



→ Consultation for Applicants

Berlin:

Monday – Thursday | 08:00 – 17:00

Friday | 08:00 – 14:00

Telephone advisement and appointments:

+49 30 2324-7000

Branch Offices:

Monday – Thursday | 08:00 – 17:00

Friday | 08:00 – 14:00

Further appointments based on local office hours.

Brochure submitted by:

The Stasi Records Office
Central Office in Berlin
Karl-Liebknecht-Straße 31/33
10178 Berlin-Mitte

Postal address: 10106 Berlin

Phone: +49 30 2324-50

Fax: +49 30 2324-7799

post@bstu.bund.de

www.bstu.de

Illustrations: title photo: Pralle Sonne; outer page 1: Andreas Schoelzel; page 4: BSTU; inner page 1: Kai-Olaf Hesse; page 2: Simone Hertel/BSTU; page 3: both Pralle Sonne; page 4: Rolf Walter (1), Pralle Sonne (2); Design: Pralle Sonne; Status: June 2008

BSTU

The Stasi Records Office

Archives
Using the Files
Research
Historical and Political Education





The disbandment of the Ministry for State Security (MfS) was one of the central demands of the demonstrators in the autumn of 1989. The State Security Service of the GDR was the "shield and sword" of the State party, the SED. It secured the SED dictatorship through terror, repression and surveillance of its own people.

In the records of the MfS we find reports about people who spied on and betrayed their fellow citizens in the service of the Stasi, but also examples of civil courage, of many people's bravery and their longing for freedom. The files also show how the dreaded apparatus of the MfS functioned.

The interest in confronting the history of the dictatorship is as great as ever, and it is growing especially among young people, who were still children in 1989. We in the Stasi Records Authority are delighted with this interest and support initiatives to confront this history to the best of our ability.

Marianne Birthler, Federal Commissioner

→ The BStU in Berlin and the New Provinces

The Stasi Records Office (BStU) has its headquarters in Berlin. There are also branch offices in 12 former GDR county seats: in Chemnitz, Dresden, Erfurt, Frankfurt (Oder), Gera, Halle, Leipzig, Magdeburg, Neubrandenburg, Rostock, Schwerin and Suhl. Regardless of their place of residence, citizens may apply at any of the offices for access to documents, read their own files or visit events and exhibitions.



15 January 1990: Occupation of the Berlin Stasi headquarters

When it became known in the autumn of 1989 that Stasi employees had begun destroying files, the protests turned even more strongly against the once powerful ministry. In December 1989, courageous people occupied the first MfS offices in the counties. In the end, they stormed the Stasi headquarters in Berlin. This marked the end of the State Security service. In the following months, the foundations were laid for the establishment of a new authority.

→ A New Authority Is Formed

Winter 89/90:

Stasi offices and finally the Berlin Stasi headquarters are occupied.

August 1990:

The East German parliament authorizes the opening of the files.

October 1990:

The establishment of the authority begins under the direction of Joachim Gauck.

December 1991:

The Bundestag passes the Stasi Records Law.

January 1992:

Citizens can view their files for the first time.

September 2000:

The Bundestag selects Marianne Birthler as Federal Commissioner

→ A Law without Precedent

The Stasi Records Law (StUG) regulates the opening of the archives while protecting privacy rights. It forms the legal basis for the preservation and use of the documents. This entered new legal territory because nowhere and never before had the files of the secret police of a dictatorship been preserved from destruction to such an extent and then opened to the public by a democratic state.



→ Historical and Political Education

To know how dictatorships are established, how people survive under a dictatorship or become implicated in its misdeeds is of the greatest importance for the development of democratic convictions and abilities. The files of the MfS are an important foundation for this knowledge. In terms of its work for historical and political education, the BStU contributes to the understanding of dictatorship through lectures, discussions, film presentations, exhibitions, seminars for teachers, projects for schoolchildren, and not least of all through its presence on the internet.

→ Exhibitions

The information and documentation centers in Berlin, Frankfurt (Oder), Erfurt, Dresden, Halle and the documentation center and memorial in Rostock house permanent exhibitions that provide an overview of the history of the MfS – including regional references in the branch offices. The central traveling exhibition, “State Security – Guarantee of the SED Dictatorship”, has been shown so far in over 70 localities in the Federal Republic of Germany and in other European countries. In addition, there are smaller exhibitions on particular aspects of the MfS’s repression.

→ Schools

Schools represent a point of emphasis for the historical and political education work of the BStU. It cooperates with schools, school districts and state ministries and will offer in the future even more programs and materials on the history of the MfS suitable for teaching in schools.



→ Legacy of the Stasi

Despite the destruction of files by the Stasi, approximately 112 km of documents are stored in the archives of the BStU, along with numerous photos, films, video and sound recordings. About half the documents over which the BStU assumed control were in the MfS’s own archives, established and organized according to the interests of the secret police force. The other half were for the most part unorganized, just as the MfS employees had left them in their offices. Some documents had even been shredded. In Berlin, as well as in several branch offices, there were thousands of sacks of so-called “pre-destroyed material.” Thus it remains a central task of the BStU still today to organize and prepare the documents so that they are available for use.



The Archives in Numbers (Berlin and Branch Offices)*

Written material:	112 km
Documents converted to microfilm:	47 km
Photos, negatives, slides:	1.4 million
Film, video and sound recordings:	169,000
Shredded material:	15,500 sacks

The collections of the central office of the former Ministry have been archived in Berlin; the files of the county and district offices have been stored in respective branch offices.

→ Guided Tours of the Archives

Guided tours through the archives in Berlin and the branch offices are scheduled regularly (registration for Berlin: +49 30 2324-6699).

* The numbers are rounded off.

→ Reading the Files

Each person has the right to examine Stasi documents relating to oneself and to find out the extent to which the State Security Service of the GDR influenced one's own life.

The application form for the personal viewing of files is available at every BStU office, by post and on the internet (www.bstu.de). The viewing of files is free of charge for affected persons; there is only a small fee for copies of the documents.

→ Historical and Political Examination and Reappraisal

In order to promote the examination and reappraisal of the MfS's activities, the ruling mechanisms of the former GDR and the National Socialist past, the BStU makes documents available for viewing and provides copies of them to scholars, the media and private organizations dealing with the past. The privacy rights of affected persons are protected.

→ Screening Requests

Public and non-public offices can request information from the BStU to find out whether people occupying high positions in politics, sports and administration worked for the State Security Service, either full-time or unofficially. This regulation remains valid until 2011. The files of employees involved in examining and reappraising the SED dictatorship can be scrutinized without any time limit. The decisions whether to screen and what consequences may ensue are left to the offices making the screening request.

The BStU continues to process inquiries from the agencies responsible for rehabilitation and restitution, as well as those responsible for clarifying pension matters.

Applications in Numbers (as of May 2008)*

Since 1991, approximately 6.2 million applications have been made to the BStU, including:

Personal review of files:	2.5 million**
Screening requests:	3.2 million
Research and the media:	20,600
Rehabilitation, restitution, and criminal prosecution:	442,000

** This number includes first-time and repeat applications, applications for document decoding and requests for copies.



The research of the BStU focuses on the structure, methods and impact of the Ministry for State Security.

→ Points of Emphasis in Research

- History and structure of the Ministry for State Security (handbook)
- Full-time employees and unofficial collaborators of the Stasi
- Espionage activities of the State Security service
- The State Security service and society
- Opposition and resistance

Plans for the coming years include research on Stasi reports regarding the mood of the GDR populace, the Stasi's cooperation with other East European security services and the local power structures based on regional case studies.

The research results are published and are available through the BStU, on the internet (www.bstu.de) and also in book-stores.



→ Library

There is an extensive reference library for GDR history at the Berlin central office, which is also open to visitors:

Monday | Tuesday | Thursday | 08:30 – 16:30
 Wednesday | 10:00 – 18:00
 Friday | 08:30 – 14:30