if the border were closed, if war broke out, or if the Allies pulled out of West Berlin. As a rule, they hid the radios, which they were only to use to supply intelligence if war came. Their job was to report on all troop movements, signs of popular unrest, and on whether the army had popular support. Until the border was closed, most of them supplied this information by secret writing in letters and by meeting their controllers in West Berlin. The MfS was successful in arresting many of them, particularly ones working for the BND.

The new communication methods were tried out before the border was closed. The MfS records I have read reveal most about the BND's preparations. In its case, the communication of intelligence other than by meeting in West Berlin or elsewhere – and chiefly by secret writing – had already been widely tried out before August 1961; in part, it had started in earnest. Some spies were receiving instructions by radio by 1960 at the latest.[62] Some American spies had also started communicating intelligence by secret writing by 1960.[63] In the MfS's view, when the border was closed the BND was the best prepared of the Western services for the new conditions for spying. By contrast, the CIA claims that it was.[64] Naturally, some of the BND's precautions turned out to be futile. Measures such as the establishment of stations under cover in West Berlin and the laying of dead letter boxes there had been designed to prepare for its enforced withdrawal from the city and to enable secret operations there to continue. However, it did not have to leave the city.

Fearing an Allied withdrawal from West Berlin and its transformation into a Communist satellite, the BND withdrew intelligence units to West Germany, from where they could operate against the Bloc in safety. It made great efforts to ensure that it received warning of any military action by the Warsaw Pact. Its spies were trained to send coded warnings of tension in postcards. Many dead letter boxes were laid, particularly around Berlin and

along the transit routes leading to West Germany. Paths were created along the Demarcation Line and the Berlin sectoral border to smuggle people across.

The Americans strengthened their clandestine presence in the DDR while there was still time, recruiting more agents there and sending others in. Well-trained spies, usually refugees from East Germany, were sent in to report on troop movements and military preparations. Some carried out brief intelligence tasks; others were meant to stay and provide intelligence if war broke out. Spies in East Germany were told to find places suitable for use as airfields or dropping points so that partisan groups could be supplied.[65]

THE BORDER CLOSURE AND ITS EFFECTS

In the early hours of the morning of 13 August 1961, the border between East and West Berlin was closed. The declaration of the Warsaw Pact states announcing the closure claimed that its purpose was to prevent 'subversive activity' against them. There was some truth to this. The solution Khrushchev chose to the refugee and subversion crises caused to the GDR by the open border in Berlin was that which least antagonized the US and was not forbidden by Kennedy's 'Three Essentials'. He wrong-footed the Western Allies by resolving the crisis in a way which neither threatened their position in West Berlin nor was indicated by his ultimatum of November 1958.

The border closure had a profound impact on spying. It made spies harder to identify for recruitment and much harder to communicate with; it also increased the MfS's ability to discover them, once recruited. Most East Germans could not go to West Berlin at all; those who could had first to pass through border controls. Since few East Germans could now flee west, they could name far fewer people as promising spy candidates. Mass recruitment of spies therefore ended in August 1961. Thereafter, the principal method of recruiting spies was to commission West Germans to recruit their East German relatives, friends and business partners. However, West Germans also had to undergo border checks to enter East Berlin or the GDR.[66]

Greater efforts were also made to recruit spies among the East German representatives who were either posted abroad (*Auslandskader*) or allowed to travel abroad (*Reisekader*); these people were diplomats, sportspeople, commercial representatives attending trade fairs or visiting clients, and scientists attending conferences and making exchange visits to foreign universities.[67] However, the MfS selected *Auslandskader* and *Reisekader* very carefully, conducting a thorough background check, preparing them to

resist any approach, and recruiting many as informers.[68] Its greater control over the human traffic between the two Germanies gave the Ministry a wealth of opportunities for double agent operations. Many of the BND's agents reporting on East Germany in the ensuing decades turned out to be double agents under MfS control.[69] From now on, it was also more difficult for scientists to defect; though they were allowed to attend conferences abroad and participate in exchange programmes, their families were held hostage behind the Wall to ensure their return.[70] The border closure ended the era of mass interrogation of refugees for a wealth of intelligence of all kinds.

Spies were now easier to uncover. It was now riskier for them to communicate intelligence. Like recruitment of agents, as a rule the spy's communications with the secret service had to start from the GDR, where the MfS could undertake very extensive surveillance. The principal method of communicating intelligence was now secret writing. A letter bearing secret writing had generally to be posted in the GDR; the MfS could intercept it, identify the cover address as one used by a secret service, reveal the secret writing, and try to identify the writer. A radio message transmitted by the spy could be detected and located. Both a meeting with a courier at which the spy handed intelligence over and the act of depositing intelligence in a dead letter box which a courier emptied took place in East Germany. The MfS could identify a courier or dead letter box and put him or it under surveillance; in time, this would lead them to the spy. Even some radio transmissions to the spy proved to be insecure because the MfS was sometimes capable of identifying the frequency to which East Germans were listening. In short, less secure communication methods made the spy easier to identify.[71] In the words of one MfS counter-intelligence officer, the communication system was 'the weakest link in [the chain of] espionage activity and thus the principal link to work on in trying to expose people suspected of spying'.[72] Many spies were arrested in the early 1960s; this, combined with the much harder conditions, caused many sources to dry up.[73] A BND officer claimed in 1968 that the service lost most of its spies in East Germany as a result of the Wall's construction.[74]

Though West Germany still offered considerable opportunities for intelligence collection, West Berlin was no longer a uniquely valuable asset. The CIA greatly reduced its staff in the city.[75] One reason why in the 1960s the Agency gave more attention to developing states and less to Europe is that it was so hard to recruit and run productive agents in Soviet Bloc states. Third World states were less centralized, less concerned with security, and much easier to penetrate.[76] Though a political defeat for the Communists, the closure of the Berlin sectoral border enabled the Soviet-style police state to operate more effectively against Western espionage and subversion.

CONCLUSION

The closure by the SED regime of the Berlin sectoral border did not represent a failure on the part of the Western intelligence services, which did a good job throughout the Second Berlin Crisis. Admittedly, the prevailing opinion in the West's governments and intelligence services was that a blockade was the likeliest Soviet initiative. The CIA did not predict that the border would be closed (though the BND did[77]). To that extent, the border closure was a surprise. However, the Western secret services saw clearly what options were open to Khrushchev and Ulbricht and prepared for them. Throughout the crisis – indeed, throughout the 1950s – they saw that the Communists might try to close the border. From the time of Khrushchev's ultimatum over Berlin, they saw that the Soviet leader intended to deprive them of West Berlin by some means or other – the only question was how. They prepared for all possibilities.

Although the MfS (or 'Stasi') has since the GDR's collapse acquired a fearsome reputation as a very effective security service, the fact is that until the border closure of 1961 it was unable to give the GDR adequate security against spying and subversion. Proper security could not be achieved as long as East Germans had free access to West Berlin. The reason was that, as long as the border was open, East Germans could escape MfS surveillance and post interception, rendering them much less effective as counter-espionage and counter-subversive instruments. Furthermore, owing to widespread anti-Communism among East Germans, many could be recruited as spies and subversives. The SED regime therefore needed a border which could not be crossed without its permission – from either side, but particularly not from the GDR.[78] It needed this, not only to prevent the flight of refugees, but also to enhance its security. The erection of a border fence, which turned into the Berlin Wall, ended the most successful phase of espionage and subversion ever conducted by the Western states in Communist-held territory. The importance of the open border in Berlin to Western spying and subversion explains why, far from being unpredicted, the border closure of 1961 was one of the most anticipated and prepared-for events of the twentieth century.

NOTES

1 See M. Beschloss, *Kennedy v. Khrushchev: The Crisis Years, 1960–63* (London: Faber & Faber 1991) p.278*n*. On warning in peacetime, see M. Herman, *Intelligence Power in Peace and War* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press/Royal Institute of International Affairs 1996) pp.152–4.
2 Like East Germany, of the satellites Albania was in the early 1950s considered to be particularly vulnerable to subversion; one reason was again that, as a littoral country, its border with the West was not secure: see NSC-174, 'United States Policy Toward the Soviet Satellites in Eastern Europe', 11 December 1953, *Foreign Relations of the United*

States 1952–1954, Vol. VIII (Washington, DC: US Government Printing Office 1988) pp.110–27.

3 See P. Maddrell, *Spying on Science: Western Intelligence in Divided Germany, 1945–1961* (Oxford: Oxford University Press 2006) chapters 2 and 5. This is only an indication because the HA IX's monthly *Tätigkeits- und Auswertungsberichte* only summarize important cases of spying.

4 In German, *Sozialistische Einheitspartei Deutschlands*.

5 *Schlußbericht*, 5 March 1958, BStU, ZA, MfS-AU 253/59 (Band 7) p.39. 'BStU, ZA' stands for the *Zentralarchiv* (Central Archive) of the *Bundesbeauftragte für die Unterlagen des Staatssicherheitsdienstes der ehemaligen Deutschen Demokratischen Republik* (Federal Commissioner for the Records of the State Security Service of the former German Democratic Republic).

6 Maddrell, *Spying on Science* (note 3) chapter 5. See also Hauptmann Heinert, 'Die Analyse des nachrichtendienstlichen Verbindungssystems des Bundesnachrichtendienstes und seiner Entwicklungstendenzen', *Diplomarbeit* (dissertation), 15 October 1965, BStU, ZA, MfS-JHS-MFZ-201, pp.7–9.

7 B. Stöver, *Die Befreiung vom Kommunismus: Amerikanische 'Liberation Policy' im Kalten Krieg*, 1947–1991 (Köln: Böhlau Verlag 2002) p.428.

8 NSC-158, 'United States Objectives and Actions to Exploit the Unrest in the Satellite States', 29 June 1953, Folder 'President's Papers 1953(5)', White House Office, OSANSA: Records, 1952–61, Special Assistant Series, Presidential Subseries, Box 1, Dwight D. Eisenhower Library (DDEL), Abilene, Kansas, USA.

9 Morgan to Lay, 4 May 1953, Folder 'PSB 383.7 Escapee Program Section 4 (3)', White House Office, NSC Staff: Papers, 1953–61, PSB Central Files Series, Box 27, DDEL.

10 Draft report, 'PSB Planning Activities', 7 February 1952, Folder '383.7 Escapee Program – Section 2 [3 of 5]', SMOF-PSB Files, Box 33, Harry S. Truman Library (HSTL), Independence, Missouri, USA.

11 'A National Psychological Plan with Respect to Germany', PSB D-21, 9 October 1952, Folder 'Master Book of PSB Documents, Vol. II(1)', White House Office, NSC Staff, 1948–61: NSC Registry Series, 1947–62, Box 14, DDEL.

12 See Maddrell, *Spying on Science* (note 3) chapter 7.

13 Evans to Turney, 10 November 1952, DEFE 41/16, National Archives, London.

14 Walter to Abteilung VI, 22 November 1958, BStU, ZA, MfS-BdL/Dok, No. 003886.

15 See Stöver *Die Befreiung vom Kommunismus* (note 7) pp.250–83, 519–52; D. Murphy, S. Kondrashev and G. Bailey, *Battleground Berlin: CIA vs. KGB in the Cold War* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press 1997) pp.103–26.

16 In English, Federal Intelligence Service. Until 1956, it was controlled by the CIA and was known as the Gehlen Organization.

17 *Capital* (Hamburg) Vol. 8 (1968) p.67.

18 A. Wagner, *Walter Ulbricht and die geheime Sicherheitspolitik der SED* (Berlin: Links Verlag 2002) p.432.

19 Secret hiding places.

20 *Tätigkeitsbericht für November 1957*, 9 December 1957, BStU, ZA, MfS-HA IX, MF-11171. The words used in the report are: 'sollte diese Art der Nachrichtenübermittlung im Falle einer Blockade angewandt werden'.

21 Murphy *et al*., *Battleground Berlin* (note 15) p.57; ORE 41-48, CIA, 'Effect of Soviet Restrictions on the US Position in Berlin', 14 June 1948, in D. Steury (ed.) *On the Front Lines of the Cold War: Documents on the Intelligence War in Berlin, 1946–1961* (Washington, DC: Center for the Study of Intelligence 1999) pp.178–80.

22 Wagner, *Walter Ulbricht und die geheime Sicherheitspolitik der SED* (note 18) p.433; CIA Information Report, 18 June 1953, in Steury (ed.), *On the Front Lines* (note 21) p.249.

23 Murphy *et al.*, *Battleground Berlin* (note 15) pp.178–80.

24 NIE-81, 'Probable Soviet Courses of Action with respect to Germany through mid-1954', 22 May 1953, in Steury (ed.) *On the Front Lines* (note 21) p.238.

25 *Auswertungsplan*, 13 April 1958, MfS-AU 253/59 (Band 2), p.280; *Schlußbericht*, 5 March 1958, MfS-AU 253/59 (Band 7) pp.43–4.

26 *Tätigkeits- und Auswertungsbericht der HA IX für April 1961*, 6 May 1961, MfS-HA IX, MF-11211. In the report, the quoted words are: 'bei einer eventuellen Abriegelung Westberlins'.

27 'Secret writing' means writing a hidden text in invisible ink on a letter which is then sent to a cover address in the West.

28 *Vernehmungsprotokoll*, 16 April 1959, BStU, ZA, MfS-AU 600/59 (Band 1a) pp.112–16.

29 *Tätigkeitsbericht für Dezember 1959*, 12 January 1960, BStU, ZA, MfS-HA IX, MF-11195. In the report, the quoted words are: 'dabei wurde ihr vom Mitarbeiter des englischen Geheimdienstes mitgeteilt, daß man mit der Absperrung der Staats- und Sektorengrenzen rechnen müßte'.

30 *Tätigkeitsbericht für April 1961*, 6 May 1961, BStU, ZA, MfS-HA IX, MF-11211.

31 H. Wagner, *Schöne Grüße aus Pullach: Operationen des BND gegen die DDR* (Berlin: edition ost/Das Neue Berlin 2001) pp.23–31.

32 C. Andrew and V. Mitrokhin, *The Mitrokhin Archive: The KGB in Europe and the West* (London: Allen Lane/The Penguin Press 1999) pp.520–21; see also Maddrell, *Spying on Science* (note 3) pp.145–6.

33 Speech of Erich Mielke to 23rd Plenum, SED Central Committee, 14 April 1955, in K.W. Fricke and R. Engelmann, *'Konzentrierte Schläge': Staatssicherheitsaktionen und politische Prozesse in der DDR 1953–1956* (Berlin: Links Verlag 1998) pp.329–30.

34 J. Schick, *The Berlin Crisis, 1958–1962* (Philadelphia, PA: University of Pennsylvania Press 1971) pp.10–14, 19–23; CIA Current Weekly Intelligence Summary, 15 January 1959, in Steury (ed.) *On the Front Lines* (note 21) p.435.

35 See R. Steininger, *Der Mauerbau: Die Westmächte und Adenauer in der Berlinkrise 1958–1963* (Munich: Olzog Verlag 2001).

36 Quoted in Beschloss, *Kennedy v. Khrushchev* (note 1) p.278. Although a political defeat for the Communist Bloc, the Wall's construction did force West Germany down the road to détente: see L. Freedman, *Kennedy's Wars* (Oxford: Oxford University Press 2000) pp.75–6.

37 On NATO contingency planning for the use of force (both conventional and nuclear) over Berlin, see P. Nitze, *From Hiroshima to Glasnost* (London: Weidenfeld & Nicolson 1989) pp.196–208.

38 F.J. Strauß, *Die Erinnerungen* (Berlin: Siedler Verlag 1989) pp.380–88.

39 CIA Current Intelligence Weekly Summary, 5 February 1959, in Steury (ed.) *On the Front Lines* (note 21) p.452. See also A. Dulles, *The Craft of Intelligence* (London: Weidenfeld & Nicolson 1963) p.154.

40 B. Stöver, 'Mauerbau und Nachrichtendienste' in H.-H. Hertle, K. Jarausch and C. Kleßmann (eds.) *Mauerbau und Mauerfall* (Berlin: Links Verlag 2002) pp.139–41; SNIE 2-61, 'Soviet and Other Reactions to Various Courses of Action Regarding Berlin', 13 June 1961, in Steury (ed.) *On the Front Lines* (note 21) pp.550–69.

41 Quoted in H. Harrison, *Driving the Soviets up the Wall: Soviet–East German Relations, 1953–1961* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press 2003) p.192.

42 M. Uhl and A. Wagner (eds.), *Ulbricht, Chruschtschow und die Mauer: eine Dokumentation* (Munich: Oldenbourg Verlag 2003) pp.195–7.

43 P. Merseburger, *Willy Brandt 1913–1992: Visionär und Realist* (Stuttgart: Deutsche Verlags-Anstalt 2002) pp.393–5.

44 Nitze, *Hiroshima to Glasnost* (note 37) p.199.

45 J. Gearson, *Harold Macmillan and the Berlin Wall Crisis, 1958–1962* (Basingstoke: Macmillan 1998) pp.182–5.

46 HA IX/1, *Neue Arbeitsmethoden westlicher Geheimdienste*, MfS-HA IX 4350, p.341. In the report, the quoted words are: 'auf Vorschläge sofortige Reaktion bei allen Nachrichtendiensten – besonders Amerikaner und Bundesnachrichtendienst – Mitarbeiter beunruhigt, durcheinander – schätzen jedoch entgegen Politiker der Westmächte die Lage relativ real ein; das heißt: umfassende Umstellung der Arbeit'.

47 *Tätigkeitsbericht für Oktober 1961*, 9 November 1961, MfS-HA IX, MF-11217. In the report, the quoted words are: 'nach Absprache mit dem Bundesnachrichtendienst sollte der Beschuldigte außerdem im Falle der Schließung der Staatsgrenze DDR-Westberlin mit der Führung einer sogenannten Leitstelle des BND im Gebiet der DDR beauftragt werden'.

48 Oberleutnant Arnold, 'Die Mittel, Methoden und Möglichkeiten zur Aufklärung der feindlichen Zentralen des BND und deren Mitarbeiter unter den veränderten Bedingungen aufgrund der Schutz- und Sicherungsmaßnahmen der DDR seit dem 13. 8. 1961', *Diplomarbeit*, January 1963, BStU, ZA, MfS-JHS-MFZ-18, pp.13–15; Murphy *et al.*, *Battleground Berlin* (note 15) pp.351–4.

49 H. Lapp, 'Die Erfahrungswerte des MfS BV Potsdam und weitere Aufgaben zur Sicherung spionagefährdeter militärischer Objekte und zur Feststellung militärischer Spione des BND im Bezirk Potsdam', *Diplomarbeit*, October 1965, BtSU, ZA, MfS-JHS-MFZ-524, *Anlage*, 7.

50 J. Schwarz, *Bis Zum Bitteren Ende* (Schkeuditz: GNN-Verlag 1995) p.33; E. Martin, *Zwischenbilanz: Deutschlandpolitik der 80er Jahre* (Stuttgart: Bonn Aktuell 1986) pp.103–4.

51 Wagner, *Schöne Grüße aus Pullach* (note 31) p.46.

52 *Tätigkeitsbericht für Februar 1962*, 9 March 1962, BStU, ZA, MfS-HA IX, MF-11221. In the report, the quoted words are: 'im Falle eines Abreißens der Verbindung nach Westberlin'.

53 *Tätigkeitsbericht für November 1960*, 12 December 1960, BStU, ZA, MfS-HA IX, MF-11206.

54 *Tätigkeitsbericht für Mai 1960*, 13 June 1960, BStU, ZA, MfS-HA IX, MF-11200.

55 *Tätigkeitsbericht für November 1960*, 12 December 1960, BStU, ZA, MfS-HA IX, MF-11206.

56 *Tätigkeitsbericht für Mai 1960*, 13 June 1960, BStU, ZA, MfS-HA IX, MF-11200.

57 *Tätigkeitsbericht für November 1960*, 12 December 1960, BStU, ZA, MfS-HA IX, MF-11206.

58 *Aufstellung über im Gebiet der DDR seit 1/1/1959 festgenommene Agentenfunker*, 22 June 1959, BStU, ZA, MfS-HA IX 4350, p.293.

59 *Tätigkeitsbericht für März 1963*, 8 April 1963, BStU, ZA, MfS-HA IX, MF-11234.

60 *Aufstellung über im Gebiet der DDR seit 1/1/1959 festgenommene Agentenfunker*, 22 June 1959, BStU, ZA, MfS-HA IX 4350, pp.291–9.

61 Heinert, 'Die Analyse des nachrichtendienstlichen Verbindungssystems' (note 6) pp.23–4.

62 Arnold, 'Die Mittel, Methoden und Möglichkeiten' (note 48) p.6; *Tätigkeitsbericht für Januar 1960*, 12 February 1960, BStU, ZA, MfS-HA IX, MF-11196; *Tätigkeitsbericht für Juni 1963*, 9 July 1963, BStU, ZA, MfS-HA IX, MF-11237.

63 *Tätigkeitsbericht für Mai 1963*, 11 June 1963, BStU, ZA, MfS-HA IX, MF-11236.

64 Murphy *et al.*, *Battleground Berlin* (note 15) p.386.

65 HA IX/1, *Neue Arbeitsmethoden westlicher Geheimdienste*, MfS-HA IX 4350, pp.341–60; *Einschätzung der Spionage- und Wühltätigkeit der imperialistischen Geheimdienste gegen die Deutsche Demokratische Republik*, 21 November 1961, BStU, ZA, MfS-HA IX 4350, pp.262–4.

66 Lapp, 'Die Erfahrungswerte des MfS' (note 49) pp.3, 19; Hauptmann Radzuweit, 'Die politisch-operative Zusammenarbeit mit IMF aus dem Operationsgebiet und der sich daraus ergebende Nutzeffekt bei der Bearbeitung des Bundesnachrichtendienstes durch die aüßere Spionageabwehr', *Diplomarbeit*, 14 September 1970, BStU, ZA, MfS-JHS-MF-GVS-55/70, pp.16–-17.

67 Wagner, *Schöne Grüße aus Pullach* (note 31) pp.139–45.

68 M. Wolf, *Man Without A Face* (London: Jonathan Cape 1997) p.99.

69 E. Schmidt-Eenboom, *Schnüffler Ohne Nase: Der BND – die unheimliche Macht im Staate* (Düsseldorf: ECON Verlag 1993) pp.108–10.

70 See P. Maddrell, 'The Scientist Who Came in from the Cold: Heinz Barwich's Flight from the GDR', *Intelligence and National Security* 20/4 (December 2005) pp.608–30.

71 Arnold, 'Die Mittel, Methoden und Möglichkeiten' (note 48) pp.4–6.

72 Heinert, 'Die Analyse des nachrichtendienstlichen Verbindungssystems' (note 6) p.1.

73 Radzuweit, 'Die politisch-operative Zusammenarbeit' (note 66) p.12.

74 *Capital* (note 17) p.67; see Maddrell, *Spying on Science* (note 3) pp.260–62.

75 Murphy *et al.*, *Battleground Berlin* (note 15) pp.385–8.

76 V. Marchetti and J. Marks, *The CIA and the Cult of Intelligence* (London: Jonathan Cape 1974) pp.384–6.

77 M. Uhl and A. Wagner, 'Überwachung der GSSD-Standorte in der DDR durch den Bundesnachrichtendienst', paper to the 12th Annual Meeting of the International Intelligence History Association, 'Fifty Years of the Bundesnachrichtendienst, 1956–2006: The BND in its Historical Context', Akademie für Politische Bildung, Tutzing, Germany, 8 April 2006.

78 Its case is therefore different from that of Israel, which claims it needs a security fence to protect it from terrorism. However, this fence is meant to keep terrorists out, rather than in.