



GERMAN DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC ESPIONAGE IN SCHLESWIG-HOLSTEIN

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“The number of intelligence missions against Schleswig-Holstein that have been identified is well above the national average in relation to the population.” (Constitution Protection in Schleswig-Holstein 1976)¹ This was stated by the State Office for the Protection of the Constitution in its 1976 annual report. Apparently, tranquil Schleswig-Holstein, one of the eleven federal states of the Federal Republic of Germany at the time, on the northern edge of the country, aroused the interest of foreign intelligence services, meaning those from the East. In 1978, it even stated: “The number of espionage cases increased significantly in Schleswig-Holstein in 1978. Over the last five years, there has been an

¹ Constitutional Protection in Schleswig-Holstein 1976, published by the Minister of the Interior of the State of Schleswig-Holstein in cooperation with the head of the press and information office of the state government (Schriften des Minister of the Interior, H. 19, Kiel 1977, p. 50), cited as: Constitution Protection in Schleswig-Holstein 1976.

increase of almost 100% in such cases" (Constitution Protection in Schleswig-Holstein 1978).²

Such statements do not allow any conclusions to be drawn about actual intelligence activities. They are merely "exact figures on solved cases" in order to "prevent enemy intelligence services from gaining insight into the extent of counterintelligence successes" (Constitutional Protection in Schleswig-Holstein 1978, p. 43). However, the 1978 report (p. 13) goes on to say: "Three quarters of all espionage activities in 1978 originated from intelligence services in the GDR." So even after the process of détente between the Federal Republic of Germany and the German Democratic Republic (GDR) that began in the 1970s, the intensity had by no means decreased, as had sometimes been assumed, according to the findings of the Office for the Protection of the Constitution (Constitution Protection in Schleswig-Holstein 1976, p. 50).

Judging by Table 1, Schleswig-Holstein did not enjoy a prominent position in the operational work of the Main Administration A (hereafter HV A) of the Ministry for State Security (MfS), which was responsible for foreign espionage, compared to the other federal states.

Table 1: Distribution of unofficial employees and contact persons of the HV A and its departments XV by federal state (as of December 1988)
(Source: Helmut Müller-Enbergs: Unofficial Employees of the Ministry for State Security.

Part 2: Instructions for working with agents, scouts and spies in the Federal Republic of Germany, Berlin, 1998, p. 194)

Federal state	Unofficial employees and contacts	Percentage
Baden	13	7
Bavaria	241	13
Berlin	427	23
Bremen	30	2
Hamburg	102	5

² Constitutional Protection in Schleswig-Holstein 1978, published by the Minister of the Interior of the State of Schleswig-Holstein in cooperation with the Head of the Press and Information Office of the State Government (Schriften des Innenministers, H. 19, Kiel 1979, p. 13), cited as: Constitution Protection in Schleswig-Holstein 1978.

Hesse	140	7
Lower Saxony	134	7
North Rhine-Westphalia	462	25
Rhineland-Palatinate	43	2
Saarland	10	1
Schleswig-Holstein	53	3
Other	101	5

As of December 1988, HV A's operational centre was clearly located within Schleswig-Holstein, in the state's three largest cities – in order of size: Kiel, Lübeck and Flensburg. However, there is no mention of Neumünster, Norderstedt and Elmshorn, or even Wedel, Ahrensburg and Itzehoe. This is, as expected, evidence of a desire not to have an operational presence in all of the state's major cities. There are, however, special cases such as the small town of Rendsburg, which was home to the LANDJUT headquarters, the Army Air Defence School and other Bundeswehr facilities. The HV A listed five positions there in its statistics. And with this number of positions, the district of the Duchy of Lauenburg also counts as part of the affluent suburbs of Hamburg and Lübeck.

Table 2: Unofficial employees and contact persons
of the HV A in Schleswig-Holstein (as of December 1988)
(Source: Gunthar Latsch, Udo Ludwig: Fromme Spione, in: Der Spiegel,
65 (2011) No. 47, p. 44 f., here 45)

Location	Number
Lübeck	14
Kiel	9
Flensburg	7
Duchy of Lauenburg	5
Rendsburg	5
Pinneberg	4
Bad Segeberg	2
Husum	2
Ammersbek	1
Dithmarschen	1

Operational objectives of the HV A in Schleswig-Holstein

On 3 December 1979, various HV A units received Service Instruction No. 3 of 1979 from their headquarters in Berlin. It listed the individual operational objectives of the HV A that were to apply from then on, including those in Schleswig-Holstein.

In Kiel, the HV A wanted to maintain sources in the state government and the Ministry of the Interior, as well as in the fleet command in Flensburg-Mürwick and the Marienführungsdienstkommando (Marine Command) in Glücksburg-Meierwik. It also wanted to gain operational insight into the Kiel branches of the BND (Bundesnachrichtendienst), and the military counterintelligence service, the MAD (Militärischer Abschirmdienst), in particular their Group I. In Flensburg, the Federal Motor Transport Authority was also of interest.³ Essentially, intelligence work was therefore concentrated in Kiel and Flensburg.

Responsibility for the individual targets was also regulated in these service instructions. According to internal guidelines, Schleswig-Holstein's Chekist mentor was therefore the HV A branch in Rostock, which operated as Department XV within the district administration (BV) of the MfS. The Rostock branch cooperated in part with the specialist departments of the HV A in Berlin, such as HV A IX, which was responsible for secret services and police, which is quite logical for the BND and MAD.

According to the planning documents of the HV A, its service unit in Rostock was assigned the key role for operational work in Schleswig-Holstein. So let us ask: Did this also correspond to operational practice? A compilation of the operational procedures carried out by the HV A in Schleswig-Holstein clearly shows the prominent role played by the Rostock Chekists. No fewer than six Schleswig-Holsteiners were registered for this service unit. But the neighbouring district branches of the HV A, such as Schwerin and Neubrandenburg, are only slightly behind the responsible service unit. This even applies to a lesser extent to Magdeburg and the more distant Leipzig. Consequently, Service

³ See Helmut Müller-Enbergs: Hauptverwaltung A. Aufgaben – Struktur – Quellen (Headquarters A. Tasks – Structure – Sources), Berlin 2024, p. 307.

Instruction No. 3 from 1979, which was intended as a control measure, only fulfilled its function to a limited extent. The service units – even the specialist departments at headquarters in Berlin – recruited whatever they could find. The plan did not succeed. Instead, quite a few of the HV A service units ended up in Schleswig-Holstein: a third of the district branches and soon half of the central specialist departments.

The network of intelligence positions of the HV A in Schleswig-Holstein did not emerge overnight, but was rather the product of a long development process. This can only be partially captured by the snapshot taken in December 1988. After all, the 51 unofficial employees (IM) and contact persons (KP) of the HV A in Schleswig-Holstein included 18 women, which is a comparatively above-average proportion of 35 per cent. Not quite, but soon half of the operational heaven belonged to women in Schleswig-Holstein. The youngest among them was 25 years old on the cut-off date, the oldest 74. More than half of the HV A's active members were born between 1930 and 1939 ($n = 15$) and between 1940 and 1949 (16), had reached or already passed the age of 50, and were shaped by a childhood under National Socialism or the post-war period and the emerging affluent generation (Müller-Enbergs, 1998). Seven confidants of HV A were in their sixth or seventh decade of life and were still influenced by the Weimar period. Viewed in this light, the operational network appears to be ageing – and the next generation was slow in coming. Only four citizens were between 25 and 28 years old, while eleven were between 30 and 39. The prognosis of an ageing operational network in Schleswig-Holstein can be derived from the recruitment years themselves. Well over half ($n = 31$) of the citizens active for the HVA in Schleswig-Holstein in December 1988 had committed themselves to cooperation between the ages of 17 and 38 (Müller-Enbergs, 1988). While the HV A was recently only able to recruit four citizens between the ages of 25 and 28, at least implicitly, in previous years – according to the most recent active members – there had been more than three times as many ($n = 13$), including a remarkably high number of eight women (Müller-Enbergs, 1988).

Some of the Schleswig-Holsteiners led by the HV A have been active for a long time. Seven of them had already been active for over twenty years, and another 14 for between ten and twenty years. In any

case, there were recruitment gaps in the years from 1962 to 1967 due to the construction of the Berlin Wall (Müller-Enbergs, 1988). Even in the second half of the 1970s, only one Schleswig-Holstein resident remained in the HV A networks. This changed in the 1980s, when an average of three to four people took the bait each year, but these included quite a few who had already reached a considerable age. It can be assumed that, in quantitative terms, the HV A network in Schleswig-Holstein had passed its operational zenith. The statisticians within the HV A will certainly have called for increased recruitment efforts.

The HV A had operated as one of the MfS's service units in Schleswig-Holstein. In December 1988, there were 51 unofficial employees and contact persons on record, including ten sources in target objects (Müller-Enbergs, 1988). According to current knowledge, it only achieved its ambitious goals of infiltrating the state government and the Ministry of the Interior of Schleswig-Holstein to a limited extent. It was able to achieve other operational goals, such as the Federal Motor Transport Authority in Flensburg, but was clearly not present in others at the time of the investigation.

The unofficial network in Schleswig-Holstein was getting old, and the HV A was having difficulty recruiting new members. Although it had a considerable logistical apparatus at its disposal – from border smugglers to conspiratorial apartments – it found it difficult to consistently pursue its planned objectives, even though there were some promising contacts in the end. The local deployment and the operational sources under contract sometimes appear arbitrary. Recently, the journalist “Bernhard” provided significant political access to the state government, and the politician “Hecht” provided a possibly unconscious skimming contact. At least from the HV A's point of view, the HV A's foreign intelligence service was far from having infiltrated Schleswig-Holstein. Furthermore, the HV A only partially succeeded in achieving its operational goals in Schleswig-Holstein.

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For more details about this espionage network see the volume edited by Nils Abraham, Thomas Wegener Friis, Helmut

Müller-Enbergs⁴, Mogens Rostgaard Nissen, *Spionage im Grenzland Nachrichtendienste in Schleswig-Holstein und Süddänemark* [Borderland Intelligence Services Espionage in Schleswig-Holstein and Southern Denmark], BeBra Science Publishing House, Berlin, 2025, 336 p.⁵ The contributions in this volume focus for the first time on this invisible history in the German-Danish border region from a broad temporal perspective: during the First World War, during the Nazi era and the German occupation of Denmark in the Second World War, as well as during the Cold War after 1945. Thus, the volume makes a contribution not only to regional history, but also to international intelligence history.

The volume was possible with the contribution of sixteen authors: Nils Abraham, Dieter Bacher, Kristian Bruhn, Wladyslaw Bulhak, Martin Göllnitz, Bodo v. Hechelhammer, Anne Heckmann, John Jensen, Henrik Lundtofte, Carsten Müller-Boysen, Helmut Müller-Enbergs, Anne Rheder Andersen, Mogens Rostgaard Nissen, Jon Thulstrup and Thomas Wegener Friis.

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⁵ More details on: <https://bebra-wissenschaft.de/vzgesamt/titel/spionage-im-grenzland.html>