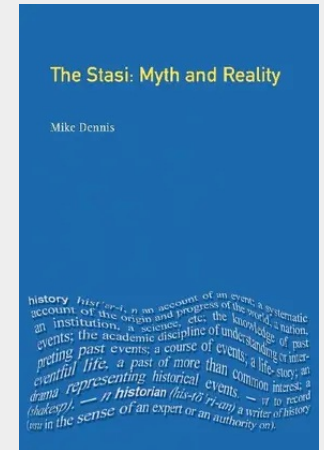


The Stasi

Myth and Reality

The East German Ministry of State Security, popularly known as the Stasi, was one of the largest and most intrusive secret police systems in world history. So extensive was the system of surveillance and control that in any given year throughout the 1970s and 1980s, about one in fifty of the 13 million East German adults were working for the Stasi either as an officer or as an informer. Drawing on original sources from the Stasi archives and the recollections of contemporary witnesses, *The Stasi: Myth and Reality* reveals the intricacies of the relationship between the Stasi enforcers, its agents and its targets/victims, and demonstrates how far the Stasi octopus extended its tentacles into people's lives and all spheres of society. The origins and developments of this vast system of repression are examined, as well as the motivation of the informers and the ways in which they penetrated the niches of East German society. The final chapters assess the ministry's failure to help overcome the GDR's inherent structural defects and demonstrate how the Stasi's bureaucratic procedures contributed to the implosion of the Communist system at the end of the 1980's.

A study of the powerful and much-feared East German Ministry of State Security from its establishment in 1950 to its fall in 1990. The Stasi were a central institution of the GDR, and this book illuminates the nature and operation of the entire East German regime, addressing one of the most important topics in modern German history. Its emphasis is primarily on the key years under Erich Honecker, who was Head of State from 1976 and ousted in 1989. The book looks at all aspects of the control, operation and impact of the security police - their methods, targets, structure, accountability, and in particular the crucial question of how far they were an arm of the ruling communist party or were themselves a virtually autonomous political actor.



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