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Teaching in East Germany in the 1980s: Collaborating with my Stasi File¹

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Texas State University

This essay reflects on Morrison's experience teaching in East Germany in the 1980s through an exchange programme between Brown University and the (former) Wilhelm-Pieck-Universität Rostock. Of particular note is Morrison's Stasi – or secret police – file. While some sections are typewritten, the pages from the IMs or “unofficial collaborators” are hand-written. Focusing on an incident from September 1985, when Morrison was in charge of the programme's “wall newspaper,” this essay reflects on a student's controversial article about “Good Women in the Soviet Union.” This was not received well by university authorities and threatened to undermine the delicately negotiated exchange programme. Research on the nature of secret police files from the former East Germany and other eastern European countries as literary narratives suggests that those drafting such files can be understood as fiction writers, including making totally innocent material sound shady. While one “unofficial collaborator” suggests that Morrison would be a good partner with Rostock in the future, some have suggested that he might have been intending to “turn” Morrison as a spy for East Germany.

While a graduate student of Comparative Literature at Brown University in the 1980s, I taught English to students at the Wilhelm-Pieck Universität, Rostock [today Universität Rostock], in the former German Democratic Republic or GDR. This programme, formally contracted between 1979 and 1980, has been largely forgotten in the wake of the Wall coming down in 1989 and reunification the following year (see Karge, Herold, and Ostrop 2017; and Bernhard and Smith 1991). The collaborative nature of this exchange fostered connections valuable to scholars and students making intellectual, political, and social links. The contract, signed in May 1980, between the two universities was written in both English and German: “Contract Regarding Academic Cooperation Between Wilhelm-Pieck University, Rostock/GDR and Brown University, Providence/USA.” This formulation emphasising the word “cooperation” repeats itself throughout the entire contract:

¹ Many thanks to “Angela Haffner,” “Nele Rath,” and Belinda Scott for their advice in crafting this essay, along with the wisdom of my biography writing group. I'm also grateful to the other speakers and audience at the roundtable *Cold War Spy Stories From the Eastern Bloc* organized by Dr. Valentina Glajar at Texas State University.

Guided by the desire to contribute to the peaceful cooperation between the GDR and the USA, through cooperation on the basis of principles and guidelines contained in the final communiqué of the Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe, both parties after preparatory negotiations have agreed to conclude the following contract regarding academic cooperation.

The word “cooperation” appears five times in the title and opening sentence, only to be repeated 19 times altogether throughout the seven-page contract. The word “collaboration” never appears. In the German version of the contract, the word “Zusammenarbeit” (literally “together working,” appearing eighteen times) substitutes for

Es wurde die Verbindung zu ihm hergestellt.
 In den Gesprächen ergab es sich, dass sie ein
 großes Interesse daran hatte, in Kontakt zu treten
 als Amerikanistin zu arbeiten. Die Gelegenheit
 war für sie sehr günstig, da sie für 1 Jahr
 in einem Sonderprogramm von der FU Berlin (West)
 arbeitete zu einem gemeinsamen Thema.

Sie will sich insbesondere mit der deutschen Literatur
 des Mittelalters befassen.

Der M. war sehr interessiert daran, einige Aus-
 wahlleistungen in Kontakt zu bekommen.

Diese Klausuraufgaben hat sie auch 88 mit
 20 Jahre mit Schülern und Lehramtskandidaten
 durchgeführt.

In einem Raum wurde sie zu der Konferenz der Professen
 nach Kötterberg (7.2. - 10.2.89) eingeladen. Außerdem
 wurde sie auch an der Shakespeare - Tagung in Weimar
 teilnehmen.

Bei der M. handelt es sich um eine sehr kluge junge
 Frau, die sich auch als Literatin ausgezeichnet eignet.
 Falls sie an der Deutsche - Univ. weitere Perspektiven
 erhält, wäre sie für die VPA eine gute Person.

Der M. steht mit der USA - Botschaft in Verbindung.
 Sie stellt viele Fragen, sammelt wahrscheinlich Informationen
 über die Lage in der DDR sowie eigene politische Meinung
 ab.

Kopie: BSHU
 Ludwigsplatz, Postfach

A page from Susan's Stasi [secret police] file written by "Georg"

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“cooperation,” with the German “Kooperation” appearing once. It seems the word “collaboration,” cognates in English and German, smacks too strongly of suspect war-time accommodation to the enemy. So then, did I, as a member of an American team sent behind the Iron Curtain, ‘collaborate’ with the (then) ‘enemy’?

Peter Stearns suggests “ordinary people” are “historical subjects and agents” who shape history (9, 12). The microhistory is a genre which has been called “world history from the perspective of the individual” (Tomich and Zeuske 97). To reflect on my time in the GDR, I am exploring multiple documents, including my journals, diaries, and letters; as well as artifacts (maps, telegrams, identification documents, official letters, etc.). Of particular note is my Stasi (secret police) file. A few words about this file. First of all, I was not a victim. I was an American citizen. If I had done anything illegal, the worst that would have happened to me would have been to be kicked out of the country. This was nothing compared to what GDR citizens suffered for perceived infractions, such as interrogation, imprisonment, loss of job, even death if they were shot trying to cross the border illegally.

While I returned periodically to East Germany between 1988-90 to teach and present papers while working on my dissertation in West Berlin, my initial stay was in September 1985. Five people from Brown, including graduate and undergraduate students as well as a professor, along with five from Bradford University in England,

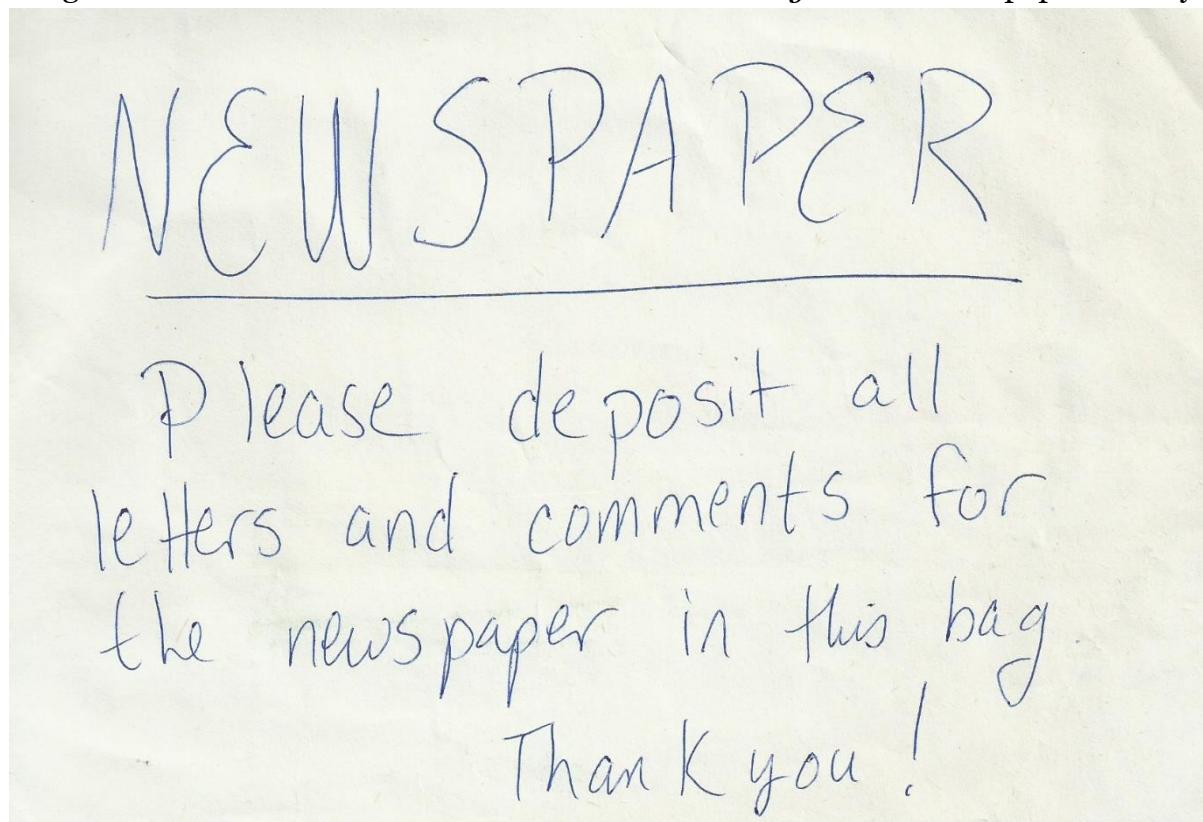


Susan in the streets of Sanitz on an outing with other faculty in 1985

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were sent to conduct classes with students planning to be English teachers at the Gymnasium or high school level. All of the GDR students had also studied either German or Russian language and literature. Our work only began after a week-long bonding period with our East German colleagues, a collaboration both to set up the pedagogical goals and to inculcate personal trust. This initiation consisted of lectures, such as “Brown’s Contribution to the Fachpraktikum” and “The Training of Teachers of English – the Work of the Summer School.” We ate, drank, sang, and took excursions, such as to the medieval village of Sanitz and the beach at Warnemünde. Once the programme officially started, we lived in dorms with the students, taught our grammar and discussion classes, had outings, and partied every night for two weeks.

Each native speaker had to give a lecture, such as “Universities in the US” or “Hooliganism and the National Front in Britain.” Additionally, we each had a “special assignment.” Mine was as the editor of the *Wandzeitung* or “wall newspaper.” Every



Susan’s note on the bulletin board directing students to submit material

day on a bulletin board I would post articles and announcements in English; all material was written by students. Everything was wonderful: people were nice; my students were engaging and interesting; I was happy, eager, and delighted to be there.

I was also terribly naïve.

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I distinctly remember the East German programme head professor saying, “Treat it just like an American newspaper.” One student – let’s called her Angela Haffner – wrote a two-part article on young women in the Soviet Union, where she had recently studied. The first would be on “good” women in the Soviet Union, and the second would be on “bad” women. As she handed me the first article, she said, “I think some people may not like this.” If she had said that to me even twenty-four hours later, I would have rejected the article, torn it up, flushed it down the toilet, burned it. But I was still young and innocent. My response to Angela and her anxiety? “That’s ok. If someone doesn’t like it, they can write a letter to the editor and we’ll put it up.” That’s just like an American newspaper, isn’t it?

“Girls in the S.U. [Soviet Union]”

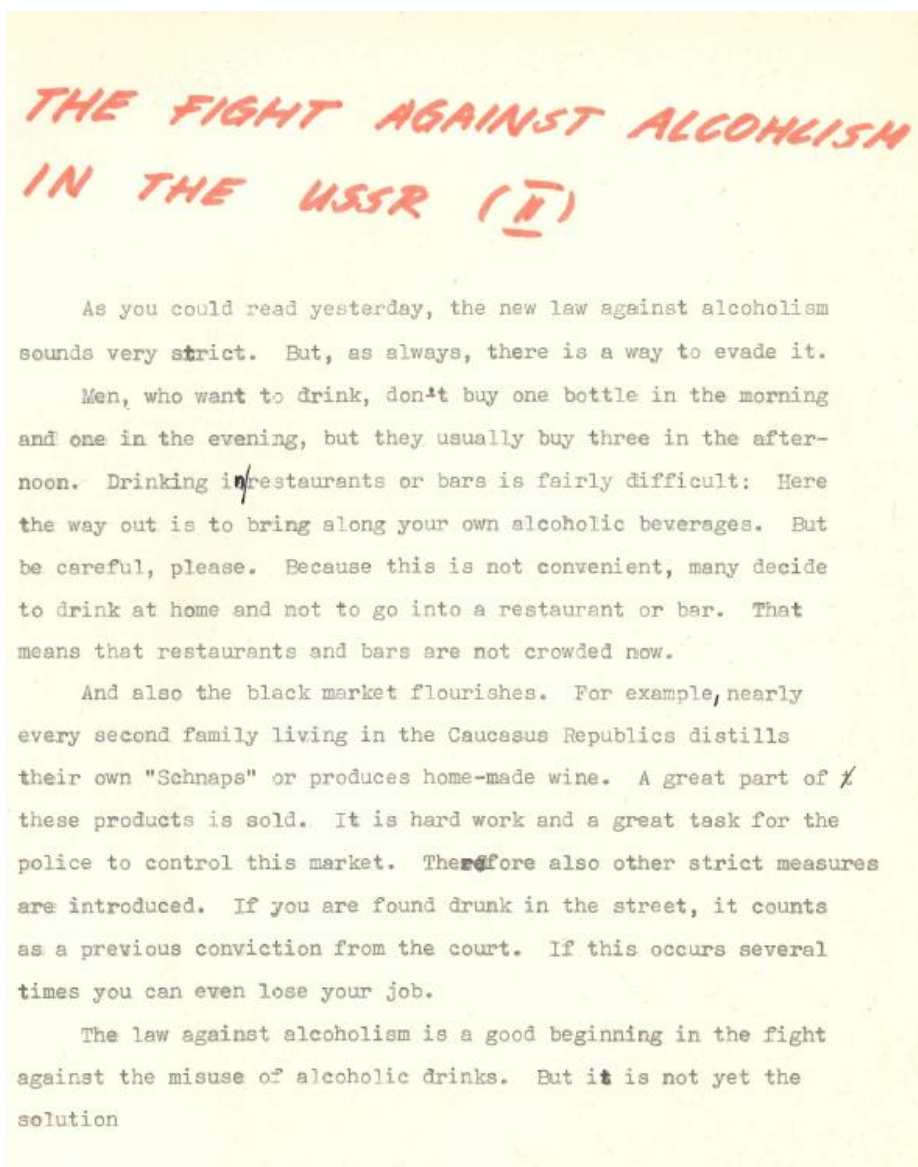
At first, I only want to write about my own experiences with girls. And it would be wrong to generalize my experiences but it is an interesting aspect of life there and so I want to talk a bit about women, especially in Southern Russia where I was studying for one year.

The girls, including all female students, which are usually very young (from 16 to 22) I’d like to divide into two groups. The first group is the “good girls” and the second the “bad.” The first one is used to sitting home or in the student hostel with girl-friends and are usually talking about cooking or about their studies. They all love Alla Pugatshowa, a famous pop singer in the S. U. It was very hard to come into contact with them. Sometimes their conversation even seemed absurd to me. For instance, they liked to repeat fixed phrases from newspaper discussions about family or moral problems. And when I said my own opinion during the conversation they seemed shocked. To have one’s own thoughts seemed to be an offence. By the way they are very shy. Men are for them dangerous and mysterious. They prefer to talk about men secretly. Sex is tabu. When they get married (How do they manage this?—I could not make head nor tail of it) they become a good mother of 1 or 2 children. Then they get fat and they dress in old-fashioned styles. They and the children seemed to be neat and tidy. That’s the “happy” ending for them. In my next article I will write about the “bad” girls.”

There was no next article.

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In less than an hour after “Girls in the S.U” was posted, I was summoned by the U.S. and East German heads of the programme. Coming on the heels of an article written on “Alcoholism in the S.U. [Soviet Union],” this article, it was determined, had to come down as the entire programme could be at stake. The American professor insisted too, which, at the time, seemed horribly cowardly to me. Was he a collaborator with an oppressive government?



“The Fight Against Alcoholism [sic] in the USSR (II),” another controversial article

The East German professor (according to my diary from the time) wanted to censor the articles on alcoholism and Soviet women. He explained: “The program is fragile. Anti-Soviet articles are dangerous.” Furthermore, “If this is all the girls can

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write, they aren't thinking constructively" – which I took to mean pro-Soviet. I insisted on being at fault. "No, no," he said, "no one will blame you." He took full responsibility. When I explained I had been thinking of how American newspapers were run, he reassured me. "Yes, yes, I understand. But this article could be interpreted as Western sensationalist influence. We can't have that. They should be grateful to their host country," where they had studied. He claimed to be all for open discussion – just not writing it down. Though I cried – not wanting to remove the article on account of my deeply held American beliefs in free speech – I agreed to the demands of the East German and American heads of the programme. The key thing was to keep the programme going, so there would continue to be East-West dialogue and, indeed, cooperation. Though I was devastated at the time, in hindsight, I realise it was the right decision. But did my succumbing to their wishes smack of collaboration on my part?

The aspect which most worried me was the position of Angela. Although her essay went up with anonymously, only a select number of students had recently studied in the Soviet Union. It wouldn't have been too difficult to figure out who the culprit was. Moreover, Angela had had a boyfriend from Georgia (the Caucasus nation known as the Georgian Soviet Socialist Republic). Any collaboration between the sheets was officially discouraged. Staying out all night was not allowed.

After this, I became totally paranoid (like everyone else in the GDR—with good reason). I was convinced our room was bugged (it may have been). I had to talk to Angela about what had happened, so we went to a café where there was noise around us. She suspected some people next to our table to be spies, as they were known to be austere party members. We felt more secure speaking in English. What did we talk about? Initially, we mulled over the newspaper incident. A litany of possible retaliations could ensue. She felt she'd be punished by not being allowed to take two weeks' vacation abroad.

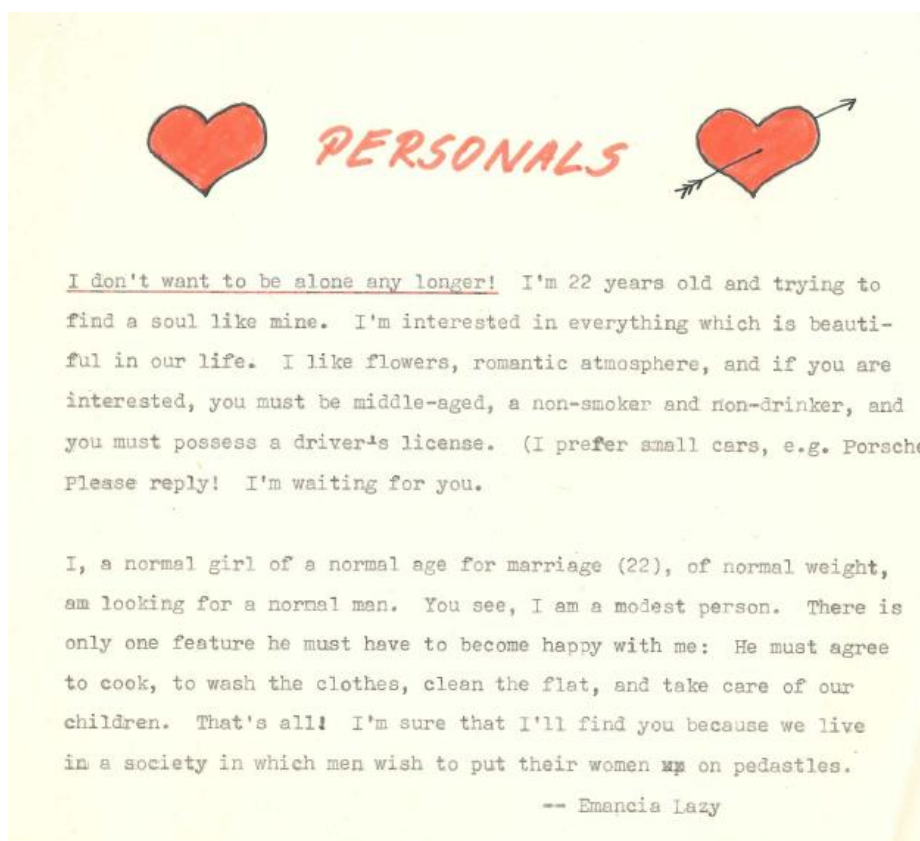
She told me all about Soviet Georgia and the various things the government did to invade one's privacy and private life. She feared for her boyfriend and, indeed, he never got the permission to travel abroad to see her. Rather than undergoing his army service alongside his university work in the city where he studied – as was the usual way with such students in the Soviet Union – he had to interrupt his studies to serve in the army for two years in Kamchatka in far eastern Siberia. When she applied for a permission to travel to Georgia in the Soviet Union the following summer,

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she was set in fear by being cited to a high-level police department. While she did get the permission, she also had the certainty that the state had an eye on her. For what – she could only suspect.

For Angela and me – thriving on the secrecy, the forbidden nature of our intimacy, the danger in our exchanges – it was like a clandestine love affair, thrilling and illicit, without the sex. We felt as though our personal collaboration as friends functioned as a way to defy an oppressive government system.

Upon my return to the university to type up more articles for the wall newspaper, the East German head had left a “funny” note in the typewriter for me. “This typewriter has been CENSORED. DO NOT USE the letter U, S, R.” As censorship did not officially exist – though in reality and practice, of course, it did – this is especially ironic.



A light-hearted personals ad: innocuous and erotically innocent fun

Subsequently, the students and I chose to post innocuous and amusing light articles on the wall newspaper board, such as personals ads. Sexual innuendo was tolerated to prevent any overtly political pieces.

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Here I am! The girl of your dreams!

If you are lonely – write a letter to me! I'm 21 and maybe you are the man of my dreams.

You needn't send a photo because I like surprises.

My sign: Sleeping Beauty



Susan with fellow British tutor, Belinda, in front of the bulletin. "Trashedy" as an amusing parody of "Tragedy" for that day's comedic pieces after the political brouhaha earlier in the programme

The "wall newspaper" signifies to me the bulletin board submissions I edited, but also the parallels to the wall erected between the two Germanies, one I feel fortunate to have passed through, making connections still present in my life.

James Cleverley argues, "the perceived wall that separates truth and fiction into binary distinctions must be dismantled. This is not to say that there is no such thing as 'truth' – far from it...[T]here may be alternative modalities of truthful experience that can emerge from affectivity, from within the gap between representation and reality" (12-13). This ambiguity between truth and fiction can be witnessed in the secret police file kept on me concerning this incident. I have obtained pieces of my Stasi file over the years starting in 1997. It has several major sections, most typewritten, such as pages concerning an incident at the border in January 1989. The pages

Abteilung XX18. 15. April, 4.2.67, 87

Brief : 165, 166
 Empfänger: Helen Ridd

Beitrag zu demselben Teilzeitstudium Susan Morrison
 und den weiteren Handlungen zur WPA.

Die Susan Morrison war im 1986 zum Teilzeitstudium
 an der WPA-Sektion SH und nahm auch am Festspieltheater
 der Angliken teil. Während der FP war sie die Tutorin der
 22 WPA-Schülerin, die unmittelbar vor dem FP ein
 Seminar in der SH nahm, wobei sie die Sprachübungen, um
 auf die Vorbereitung in der SH zu diskutieren. Sie inspirierte
 einige Studenten dazu, demselben Niveau zu arbeiten und
 dies an die Vorbereitung zu bringen. In dieser Zeit
 der SH arbeitete, gab es mit der Herstellung von
 und sie sollte kein Hindernis dafür aufbringen, dass
 diese Arbeit aufgeführt werden.

Seit September 88 hat sich die H. an der FH RB auf
 während ihres Aufenthalts überwachte sie die Verbindungen
 zur SH RB August 88. Gute Kontakte unterhält sie zu
 Prof. Weber, Dr. Einar Wital, Dr. Christel Wagner und Dr. Hildegard
 Wölke. Sie wurde zweimal als bester der WPA eingek
 worden wie eine amerikanische Historikerin.

Somit kann man sie auch in der ersten Angliken
 Bewegung zur engl. in einem Teilzeitstudium in
 Neben der Arbeit der WPA, die sie zu einem Teilzeit
 der Angliken hat, hat sie besonders der WPA in
 der Dr. Christel Wagner Seminar. Ein Grund dafür liegt
 darin, dass die Dr. Wagner die WPA-Schülerinnen
 ist und auch mit finanziellen Mitteln.

Kopie BSTU
 Außenstelle Rostock

Page 1 of Susan's Stasi file from "Anka"

from the IMs or "unofficial collaborators" are hand-written. Not only that, they are poorly copied. So, understanding them involves real detective work. While I have transcribed most of it successfully, even my East German friends disagree on scattered phrases and words in the handwritten portions. Here is a portion of the file sourced by an IM concerning the wall newspaper, transcribed almost four years after the incident in question.

Department XX18 Rostock, 27 of April 1989

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Source: Informal Collaborator for Political-Operative Penetration and for Protection of Responsibility Areas

Source: „Anka”

Noted down by Captain P—

With regards to the former part-time student Susan Morisson [sic] and maintained contacts at WPU [The Wilhelm-Pieck-Universität, Rostock, German Democratic Republic]

The Susan Morisson was a part-time student in 1986 in the Wilhelm-Pieck-Universität SLW Department (Sprach- und Literaturwissenschaft) [Language and Literature Department] and also participated in the Practical Internship for students of English. During the Fachpraktium [practical course] she entered as a tutor. As she schooled the WPU students, who had been a semester in the Soviet Union, she used the conversation practice classes to discuss relationships in the Soviet Union. She inspired some students to write articles about that and hang them on the wall newspaper. Since these presented discrimination in the Soviet Union, it came to conflict with the course leaders and she wanted to bring no understanding that these articles were problematic.

“Anka” (her code name) describes me as deliberately collaborating with my students to intentionally undermine relations with the Soviet Union. In reality I can attest to my utter naïveté, but this was perhaps a position impossible to imagine by someone raised in an atmosphere of mistrust and paranoia. “Anka” collaborated with the government perspective, in part, I imagine, to accommodate herself to such a stressful culture of suspicion. Certain ‘facts’ in her report are clearly wrong. Concerning the “conflict with the course leaders,” the “conflict,” such as it was, barely existed for more than a few minutes, as I pretty much immediately caved in to the request to take the article down from the bulletin board. In truth, I *wanted* to understand and make the two professors likewise comprehend that these were *innocent* articles. Yet their experience – one an East German professor and the Brown professor a veteran visitor to the GDR – trumped my perspective as a trusting and unworldly American patriot.

A second student-friend, “Nele Rath,” shared with me her Stasi file. Here, the wall newspaper incident makes mention of “Angela Haffner” to chastise her.

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The Haffner published an article on the experiences of her part-time studies in the USSR on the wall newspaper. She expressed herself in an arrogant and discriminatory manner about the differences in the standard of living of the GDR and the USSR. The Haff. made it sound as if the male citizens of the USSR were so violent, that a woman dare not go in the streets of the USSR at night.

Despite this clear judgement on the part of the informers who collaborated with the government, Angela was permitted to continue with her studies.

My file confirms what Glajar, Lewis, and Petrescu argue in their volume *Secret Police Files From the Eastern Bloc*. Informers are themselves a form of “detective” (Lewis 28). As Glajar puts it, “texts [are] assembled from a chorus of incriminating narrative voices” (Glajar 56), fashioning what she calls “file stories” (Glajar, Lewis, and Petrescu 9). In my file there were two informers, with the code names “Anka” and “Georg.” The unofficial collaborator or IM “Anka” says that I was in communication with the US Embassy, something “Georg” likewise suggests (Wockenfuß 212).² “Anka” maintains concerning me: “[S]he used the discussion classes in order to discuss relationships in the Soviet Union.” In fact, I was so ignorant, I doubt I would have instigated such dialogue, except out of genuine curiosity. “She inspired some students to write articles about that and hang them on the wall newspaper.” The truth was, I was open to virtually any topic. Simply to get them to write in English, I would have accepted anything.

Annette Kuhn’s analysis of “memory work” applies here. As Kuhn points out, “an active practice of remembering [...] undercuts assumptions about the transparency or the authenticity of what is remembered, treating it not as ‘truth’ but as evidence of a particular sort: material for interpretation, to be interrogated, mined for its meanings and its possibilities” (157; qtd Cleverley 2). The tension between the file’s assertion, my recollection, and my diary from the time argues for a disparity in perception. The “taboo of mixing fact and fiction is abolished” (Cleverley 8) in Stasi files.

While I later discovered that those informing on me were teachers and colleagues, the informers for Angela and Nele were fellow students. And it wasn’t just

² Karl Wockenfuß writes about various IM reports concerning the Brown-Rostock programme, including a focus on “Kontakte zur US-Botschaft.” Either this is the same IM as the one who reported on me, or its simply a convention of the genre. Wockenfuß 212.

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the wall newspaper which received notice. Group discussion sessions were also reported on. Here, from Nele's file:

Haffner and Rath told Susan M. about the work of the youth section of a church community – Jungen Gemeinden and the ESG [Evangelical Student Parish] – with several examples that people being members of the church were “persecuted by the state,” that they were disadvantaged in their personal development (study places, etc.). Further they spoke of the desire for an “independent peace movement,” examples from Jena, Dresden, and the reaction of the government to this action.

[Various students] did not participate in the discussion. Another person attempted to set right and object to the utterances of Haffner and Rath (whereby Haffner was the more active of the two). The whole discussion then became an argument between the two parties, in which Haffner and Rath did not abandon their positions, but were increasingly unable to cope with the argument. Susan M. participated in this argument only passively as a listener, although the attempt was made to involve her in the conversation.

After the end of the Conversation, however, she invited Haffner and Rath to her room, and the invitation was accepted by both.

My invitation to join me back in my room was perceived as a private and therefore threatening collaboration, disturbing enough that the “unofficial collaborator” – as such informers were called – felt compelled to record it for posterity.

In 2002, I received the real names of the two unofficial collaborators or IMs who directly reported on me. Unsurprisingly, “Georg” was my East German boss, who naturally needed to show himself in a good light. Concerning the programme in 1985, he writes about me four years later in 1989:

She proved herself well there. She demonstrated extremely friendly, collegial, and contact-friendly behaviour. There was an event concerning the wall newspaper, which had been provided with articles by students that expressed themselves very critically about their experiences in the Soviet Union. This wall newspaper was accomplished under her leadership. There were expressions about Soviet relationships and people which were classified by the programme administrators to be insulting. It came to clashes with the students and the Morisson. The Morisson proved herself to be cooperative and continued afterwards to maintain connections with the Professor [in Rostock].

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Seemingly, this professor did not resent me for this. Having recently shown my file to various East German friends, they suggest the way “Georg” talked about the Wall Newspaper was to protect his students and even, perhaps, me. He goes on in the file to suggest, among other things, that I would be a good partner with Rostock in the future. All this can be read in many ways. Some have suggested that he might have been intending to “turn” me as a spy for East Germany. Perhaps he was attempting to “collaborate” with me in order to soften me up as a potential recruit. After all, given the hubbub around the wall newspaper incident, it is otherwise surprising that he invited me back, repeatedly, to Rostock. While visiting Brown University three years after the summer programme, he invited me to teach in Rostock again. Hence, while I was researching my dissertation in West Berlin during 1988-90 supported by a DAAD Fellowship, I gave an intensive two week-long seminar to master’s students on the subject: “The Canon, Contemporary Literary Theory and American Literature.” Additionally, through his intervention and invitations, I was able to attend several East German conferences and present scholarly papers.

Totally innocent material was framed to sound shady, thus making something suspicious out of nothing. Georg writes about me, “The M. is in communication with the USA Embassy. She asks many questions, probably collects information, but hardly expresses her own political view.” As Lewis puts it, “[N]o amount of [banal] detail is redundant or superfluous, since any snippet of information can reveal itself later to be an important piece of intelligence” (28). Stasi files need to be interpreted as literary narratives with the file writers themselves fiction writers (Glajar, Lewis, and Petrescu 10). As Lewis argues, “[S]ecret police files must first be made intelligible, and this involves acknowledging their narrative character” (27). My name is misspelled as “Morisson” throughout. In the case of my file, some material was made up. About an incident at the border in January 1989, the file writer says my boyfriend, now my husband, was a member of the US military. He was, in fact, a graduate student at Brown specialising in eighteenth-century British literature.

Petrescu has pointed out how there are “informational gaps inherent in each file” (85).³ No mention was made of me travelling illegally throughout the GDR when

³ “Almost all secret police files begin with a suspicion or a hint of a dissenting political position that the regime needs to prove. Propelling each file are wider metanarratives about sabotage and enemy influence, capitalist conspiracies against international communism, which seem to urge the writer of the file – t usually an officer – to try to make the story fit the crime.” Glajar, Lewis, and Petrescu 9.

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I lived in West Berlin in 1988-90 or having extensive subsequent contact with “Angela” after she had become a Gymnasium teacher. As such, she had *Westkontaktverbot* – she was forbidden to contact Westerners. While we met repeatedly before the Berlin Wall came down, these meetings do not appear in my file. Our personal collaboration either wasn’t seen as important from 1988-89 or, more likely, it was simply not observed. The informers were not all-seeing.

Collaboration, cooperation, and working together take on various nuances in the scenarios engaging individuals from opposing political systems. Those from a

000314

1118

Information

USA-Bürgerin, die an der Freien Universität Berlin Germanistik studieren will, reist mit einem Angehörigen der US-Armee in die Hauptstadt, um u. a. an ihr bekannte DDR-Bürger Briefe und Karten zum Versand zu bringen, in denen sie z. T. Treffs in der DDR vereinbart

Am 11. 01. 1989 gegen 13.20 Uhr reiste die USA-Bürgerin

H o r r i s o n, Susan Signe
geb. am: 15. 04. 1959
wohnhaft: Berlin (West) 61
Wartenburgstr. 18
Tätigkeit: lt. eigenen Angaben Germanistikstudentin an der Freien Universität Berlin

auf Senatsbescheinigung über die Grenzübergangsstelle Bahnhof Friedrichstraße ein.

Der Zollkontrolle führte die Bürgerin neben 251,-- DM zahlreiche verschlossene Briefumschläge vor, die als Absender ihren Namen und die Anschrift

bei Baumgarten
Berlin (West) 10
(lt. Fernsprechnummer [REDACTED])

trugen. Als Empfänger werden die DDR-Bürger

H ü h n e, Horst Prof. Dr.
[REDACTED]
Sektion Sprach- und Literaturwissenschaft
WB Anglistik
[REDACTED]

W a g e n e r, Christel Dr.
[REDACTED]

T a u b e, Bert
[REDACTED]

genannt. Die Morrison wurde gebeten, die Briefe zu öffnen. Diese enthielten persönliche Schreiben der USA-Bürgerin an die DDR-Bürger. Weiter war die Reisende im Besitz zweier Postkarten, adressiert an

S c h e r f f, Urte
[REDACTED]

Kopie BStU
Außenstelle Rostock

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more democratic or 'liberated' system may want contact with those from an oppressive government – yet how much does one need to erode one's own ethics while collaborating? Can unashamedly self-confessed collaborators, such as those 'unofficial collaborators' of the GDR, be seen as not only collaborating with the surveillance system of their country, but also, oddly, with their victims – those they report on? Collaboration cannot be seen as wholly positive or negative, but with nuance given its ambivalent contexts. Collaboration can even be seen in my writing about and using the very file written with its surveillance of me. Does personal collaboration function as an effective means to help bring about positive political change? Finally, in this instance, is collaboration in fact a form of resistance?

In September 1989, a friend of mine drove with me from West Germany to Berlin in his old BMW. Driving on the two-lane highway at dusk, we were stopped by the East German police because a taillight was out. We'd have to wait until morning to continue. With no shoulder to the road, we parked on the edge of the tarmac, pulled over until dawn. Cars shot by inches away, shaking us all night. Finally, at 6 a.m., we left. Again, we were stopped. "It's not light enough yet," we were told. In perfect innocence, I asked, "When does the sun come up in the German Democratic Republic?"

Part of the sun coming up in any country is the light that is shed on its history – even this small tile of the mosaic that constitutes the past of the German Democratic Republic.

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