ARRESTS AT THE MIDNIGHT HOUR:
PUBLIC PERCEPTIONS OF THE SECRET POLICE IN GERMANY AND RUSSIA

by

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A thesis submitted to the Faculty of the University of Delaware in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Honors Bachelor of Arts in History with Distinction

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ABSTRACT

East Germany and Russia both made use of a secret police/political police force in the twentieth century; both are also former communist states and European countries. But the public in those two countries perceived the secret police very differently. In East Germany, the Ministerium für Staatssicherheit (the Stasi) were hated, while in Russia, the KGB (Committee for Government Safety) was tolerated, with its thrice-elected president being a former agent himself. Post-Communism, unified Germany chose to release the files that the Stasi had kept, allowing people to read them, a luxury that Russians have not yet had. Finally, in Russia alone was the political police reorganized and reappropriated by the government, as the FSB. This thesis looks at each of those three points separately, and derives three conclusions.
Chapter 1

THE SECRET POLICE: AN OVERVIEW

Introduction: Definitions

The secret police are governmental organizations that operate under the law using excessive force, stoking fear among the populace. Obeying a single man or party, agents are tasked to suppress opposition movements and to keep the regime stable. To root out and destroy dissidents, they use methods such as surveillance, letter opening, encouraging informants, blackmail, clandestine midnight arrests, or torture. Part of their operating method is to instill, if not outright fear, then at least the myth among the population that the police is omniscient and omnipresent within society. That myth, itself, helps the political police fulfill its mission to suppress opposition and criticism of the government. The concept of a “secret police” has been around for thousands of years; the Roman empire gave the role of such a service to wheat collectors and called them the frumentarii. In more recent times, totalitarian, one-party, and/or communist governments have used a secret police force.

The phrase “secret police,” while widely accepted by the general public, is not always the most accurate description of such agencies. “Political police” and “security agency” may be used as synonyms. Throughout this thesis, “security agency” or “political police” will be most commonly used, because of their technical accuracy. An unequivocal secret police force, for example, would be the Gestapo, because they did not claim to provide security to the state, unlike the agencies that will be discussed.
Differentiation from a Government Security Agency

The line between a secret security force and a legitimate security agency can be blurred. The United States, for example, has the Central Intelligence Agency. Some of its past dealings—the MKUltra mind control, drug use, and torture experiments, or hundreds of unsuccessful assassination attempts on Fidel Castro—seem more suited towards a political police agency. Yet it is considered a legal institute, as is the Federal Bureau of Investigation. The distinction is because the mentioned agencies are subject to government regulations, transparency, and public scrutiny. The security police are not. They are free to operate as they wish. Further, the CIA, FBI, and similar international agencies do not aim to terrorize or employ selective surveillance. In a democracy with multiple political parties and freedom of speech, there is no need to use brutal methods, but in a one-party state that forces an ideology, any dissent can be dangerous. As a rule, the secret police and similar agencies are not found in democratic states.

Background: Russia

The most iconic monument in Russia, Saint Basil’s Cathedral, was built under Tsar Ivan IV, more commonly known as “the Terrible.” Legend says that the tsar blinded the architect so that he would never again create something as beautiful as the colorful onion domes. Regardless of whether the legend is true, Ivan the Terrible’s infamous propensity for violence makes it no surprise that he assembled the earliest secret security force in Russia. In the 1560s, the Oprichniki were given the power to harass and torture those who opposed the tsar’s, and Moscow’s, power. Little is known about them except their sack of the city of Novgorod in 1570.
The Oprichniki were disbanded in 1572, but the security agency made a reappearance 300 years later as the Okhrana ("protection").\(^1\) Created in 1880 and solidified under Tsar Alexander III, the Okhrana infiltrated political groups in large cities and, among other activities, blackmailed arrested revolutionaries into spying for them.\(^2\) The government feared radical terrorists after the assassination of Tsar Alexander II in 1881. The autocracy's fear may have been justified, as the monarchy was overthrown in the Revolution of 1917, led by a political group from the large city of Petrograd, no less. As the new ruling party, the Bolsheviks continued the long and beautiful Russian tradition of a security police. Felix Dzerzhinsky formed and headed the Cheka (an acronym for Emergency Committee), and his iron statue in Moscow played a small role in years to come.

Originally, the intention was to merely find counterrevolutionaries, but by late 1918, the Cheka were given orders to simply shoot state enemies sans trial.\(^3\) As the Soviets strengthened their power, they also expanded their security agency, and in 1923 united its various departments into the OGPU. In 1933, it was again reorganized and renamed, to the People's Commissariat for Internal Affairs—the NKVD. In the west, the NKVD is overshadowed by the Gestapo, operating at roughly the same time, and the later KGB. It was crueler than either of them. General Secretary Joseph Stalin used it as tool to aid his paranoia about enemies in the shadows. Members carried out his purges and ran the system of gulags (isolated work camps known for their severe

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\(^3\) Michael J. Waller, "Russia: death and resurrection of the KGB." *Demokratizatsiya* 12, no. 3, 2004.
Purges would often occur in the middle of the night, and without proper trials or documentation—agents would simply drive up in their distinctive dark cars, nicknamed “black ravens,” and the victim would never be heard from again. For example, on one night in 1937, the NKVD took about 5,000 men deemed “unreliable” (members of the intelligentsia) from Kiev to an unknown fate. It was the true epitome of a secret police, deporting and executing people for the smallest of crimes and carrying out massacres, most notably in Katyn, Poland, in 1940. There, in the forest, about four thousand Polish prisoners of war were mass executed and buried. Altogether, Stalin and his executioners were estimated to have killed up to, or even more than, 20 million Soviets.

Following Stalin’s death in 1953, the NKVD was curbed and tamed and renamed the Committee of State Security, the KGB. It “combined dozens of different functions: gathering foreign intelligence, guarding national borders, protecting Soviet leaders, obtaining counterintelligence, silencing dissent, and closely monitoring all aspects of Soviet life, from the Orthodox Church to the military.” Now, the party was suspicious of its security agency, and wanted to create a better image for it, as the NKVD’s brutality had left Soviet citizens both scared and scarred. Indeed, the KGB is

5 My high school history teacher gave us an anecdote from a book: a truck was carrying bags of wheat, and one fell out of the back. Someone picked it up. They were sent to a labor camp on the accusation of theft.
better known for its spies and international plots than for domestic terror. After a relatively uneventful forty years, president Boris Yeltsin dissolved it following the breakup of the Soviet Union.

**Background: Germany**

1848 was the year of revolutions across Europe, of liberals demanding reforms that could erode the power of traditional monarchies. Beginning in France and spreading to Italy, Germany, Hungary, the Hapsburg empire, and smaller states, the revolutions in Germany succeeded in forcing through an Imperial Act that guaranteed basic civil and human rights. While a victory for the common people, the rulers feared further breakdown of the social order. In the not yet unified states of Germany, King Friedrich Wilhelm IV of Prussia grew nervous, and the functions of the already existing Prussian police were broadened in order to stabilize his kingdom. In 1851, the police of the German Confederation, the *Polizeiverein*, were told to monitor the press and follow revolutionaries and enemies, fairly basic tasks. The state’s enemies included Socialists, and, after the Kulturkampf of 1871, Catholics, and the *Polizeiverein* surveilled those groups by infiltrating meetings.\(^8\) Early German security agencies, however, did not carry out kidnappings or murders, being on the tamer end of the scale.\(^9\)

Throughout the nineteenth century, the German states also organized several other short-lived similar agencies, such as the Political Police Agency of Prussia in 1848, and the Central Agency to Combat the Anarchist Movement in 1898. The

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knowledge and experience gained through their information gathering and blacklisting techniques set a precedent for later and larger agencies, including Interpol.10 Moreover, Prussia’s actions on the eve of the First World War also set a precedent for future German security forces. Under the Prussian Siege Law of 1851, which had not been updated since its creation, the state was able to suspend civil liberties under the guise of a “state of siege.” When that happened, the law gave near-dictatorial powers to district police directors. In 1914, they used the police force to impose censorship and arbitrary searches and seizures, break up unlawful assemblies, and strictly police the “morals” of the youth.11 In two decades, a similar suspension of civil liberties would occur, and a unified security police force would rise.

At the same time as the NKVD was being consolidated in 1934, the new German Chancellor Adolf Hitler was consolidating a police force of his own. Following the Reichstag Fire, Hitler nullified many of the constitutional liberties that had been granted in the Weimar Republic. He and Hermann Goering, minister of the Interior, began placing members of their party, the National Socialists, into the Prussian police (Prussia was included as a state in unified Germany). They later renamed it the Geheime Staatspolizei, “Secret State Police,” shortened to Gestapo. The Gestapo was headed by Rudolph Diehls, and was said to have been modeled either after the Cheka or the Prussian secret police; likely a blend of stereotypical German efficiency and Russian ruthlessness.12 In any case, the Gestapo had the same goals as

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11 Spencer, Police and the Social Order, 150.
12 Waller, “Russia: death and resurrection of the KGB.”
any other secret police force, to sniff out opposition to the Nazis. Beginning with Kristallnacht in 1938, they were “ultimately responsible for the fate of Jews.”\textsuperscript{13} On November 9\textsuperscript{th}, the Nazi state gave the Gestapo orders to arrest 20,000 to 30,000 Jews and destroy their businesses. From then on, they were the most powerful police force in Germany.\textsuperscript{14} In collaboration with other services, they rounded up thousands of Jews, socialists, homosexuals, and other “undesirables” to be sent to labor or concentration camps. Even foreign Polish workers in the regime were subject to close monitoring and arrests, especially if they engaged in so-called racial mixing with Germans. The Gestapo relied on informants, finding many citizens who were willing to denounce someone, sometimes for legitimate rule-breaking, other times to fulfil personal vendettas.\textsuperscript{15} During the Second World War, some Gestapo members joined the Einsatzgruppen, mobile units of killing machines that followed the German army into Eastern Europe.

In May 1945, the Allies united both victorious fronts in Berlin, and subsequently divided Germany into four zones. The Nazis were expunged from the government, with the higher-ranking ones placed on trial and executed under a new category of crimes: against humanity. The process, sometimes called Denazification, aimed to almost completely eradicate all traces of Hitler’s regime. Among the included and eliminated institutions was the Gestapo. Three of the new zones merged into West Germany, administered by the Allies. West Germany did not have a secret police force, and its story ends here. The eastern zone, however, was occupied by the

\textsuperscript{14} Robert Gellately, \textit{The Gestapo and German Society}, 113-160.
\textsuperscript{15} Ibid., 222.
Soviet Union and became the German Democratic Republic.\textsuperscript{16}

The GDR existed as a Soviet satellite state, and the vacuum caused after the Nazis was filled by the Communist Party and its institutions. Modeled after the Soviet security agencies, the \textit{Ministerium für Staatssicherheit} (Ministry for State Security; “Stasi”) was created in 1950. It was intended to be the “sword and shield” of the GDR, to protect it from anti-Communist movements. Until the 1960s, the Stasi kidnapped and murdered some suspected political opponents, but like the KGB, they too were reined in by the Party. After that, they used similar techniques as the KGB, but spread their net of surveillance much wider.\textsuperscript{17} Erich Mielke led the Stasi until 1989, when the anti-Communist movements that the Party had so feared spread across East Germany. Stasi buildings were the “focal points of unrest,” occupied by ordinary citizens, and officers were hounded and harassed.\textsuperscript{18} It was them, and not the Party, who were seen as the symbol of failings of the Communist system. As a result, the Stasi were purged from the political system as thoroughly as the Gestapo following 1989 and reunification.

\textbf{Challenges}

The KGB, the Stasi, and their brother organizations formulated dozens of plots, some executed and some not, in both the domestic and international sphere. But due to the nature of their work, finding specific information is difficult. Some of the accusations of their schemes have been accepted as being fact, especially if there is

\textsuperscript{16} States with “Democratic” in their name are never actually democracies
first hand evidence, for example, if the target of an assassination or blackmail attempt speaks out about it. Former agents, too, have spoken about their work in writings and interviews since 1990. There are also plots that may be pure speculation or exaggeration, either because they were never pulled off or, or due to being baseless conspiracy theories. In the case of the KGB, whose files are held by the Russian state, there may never be concrete evidence of the extent of their surveillance and intelligence work. Examples of more well-known plots/accusations have been compiled into the following chart. This is not the end all, be all of security police activities, but rather a sample of the types of projects that they would have involved themselves with. Items marked with a * will be referenced in later chapters.

Table 1 Secret Police/Political Police Plots

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Org.</th>
<th>Year(s)</th>
<th>Accusation</th>
<th>Credibility of claim</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>NKVD</td>
<td>Early 1950’s</td>
<td>Assassination attempts on Josip Broz Tito, president of Yugoslavia, as ordered by Stalin</td>
<td>True; or at least, Tito believed so</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>KGB</td>
<td>1939-1946</td>
<td>Having spies inside the Manhattan Project, including Robert Oppenheimer, Enrico Fermi, and multiple unnamed ones</td>
<td>Stated by former KGB agent in 1994; FBI denies</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>KGB</td>
<td>1959</td>
<td>Mapping Canadian oil refineries in preparation for sabotage work (Operation KEDR)</td>
<td>In Mitrokhin Files</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>KGB</td>
<td>1966</td>
<td>Funding anti-U.S group in Nicaragua, the Sandinistas, to prepare for Cuban-style revolt</td>
<td>In Mitrokhin Files</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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21 Ibid., 634.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Agency</th>
<th>Period</th>
<th>Action/Description</th>
<th>Evidence/Source</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>KGB</td>
<td>1960’s</td>
<td>Sexual blackmail of Indonesian president Hajji Suharto to coerce him into closer relationship with Soviet Union</td>
<td>True; Suharto addressed the blackmail</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| Stasi  | 1950-  | Stealing “Lebensborns” (Aryan-looking children adopted or supported by Nazi state in an effort to expand the race) identities to send spies into West Germany | Speculation\
| KGB    | 1968   | Infiltrating Czechoslovakian politics and suppressing the Prague Spring             | Evidence in favor |
| Stasi  | Early 1970’s | Planting Günter Guillaume as a spy in West German Chancellor Willy Brant’s close circle | True; Brandt resigned in 1974 |
| Stasi  | 1970’s | Supporting West German terrorist group, the Red Army Faction *                     | Strong evidence in favor; stated by former Stasi agent |
| KGB    | 1980’s | Operation PANDORA- exploiting racial tensions in the U.S with pamphlets            | Speculation |
| KGB    | 1980’s | Financing the Palestine Liberation Organization and Irish Republic Army            | Speculation |
| KGB    | 1983   | Converting CIA agent Aldrich Ames into a KGB mole                                  | True; Ames serving life sentence |
| KGB    | 1990-91| Ousting General Secretary Mikhail Gorbachev by placing him under house arrest and declaring State of Emergency | True; Gorbachev kept records\
| FSB    | 1999   | Bombing apartments and placing blame on the Chechens to raise public support for an invasion | Evidence in favor |

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24 Ibid., 310.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Event Description</th>
<th>Source</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2004</td>
<td>Having advanced knowledge of the school siege in Beslan, North Ossetia, that resulted in almost 400 deaths</td>
<td>Stated by Alexander Litvinenko</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2006</td>
<td>Poisoning ex-KGB agent Alexander Litvinenko after he criticized Vladimir Putin</td>
<td>Strong evidence in favor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2016-</td>
<td>Targeting U.S election controversies and party divisions with Internet trolls</td>
<td>Possibility/to be seen</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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Chapter 2

THE BIG QUESTIONS

Germany and Russia are both European states which formerly experienced Communism, and used their security agencies to achieve similar goals. But the secret police were accepted to varying degrees of difference. In Germany, the Stasi were widely unpopular, but it was not so in Russia, where the KGB was feared but not necessarily hated. During their transitions to democracy, the two countries took a different approach to the files that their security agencies had collected on citizens. Germany released its so-called Stasi files, slowly making them accessible to the public, who could then use them to oust public servants who had a black mark on their record. Russia has kept most of the KGB archives hidden. Furthermore, Russia seems much less willing to break its chain of history; in the late 1990s, the KGB was reorganized and renamed the Federal Security Service, or FSB. Germany, on the other hand, has not reinstated the security police.

After noting those differences, this thesis asks three questions:

1) Why were the security police more hated in Germany than in Russia, if they operated so similarly?

2) Why was there a difference in the treatment of the files? Why did only Germany release them on a mass scale?

and 3) Why did the secret police make a comeback only in Russia? Why would a democracy even need to make use of it?
Chapter 3

QUESTION 1: PRE-1991

“WHY DO THE SECRET POLICE MAKE THE BEST TAXI DRIVERS? YOU GET IN, AND THEY ALREADY KNOW YOUR NAME AND WHERE YOU LIVE”

Germany

East Germany: the name brings to mind the Berlin Wall, utilitarian architecture, and a gray, dreary landscape. Spies, too, lots and lots of spies. The average East German is estimated to have been more spied on than any other person at the time. The Stasi employed approximately 100,000 agents, 173,000 informers, and over two million apartment managers whose additional duties included keeping track of all visitors. Just for following suspects, the Stasi allocated 5,000 additional workers. They also received denunciations from people who they had either recruited informally, extorted, or those unaffiliated who held a grudge against a neighbor. Informal “moles” were not tracked as Stasi employees were, so their exact number is unknown. Those unlucky enough to be on the Stasi’s radar would receive “…a midnight knock on the door and the subsequent disappearance…torture, kidnapping and killing…what agents called ‘escalation steps’—such as anonymous letters and phone calls to employers and spouses or faked photographs—to destroy a

27 Lemke, “Trials and Tribulations.”
target's reputation and career without making an arrest.” Emigrating illegally to West Germany had a particularly harsh penalty; the emigrant’s family would be harassed and followed as well. In the 1980s, the Stasi further doubled their number of agents with the goal of covering every citizen in the GDR. East Germans had a vague idea of this vast network of spies, but when the files were released, it was found that they actually underestimated the Stasi. Out of 16 million East Germans, five million had a file. Experts in the West were similarly stunned.

The Stasi and the East German state placed an unusually high priority on monitoring their own citizens. As seen in Table 1, the Stasi’s non-domestic intrigues dealt mainly with West Germany, with funding for a few international rebel groups as exceptions. The premier Stasi agent was Markus Wolf, and his dealings centered around East Germany’s other half. He triumphed by successfully placing a spy, Günter Guillaume, into Chancellor Willy Brandt’s cabinet. Guillaume became Brandt’s secretary, and transferred private information back east. When this was discovered in 1974, Brandt was forced to resign. Besides Wolf, the Stasi is suspected of also hedging their bets on the Red Army Faction, a terrorist group led by Andreas Baader and Ulrike Meinhof. The RAF engaged in kidnappings, assassinations, and airplane hijackings, all in an effort to spark a larger revolution against the “fascist” West German government. In 1989, evidence that the Stasi had trained and supplied RAF members was unearthed, and Markus Wolf corroborated the facts in his memoirs.

29 Lemke, “Trials and Tribulations.”
30 Wolf, Man Without a Face, 168-182.
31 Ibid., 310
Stasi agents rarely ventured any further than West Germany, a small sphere of operations. This meant that they were able to direct most of their resources towards internal affairs. In contrast, the KGB certainly had more agents, as the Soviet Union had almost 300 million people compared to the GDR’s sixteen million, but concentrated more on foreign espionage, leaving fewer agents to control the domestic populace.

The Stasi network created an atmosphere of fear in the GDR. Its major targets were writers, who could circulate incendiary material against the regime, and the church, which had maintained some autonomy and had closer links to West Germany. Their scope wasn’t limited to the typical suspects, though. Anyone who was thought of as suspicious could be targeted. Coworkers or even spouses could be Stasi informers; the Stasi especially relied on those two types, for the threat of ruining suspects’ careers or marriages brought results. The high number of informers and denunciations made the most casual of conversations about politics or West Germany strained. As one woman noted, “The Stasi was present during every discussion like a monster in a horror film. It destroyed the trust of the people who lived in its state and played a major role in its downfall.”

It is almost impossible to find surveys or polls about the Stasi taken in East Germany, and so it is hard to say how, exactly, citizens felt. Actions speak louder than words, though, and the events of 1989 are well documented. The Stasi were the primary target of anti-Party and anti-Communism movements. East Germans perceived them as the embodiment of everything foul about the GDR, as the Stasi

32 Lemke, “Trials and Tribulations.”
mingled with common citizens more often than Party members did. As Joachim Gauck, a civil rights activist and former president of Germany wrote, “[the] Stasi, the prime instrument of oppression, was to be the first victim. ‘Put the Stasi men to work in the factories’ was the rallying cry of the protesting masses.”

As the Berlin Wall came down, protests continued, and the weeks stretched from 1989 into 1990, the SED (Socialist Unity Party; the leading Communists) realized how quickly it stood to lose its power. In response, it attempted to pivot into the SED-PDS (Party of Democratic Socialism), and elected a new leader, Gregor Gysi. Germans correctly perceived these pitiful machinations of power, and in January of 1990, demonstrated against the SED-PDS and the Stasi. On the 15th, civilians took over the Stasi headquarters in Berlin, and the SED was forced to begin abandoning its security police. Within the final weeks of the Stasi’s official reign, East Germans were loudly showing their pent-up dissatisfaction with it.

When not lashing out against the Party, citizens would sometimes go after the Stasi themselves (though occasionally, an innocent policeman would be confused for a Stasi officer and attacked). A month earlier, in December, activists had gathered around a Stasi building in Dresden. They were brought there by the spreading public anger at the abuses of the security agency, their corruption, and the ongoing destruction of the files. They had “instinctively turned against the last and greatest

35 Christiane Olivo, Creating a Democratically Civil Society in Eastern Germany (New York, NY: Palgrave, 2001), 105-106.
bulwark of Communist power in the country.” Dresden was not alone; Stasi offices all over the GDR attracted angry crowds. Agents closed their window blinds and snuck out only after darkness, fearing for their safety. In Dresden, a fifty-year-old truck driver said, “We've got to stay calm and we don't need violence…but we also have to settle accounts with the criminals who made us feel like we were prisoners here for 40 years.” Others wished to see the Stasi dismissed and placed on trial. After the activists left, the building remained standing, but graffitied.³⁷ And this happened before the Party’s attempt to maneuver themselves and the Stasi back into the status quo.

Some of the activist’s wishes would come to fruition. Four years later, Mielke was put on trial for two cases of murder (that pre-dated his Stasi involvement), and was given six years in prison despite his advanced age. Border guards at the Berlin Wall who had shot and killed attempted escapees were also put on trial, and their excuse that they were “just following orders” carried less weight the second time around. Erich Honecker, General Secretary of the GDR from 1971 onwards, was tried for “maintaining a state based on force.” The trial, however, was suspended on account of his liver cancer.³⁸ By carrying out trials, East Germans were rooting out the Party and Stasi sympathizers, as well as sending a message that the old political system would no longer be tolerated.

In 2000, Erich Mielke died, at the age of 92. Newspaper headlines read, “Most Hated Man Now Dead.”³⁹ To earn that title, rightly or not, Mielke had overseen a

³⁹ Anna Funder, Stasiland: Stories from Behind the Berlin Wall (Harper Perennial, 2011), 255.
security network that had imprisoned thousands of Germans, and blackmailed, beleaguered, or otherwise hounded thousands more. In an attempt to oversee every aspect of German society, the Stasi had overextended itself. Just as there is a thin line between the security agency and government agencies, there is also one between an efficient and covert spy network, and what the Stasi ended up with. Too few spies and information is lost, too many and people are cowed. In the GDR, the Stasi erred too far on the latter side.

Russia

In comparison, the KGB was much better tolerated in the Soviet Union. Survey data about the public’s opinion of the KGB is easier to find, and it shows that the general opinion was neutral or sometimes even positive. In 1990, 40 percent of those surveyed felt that it could be wholly trusted—a higher rating than for the mass media, police, or courts. In 1993, a random sample of 1,530 urbanites (not to be taken as a representative sample of Russia) asking about the opinions they held pre-1991 demonstrated that 55 percent did not fear the KGB, and only one-third believed that the KGB and its predecessors had “inflicted harm on society,” though it was unspecified whether it was the KGB or the NKVD that they had in mind. A mere one out of ten believed that the KGB should have been abolished. The responders perceived officers as being professional, intelligent, brave, and physically strong. They felt that if they had been introduced to someone who was a KGB agent, “for

62.1% it would make no difference; for 50.8% (there could be more than one response) it would arouse some curiosity; 30.1% would think better of their new

40 Another adjective commonly used was “competent”, but that does not correlate with likeability. An executioner can be competent, but he will still be loathed.
acquaintance; while 27.3%, by contrast, would be apprehensive, and a further 17.4% would do their best to avoid” contact.\textsuperscript{41}

In 1983 and ’84, almost 2,800 former Soviet citizens, mostly living in the U.S, were also interviewed about their opinions of the KGB. Again, they were not statistically representative of Russia, as the interviewees were overwhelming Jewish and living in urban areas. Among the questions asked was their involvement in “non-conforming activities.” 30 percent read \textit{samizdat}, underground publications about topics that were censored, but only about one out of every 280 readers were ever punished for it. For other non-conforming activities, leaders of them had a one in two chance of being punished, and followers less than one in ten. When speaking of direct contact with the KGB (punishments may also have come from other institutions), “24% concerned contact with foreigners; 17%, illegal economic activities; 12%, other restrictions on the respondents' freedom of speech or movement (e.g.: reading or publishing samizdat); 5%, ethnic reasons or engaging in religious observances; and 17%, unidentified.” The majority of people who were contacted by the KGB had been involved in, or suspected of being involved in, illegal activities. Those numbers may be inflated, though, as urban Jews with Western contacts would have been considered the \textit{intelligentsia}, who were among the most likely to oppose the Soviet regime, and therefore likely to have had a higher surveillance priority from the KGB.\textsuperscript{42} A rural worker who did not read samizdat or have Western contacts would have less reason to

be punished by the KGB.

Two surveys do not, of course, give a completely accurate picture of the public’s views of the KGB. But as in Germany, it is possible to look at events that occurred when communism was beginning to collapse, around 1990. Twelve KGB agents were elected as People’s Deputies of the USSR in 1989, and a year later, almost 2,000 were elected to local parliaments, an indication that they were still trusted enough to hold high positions. When the rallies and protests of 1991 began, the primary target was the Party, not the KGB. “Down with the CPSU! [Communist Party of the Soviet Union]” was often heard at rallies, but “down with the KGB”—never. Unlike in Germany, where the security police had a heavy presence, the KGB had stayed subordinate to the Party in the public’s eyes. They knew their place. When Soviet citizens were out protesting, they were protesting against the highest echelon of the government, the CPSU.

In a panic, the Party tried to pin the blame on the KGB. In the opinion of one former agent, “to turn society against the KGB, the self-professed democrats [Boris Yeltsin and followers] claimed that Soviet intelligence supported corruption in the Communist Party.” “To turn society against…” is an interesting choice of words, one that implies that society was not already against the KGB. In late August of 1991, crowds tried to storm the security agency headquarters in Moscow, the Lubyanka, and toppled the statue of Dzerzhinsky, the Iron Felix, that ominously stood in front of the building. That was the extent of the damage. Meanwhile, the Russian state continued its inflammatory movement against the KGB. As late as 1993, a writer stated that “the

43 Albats, *The State Within a State.*
hostile campaign against the old state security apparatus continues nonetheless. Major international and Russian publications are engaged in the hunt; so also are former dissidents…Russian television screens flash western films showing KGB employees as killers and terrorists…” 45 Had the public already been hostile towards the KGB, no such campaigns would have been needed.

In short, even by 1991, after the KGB had been operating for forty years, the public was not nearly as harsh towards them as the Germans were towards the Stasi. What could have caused the difference in temperament? For starters, the KGB had a smaller presence. In 1991, it had about 480,000 agents, amounting to one for every 610 people; the Stasi had one agent for 160 people. 46 The number does not include informers. The KGB surely made use of blackmail to obtain information, or else gathered it from willing sycophants, but the number of them is unknown. Likely they had less than the Stasi did; little mention is made anywhere of informers or their presence. The KGB were also given a public image boost by way of the Party and its propaganda machine. After the NKVD, the Party recognized that the secret police would need to be cleaned, scrubbed, and polished to appeal to the populace, and so it “launched a vast publicity campaign designed to raise the prestige of the KGB and the militia.” 47 They created literature and published articles that were pro-KGB. The corruption and nepotism within the police was covered up. It was also at this time that Nikita Khrushchev had a policy of “De-Stalinization,” a process that included

46 Ibid.
reversing many of Stalin’s policies and closing the gulags. The KGB would have benefited from being disassociated from Stalin and the NKVD. Furthermore, from the late 1960s through the early 1980s, Yuri Andropov, Chairman and later General Secretary, pushed the narrative that the KGB was made up of intelligent, not brutal, people.\footnote{It is also worth noting that in its history, the KGB had eight chairmen, each bringing their own experience, expectations, and ideals. The Stasi had one chairman.} Under Mikhail Gorbachev, the Party additionally distanced it from the harsh repressions of the past.\footnote{Soldatov, “Russia’s New Nobility,” 81-83.}

In the late 1980s, the KGB underwent even more PR-friendly reforms. It established republican divisions, beginning in Russia. It then opened a department of public relations, and allowed journalists to enter their elite training college. A new propaganda campaign called the KGB a “protector of human rights.” The latter half of 1991 saw the announcement that it would no longer monitor the conversations of private citizens.\footnote{White, “Public Attitudes to the KGB.”} They still wielded enormous power—Gorbachev and his wife were being monitored to the minute, of which he claimed to be unaware—but it was not widely known until later exactly how much power. Any talks of abolishing or completely reforming the KGB were limited to underground human rights movements.\footnote{Waller, "Russia: death and resurrection of the KGB,” 63.}

Unfortunately, the scarcity of survey and polling data among East Germans makes a direct comparison of attitudes between them and the Russians impossible. But, based on the events of 1989 and 1991, it is safe to say that the Stasi were much
less popular than the KGB. This gap was because of functional differences: the Stasi took surveillance to the extreme, with so many agents and informers that it ruined their image. Four times more likely to be tracked than the average Russian, East Germans felt threatened. They were aware that informers were pervasive, and could be as near and dear as their own family members, but the uncertainly only heightened their anxieties. Having a wasp in your house, flying around your head, is scary. But if the wasp flew away and you lost sight of it, you would be even more on edge. What if it flew into the bathroom or the bedroom, biding its time? The Stasi were a natural target for frustrated Germans, a frustration that ended with its demise. The KGB, on the other hand, had released fewer wasps into people’s homes, so to speak. It also ran an extensive propaganda program to create goodwill among the public. As a result, it escaped the wrath of the mobs in 1991, giving it the time and opportunity that it needed to cling to power.52

52 Ukraine has recently chosen to open its archives of NKVD-KGB files, as a way of assessing the crimes that Soviet Russia committed there. They are hoping that access to the files will help promote democracy and freedom in Ukraine, though spite towards Russia was likely another motivation.
A man calls the KGB and says, “My parrot’s been stolen!” The agent says in irritation, “Comrade, you need to call the police, not bother us.” “I will, but I wanted to let you know that I disagree with everything he says!”

Germany

When the Stasi realized that East Germans had turned on them, in November 1989, they began destroying their files. Burning them took too long, so some offices unceremoniously jammed them into the shredders instead. In Schwerin, Mecklenburg-Pomerania, 17,200 sacks of shredded paper were discovered.53 In all, about 20 percent of the Stasi files were lost during the upheaval.54 The rest were seized and placed under state control when a new parliament in 1990 “undertook several important initiatives to deal with the Stasi. Shortly after its election, for example, it established a committee that would oversee the breakup of the Stasi. Additionally, it drafted a bill that dealt with access to the Stasi files that was passed in August 1990.”55

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55 Bruce, “Access to Secret Police Files.”
citizens were not able to see their files directly. A third party had to relay the information in them. But after 1992, the files were given to the Federal Commissioner for the Files of the State Security Service of the former German Democratic Republic (Bundesbeauftragte für die Unterlagen des Staatssicherheitsdienstes der ehemaligen Deutschen Demokratischen Republik). Joachim Gauck was its first commissioner. Since then, there have been over five million applications to view a file. Fifty six All citizens who believe that they have a Stasi file on themselves are allowed to submit a request. Forty percent of those who did so learned that a file on them did not exist; one may have been burned or shredded, or perhaps never existed in the first place. Not everyone had been deemed to be a threat. Fifty seven Only .3 percent of the requests came from researchers.

Victims of surveillance were also allowed to see the files on “their” Stasi agents. They are considered to be figures of “contemporary history,” and therefore their files, work history, and even signatures on documents are accessible. Ironically, former Stasi themselves do not have that right of access. Fifty eight People who had resisted the state were too given priority to see their files, since it was guaranteed that they had one. Interviews with Germans who read them show that they have mixed emotions. One man felt that the information in his file was true; “I don't know of anybody whose files lie. The [Stasi] now lie, still now. They contradict the files . . . The files are more honest than their authors.” Another felt that the files did not represent him accurately. However, most of the interviewees agreed that the information in them was honest—it would not have been in the Stasi’s best interests to falsify data. But their analysis of

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56 Bruce, “Access to Secret Police Files.”
57 Miller, Narratives of Guilt and Compliance.
people’s lives could be faulty. For example, they assumed that a Women for Peace group was being led by men behind the scenes, when it was not. As the interviewer Molly Andrews wrote, “Employees and collaborators of the Stasi could not 'see' what was before them, because it did not adhere to their expectations of what comprises a life.” 59

The sheer volume of information that the Stasi had managed to collect was shocking. In an article titled “On Reading my Stasi Files,” Frederic Pryor related how he had been in prison for six months in 1961 on charges of espionage, after one of his acquaintances fled to West Germany. His status as an American graduate student did not offer him any protection. His file ended up being 5,000 pages, with 20 of them just listing the abbreviations used. 350 of those pages were notes from his cellmate, others were about his dissertation, police interrogation, the papers found on him, and the contents of his car.60 Another man, a British citizen named Timothy Ash who had lived in Berlin, found that the Stasi had followed him to a level that can best be described at creepily obsessive. They had, for instance, followed him into a restaurant, and noted the exact time he entered and left, what he was wearing, and the appearance of the woman who was with him, given the code name “Beret,” and what she was wearing, too. The Stasi had then created a plan of action for future surveillance. 61 While Ash was intrigued by his files, later going on to interview former Stasi agents and publish a book about the experience, Pryor felt only relief that “[his] contacts with various East Germans did not lead to great problems for them, something that had

been on [his] conscience for three decades.” For people like him, the files gave answers to long-held questions, and for others, confirmed their worst fears.

Aside from making for interesting (or horrifying) reads, the Stasi files were also used to uproot former agents from the new, unified Germany. Public officials were vetted. So were current and aspiring politicians, teachers, and airport employees post-9/11. Most were deemed to be too insignificant in the Stasi cliques, and kept their jobs. But by 1996, anywhere from 60,000 to 100,000 people had been dismissed based on information from their files. Vetting turned out to be a complex process, as “any East German of ability who had the desire to accomplish something in [the GDR] under communism had dealings with the Stasi, since the Stasi had practically unlimited power. As a result, no politician of any stature has been able to emerge… who has not been tainted by Stasi contacts.” East Germany’s first prime minister Lothar de Maiziere, elected in 1990, was driven from office because of rumors of his involvement with the Stasi. Ibrahim Bohme and Wolfgang Schnur, two other party chairmen, were also discovered and implicated, as well as half of the founding members of the East German Green Party. For persons of lower status in the Stasi, their employers were still notified that their potential hire/current employee had Stasi connections, and it was up to them to make of that as they wished.

German politicians began debating whether to close the files in 2007.

64 Written in 1995, ten years before East German-raised Angela Merkel became Chancellor.
66 Lemke, “Trials and Tribulations,” 44.
67 Bruce, “Access to Secret Police Files.”
Wolfgang Thierse, a Social Democratic and vice-president of the Bundestag, wanted to keep the files open until at least 2019, when, he said, “the vast majority of East Germans would have had sufficient opportunity to view [them].” Thierse and other supporters feared that “an integration of the Stasi Archive into the federal system would reduce access to the files as they would no longer be exempt from the strict privacy rules that govern access to other files…East Germans may not as easily be able to view [them].”68 The files remained open.

Since their opening, there have been many discussions about the Stasi files. Germans were worried about the effect they might have—would people use them to exact revenge? What would happen to informers? The information could destroy people’s relationships with their neighbors, friends, family. On the other hand, Germans believed that their politicians shouldn’t have suspect security agency connections, and that the files would be a way to ascertain that. Debates likewise focused on how the files might be related to previous German authoritarian regimes, a raw nerve in society. After all, the Stasi had been preceded by the Gestapo. The debates continued long after the new century rang in. In 2006, the German film Das Leben den Anderen (The Lives of Others) won an Academy Award. The film is about a Stasi officer who is assigned to follow a playwright, and throughout the film becomes disillusioned about his career. It was the first German film to have a sympathetic Stasi character, and it “evoked intense critical discussion.” One such point was “the humanization of the Stasi…with the concern that humanization could legitimate the actions of Stasi officers.” Some critics compared the positive

68 Ibid., 83.
characterization of the Stasi officer with the humanization of the Nazis.\textsuperscript{69} The film raised questions about the “goodness” of Stasi officers, and how society perceived them fifteen years after the fact.

West Germans in particular “metonymically identify the Stasi with…the Gestapo.” \textsuperscript{70} Equating someone with the Gestapo is a very serious accusation of wrongdoing, and such attitudes play a large role in how Germany as a whole reacts to the security police. Their attitudes could be due to not having first-hand experience, only rumors and exaggerations coming from the East. The Berlin Wall was not erected until 1961, while the Stasi had been formed in 1950 and were more oppressive in their earlier years, before being restrained by the Party. West Germans could have heard stories about the Stasi during that ten-year period of free movement. What West Germans \textit{have} heard about the Stasi has given them the idea that they were “perhaps the epitome of all that was wrong with the GDR.” \textsuperscript{71} They are more inflexible than Easterners about dismissing officials with Stasi connections, as well as not employing former Stasi in the police force. In effect, the dominant attitude in the western part of Germany has been to shut out the Stasi.

With society debating over whether Stasi agents can be inherently good people, the former agents themselves feel excluded and vilified. For instance, in March of 2006, about 200 former Stasi employees, including a former deputy of Mielke’s, attended a Berlin meeting concerning a defunct Stasi prison that had been

\textsuperscript{70} Glaeser, \textit{Divided in Unity}, 277.
\textsuperscript{71} Ibid., 269.
transformed into a museum. They demanded that the museum be shut down. Why? Because they believed that the description of the prison as “a place of terror, mistreatment and suffering” was “lies.” Siegfried Rataizik, formerly in charge of the prison, went as far as to say to visiting ex-prisoners that the Stasi had treated them fairly (certainly a lie), and that their victim attitude was uncalled for. The thousands of other ex-Stasi men who did not attend the meeting likely felt similarly; to them, their role was no different than that of a regular security officer or police agent. Most Germans would see it differently. As well as that, the Stasi say that they and the Party operated within the Constitution, and that their odious deeds are exaggerated. In recent years, the Stasi have continued their attempts to change the public’s opinion about them. A few have published “whitewashed” books. In doing so, they are pushing back and defending themselves against the pervasive German opinion of Stasi agents as remnants of an oppressive government, people who must be outed and pushed out of politics.

Informers, too, have taken a defensive side. Barbara Miller has compiled interviews with former informers in her book, “Narratives of Guilt and Compliance in Unified Germany.” In many cases, the interviewed informers were outed when the Stasi files were released, even if it was against their wishes. They had been selected from a broad base; some informers willingly agreed while about eight percent were blackmailed into doing so. Informers in the latter category felt that it was unfair for them to be judged so harshly, given their circumstances. But other informers felt that

72 Kyle James, “Former Stasi Officers Coming out of Shadows,” Deutsche Welle [Berlin, Germany], April 24th, 2006.
they had done nothing wrong. Yet they still gave Miller cover names in place of their real ones for her publication, suggesting that they do not desire their past identity to be known. In post-Communist Germany, they, like the Stasi, feel a degree of ostracism. When even politicians with influence and experience had their careers ruined, the average informer was in danger of being harassed and cut out of social circles if, or when, their Stasi file was examined.

For Germans, the memory of the Stasi’s oppressiveness and the trauma that came from it was not the first time they had to deal with history being linked to national shame. Following its defeat in 1945, Germany entered what would be termed the *Stunde Null*: Hour Zero. The surrender, their shame, and the denazification of the country gave them the chance to start on a fresh slate. But the Nazi’s war crimes, brought out into the light and seen through the lens of a society no longer at war, weighed heavily on them. People questioned whether there was anything of value created during the last ten years, or only misery. Would Germans try to forget the Holocaust and other Nazi atrocities, and erase them from history, or accept the facts and seek retribution and forgiveness? They chose retribution.

Germany has become an exemplary model of a nation accepting the responsibility of the darker moments of its history. In 1970, West German Chancellor Willy Brandt opened a national discourse by paying respect to a memorial for the victims of a ghetto uprising in Warsaw. He was the first German politician to acknowledge the unnamed victims of his country’s past. Since then, unified Germany has created monuments of its own to honor those killed in World War II. Former

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73 Miller, *Narratives of Guilt and Compliance*.
74 Germany political culture has been defined as neurotic and guilt-seeking (Lemke, “Trials and Tribulations.”)
concentration and labor camps, such as Dachau, have been left standing and made into museums. In Dachau, the chilling slogan *Arbeit Macht Frei* continues to mark the entry into the camp, the first thing every visitor sees. Streets in Berlin have memorial plaques, called *stolpersteine*, laid into the sidewalks in front of homes where exiled Jews once lived. With over 7,000 plaques in Berlin alone, literally stumbling onto one is unavoidable. These monuments are used both to educate people, and to remind them of what happened only two generations ago.

Another concentration camp, Sachsenhausen, had been turned into a museum in the GDR, and tours were allowed inside. But when talking about the prisoners, tour guides didn’t mention how they had been arrested and persecuted for being of a different ethnic group. Instead, they focused on their “struggle against Fascism.” The political discussion was there, but it was strictly anti-Nazi. Since the fall of the GDR, Sachsenhausen and other camps have added information about the numerous other reasons, whether for ethnic or religious, that people were interred there. Now, visitors can hear a more unbiased and honest history about what happened in the camps.

Germany has also banned certain “symbols of unconstitutional organizations” i.e.: the swastika, the SS symbol, the Heil Hitler greeting, and flags of the Third Reich. Using those symbols in the context of Neo-Nazi groups is deemed extremely offensive. In taking those actions, Germany hopes to prevent fascist groups from ever

75 Anne Thomas, “20 years of 'Stolpersteine'.” *Deutsche Welle* [Berlin, Germany], December 5th, 2016.
77 Ibid.
rising to prominence again. As well as that, it has given over seventy billion dollars in reparations to Israel to try to mitigate the enormous loss of life, pursued close relationships with two formerly occupied countries, France and Poland, and has become a large collaborator in the EU and NATO, working well alongside other nations that suffered under the Nazis.

After the collapse of the GDR, Germans were faced with a new memory of national embarrassment. The nation was linked to the Nazis, as it had only been created out of the ashes of a defeated and occupied Germany. The Party and the Stasi had brought repressions, arrests, and imprisonment, both virtual and real, in Berlin. Communism was linked to not only the failure of the GDR to sustain itself, but of the Soviet Union’s dissolution as well. Germans would have to again decide how to move on. The second occurrence of this phenomenon has been termed the *doppelte Vergangenheitsbewaetigung* (double reckoning of the past). If East Germans, indeed, all Germans, were able to accept their Nazi past, they would be able to accept a communist past. Therefore, as they had previously done, they embraced transparency and acceptance, and opened the Stasi files. By reading their files, people could learn about the inner workings of the regime, and find out who their informers were. Politicians and other public servants could be judged by their constituents. The files also allowed for vetting, not as a form of revenge, but because the government recognized that its citizens would not tolerate any Stasi collaborationists coming into power. German governance and society have allowed for debates, and in doing so, will

78 Germany’s right-wing party, the AfD, is not considered a fascist organization by the government.
keep the national memory of their secret police alive.

**Russia**

In Russia, on the other hand, the KGB’s files are rarely discussed. They too were partially destroyed in 1991, and the remaining ones were left untouched after Boris Yeltsin appointed Vadim Bakatin as the KGB’s last chairman in August. His order regarding the files had been his first.\(^{80}\) On October 24\(^{th}\), 1991, Gorbachev formally ended the KGB by signing a decree that dismantled it into many other bodies. The doors to the Lubyanka swung open, and ordinary people were finally allowed inside. But, in December of the same year, Yeltsin signed the Decree on the Formation of the Ministries of Security and Internal Affairs, which united the KGB, in its various agencies, with the police. He installed Victor Barannikov as the head of the joint agencies.\(^{81}\) The process of dismantling the KGB had ended. The doors to the Lubyanka closed again.

A 1993 decree forbade many of the KGB’s files from being opened for fifty years.\(^{82}\) A year earlier, the new Russian successor to the Supreme Soviet overwhelmingly passed a law that stated that the names of those who cooperated with or informed for the KGB would be protected by the state. As a majority of the Supreme Soviet likely had KGB connections, their desire to keep classified information safe was no surprise. A few informers have since “confessed,” but most

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81 Albats, *The State Within a State*, 297-311.
82 Ibid., 341.
have stayed quiet about their role in abetting the security agency.\footnote{David Satter, \textit{It Was a Long Time Ago, and It Never Happened Anyway: Russia and the Communist Past} (Yale University Press, 2013)} These actions had support from the powers above; “Bakatin, Gorbachev, and Yeltsin saw how the Czechs and East Germans destroyed and uprooted the former Communist state security systems in their countries and they deliberately decided not to follow that trail.”\footnote{Waller, "Russia: death and resurrection of the KGB,” 367.} By not releasing the KGB files, Russia’s leaders hoped to minimize discussion about it and other communist abuses of power.\footnote{Amy Knight, “The Fate of the KGB Archives,” \textit{Association for Slavic, East European, and Eurasian Studies}, Slavic Review, Vol. 52, No. 3 (Autumn, 1993): 582-586.} They, as well as Vladimir Putin, did not support or encourage the vetting process that was happening in Germany.

There was only a brief period in the late 1980s, during \textit{glasnost}, when public discussions and human rights groups became common. Prior to that, the Soviet Union’s problems had been blamed on Stalin. Nothing else to discuss, was the Party line. But during the relatively lax and free period of \textit{glasnost}, people began to look deeper into their past. And in the early 1990s, Russia, like Germany, “faced an internal debate about its totalitarian past after the fall of the communist regime. While repression and human rights violations had characterized the Soviet regime throughout its history, this debate cut most deeply in regard to the Stalin era and the secret police.”\footnote{Forest, “Post-Totalitarian National Identity.”} In response, a human rights group called Memorial was created. One of their first acts was to place a small monument, a stone, as a tribute to those who had died in the gulags, in front of the Lubyanka. But the discussion was tempered when the KGB files remained classified.
The Russian public seems to have accepted this. There is little curiosity about what was written in people’s files, or using them to vet politicians. After all, president Vladimir Putin, who in 2012 was elected to his fourth term, had served as a KGB officer. He would have never been elected to a post in Germany. But in Russia, his history in espionage is well known, and is rarely used as a criticism against him. A study by Olga Kryshtanovskaya found that a quarter of “leading” political figures were current or ex agents of the Russian security services. Other former KGB agents found lucrative jobs outside of politics. Victor Cherkashin, the earlier mentioned KGB agent, owned a number of businesses in the 1990s. He hired other KGB men to protect them from gangs. Currently, people’s criticisms apply mostly to those who are called “New Russians”—the nouveau riche. Millionaires and billionaires living behind eight-foot walls on the perimeters of Moscow draw the most ire from the public, not ex-KGB agents. Clearly, the political and social culture in Russia is different.

In Russia, the communist past is seen more positively than it is in Germany. Many Russians do not believe that the Soviet regime was problematic. Soviet era nostalgia is pervasive, with almost half of Russians, mid-1990s and onward, preferring a Soviet style of government over democracy. In 1999, approximately half also felt ashamed at “the destruction of the USSR.” Three-quarters regretted its passing in some way. Furthermore, “a survey by the respected agency VTsIOM [All-Russian Center for the Study of Public Opinion, also called Levada] found in early 2003 that

over half of Russians polled viewed Stalin’s role in Soviet history as ‘probably’ or ‘definitely’ positive.” Another 1999 poll asked people to name the ten greatest men of all time; the final five included Vladimir Lenin and Stalin. Statues of Lenin can still be found innocently standing in squares all over the country, and the Park of Arts in Moscow includes busts of Stalin. The Duma has received many people’s petitions that have called for a restoration of the Iron Felix to its previous space. Some Russians, Duma members included, feel that Dzerzhinsky was a symbol of “the fight against crime.” One author compared the act to the Germans erecting a statue to the founder of the Gestapo in Berlin.

While Germany has been open and apologetic about its shameful history, Russia denies it. There are few monuments to, for instance, Stalin’s victims. Though gulags numbered in the dozens, and their victims in the millions, there is only one large museum dedicated to them. The exact number is victims is further unknown, as the NKVD’s statistical records are sealed by the state. Guesses have come from independent scholars using census data and testimonies from witnesses. Statistical information about deaths in the Gulags is also available, and has been used in compilations. The non-Russian victims from the same period, such as the losses from the Holodomor famine in Ukraine or the Red Army’s trail of devastation from Moscow to Berlin, are also not acknowledged. Russia denies the Holodomor as a

92 Ibid.
It is similarly unsympathetic to the fate of the Soviet occupied nations of eastern Europe, and instead the current government has made some noise about protecting ethnic Russian minorities in those states. Russia also does not maintain good relations with quite a few of her ex-satellite states, i.e.: the Baltics, Ukraine, Georgia, and does not generate much discussion about Soviet crimes that happened there.

That is not to say that Russians are apathetic towards monuments. There a great deal of cultural and religious monuments. Every city, town, or hamlet that was under Nazi occupation has memorials. Churches and other religious symbols have been restored following the end of the Soviet Union’s policy of atheism. But those monuments portray Russia in a positive light (the Soviet victory in the Second World War is a huge source of pride). The state has been hesitant to erect any that portray the less savory parts of its history. Of course, Russians are not alone in this bias. Turkey, for example, rabidly denies the Armenian genocide, and Japanese textbooks leave out the war crimes committed in China during the Second World War. If anything, Germany is the stand-out with its treatment of the Holocaust. Nonetheless, Russia has little willingness to discuss to historical repressions and crimes, and instead wishes to focus only on the positive.

On the eve of the election of 1999, Vladimir Putin gave a rousing speech. In it, he “commemorated the founding of the Bolshevik secret police. He warned against efforts critical of the Chekists: "Bodies of state security have always defended the

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93 It is not clear if the famine was caused by collectivization and poor administration, or a deliberate attempt on Stalin’s part to eliminate Ukrainians.
94 The town of 13,000 where my grandmother lives was occupied for three months, and has at least two memorials dedicated to the event, as well as a statue of Lenin.
national interests of Russia," he told state security workers."95 The so-called Chekists were never rooted out, as the Stasi were. Russians did not consider it a priority, and with their new president openly endorsing state security systems, it would never become one. They were unwilling to face the facts about the KGB, which would have reflected badly on the Soviet Union.

This attitude is seen in the handling of the KGB’s files. They could be considered a shameful part of history, so they are rarely talked about. The information in them is still mostly unknown, with a few notable exceptions. Vasily Mitrokhin was a KGB agent who defected to Great Britain in 1992, taking his notes with him, where they were co-published as the Mitrokhin Files. However, his archives concern mainly foreign espionage and plots, unlike the individually-centered Stasi files.96 The other exception is the human rights group Memorial, which has archives about the gulags and dissenters.97 In an act of opposition to the group, the Zamoskvoretzky District Court of Moscow ordered Memorial to register as a “foreign agent” in 2014, or else face legal sanctions. When the suit was taken to a higher court in St. Petersburg, the order to register was upheld, but Memorial chose to ignore the label and “continue its work without registration in the Russian Federation.”98 It has continued its archival work, but the lack of formal support from the government is, nonetheless, a good hint of how well human rights groups are tolerated.

Other than the Mitrokhin files, another source of ex-security agency files can

95 Waller, "Russia: death and resurrection of the KGB."
97 Memorial
98 “RUSSIAN FEDERATION: Court orders Memorial Human Rights Center to register as “foreign agent.” Fidh.org
be found in the Holocaust Memorial Archives, headquartered in Washington D.C. The organization claims the documents, photographs, and microfilms as belonging to the former KGB, but their scope covers war crimes during the Second World War, a time during which it was the NKVD that was operating.99 Two of the more well-known “sources” would not be of much, if any, help to any Russians seeking to read their police file, as Germans as allowed to. The paucity of any published and accessible KGB files speaks for itself.

Chapter 5

QUESTION 3: 1991 -

“WHY DO STASI OFFICERS TRAVEL IN GROUPS OF THREE? THEY NEED ONE OFFICER TO WRITE THE REPORTS, ANOTHER TO READ THE REPORTS, AND THE THIRD TO KEEP AN EYE ON THOSE TWO INTELLECTUALS.”

June 22nd, 1941, saw history’s largest land-air invasion, Operation Barbarossa. Determined to take the Soviet Union, Adolf Hitler coordinated multiple simultaneous fronts along the 1,800-mile border. To prolong his initial successes, he needed to sniff out intelligence about the Red Army. In 1942, Reinhard Gehlen took over the army division that gathered such intelligence. Hitler found his collected information too pessimistic and dismissed him in April 1945, though he later probably did not appreciate the irony that Gehlen had been correct about the Red Army’s superior strength. Gehlen turned over his intelligence to the CIA after the war, creating the Gehlen Organization.100 In 1956, it was transformed into the Bundesnachrichtensdienst (BnD) in West Germany. Following unification, the BnD encompassed all of Germany. It operates similarly to the CIA (which is not considered a secret police force) by using surveillance to detect threats, mostly foreign, to

Germany.

The situation in Russia was more complicated. As of the last mention of the KGB, it had been united with the police by Boris Yeltsin. Its director, Bakatin, was fired in 1992. Its power was further strengthened in August 1993, when parliament passed a law that allowed “operational investigative methods,” i.e.: wiretapping and opening mail without a warrant.\(^\text{101}\) This security body was now able to conduct surveillance as the KGB had done, without consent of the public. Yeltsin became scared of a coup, and divided the agency in 14 smaller ones (privately, he was opposed to dismantling the KGB completely).\(^\text{102}\) The KGB’s largest sub-agency was renamed the FSB (Federal Security Service) in 1996. Initially, it was used to prosecute mafia groups, but it was later partially disbanded and the director fired. The FSB remained in shambles until Putin, who trusted the organization, consolidated it in 2000. It was merged with the border control in 2003, which greatly expanded its security role. With that, “the FSB…has been granted the role of the new elite, enjoying expanded responsibilities and immunity from public oversight or parliamentary control. The FSB’s budget is not published; the total number of officers is undisclosed. But even cautious estimates suggest that the FSB employs more than 200,000 people.”\(^\text{103}\)

The FSB does not differ much from its forerunner. Its emblem, a shield over a sword, differs from the KGB’s only by having the imperial double-headed eagle on the shield, not the hammer and sickle. It is housed in the same building. It is still impenetrable to outsiders. As well as that, “unable to rid themselves of that deeply ingrained KGB mind-set, the Russian secret services remain locked in the past, in

\(^{101}\) Albats, *The State Within a State*, 329.

\(^{102}\) Satter, *It Was a Long Time Ago*.

\(^{103}\) Soldatov, “Russia’s New Nobility,” 81-85.
repeatedly exhibiting the same paranoia toward the West that marked decades of Cold War confrontation.”

The FSB, like the BnD and the CIA, runs on the assumption that Russia is surrounded by enemies—the West, illegal drug traffickers, the Muslim republics of the Caucasus, NATO, organized criminals, separatists, etc. And like the KGB, it is largely tolerated or ignored by Russian citizens.

Russia is supposed to be a democratic country. It has a constitution that follows the same basic outline as in other countries do, and it has a representative form of government. The FSB, and other security organizations, impinge on the guaranteed rights and freedoms of citizens. So why do the secret police still function in Russia? And why do the masses accept it? They are curiously apathetic towards the KGB and ex-agents; in the opinion of Cherkashin, public curiosity does not exist, despite many former KGB agents publishing memoirs that claim to address it. The answer to that riddle boils down to economic problems leading to corruption, growing inequality, and cynicism.

Following the break-up of the Soviet Union, Russia’s economy went into a precipitous decline (for graphical data, see Appendix A). It had not been strong even before 1991; stagnation began under Leonid Brezhnev in the 1970s. The economy, per Marxism-Leninism, was controlled by Party elites, and they were conservative, selfish, and out-of-touch, leading to a decline in the GDP as the productivity and competitiveness of industries fell. Under Gorbachev, the growth rate was practically

105 Bo Petersson, National Self-Images and Regional Identities in Russia (Hampshire, England: Ashgate Publishing Limited, 2001)
106 Cherkashin, Spy Handler, xii.
zero. He implemented a few reforms, such as his famed *glasnost* and *perestroika*, as well as tinkering with the collective farms, but his efforts were in vain. The economy imploded within months of 1990: production and transportation stopped, and the black market replaced the vestiges of the once powerful Soviet market. This was the time when nationalism grew in various republics, causing them to break away from the Soviet Union.107 In short, economic problems were nothing new to Russia. But the sudden shift from a planned economy to a typically capitalist one only exacerbated the damage.

Gorbachev’s reforms had been planned with a free market economy with a “strong safety net” in mind, Scandinavian style. The problem was, his model would take about ten to fifteen years to work properly. Russia did not have that time. Yeltsin would have to take more extreme measures. He may have had a plan in mind, but in 1991, he received a startling notice at a G7 meeting that changed the course of Russia’s economy. The other leaders, including president George H.W Bush, told Yeltsin that unless he implemented “radical economic shock therapy”, they would let him—and his country---“fail.” He was then given the same order from the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank on the condition of loans. Poland had just received shock therapy and it seemed to be working successfully, so Yeltsin decided to attempt the same experiment in Russia.108

Minted at the University of Chicago by economist Jeffrey Sacks, shock therapy was a model that aimed to drastically change national policy to “shock” a state-planned economy into a free market. It is a tool used by neoliberal economists. Naomi

108 Poland, however, had been given aid to ease the transition. Russia did not receive any.
Klein, in her book *The Shock Doctrine: The Rise of Disaster Capitalism*, makes the argument that shock therapy is largely unsuccessful, leads to corruption, and implemented in unethical ways. She examines how it was used poorly in states such as Chile and South Africa---which today have large income inequalities and corruption,— in Iraq to the benefit of only large corporations, and in New Orleans after Hurricane Katrina to stamp out public schools. In Russia, she wrote, the democratic revolution had to be interrupted to get the shock therapy program underway.\(^{109}\) Herein lay the root of Russia’s problems.

From the start, shock therapy was disastrous. In order to begin it, Yeltsin had to ask Parliament to give him the power to pass emergency laws by decree, not vote, essentially giving him dictatorial powers for a year. Not a good start for a nascent democracy. Yeltsin was guided by a group of economists dubbed “the Chicago Boys,” as they were admirers of the shock therapy program. The Chicago Boys, led by Yegor Gaidar, and Yeltsin lifted price controls and privatized 225,000 previously state-owned companies.\(^{110}\) They took this action despite polls showing that 67 percent of Russians opposed the private seizure of assets; they believed that assets should remain public, and 70 percent being against lifting price controls. Because of the hostility towards his policies, Yeltsin and Gaidar rapidly put them into place, giving the opposition no time to organize and try to work against them. A similar concept is found in countries curbing freedoms or increasing surveillance in a “fog of war” situation. Within a year, personal wealth had fallen, causing the poverty level to rise. Yeltsin told people that the situation would stabilize in half a year, and then Russia

\(^{110}\) Ibid., 223.
would be an economic powerhouse.

After not seeing the promised changes, the parliament voted Gaidar out in 1992, and repealed Yeltsin’s powers. In a fit of rage, Yeltsin tried to dissolve Parliament, bringing into mind the last tsar, who had done the same on at least a few occasions. Western leaders continued to throw their support behind Yeltsin and his shock therapy program. Russians, however, began protesting. Yeltsin sent in troops and tanks to fire on the crowds, claiming that he was “defend[ing] Russia’s new capitalist economy.” He suspended the courts and the Constitution in September 1993, finding a loophole in the Constitution that he used to achieve this, even though his powers did not extend that far. In what was subsequently called a constitutional crisis, Parliament attempted to impeach him. Large anti-Yeltsin crowds gathered in Moscow and broke into the state-run and pro-Yeltsin television studios. In less than two years, he seems to have become more unpopular than the KGB ever were. Undeterred and with the courts suspended, he and the Chicago Boys quickly passed through huge budget cuts and sped up the privatization process. Here, Naomi Klein compared the situation to one that happened in Iraq a decade later, an ominous warning given Iraq’s current situation. She wrote, “…a clique of noveaux billionaires…teamed up with Yeltsin’s Chicago Boys and stripped the country of nearly everything of value.”

They sold off many state energy companies, e.g.: Norilsk Nickel and Yukos, for less than their market value. They were purchased by Russia’s new elite, many of them ex-Party and KGB men, using the public’s money. The GDP continued to decline. The effect is still felt in Russia, as the GDP per capita lingers lower than in most European

111 Ibid., 225.
112 Ibid., 230.
113 Ibid., 231.
countries. Yeltsin’s approval rating declined even faster, falling below 10 percent. In 1998, the Asian financial crisis caused another drop in the economy, and Yeltsin’s approval rating bottomed out at below five percent.

In the field of political science, there is a phenomenon called the “rally ‘round the flag” effect. It states that wars, terrorist attacks, and other national crises will cause a surge of patriotism, and increase the popularity of the president; it explains why George W. Bush’s approval rating went up after 9/11. According to Klein, this was the reasoning behind Yeltsin's decision to invade Chechnya, a Muslim republic in the Caucasus that had tried to declare independence in 1994. Then, in 1999, four apartment buildings were bombed, two in the large cities of Moscow and Volgograd. The FSB blamed the attacks on Chechen extremists, creating a justification for the Second Chechen War. Prime Minister and previous FSB minister Vladimir Putin coordinated the bombing of Chechnya’s capital, Grozny. Fearful of more terrorist attacks, many Russians felt that Putin’s ex-KGB status was an asset, rather than a liability. Who better to find the perpetrators than a former secret police agent? Putin’s popularity climbed, and in late 1999 Yeltsin quietly transferred presidential powers to him before resigning. In March of 2000, Putin won the presidential election, and one of his first acts was to give Yeltsin immunity from prosecution.

The conflict in Chechnya did not help Yeltsin, as seen by his approval ratings and eventual embarrassing retreat from office. Under his economic policies, Russians

114 For comparison, Gallup Polls have found Donald Trump’s lowest approval rating, as of December 2017, to be 33 percent.
115 Ibid., 232.
116 There is much evidence that the bombings were actually done by the FSB, to increase public support for a second assault on Chechnya. Of course, neither they nor Putin would ever admit it.
suffered more than they had under communism. By 1998, 80 percent of farms had gone bankrupt. 70,000 state factories had closed, leaving 74 million Russians living below the poverty line. The population growth rate fell below zero, where it remained until 2009, and average life expectancy underwent a similar trend. Alcoholism became twice as common.\textsuperscript{117} Furthermore, as Klein argues, “…the entire thirty-year history of the Chicago school experiment has been one of mass corruption and corporatist collusion between security states and large corporations.” \textsuperscript{118} Yeltsin dismissed a few of the already scanty anti-corruption fighters in the government when they came too close to his inner circle. Billions of laundered dollars were never investigated by the Kremlin. \textsuperscript{119} A new class of oligarchs arose in the 1990s, made up of countless former communist elites. Benefiting from their already high positions, they were able to amass even greater wealth by buying up privatized corporations. The income inequality gap widened, with the top 10 percent of Russians holding over 30 percent of the wealth throughout the decade. By having uppermost positions in the new government, former KGB agents were able to pass through laws that benefited them, such as the one in 1993 that allowed for unconstitutional surveillance. Courts and procurators were also considered to be strong-armed by security agents in the early 90s—the court system ground to a halt, and the number of bribes rose.\textsuperscript{120}

In such a climate, anarchy became the rule of law. Boris Yeltsin would later write in his autobiography, “outwardly, Russia has all the necessary attributes of a state: The Justice Ministry, the powerful security Ministry, and an enormous police

\textsuperscript{117} Ibid., 238.
\textsuperscript{118} Ibid., 241.
\textsuperscript{119} Waller, "Russia: death and resurrection of the KGB."
\textsuperscript{120} Albats, \textit{The State Within a State}, 38.
force... Only one reason could explain the anarchy. The conveyer-belt system of administration was not working, and, therefore, the machinery of government would not function... somebody had to be the boss in the country.”

More and more Russians had begun to believe, around 80 percent by 1994, that state institutions only protected those who wielded power. They also felt that the problems of primary importance were rising unemployment, criminality, lack of state authority, and low income (in 1982, the same survey found the primary concerns to be “international relations” and family tensions). Similarly, Levada polls showed that people in the early nineties were more worried about wars, famines, criminals, and chaos than they had been twenty years earlier, hinting at an increasing pessimism and misery among the population. Certainly, the average Russian in 1999 felt that bitterness, tiredness, and indifference grew the most among the people around them, and that the current year was harder than the previous few. Nor were the wealthy immune from the anarchy. Banks and bankers were targeted by gangsters, forcing ex-agents like Viktor Cherkashin to hire bodyguards.

Earlier in this thesis, it was assumed that Russia is a democracy. That assumption should now be qualified. Democracy indices place it as a “flawed democracy” or “hybrid regime,” due to rampant corruption, high income inequality, and accusations of unfair elections. Consequently, “democracy is widely viewed as a fraud. There is a prevalent perception that Russia's politics have been "privatized" and...

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123 Ibid., 336.
124 Levada, 24.
125 Ibid., 17.
are controlled by powerful clans.” Over three-quarters of citizens believe that “democracy is a facade for a government controlled by rich and powerful cliques.”

In contrast, support for a one-party state, the opposite of democracy, is quite high. Essentially, the corruption and inequality that arose from the new Russian state in the 1990s had given people a distaste for democracy. From 1992 to 2003, surveyed Russians rated their current political system a 2.6 out of 10 (10 being the best), a rating lower than Mexicans, South Africans, and Brazilians gave to their own governments. Clearly, Russia’s new government had serious image problems. The Soviet Union had not had such problems, and therefore it was democracy which was perceived as the common denominator. Western culture is also viewed suspiciously, and democracy has long been associated with the West. The other outcome has been a prevalent undercurrent of nostalgia for the Soviet Union.

These negative opinions of democracy have also influenced Russian’s views on civil rights. Russia has long been a “remarkably” conservative nation, with no history of private land ownership or civil rights. With the advent of democracy, Yeltsin, Putin and other politicians continued to push anti-democratic and anti-liberal actions. One would expect Russians to rebel, but instead, “there is a good deal of evidence that the…actions of the current administration are not being inflicted on the Russian people but are actually supported by them.” For example, almost 30 percent

128 Ibid., 10.
129 Putin, incidentally, was voted Russia’s “Man of the Year” from 2011-2016.
of Russians would be willing to give up their freedoms for nothing, because no value was attached to them.\textsuperscript{130} Three out of four favored censorship of the press, i.e., internet restrictions or banned books. Order in the country, and a strong government, are prioritized over civil rights.\textsuperscript{131} Even if those numbers are exaggerated, there is still support to show that Russians do not place the same importance on civil rights as westerners do. By nature, agencies like the KGB either skirt or outright step on citizen’s rights; surveillance techniques like letter opening, wiretapping, arrests without a probable cause, and torture would violate any constitution. As was noted above, the secret police and similar agencies are unlikely to be found in democracies. But because Russia is not a fully functioning democracy, and people show a distaste for one, the FSB can operate there.

Alexander Litvinenko found himself in the unfortunate situation of running afoul of the Russian government in 2000, having been an outspoken critic of it, and by extension Putin. A former KGB agent, he was frightened enough to move to London, where, in 2006, he was hospitalized with an illness that the doctors could not initially identify. He died on November 23\textsuperscript{rd}, hairless and wretched, shortly before the cause was discovered: Polonium poisoning. Given that most Polonium reserves are in Russia, and his flight from the country several years earlier, investigators fingered Putin and the FSB as primary suspects. Scotland Yard’s investigation concluded that Litvinenko was poisoned by FSB agent Andrei Lugovoy, but the Russian government refused to collaborate. Litvinenko was not the first of Putin’s critics to die mysteriously, and nor will he be the last. The exact degree of compliance that the FSB

\textsuperscript{131} Levada, 197.
had with the murder of him, journalist Anna Politkovsakya, and other silenced critics, is unknown.

If the FSB was indeed involved, then it is clear how much power Putin has over them. Using a security police for international espionage is one thing, using them for personal vendettas is another. After serving as their minister, Putin greatly expanded the FSB in the early 2000s, and in return, he may be asking for their personal assistance. Thus, they enjoy a mutually symbiotic relationship, like a Golden Retriever and his owner. As things are, their relationship will likely continue. Edward Walker, the director of Berkeley University’s Program in Soviet and Post-Soviet Studies, makes the argument that under Putin, political killings have replaced the business killings of the anarchical nineties in Russia’s “culture of political violence.” He blames Putin’s “leadership style” and KGB background for the increase in political violence, which includes the shooting of journalists, bankers, a mayor and a governor, and an attempt on Yegor Gaidar’s life. Although there was national outcry after these deaths, especially Politkovskaya’s, political violence continues to happen and Putin remains popular. Again, the FSB’s role in political killings is murky, and perhaps they have no involvement with them at all. But the fact remains that the two are close allies. As Putin’s approval rating remains high, so will public opinion of the FSB.

The FSB is also legitimized as a security system that gives Russians protection from their perceived enemies. In the past, the Soviet Union used its hard and soft powers to keep Russians secure and give them the feeling of power. It was inescapably

linked with an image of military might. After its disintegration, they lost land, prestige, and military capabilities. Ethnic conflicts in the Soviet bloc in the early 1990s made it easier for the state to persuade Russians that a “strong arm” was needed to keep them safe.\textsuperscript{133} The revolts were largely contained, but evidently the threat of angry Lithuanians and Estonians was enough that 70 percent of Russians, in one poll, agreed that they needed “stringent order.” Another 20 percent supported military intervention to achieve that order.\textsuperscript{134} More alarmingly, NATO, created to counteract Soviet influence in Eastern Europe, has been creeping closer to Russia’s borders since 1991. Ukraine has long been seen as a sister nation/vassal state, and her desire to join NATO is interpreted as betrayal. The weak economy and declining population have further contributed to a feeling of insecurity. This feeling is at odds with Russia’s national goal of security. This is a goal that Russian shares with every country in the world, notably, along with a White House administration, with the United States. For instance, Putin and his government would love nothing more than to see the United States and/or NATO destabilized, an event that would allow Russia to expand back into Soviet boundaries. But until that unlikely event, Russians have had to look elsewhere for security. How lucky that they have the FSB, the successor to the secret police of their beloved Soviet Union.

\textbf{Germany}

Germany has largely avoided Russia’s fate. It was always wealthier to begin with; East Germany had the highest standard of living in Eastern Europe. While it was bound to the same planned command economy as the Soviet Union, the GDR had

\textsuperscript{133} Albats, \textit{The State Within a State}, 245.
\textsuperscript{134} Ibid., 252.
more freedom of trade and reforms (due to being a satellite state and not an actual member of the USSR). In the mid-1970s, the economy was growing by roughly seven percent a year, aided by the large manufacturing sector, and was the greatest trading nation in the world. It was able to trade with West Germany as a backdoor into western Europe. But it was not protected from the same problems that had plagued the Soviet economy. Crumbling infrastructure, a dependency on Russian oil, and an extraordinarily high debt from foreign borrowing kept East Germany from having the wealth that its western neighbors did. Still, in comparison to the average Russian, the average East German was markedly better off.

After unification, the differences between East and West Germany’s economies were thrown into sharp relief. The GDR’s factories and technologies were outdated, and the currency exchange rate was unfavorable. Its once prized manufacturing sector was revealed to be uncompetitive in western Europe. The GDP rose slower than was predicted: in 1995, the growth rate was a meager 1.5 percent. Unemployment and emigration were what rose dramatically instead. East Germans too found that they were now being compared on the world stage to West Germans, who had more wealth and half the unemployment rate. Like the younger sibling overshadowed by his wunderkind older brother, East Germans felt insecure and inferior.

Accordingly, East Germans had negative views about their government. Even by 2004, more than a decade after unification, “support for Western institutions among the East German population is very low. Trust in institutions lies below the Western

level. Many Easterners feel that they are neither protected by the legal system, nor treated very fairly by it. East Germans are more dissatisfied with the functioning of democracy than West Germans.”

In 1990, 60 percent had been satisfied with the functioning of their democracy; that number fell slightly in later years. The corresponding number in West Germany has always been about 20 points higher, and both Germany’s higher yet than in Russia. West Germany, of course, had a more stable government and economy, and a closer connection with the pro-democratic west. East Germans, on the other hand, struggled with the transition to western principles. One study of data taken from the German Socioeconomic Panel found that being from the East “increases the probability of favoring state intervention by between 14.5 and 17 percentage points in 1997, compared to being from the West.”

Socialism, as a “good idea,” was rated 35 percentage points higher in the former GDR from 1991-2000. The nostalgia that East Germans harbored for the old ways was coined “Ostalgie.”

Such unfavorable statistics point towards a society that would happily accept the resurgence of communism, and the security agencies that came with it. So, what would explain the simple fact that neither Stasi nor a successor organization operate in Germany? For one, the security police had long been seen as more repugnant in Germany than in Russia. An intermediary period of a few years was not going to

137 Ibid., 259.
139 Pollack, “Support for Democracy in Eastern and Western Germany.”
suddenly make Germans overcome their strong emotions. And more important, the GDR was integrated into a strong and democratic state without a recent tradition of security police.

West Germany’s influence and money kept East Germany afloat. A major influx of capital was transferred from west to east, an estimated 75 billion Deutschmarks per year, or a third of all money in East Germany.\textsuperscript{140} About 20 percent of the money went towards unemployment benefits. In addition, the extra funds allowed for an expansion of infrastructure, updates to existing technology, a welfare safety net, and more consumer choices.\textsuperscript{141} Market labor reforms in the mid-2000s and the expansion into the Eurozone bolstered the economy even more. Competitiveness increased, and Germany’s exports became high-value, with cars, machinery, and chemicals now renowned for their high quality. During the Great Recession of 2008, Germany had almost no changes in the unemployment rate. Today, it is considered to be an economic superstar, with the fourth largest economy in the world.\textsuperscript{142} An assessment found that in 2009, “Germany was the most positively assessed country cross nationally with a score of 61 percent--ahead of the perennial, non-offensive, universal-health-care-providing favorite, Canada with 59 percent.”\textsuperscript{143}

The transition wasn’t as easy as such glowing figures would have it seem.

\textsuperscript{140} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{143} Eric Langenbacher, "Conclusion: the Germans must have done something right." \textit{German Politics and Society} 28, no. 2 (2010): 185+. 
West Germans did not always want to pay to integrate the East. Some felt resentment about “burden sharing” and the extra taxes that were levied. Some felt that East Germany should be subordinate, not an equal partner. Unification needed the efforts and encouragement from all parts of society. An American woman who had lived in Berlin for some time commented, “—TV and radio on both sides of the Wall are working closely together. In fact, you can hardly tell the difference any more. — East and West police forces are cooperating to make passage back and forth easier. — Academics and leaders of business and finance are meeting to plan for the future.” Berlin offered East Germans a myriad of free things, such as parking and 100 Deutschmarks, to ease their transition. Still, she and other Easterners were wary about “being swallowed by the West.” Yet, in 1992, only 60 percent of East Germans considered unification to be a positive event, and fewer West Germans thought the same. It took time for Germans to overcome the mentality that they were a separated people.

East Germans in particular were sensitive to their country’s economic performance. As one historian wrote, “…economic hopes by far outweighed any nationalist motives in the pursuit of unification in 1989 and 1990.” At first, in 1990, East Germans were thrilled by unification, imagining all the economic excesses that the west could bring to them. Then, they were more likely to think of themselves as

144 Brady, The Postwar Transformation of Germany, 333.
145 Hall, “East Germany’s Transitional Economy.”
147 Ibid., 130.
148 Allensbach Institute
149 Jarausch, After Unity: Reconfiguring Germany Identities, 44-45.
just “Germans” instead of “East Germans.” But when the economy slowed down in a few years, they reverted back to thinking of themselves as almost two separate nationalities, and then back into unified Germans in 1995, when the economy and GDP rose again (see Appendix A, Figure 2). It would follow reason that as the GDP continued to climb, East Germans felt more comfortable with their new German identity. As well as that, a well-functioning democracy and economy would further increase their sense of well-being and satisfaction, in comparison to Russia, where bitterness and indifference were the most en vogue.

Germany has been scored as a “full democracy,” ahead of even the United States and Great Britain. Despite the problems that came with unification, Germany has free elections, little corruption, and “is one of the best performers in terms of minimizing income inequality.” Its transition from a communist state into a democracy was ultimately successful. It also has a reliably robust economy. A well-functioning state has given Germans (both East and West) a high opinion of democracy; in 2004, “democratic values like freedom of speech, freedom of assembly, the right to engage in demonstrations, or party competition are valued as highly in the East as in the West.” The Allensbach Institute, the German equivalent of Levada, found that 93 percent of people considered the freedom to “not be monitored by the state” to be of high importance. The tendency among East Germans to believe that freedom is something that they have to fight for has decreased, as more and more

150 Ibid., 44-45.
151 Langenbacher, "Conclusion: the Germans must have done something right."
152 Pollack, “Support for Democracy in Eastern and Western Germany.”
153 Allensbach Institute.
accept freedom as a natural part of their lives. As economic giants in the EU, under the protection of NATO, and leaders of the free world, Germans can afford to feel optimistic and secure, and therefore not feel the need to have any political police to “protect” them. That is not to imply that Germany is a perfect democracy where every single citizen is thrilled to live. No country is. By comparison to Russia, however, Germany seems to be a functioning democracy with no need for a political police.

Russia, on the other hand, did not have a benevolent western nation to guide its transition. Instead, Yeltsin was pressured into using an experimental and detrimental economic model. The tragic effects of shock therapy have given Russians a pessimistic view of their economy, and by extension, democracy. Compared to Germans, they are more insecure and bitter. They want to see some form of order restored to the country, even if that means reducing their civil liberties. Therefore, although the FSB was “created” by the government, partly due to the corruption that allowed ex-KGB agents to have high positions, the economic situation in Russia has "earned" it the acceptance of the people, or at least a non-threatening ambivalence.

\footnote{Ibid.}
CONCLUSION

The large building, with lines of windows and a plain brown façade, looks like a generic communist apartment block. A place where families live in small, overcrowded rooms, perhaps. It certainly does not look like a building that once held the world’s most sophisticated security agency. In 2015, the once-menacing Stasi headquarter in Berlin opened again. Only this time, it became a temporary housing community for refugees. Almost 500 Middle Easterners moved in as Germans struggled to find room for the thousands of other migrants who had arrived. Mostly Syrians, they have come to Germany in search of the same freedoms and protections that native Germans take for granted. The country has been welcoming to refugees, continuing to accept them as other states have tried to close their borders. Twenty-five years ago, Berlin was closed off and patrolled by the Stasi. East Germans could only imagine the kinds of interrogations that went on inside this building. Now, they have found a better use for their old Stasi offices. What better way to illustrate Germany’s progress?

The secret police are not welcome in Germany, nor were they ever. The Stasi had made their presence too well known. In an effort to cast their net of surveillance over the entire GDR, they employed too many agents, too many informers. People were cowed and scared that any one of their friends or family could be informing on them. Fear turned into resentment, and then hate in 1989. Should the Stasi agents have been so surprised when their offices suddenly fell under siege? With their visibility, they had turned into a reviled symbol of the crumbling communist regime.
Their grasp over German society still held after unification, as citizens and politicians debated about whether to open the Stasi files or not. Germany had faced a similar choice a generation previously; the *Stunde Null*. The cultural vacuum left after the Nazi’s vilified legacy meant that Germans had to make a conscious choice whether to forget or remember the last decade. Drawing on their earlier experience of accepting their unsavory history, they chose to open the files. People could learn about their informers and reasons for arrests, and more importantly, vet out politicians who had Stasi connections. A way of cleansing the system.

The GDR was integrated into West Germany, a state that not only did not have security agency, but was also democratic. Public opinion in the former GDR showed some bias towards state intervention and socialism. By unifying with a pro-democratic state, East Germany successfully became one as well, no matter what public opinion said. It also had the benefit of a strong economy that kept the state secure and well-functioning. With such a stable state, Germans have no need for the secret police.

The Stasi could have taken some lessons from the KGB. Through a smaller web of surveillance and the use of propaganda, the KGB had a better reputation among Russians. Earlier agencies, i.e.: the NKVD, had gone too far in their repressions, and the CPSU realized that they would need to craft a better image for the KGB, to keep the public from souring on it. The propaganda was successful. Russians did not hate security agents, nor did they blame them for the failures of the Soviet state. The protests in 1991 were directed towards the Party, allowing the KGB to keep to the sidelines, out of the public’s eyes, and eventually infiltrate the new government.

The KGB’s files have not been fully released to the public yet. Unlike Germany, Russia does not want to start discussions about the reprehensible aspects of
its history—gulags, communist oppressions, the Holodomor, etc. It is content with only remembering its past victories and cultural moments. Thus, the files, which could be interpreted as a negative part of Russia’s history (being spied on by the state), are rarely mentioned.

After 1991, many Russians and Westerners alike hoped that the country would become a powerful democracy; instead, it declined and stagnated into a quasi-authoritarian state. Corruption is common, and so is revulsion towards the top one percent, who live in luxury while the common masses live in grimy apartments. Economically, Russia has grown slower than other post-Communist countries. President Yeltsin’s shock therapy program squandered much of Russia’s wealth, and made people feel insecure about their standing. Those two factors have created a societal tolerance, and even nostalgia, for state intervention and extra security.

The Lubyanka, like the Stasi’s former office in Berlin, is open. A short walk away from the Kremlin, the building was redesigned under Stalin, who had a surprising flair for classical architecture. Pale orange brick, faux columns, and decorated windows make the Lubyanka easy to pick out among the gray buildings of Moscow. Don’t admire it for too long, though; the FSB have made it their headquarters. If Germany’s refugee centers can serve to define its post-Communist history, then the same could be said of Russia and the Lubyanka. From their nest in the center of Moscow, the FSB have a bird’s eye view of what is happening in the country, and their surveillance is largely uncontested by Russians. So much has changed, yet so much has remained the same. If they were to place the Iron Felix back, then, truly, history would come full circle.
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Appendix A

Economic Graphs to Illustrate Chapter 5

Figure 1: Decline in wealth; Purchasing Power parity had a similar graph

Figure 2: note the differences in USD between Germany and Russia