

Stasi Report on the Size and Structure of the East German Opposition (June 1, 1989)

Abstract

The East German secret police, worried about the proliferation of 160 opposition groups with about 2,500 members, analyzed their aims (including peace, ecology, gender equality, and human rights) and their networking structures and interpreted them as a form of subversion from without rather than opposition from within.

Source

One of the main lines of attack in the enemy's subversive action against socialism is the attempt to create and legalize a so-called "domestic opposition," and to inspire/organize underground political activity in the socialist states as a "source of domestic pressure" intended to soften, undermine, politically destabilize, and ultimately do away with socialism.

In carrying out the anti-socialist "program for democracy" approved by imperialist circles in the USA, leading political forces in the NATO states are working—under the banner of "democratization, liberalization, and advocacy of Western-style political pluralism in communist countries"—to develop and promote opposition parties and movements in these states, and thereby provide active support for the legalization of already existing so-called "independent groups." This action is reflected in the state policy of major imperialist powers and in various subversive activities of antagonistic centers and organizations, as well as of additional forces hostile to socialism that work against the socialist states. (Through abuse of the CSCE process, and through reference to certain developments in some socialist states, these activities are increasingly intended to provide political, material, and moral support to hostile, oppositional forces and alliances of personnel in the GDR, and to inspire and trigger actions directed against the socialist political and social order.)

It is estimated that the enemy's political, ideological, and subversive influences, as well as influences deriving from the current situation in some socialist countries, are achieving certain effects among sections of the GDR's population. These effects are reflected particularly in the existence of alliances of personnel (which are manageable and controllable by the state and society) and related groupings and groups that, in agreement or cooperation with reactionary clerical persons, and together with foreign enemies, are attempting to advance this oppositional strategy.

Since the beginning of the '80s, persistent attempts to gather and assemble by such persons—who have made it their goal to weaken, undermine, and politically destabilize the GDR to the point of changing its social conditions—have led to the formation of related groupings and groups. These are almost exclusively embedded in the structures of the Protestant churches in the GDR, or they are able to make extensive use of the material and technical resources of these churches for their activities. Correspondents accredited in the GDR and the staff of diplomatic missions (including secret intelligence staff under cover as diplomats) from non-socialist states, especially from the FRG, the USA, and Great Britain, play a decisive role in this process. They inspire hostile, oppositional forces and alliances of personnel to undertake anti-socialist activities, offer them continual support, and popularize actions in this connection with the aim of placing such persons and alliances under the protection of international public opinion. (Appearing especially active in this regard are the correspondents BÖRNER, HEBER, and HAUPTMANN—ARD; BRÜSSAU, SCHMITZ—ZDF; SCHWARZ—*Der Spiegel* and RÖDER —epd; as well as

SCHWELZ—AP and NESIRKY—Reuters.)^[1]

Currently there are c. 160 alliances of this kind in the GDR. Among them are a significant number from which hostile-negative actions, or actions otherwise directed against the socialist state and social order, emanate continuously or in connection with a particular occasion. They are divided into less than 150 allegedly church-based, grass-roots groups that designate themselves, based on the demagogically asserted “aim” and “content” of their activity or on their personnel, as “peace circles” (35), “ecological groups” (39), mixed “peace and environmental groups” (23), “women’s groups” (7), “physicians’ circles” (3), “human rights groups” (10) or “second/third-world groups” (39), and allegedly regional groups of conscientious objectors. [...]

In addition, there are over ten alliances of personnel with specific coordinating functions and assignments, such as the “Concretely for Peace Follow-Up Committee,” the “Solidaristic Church Working Circle” (in 12 regional groups), the “Church from Below” (in 4 regional groups), the “Ark Green-Ecological Network,” the “Peace and Human Rights Initiative,” and the “Friends’ Circle of Conscientious Objectors” [...]

Over half of all such alliances were formed before 1985. Political and social efforts to reduce their total number have not thus far succeeded. Alliances of personnel that have been dissolved are countered by an equally large number of newly formed alliances—thus, in 1988 alone, 7 new regional groups of the “Solidaristic Church Working Circle” were formed, as well as 8 new “peace circles” and 8 new “ecological groups.”

The total potential of these alliances—including peripherally affiliated forces, which generally represent mere participants in activities/events, who do not pay dues—amounts to c. 2500 persons total. (Not included in this figure are sympathizers or the politically misled, who are frequently drawn to their activities to influence the public as a result of the calculated influence of the above-named forces—including the production of so-called “solidarity effects”—and thereby considerably increase the potential and effectiveness of such alliances.) About 600 persons may be categorized as members of executive committees, while the so-called “hard core” is made up of a relatively small number of fanatical, often obstinate enemies of socialism, who are driven by a so-called “sense of mission,” a craving for personal recognition, and a mania for political distinction. In this category there are c. 60 persons, among others the pastors EPELMANN, TSCHICHE, and WONNEBERGER, as well as Gerd and Ulrike POPPE, Bärbel BOHLEY, and Werner FISCHER; and the persons RUDDENKLAU, SCHULT, Dr. KLEIN, and LIETZ. They are the leading inspirers/organizers of underground political activity and—with their connections at home, abroad in the West, and to anti-socialist forces in other socialist states— they determine the specific content of the hostile activity of alliances of personnel and their nationwide radius of action.

The composition of the above-mentioned alliances of personnel demonstrates a broad spectrum, extending from those with a strong religious affiliation to those representing atheist positions, most of them young people, who possess different manifestations of a hostile, oppositional attitude towards the socialist state and social order. The greater part of these forces is characterized by politically indifferent, unstable, wavering attitudes and positions. Some of them also represent “alternative” or pseudo-alternative views, ideas, positions, and ways of life with regard to socialist development. The proportion of workers and others employed in the productive sector is relatively small. By contrast, the proportion of persons without legally recognized employment is significant (12 percent of all active members/executive leaders).

[...]

NOTES

[1] Listed are West German radio, television, and print news services along with American news providers—trans.

Source: “Stasi Bericht über ‘Persönliche Verbindungen oppositioneller und anderer negativer Kräfte,’” in Armin Mitter and Stefan Wolle, eds., *“Ich liebe Euch doch alle!” Befehle und Lageberichte des Ministeriums für Staatssicherheit*. Berlin, 1990, p. 46 ff.

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