

The Gauck Office has a new boss

On 28 January, the Bundestag acting upon a government motion elected Roland Jahn head of the Federal Commission for the Stasi Archives (BStU), also referred to as the Gauck Office. This former East German dissident will on 14 March replace Marianne Birthler, who has been directing the BStU over the past decade. The new commissioner's main task will be to improve the functioning of the BStU as a research and education centre.

The Federal Commission for the Stasi Archives is responsible for the maintenance, examination and publication of documents gathered by the East German secret service. The new commissioner is perceived in Germany as one of those who made an essential contribution to the collapse of communism in East Germany. The East German government deprived him of citizenship and deported him to the West in 1983. He started working as a journalist for the ARD TV station in West Berlin. He was smuggling video cameras to the other side of the Wall and made a number of reports on the East German opposition. Owing to his contacts, the West German television had up-to-date and manipulation-free recordings of demonstrations in socialist Berlin.

Considering the story of his life, Roland Jahn opposes the policy of a 'thick line' and leaving 'history to historians'. Therefore, he will make efforts to keep the communist past, and especially collaboration with the Stasi, a constant element of public discourse. At the same time, Jahn intends to improve the operation of the BstU in order to defend the commission, which is accused from time to time of inefficient management and wasting taxpayers' money. <ciechan>