

The Gauck Office will investigate links between the Bundestag and the Stasi

Norbert Lammert, the speaker of the German parliament, on 8 October decided that the Office for the Stasi Archives should check how many agents the East German secret service had in the German parliament between 1949 and 1989. A motion regarding this matter was brought by an FDP politician, Reiner Dutschmann, and Lammert's decision was supported by all members of the Council of Elders, including representatives of the Left Party parliamentary grouping.

Lammert's decision ends the long debate, which has been observed in Germany since 1990, on the need to check the degree of involvement of West German politicians in collaboration with the Stasi. In the first phase of the process, the Office will verify the biographies of approximately 2,000 people who were members of the Bundestag between 1949 and 1989. Then it will be decided whether to extend the investigation to senior officials employed by the Bundestag. Similar projects have so far met with strong opposition, especially from the Social Democrats and some left-wing organisations (*NB*, from among whom the Stasi recruited most of its agents). The unwillingness to investigate the East German secret service's activity in the Bundestag and the lack of reliable information on this issue have given rise for example to speculations that the Stasi had controlled some aspects of West German politics before 1990. Former East German dissidents have also accused present politicians of using double standards in their treatment of East and West German secret service agents. The vetting in the German parliament may be an important step towards a detailed examination of the Stasi's influence among the West German political and economic elite. <ciechan>