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978-0-521-88747-2 - *Seduced by Secrets: Inside the Stasi's Spy-Tech World*

Kristie Macrakis

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SEDUCED BY SECRETS

More fascinating than fiction, *Seduced by Secrets* takes the reader inside the real world of one of the most effective and feared spy agencies in history. The book reveals, for the first time, the secret technical methods and sources of the Stasi (East German Ministry for State Security) as it stole secrets from abroad and developed gadgets at home, employing universal, highly guarded techniques often used by other spy and security agencies.

Seduced by Secrets draws on secret files from the Stasi archives, including CIA-acquired material, interviews and friendships, court documents, and unusual visits to spy sites, including “breaking into” a prison, to demonstrate that the Stasi overestimated the power of secrets to solve problems and created an insular spy culture more intent on securing its power than protecting national security. It re-creates the Stasi’s secret world of technology through biographies of agents, defectors, and officers and by visualizing James Bond-like techniques and gadgets.

In this highly original book, Kristie Macrakis adds a new dimension to our understanding of the East German Ministry for State Security by bringing the topic into the realm of espionage history and exiting politically charged commentary.

Kristie Macrakis is a professor of the history of science at Michigan State University. She received her Ph.D. in the history of science from Harvard University in 1989 and then spent a postdoctoral year in Berlin, Germany. She is the author of numerous books and articles on science and politics in modern Germany, including *Surviving the Swastika* (1993) and *Science under Socialism* (1999). She has received grants and fellowships from the National Science Foundation, the Fulbright Commission, the Humboldt Foundation, and the Institute for Advanced Study, Princeton.

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Seduced by Secrets

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KRISTIE MACRAKIS



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*In Memory of Michael Macrakis (2001), Irene Chryss (2003),
and Charlie Macrakis (2005)*

*– all good spirits who passed away as this book
was being written*

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Abbreviations and Organizations



APN	Foreign Intelligence Service (<i>Aussenpolitische Nachrichtendienst</i>), founded in 1951, transformed into the HV A in 1956
BKA	Federal Criminal Office (<i>Bundeskriminalamt</i>)
BND	West German intelligence agency (<i>Bundesnachrichtendienst</i>)
BStU	Federal Commissioner for the Records of the State Security Service of the Former German Democratic Republic (<i>Der Bundesbeauftragter für die Unterlagen des Staatssicherheitsdienstes der ehemaligen Deutschen Demokratischen Republik</i>)
BfV	Federal Office for the Protection of the Constitution (<i>Bundesamt für Verfassungsschutz</i>)
CoCom	The Coordinating Committee for East-West Trade
DEC	Digital Equipment Corporation
E/Einsatz	The technical deployment department (<i>Einsatz</i> means “deployment”)
FRG	Federal Republic of Germany
GDR	German Democratic Republic
HV A	Foreign intelligence arm of the Ministry for State Security (<i>Hauptverwaltung Aufklärung</i>)
IM	Unofficial staff member – either an agent or an informant (<i>Inoffizieller Mitarbeiter</i>)
KfS	Committee for State Security, Soviet Union (<i>Komitee für Staatssicherheit</i>)
KGB	Committee for State Security, Soviet Union (<i>Komitet Gosudarstvennoi Bezopasnosti</i>)
KoKo	Commercial Coordination Unit in the East German Ministry for Foreign Trade (<i>Bereich Kommerzielle Koordinierung</i>)

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KTI	Criminal Technical Institute (<i>Kriminaltechnisches Institut</i>)
MfS	Ministry for State Security (<i>Ministerium für Staatssicherheit</i>)
NSA	National Security Agency, United States
OibE	Officers on a special mission (undercover officers) (<i>Offiziere im besonderem Einsatz</i>)
OTS	Technical Operations Sector (<i>Operativ-Technischer Sektor</i>)
SED	East German Communist Party (<i>Sozialistische Einheitspartei Deutschland</i>)
SIGINT	Signals intelligence
SIRA	System for Information, Research and Evaluation
SWT	Sector for Science and Technology in the HV A (<i>Sektor Wissenschaft und Technik</i>)
TBKs	Dead letter boxes or dead drops (<i>tote Briefkasten</i>)
VEB	Socialist companies (<i>Volkseigenebetrieb</i>)

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What do you think spies are: priests, saints and martyrs? They are a squalid procession of vain fools, traitors too, yes; pansies, sadists and drunkards, people who play cowboys and Indians to brighten their rotten lives. Do you think they sit like monks in London balancing the rights and wrongs?

John le Carré, *The Spy Who Came in from the Cold*, 1963

This book grew out of my personal experiences living in divided Berlin during the mid-1980s. I was not a spy, but rather a Wall-hopper, student, and observer. Although I had read several John le Carré and Len Deighton novels that took place in the spy capital, Berlin, and even knew one of the Cold War's most celebrated spies – Adolf Henning Frucht, a Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) spy who was caught by the Stasi and then traded ten years later at the famous spy bridge, the Glienicke Brücke – I had no special interest in the subject. After returning to Berlin on the eve of unification in 1990 and witnessing the constant fire of revelations about the East German secret police, I could not believe all the secret activity that had taken place behind the scenes of the drab and banal black-and-white world I had experienced in communist East Berlin.

The first layer of secrecy I began to peel away at in a professional capacity was the history of science in East Germany. That quickly led to research on espionage and technology transfer and to a mysterious defector. Pretty soon I was hooked – I read every book on espionage history, started writing about it, and began teaching general courses on espionage during the Cold War. But to truly understand the spy world, I needed to get to know the spies – the agents, informants, case officers, technicians, defectors, and leaders – and that process involved total immersion in the

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spy world, including extensive interviews, site visits, and friendships on both sides of the Atlantic.

The fall of the Berlin Wall in 1989 created an unprecedented opportunity for historians to examine the files of a defunct intelligence and secret police organization. Yet the organization with the cumbersome name developed to house these files – the Federal Commissioner for the Records of the State Security Service of the Former German Democratic Republic (*Der Bundesbeauftragter für die Unterlagen des Staatssicherheitsdienstes der ehemaligen Deutschen Demokratischen Republik* [hereafter BStU]) – was not intended primarily for historians, but rather for the victims of state security, for retribution and restitution, and for political and educational purposes.¹ Unlike others, I wanted to use these files to reveal the secret methods and sources of a spy and security agency as they related to technology – to write about espionage history.

The major research for this book took place during a Fulbright Year in Berlin, 1998–99. I spent most of that year poring over thousands of files secured by the Citizen's Movement, supplemented with interviews and visits to spy sites. As I read the files, I quickly learned that the Ministry for State Security's function was much more differentiated than the revelations that had peppered the newspapers for a decade portrayed. It was not just an octopus strangling dissent with its repressive tentacles, but also a spy agency respected by former adversaries such as the CIA.

Curiously, it was only after the fall of the Berlin Wall that the pejorative term “Stasi” became widely associated with the East German Ministry for State Security. Before that, it was often referred to as “State Security,” “the Ministry for State Security,” or “MfS” in the press or in books (although it was apparently used in East Germany in the vernacular). In America, the *New York Times*, our newspaper of record, did not use the term “Stasi” until after 1989. I use both the term “Stasi” and “MfS” in this book; “Stasi” is more widely known but “MfS,” as an acronym for the organization's proper name, is a more neutral term.

Writing about secrets is not easy. They are hidden and jealously guarded. They have to be patiently excavated like artifacts at an archeological dig. Underneath the outside layer – the Berlin I experienced – I found an enormous secret world with its own spy culture. Most of the papers from internal security were intact, but foreign intelligence inadvertently only left the bones behind – the names, code names, and material delivered but not the files. In 1998 the BStU managed to decode a massive database forgotten on reel-to-reel magnetic tape, and it was only at the tail end of my research in 2006 that sensitive microfilms acquired by the CIA were released after

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their return to the Germans. Putting flesh on those bones required reading trial documents from court cases and interviewing the officers and agents themselves. Most of the spy artifacts – the spy cameras, containers, and communication and listening devices – had been destroyed, and I had to hunt them down at exhibits, private collections, and the Western Federal Criminal Office (like our Federal Bureau of Investigation [FBI]).

Seduced by Secrets is pitched at a general audience as well as specialists in history and intelligence professionals. Readers interested in learning more about spying will find the style accessible, and specialists will appreciate the prodigious archival research. Surprisingly, a large portion of the material in the files was deadly dull. Since history is not an argument, but rather a selection of material, I have attempted to bring to life the more interesting episodes surrounding technology. As the title suggests, I have a point to make but illustrate it by weaving analysis into biographies and narrative. Most chapters begin with a description of a person or place. Like Barbara Tuchman, I believe biography provides a prism of history.²

Some readers may find the “you are there” approach a bit unconventional, as I occasionally include site visits in the text (anthropologists call similar activities “ethnography”). Although I make no moral commentary about what I witness, I do not remove myself from the scene. The author is your tour guide as we visit a prison inmate, the criminal evidence collection unit, the campus of the technical services division (and the restaurant where they ate), and a dog trainer. Fifty years from now, historians will not be able to conduct such activities.

Are there lessons to learn from this episode in Cold War history in which those in power overestimated the ability of intelligence and security to solve a nation's problems? The early twenty-first century has been a period dominated by the War on Terror. The United States of America has lost its innocence and secured previously open borders. Spying has become a dominant tool in fighting that war, and we as a nation have placed more faith in the power of technological espionage than any country in the world. Perhaps it is time to rethink our strategy.

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This book could not have been written without the support of numerous people and organizations. Because it is based on thousands of files from the Ministry of State Security, the staff at the Federal Commissioner for the Files of the Former East German Ministry for State Security (BStU) needs to be singled out for their help and support in retrieving and preparing the files. When I arrived in Berlin during my sabbatical year in the fall of 1998, Wolfgang Borkmann was assigned to me as the staff member responsible for my application. We both never imagined that we would be working together for many years beyond the Fulbright year; I returned annually in the summer to retrieve more information. He not only prepared the files for viewing, but, with the absence of finding aids, he had to develop orders based on my areas of interest. It was a pleasure working together, and I am very grateful for his hard work. Heide-Marie Beidokat was also wonderful in helping me to prepare several articles before I began the book. I am grateful to Marianne Birthler, the Federal Commissioner of the BStU, for facilitating access to the *Rosenholz* files in 2005–2006.

The BStU is more than a repository for files. After it opened in 1992, it became the home for a national conversation about the recent past. Over the years, I too took part in these discussions. Thanks to Georg Herbstritt and Helmut Müller-Engbers for inviting me to speak at the 2003 BStU-sponsored conference in Berlin on the work of the Stasi in the West. I am pleased that they were both supportive of my intelligence history approach to studying the HV A, the MfS's (Ministry for State Security) foreign department. Unfortunately, their announced studies on the *Rosenholz* files had not yet been published as this book was going to press.

Numerous former officers and agents of the Ministry for State Security, the Soviet Committee for State Security (KGB), West German intelligence,

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and the CIA granted interviews and talked to me informally about their work. I am especially grateful to them for providing me insight into their world. Whereas most would like to remain anonymous, I can thank several high-profile people here. Peter Fischer was the first defector I met, and he helped me understand the life of someone on the run. I am grateful that he shared his biography with me and for his interest in the book. It was a treat interviewing the legendary spy chief Markus Wolf several times. I am only sorry that he passed away before this book was published, as I would have liked him to read my version of the history. I would also like to thank my co-conspirator for helping me gain access to a prison inmate.

Museums and criminal evidence collection departments in Germany and America allowed me to view and photograph Stasi artifacts housed at their collections. I am particularly grateful to Helmut Regenhardt and H. Keith Melton. Regenhardt showed me artifacts from the Federal Criminal Police Office's criminal evidence collection, and Keith Melton invited me to visit his fascinating private museum housing spy technology artifacts from all over the world. Thanks also to the Federal German Supreme Court for allowing me to read court documents about science agents.

This book could not have been written without the generous support of the Fulbright Commission and the National Science Foundation (SES 9811494). During later stages, the Humboldt Foundation provided me with a renewal of an earlier fellowship during one summer, and I was awarded several internal grants by my university that provided time to make headway on the writing.

Several friends, colleagues, and students read portions of the manuscript or the initial proposal. I was touched when Dr. Lily Macrakis read the whole manuscript during a summer vacation week in 2006 and encouraged me to hand it in to the Press. I am grateful to Jerry Livingston for his expert reading of two chapters. Tricia Jenkins, Mark Nock, Adam Sanborn, Ryan Sweeder, and Don Laguire each read one chapter and provided helpful feedback. Laurent Dubois and Robin Fleming read the proposal and offered constructive comments. I am especially grateful to two anonymous readers from Cambridge University Press. Their positive feedback and useful suggestions helped shape the final version of the book. I was very pleased when Dr. Charles Molhoek agreed to prepare another terrific index for me. During early stages of the research, Bernhard Priesemuth was helpful and a pleasure to talk to. It was enjoyable exploring Stasi sites with David Crawford.

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Finally, this book is dedicated to three supportive good spirits who passed away as this book was being written: Michael Macrakis (2001), Irene Chryss (2003), and Charlie Macrakis (2005).