



German History in Documents and Images

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Monitoring Telephone Traffic with the Federal Republic (November 14, 1952)

In East Germany, the policy of sealing off the domestic population from Western contacts included the strict surveillance of telephone and mail traffic. At the end of 1952, the head of the Main Administration of the German Border Police [*Hauptverwaltung der Deutschen Grenzpolizei*] asked Erich Mielke, then second-in-command at the Ministry for State Security, to curtail private phone calls from the GDR to West Germany.

I have enclosed two reports showing how very easy it is for private individuals to place long-distance telephone calls to West Germany without these calls being subject to any kind of monitoring.

About two months ago, I asked General P. to gather information, via the relevant department at the Ministry for Postal and Telephone Communications, on which phone lines still run to West Germany today.

As Comrade P. told me some time ago, the relevant department is not attending to this matter with sufficient seriousness.

I therefore ask you to initiate measures to put a stop to this uncontrollable situation of making calls to West Germany.

Source: BArch-MZAP, Pt 7219, Bl. 299; reprinted in Dierk Hoffman, Karl-Heinz Schmidt, and Peter Skyba, eds., *Die DDR vor dem Mauerbau: Dokumente zur Geschichte des anderen deutschen Staates, 1949-1961* [*The GDR before the Building of the Wall: Documents on the History of the Other German State, 1949-1961*]. Munich: Piper, 1993, p. 124.

Translation: Thomas Dunlap