

CIA will return some Stasi files to Germany

by Edward Spannaus

After years of requests from both the German government and German civil rights activists, the U.S. government has apparently agreed to return to the German government part of the information from the files of the communist East German secret service (the Stasi) which have been in the possession of the CIA since the early 1990s.

Until just recently, the CIA refused to even officially acknowledge that it had the files. But on Oct. 18, speaking at Georgetown University, CIA Director George Tenet responded to a question about the files by saying that the relationship with the German intelligence services is “enormously important” and “enormously productive for us.”

“We have already been sharing information in these Stasi files going back to 1994,” Tenet said. “We have promised the German government that we will provide them with as much information as is possible about all the German cases in these files, in a form that does not compromise sources and methods from our perspective.”

Only transcribed data

On Oct. 27, the *Washington Post*, citing unnamed U.S. and German intelligence officials, reported that the CIA has agreed to give to Germany copies of 320,000 files from the former East German intelligence service.

According to the *Washington Post* report, U.S. and German officials said that, starting in January, the CIA will turn over copies of a significant part of the archive which the CIA obtained through a covert operation in 1989. Germany will receive a master list of the 320,000 “identities”—the real names and code names of East and West German citizens in the files. However, the most sensitive files, those relating to foreigners who worked for the Stasi in the United States, Europe, the Middle East, Africa, and elsewhere, will not be turned over.

The *Washington Post* report is not entirely accurate, according to information provided to *EIR*. A knowledgeable source told *EIR* that the Germans will probably not get copies of the documents in the CIA’s possession, but rather, the data will be transcribed onto CD-ROM disks. Only if the data is unintelligible and cannot be deciphered, would a reproduction of the original documents be provided to the German government.

Appeal to Clinton

A year ago, prominent civil rights activists from former East Germany (German Democratic Republic, G.D.R.) sent an “Open Letter to President Clinton,” on the subject of the Stasi files, which was signed by nearly 1,900 citizens and civil rights activists.

The letter appealed to the U.S. President to help the Germans with determining the identities of former G.D.R. secret service units and agents who were put into crucial positions in East Germany where they remained after unification, and who are now destabilizing democracy in Germany’s eastern states.

“Up to this very day, for example, the domestic network of the Hauptverwaltung Aufklärung (HVA; Main Administration Reconnaissance) of the G.D.R. State Security Service, along with its some 10,000 agents, remains undisclosed,” the letter said. “Mostly before but even after the ‘turning point’ [Nov. 9, 1989], these agents were placed into crucial positions in both society and politics. These individuals are obstructing the establishment of democracy and a sound economy in east Germany.”

Earlier last year, in April 1998, the German magazine *Focus* had published an article entitled “‘Stringer’ for Uncle Sam. Bonn Shakes Up the U.S. Intelligence Service: Is the CIA Covering for Former Stasi Agents?”

Commenting on the *Focus* article, *EIR* founder Lyndon LaRouche urged President Clinton to cooperate with the Germans and to give back the Stasi files. LaRouche called the surreptitious obtaining of the files “a Bush operation,” referring to the time period in which it took place, and said that the United States should not continue to protect the identities of persons who acted as traitors to their country as Soviet and East German agents.

Cooperating with the German government, LaRouche said, “would go a long way to improving the strategic situation of the United States in respect to its relationship to Germany.”

In January of this year, a number of articles appeared in the British and German press, reporting that the CIA was about to return the Stasi files. But shortly after the first round, the *Washington Post* reported on Jan. 20 that the United States had no plans to return the files, and suggested that the CIA may have been using some of the former spies for its own purposes. Again in March, such reports reappeared, and again the *Washington Post* pooh-poohed the reports.

This time, it is the *Washington Post* which says the files will be returned, but the *Post* still don’t have it right: It seems that only certain transcribed data, and not the original materials, will be returned to the rightful owner.

On Oct. 28, Joachim Gauck, the federal commissioner in Germany for the Stasi records, spoke at a semi-private meeting in Washington, but he said he had no information on the latest reported developments concerning possible return of the files.

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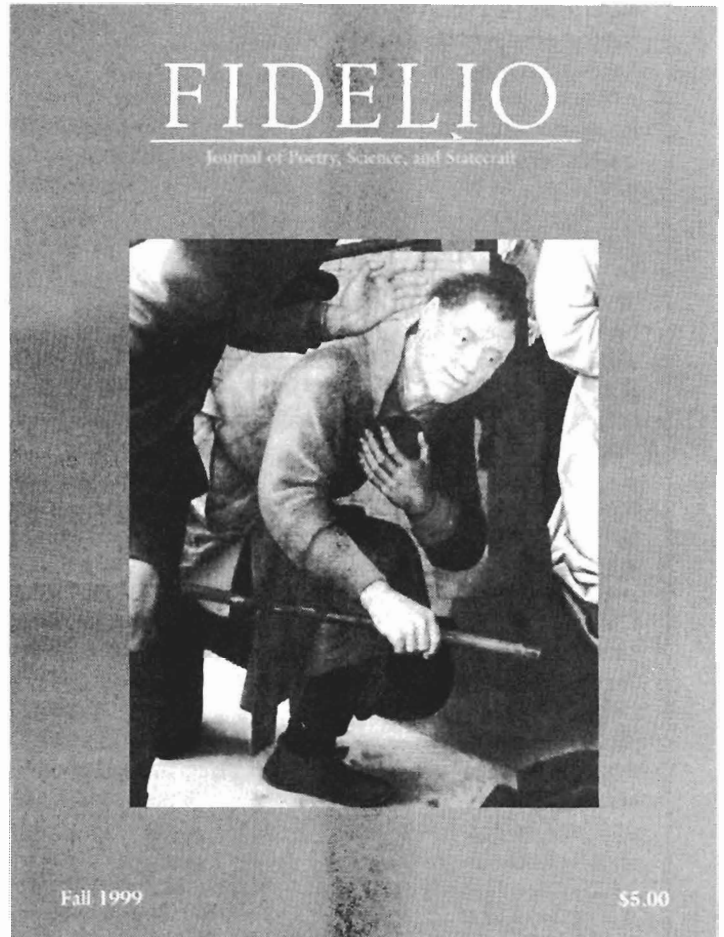
We have come into a time when the only basis for an optimistic outlook, is the fact, that history—and what we know of pre-history—shows us, beyond doubt, that there is something essentially good within human nature. Indeed, this is rightly recognized as a *divine spark of goodness*. . . . What you, the citizen, need to know, most urgently, is how most among your neighbors, each as an individual, must change his, or her own presently foolish opinions, and that radically, in order to help you make the much needed miracle possible now.

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