

Report from Bonn by Rainer Apel

A truckload of explosive secret files

The disappearance of files, including on CIA-Stasi cooperation, is the subject of parliamentary inquiries.

At the time when the press was reporting on the shredding job Oliver North did to remove sensitive files on the Iran-Contra operations, most people here believed it was another "typical" U.S. affair that had no parallel in Germany. Today, it is known that something similar also occurred here, especially during late 1989 and early 1990, which shaped the collapse of the East German regime and paved the way toward reunification.

The disappearance of certain files is the subject of several inquiries in the Parliament. The most interesting questions have been posed by Ingrid Koeppé, a former East German dissident and member of the Alliance 90/Greens group who was elected in December 1990.

In a parliamentary question on Feb. 18, Koeppé challenged the government to reveal its knowledge about one of the biggest taboos of U.S.-German relations, namely CIA-Stasi connections. Koeppé, who had been tipped off by former CIA boss William Colby and George A. Carver, a former CIA station chief in Berlin, asked: "Can the federal government, on the basis of its own knowledge, confirm reports that foreign intelligence agencies, the CIA most of all, are presently trying to recruit a wide range of former agents of the MfS/AfNS [Stasi] as sources, regular or loosely associated employees?"

Behind this was a flood of hints that after November 1989, the CIA put several hundred Stasi officers and specialists that had worked with it before, on its regular payroll to continue

operations that were termed "useful."

As this author has learned from other sources, essential aspects in the Koeppé catalogue of questions can be linked by looking at the early 1980s, when special envoys of the Gen. Richard Secord-North operation met with officials of the East German foreign intelligence to arrange secret transfers of money and arms between Iran and other states in the Mideast and South and Central America.

The question is: Since the East German regime collapsed and its secret files came into the possession of the West Germans during reunification, what do these files tell about secret talks in the early 1980s among the Americans, East Germans, and Iranians?

Bonn has always answered questions like those posed by Koeppé, that there was "no information on that matter." But in early November, the special committee of the Parliament investigating the role of Alexander Schalck-Golodkowski (one of the key East German players in these arms deals, assistant minister of foreign trade, and a senior Stasi officer) presented its first official report. It became obvious that the government still held key material under tight control.

Koeppé, a member of the committee, criticized the 1,766-page report as not reflecting the full truth, because the government had denied access to crucial files on grounds that they were "classified." "Classified" means that they contain information about ongoing intelligence operations or past operations that involve persons still on the government's payroll, or persons

that "need protection," in the government's view.

Schalck-Golodkowski falls into all of these categories: A key top-secret negotiator in the 1970s and 1980s, he moved to the West in late 1989 and spent some days or, according to some sources, weeks at CIA headquarters in Langley, Virginia, and has since been under the protection of the German foreign intelligence service, the BND.

In a leak that was certainly "unauthorized," former U.S. Consul to Munich David Fisher declared at a "private reunion" in Munich in late 1990 that the CIA had gotten hold of Stasi files "weeks before they were handed over to the BND."

Fisher knew what he was talking about, because he was also coordinator of CIA operations in Germany in the late 1980s.

"It would not be contrary to the habits of secret service men," the daily *Die Welt* wrote on Aug. 14, 1991, "if the CIA boss had made xeroxes of a couple of especially interesting documents before the BND received the originals."

According to *Der Spiegel* on Nov. 16, a senior Bonn official, Eckart Werthebach, spent weeks if not months before reunification in October 1990, sorting out all files rated "essential" by the West Germans. He was assisted by an officer of the former Stasi who had joined the West Germans, Edgar Braun.

Werthebach, *Der Spiegel* wrote, "did his job to the full satisfaction of his Bonn superior. Shortly after, he [was] promoted to the post of president of the Constitutional Protection Agency."

Are the files which the Werthebach-Braun task force sorted, destroyed forever, or can they still be made public? Koeppé is now considering suing the government in the constitutional court, trying to force the release of the files.