

Soviet Bloc Intelligence and Its AIDS Disinformation Campaign

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“

Our friends in Moscow call it ‘dezinformatsiya.’ Our enemies in America call it ‘active measures,’ and I, dear friends, call it ‘my favorite pastime.’

”

—Col. Rolf Wagenbreth, director of Department X (disinformation) of East German foreign intelligence¹

The practice of intelligence differed considerably between East and West during the Cold War. Western intelligence services were most commonly tasked with gathering information, but their Soviet bloc counterparts placed much greater emphasis on deception operations to influence opinions or actions of individuals and governments.²

These “active measures” (aktivnyye meropriatia, as the Soviets called them) included manipulation and media control, written and oral disinformation, use of foreign communist parties and front organizations, clandestine radio broadcasting, manipulation of the economy, kidnappings, paramilitary operations, and support of guerrilla groups and terrorist organizations. Under Joseph Stalin, active measures also included political assassinations.³ The basic goal of Soviet active measures was to

weaken the USSR’s opponents—first and foremost the “main enemy” (glavny protivnik), the United States—and to create a favorable environment for advancing Moscow’s views and international objectives worldwide.

This is the story of one such measure—a campaign to implicate the United States in the emergence of the AIDS pandemic that appeared in the early 1980s. The story both illustrates the nature of Soviet and communist bloc disinformation programs and demonstrates the potential long-term consequences.

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Organizational Basics

The KGB’s Service A was the unit tasked with conducting active measures, and numerous KGB residencies abroad were assigned officers dealing exclusively with them. Moreover, each officer of the First Chief

Directorate (foreign intelligence) was expected to spend 25 percent of his time conceiving and implementing them.⁴ But active measures were well integrated into Soviet policy and involved virtually every element of the Soviet party and

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state structure, not only the KGB.

Active measures specialists used newspapers, radio stations, embassies, and other official institutions for implementation and diffusion. Services allied to the Soviets, such as East Germany's Ministry for State Security (MfS), were frequently enlisted as well. In 1980, a conservative CIA estimate put the annual cost of Soviet active measures at \$3 billion.⁶

A Note about Intelligence Sources

With the end of the Cold War, former Soviet and East German intelligence officers confirmed their services' sponsorship of the AIDS disinformation campaign. In 1990, the German TV news magazine *Panorama* featured an anonymous former intelligence officer—probably Günter Bohnsack—who revealed his department's participation in the campaign. Later that year, Bohnsack and a fellow retired intelligence officer published more details of their department's activities against the West, including the AIDS disinformation campaign.⁵ And in 1992, SVR (Russian foreign intelligence) director Yevgeny Primakov confirmed the KGB's participation. Over the next years, the European and the North American media repeatedly reported on Soviet bloc intelligence sponsorship of the AIDS conspiracy theory. Archival sources, interviews, and other material were used in this article as well.

Moscow's "total" approach to influence and deception operations contrasted starkly with the American concept of covert action, which was carried out by a single agency—the CIA—whose budget for such operations made up a fraction of its overall expenditure and paled in comparison to what the Soviets spent on active measures.⁷

Disinformation (*dezinformatsiya*) was a particularly effective weapon in the armory of Soviet bloc active measures. The term *dezinformatsiya* denoted a variety of techniques and activities to purvey false or misleading information that Soviet bloc active measures specialists sought to leak into the foreign media. From the Western perspective, disinformation was a politically motivated lie, but Soviet bloc propagandists believed their disinformation campaigns merely highlighted greater truths by exposing the real nature of capitalism.

For example, the KGB began spreading rumors about FBI and CIA involvement in the assassination of President John F. Kennedy because the Soviets earnestly believed the US military-industrial complex was involved in Kennedy's murder. Likewise, East German intelligence routinely floated disinformation depicting West German politicians as former Nazis, because, from East Berlin's perspective, the Federal Republic

of Germany was merely an incarnation of the Third Reich.⁸

In conducting disinformation campaigns, Soviet bloc intelligence had to be mindful of the concerns, fears, and expectations of their target audience. As Ladislav Bittman, deputy chief of the Czechoslovak intelligence service's disinformation department from 1964 to 1966, pointed out: in order to succeed "every disinformation message must at least partially correspond to reality or generally accepted views."⁹

The AIDS Campaign's Backdrop and Origins

Deteriorating East-West relations formed the backdrop to Moscow's decision to embark on an aggressive active measures campaign in the 1980s. The Soviet invasion of Afghanistan in 1979 ended what was left of détente, and the newly elected US president, Ronald Reagan, adopted a hard line against the USSR. At his first press conference, Reagan declared: "They [the Soviets] reserve unto themselves the right to commit any crime, to lie, to cheat in order to attain [world revolution]."

In short order, the new president increased the defense budget by 10 percent, suspended arms reduction talks, and reinstated work on MX missiles and B-1 bombers. The Reagan administration's hawkish stance, in turn, stoked Soviet paranoia, especially after Yuri Andropov's election as general secretary of the Communist

Party of the Soviet Union in 1982. A former KGB chairman, Andropov was intelligent and well-versed in foreign affairs, but he was also a hardliner with a proclivity for conspiracy theories, a trait perhaps exacerbated by his terminal illness.

During his short reign, Andropov became convinced that the United States planned for nuclear war, and KGB residencies in Western capitals were instructed to look for signs of a first strike. In keeping with Andropov's hostility toward the Reagan administration, the KGB's First Chief Directorate on 30 September 1982 instructed its residencies in the United States to counterattack Washington's aggressive stance with active measures.¹⁰

Soviet active measures worked best when pre-existing plans fit neatly into political-cultural environments and specific events.¹¹ In this case, Moscow had long realized that chemical and biological warfare was of great concern to Western publics and could be exploited for disinformation purposes. During the Korean War, the Chinese and North Koreans had broadcast "confessions" of captured American pilots about the alleged US use of germ warfare.¹⁷ During the Vietnam War, the KGB circulated a forged letter purporting to come from Gordon Goldstein of the US Office of Naval Research. First published in the *Bombay Free Press Journal* in 1968, the letter "revealed" the existence of American bacterio-

The Soviet Active Measures Process

Center gives **strategic go-ahead** for a disinformation campaign.

Ideas would be generated by residency officers assigned to read local press, books, and magazines for material that could be used for disinformation purposes.¹²

Center would **evaluate** the ideas. According to a senior East European intelligence officer who defected in 1968,

*Individual suggestions for special operations [active measures] which came from stations abroad were submitted for preliminary assessment...the majority of the suggestions were discarded in the first stage of the selection process, leaving only those whose conception corresponded with our long-range plans and whose projected consequences suggested positive results. The suggestions were then transmitted to a panel...where the author of the proposal faced many questions and much criticism in an attempt to uncover any weakness. The composition of the critical board varied from case to case although several Department D employees and experts on particular regions were permanent members. Further supplemented and polished, the proposal was then submitted to the intelligence chief for approval.*¹³

Still at the Center, **preparation** involved disinformation specialists writing in their native language, **approvals** by managers, and **translation**.

Targeting followed. The Center typically sought to launch a story **outside the Soviet bloc-controlled press** to conceal Moscow's hand. This was done frequently through **anonymous letters** and newspaper **articles** in the **Third World**.¹⁴

Once published abroad, the **Soviet media** might pick up and further **propagate** the item by referring to its non-Soviet source.

Types of Active Measures

According to the defector, two types of active measures existed:

*The first category includes operations initiated and designed within KGB ranks and usually employs such traditional disinformation techniques as forgeries or agents of influence. The KGB conducts hundreds of these categories every year even though their impact is rather limited.*¹⁵

Such single pieces of disinformation were not reinforced by additional propagation efforts.

The second type was the result of a strategic decision at the top of the Soviet active measures pyramid and directly approved by the Politburo. Campaigns were usually planned to last several years and encompassed many elements of the Soviet state, including the International Information Department (IID), which directed official press organs, such as TASS, Novosti, and Radio Moscow; and the International Department (ID), responsible for liaison with foreign communist parties, international communist front organizations, and clandestine radios.

The KGB, ID, and IID would cooperate closely in executing a particular campaign with the means available to each—the KGB's Service A, responsible for forgeries and spreading rumors ("black propaganda"), the IID's press organs for official stories ("white propaganda"), the ID for clandestine radio broadcasts and the use of international front organizations ("gray propaganda").¹⁶

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logical warfare weapons in Vietnam and Thailand.¹⁸

Moreover, Americans had shown themselves politically sensitive to the behavior of their own government. In the 1970s, a spate of press and congressional investigations publicized several actual instances of US biological warfare research early in the Cold War. One example was the secret Special Operations Division (SOD) at the premier US chemical and biological warfare research facility at Fort Detrick, Maryland, which had created a number of germ weapons for the CIA (codename MKNAOMI). Later, an SOD report surfaced, detailing a simulated biological warfare attack in New York in the summer of 1966—Army personnel had released aerosol clouds of a “harmless simulant agent” into subway stations along the 7th and 8th Avenue lines to assess the vulnerability of subway systems to covert biological attacks and to explore “methods of delivery that could be used offensively.”¹⁹

In this environment, the key event was the emergence in the early 1980s of the Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome, AIDS, as a national health crisis. Scientists had named the disease in 1982, and the following year a causative virus (HIV) was identified. However, the origins of HIV/AIDS were still obscure. The lack of verifiable facts and the strong emotional

response to the discoveries opened the door to rumors.²⁰ The emergence of the mysterious illness so soon after revelations about US biological warfare experiments therefore provided Soviet active measures specialists an opening to exploit.

In addition, the Soviets were extremely sensitive to charges against them concerning biological weapons. A US State Department report released on 22 March 1982 accused Moscow of using chemical toxin weapons (“yellow rain”) in Southeast Asia. This allegation may have provided an impetus for the KGB to respond in kind.²¹

All Moscow had to do was add a twist to its time-tested biological warfare disinformation theme by introducing the idea that US government scientists had created the AIDS virus. In the words of two former Soviet bloc disinformation officers, the AIDS disinformation campaign “virtually conceptualized itself.”²²

As in earlier disinformation campaigns, the propagandists sought to expose what they considered a greater truth about the “main enemy”—i.e., that the United States was an imperialistic, reactionary power controlled by a war-mongering arms industry. In their conspiracy-driven world view, it was plausible to assume that AIDS

was indeed the result of US biological warfare experiments. But ultimately, the true origins of AIDS were of secondary importance.²³ According to Yevgeny Primakov, at the time the first deputy chairman of the Soviet Peace Committee, a foreign propaganda front organization, the KGB conducted the AIDS disinformation campaign to expose the “perfidious” work of US military scientists.²⁴

The Campaign Opens

The opening salvo of the AIDS disinformation campaign was fired on 17 July 1983, when an obscure newspaper in India, the *Patriot*, printed an anonymous letter headlined “AIDS may invade India: Mystery disease caused by US experiments.” The letter, allegedly written by a “well-known American scientist and anthropologist” in New York, claimed that “AIDS...is believed to be the result of the Pentagon’s experiments to develop new and dangerous biological weapons.” It went on to state that the United States was about to transfer these experiments to sites in Pakistan, where they would pose a grave threat to neighboring India.

- Citing a number of publicly available sources, the article recounted a series of well-established facts about AIDS—that there was great concern about contaminated blood donations; that AIDS was probably caused by a virus; and that AIDS regis-

tered its first major outbreak in the United States.

- The author then listed elements of the US biological warfare program known to the public: government records obtained through the Freedom of Information Act by the Church of Scientology, which had documented biological agent experiments in the 1950s; CIA-sponsored testing of drugs on humans during the same time period; and the development of biological weapons until the late 1960s at Fort Detrick.
- Even though President Richard Nixon had banned US offensive bacteriological weapons research by executive order in 1969, the letter in the *Patriot* stated that the Pentagon had “never abandoned these weapons” and claimed that Fort Detrick had discovered AIDS by analyzing samples of “highly pathogenic viruses” collected by American scientists in Africa and Latin America.
- It concluded by quoting statistics and publications on the spread and lethality of AIDS, and its particular threat to developing nations.²⁵

Indicators of Soviet Inspiration

There can be little doubt about the KGB’s authorship of the letter. The letter’s arguments built on earlier disinformation campaigns involving US bacteriological warfare and specifically picked up on false

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charges made in 1982 in the Soviet media to the effect that a research laboratory sponsored by the University of Maryland in Lahore, Pakistan, was in fact a bacteriological warfare facility.²⁶ AIDS itself was not of much concern to the average Indian in 1983, but any mention of schemes involving India’s arch-foe Pakistan could be expected to draw attention on the subcontinent.

The 17 July letter’s extensive quoting of US sources—e.g., *U.S. News & World Report*, *Associated Press*, and *Army Research, Development & Acquisition* magazine—suggests that US-based KGB officers initiated the AIDS campaign, or at least collected the material that triggered the idea. The KGB had large residencies in New York City and Washington, DC, both of which were assigned officers who worked solely on active measures.²⁷

One especially clear indicator of the US origins of the effort is the *Patriot* letter’s reference to *Army Research, Development & Acquisition*, which was not widely available and would make unusual reading for a “well-known American scientist” who also described himself as an “anthropologist.” The journal would be a typical source for a KGB officer seeking material for a disinformation campaign, however. In fact, the magazine’s July/August 1982 issue focused on “The Role

of Army Labs in RDA” and specifically referred to “the U.S. Army Medical Research Institute of Infectious Diseases (USAMRIID), Fort Detrick, Md,” which had—the journal asserted—placed particular emphasis “on problems associated with medical defense against potential biological warfare agents, or naturally occurring diseases of particular military importance and on the highly virulent pathogenic microorganisms which require special containment facilities.”²⁸

Once conceived, the idea for the AIDS disinformation campaign would have been approved and polished at KGB headquarters (the Center) in the Moscow suburb of Yasenovo. (See box on Soviet active measures process.) The task of pulling pertinent material together and generating the letter would have fallen to the KGB’s disinformation specialists of Service A, under General Ivan Ivanovich Agayants. By 1985, the service employed roughly 80 officers at Yasenovo and another 30 to 40 in the Novosti Press offices at Pushkin Square.²⁹

Although they had no particular training in psychology, these specialists had honed their skills over several decades and understood the dynamics of rumor campaigns intuitively. The responsible officer(s) would have composed the text first in Russian and then commissioned a translation into

As an opening salvo, the letter was a dud.

English by KGB-translators. Some translators were native-speakers, but most were Russian speakers schooled in English for this purpose.

The use of non-native speakers who may not have had much exposure to spoken English, occasionally resulted in stilted and syntactically incorrect translations, as appeared in the *Patriot* letter. The text included several grammatical errors, including a reference to the “virus flu,” rather than “flu virus.” Such linguistic slip-ups were typical giveaways of Soviet bloc disinformation stories.³⁰

Placement

Composed, approved, and translated, the letter needed to be inserted covertly into the media. India, as a large, non-aligned country with a diverse English-language press, was an ideal staging ground. The Indian government put few restrictions on the influx of Soviet officials, and in the 1980s more than 150 KGB and GRU (military intelligence) officers served on the subcontinent. Many of them were busy planting biased or false stories in Indian papers. According to KGB archivist and defector Vasili Mitrokhin, the KGB planted 5,510 stories in this way in 1975 alone and controlled 10 Indian newspapers and one news agency. KGB officers boasted to one another that there was no shortage of

Indian journalists and politicians willing to take money.³¹

With respect to the left-wing *Patriot*, the KGB had been involved in setting it up in 1967 for the very purpose of circulating Soviet-inspired articles. With a circulation of about 35,000, the *Patriot* was small by Indian standards, but it quickly gained a reputation in intelligence circles as Moscow’s mouthpiece.³²

As an opening salvo, the letter was a dud. Though carefully prepared and planted, no media outlet picked it up at the time. Even though the letter mentioned Pakistan, the Indian press probably ignored it simply because AIDS was not then an issue on the subcontinent.³³ That the Soviet media failed to follow up, on the other hand, may have been because the letter had fallen into that secondary category of disinformation, a single, if clever, piece conceived at the bottom of the Soviet active measures’ pyramid and not reinforced by additional support measures.

Reemergence of the Campaign.

The *Patriot* letter lay largely unnoticed for nearly three years. By 1985, a lot had changed. First, a new, dynamic general secretary of the CPSU, Mikhail Gorbachev, had, with KGB support, taken over and ended the USSR’s period of leadership disarray. (Gorbachev’s reform agenda would

eventually lead to the dissolution of the USSR, but at the time he refrained from interfering with the KGB active measures program and generally supported its agenda.³⁴) Second, the spread of AIDS had become a much greater global concern and made it a potentially more powerful disinformation weapon than two years earlier.

Three events in 1985 might have contributed to a Soviet decision to reactivate the AIDS campaign.

- A US government report released in February 1985 claimed that the Soviets had broken the Geneva Convention by producing biological weapons.³⁵
- An article in Lyndon H. LaRouche Jr.’s *Executive Intelligence Review* accused the USSR of blocking the battle against AIDS.³⁶
- Concern about the spread of AIDS within the USSR may have prompted the leadership to attempt to redirect domestic concerns abroad.³⁷

The campaign reopened with an article in the newspaper *Liternayaya Gazeta*, the KGB’s “prime conduit in the Soviet press for propaganda and disinformation.”³⁸ On 30 October 1985, the paper published an article by Valentin Zapevalov, titled “Panic in the West or What Is Hiding behind the Sensation Surrounding AIDS.”³⁹

Zapevalov began his lengthy piece by reminding readers that AIDS was apparently spreading from the United States to the rest of the world (in fact, most early AIDS cases were reported among US homosexual men). He went on to accurately describe the disease, quoting well-known publications such as *U.S. News & World Report* for statistical evidence. He then veered back to his initial contention about the provenance of AIDS, chronicling in some detail the early spread of the disease, and asking rhetorically: “Why [did] AIDS...appear in the USA and start spreading above all in towns along the East Coast?” This leading question was followed by a laundry list of covert US biological warfare programs of the 1950s and 1960s already noted in the *Patriot* letter; CIA-authorized testing of drugs for mind-control purposes; the case of Frank Olson, a Special Operations Division (SOD) bio weapons expert who committed suicide after he was administered LSD without his knowledge; and the delivery of a toxic substance by CIA officer Sidney Gottlieb to the Agency’s station chief in Congo for use in assassinating President Patrice Lumumba.⁴⁰

In the last third of the article, the author reminded readers of the biological warfare programs at Fort Detrick and stated that these experiments continued notwithstanding President Nixon’s 1969 ban. The *Patriot* letter from 1983 was referenced as a source for the alleged creation of AIDS at

Fort Detrick. As a result of tests on unsuspecting victims—people from the US “satellite country” Haiti, drug addicts, homosexuals and homeless people—the virus was then allegedly unleashed. Zapevalov concluded by suggesting that US military personnel were potential carriers of the virus and expressed the hope that “one of the victims” would sue the CIA or the Pentagon to show the world that “all victims of AIDS are the result of a monstrous experiment.”

The structure of the *Literaturnaya Gazeta* article bears a striking resemblance to the *Patriot* letter. While both publications claimed that AIDS was made in the USA, most of the information given in the text was accurate—an essential ingredient of a successful disinformation campaign. Much of the data was taken from published sources. As had the authors of the *Patriot* letter, Zapevalov used verifiable facts about early Cold War US experiments as circumstantial evidence for his claim that AIDS was the result of similar tests.

Enter East Germany and Dr. Jakob Segal

The Soviets frequently involved allied intelligence services and their disinformation departments in their disinformation campaigns. In this case, in turning to East Germany and to a particular East German, the Soviets injected their campaign with an energy even they may not have expected.

East Germany’s Ministry for State Security

Modeled on the KGB, East Germany’s MfS was a massive security and espionage agency that included secret police and foreign intelligence components. The foreign intelligence branch (HVA, or *Hauptverwaltung Aufklärung*—chief reconnaissance division) was headed for many years by the urbane Markus Wolf. In the early 1960s, the HVA set up its own disinformation section, Department X (or HVA X). By the 1980s, the department had grown to include roughly 60 officers, based at MfS headquarters in the Normannenstrasse in East Berlin.

Headed throughout its history by Col. Rolf Wagenbreth, HVA X focused primarily on West Germany, but it was also active in the Third World. (By the late 1970s it had expanded its overseas activities to include China and the United States.) In the mid-1960s, the KGB introduced structural reforms in the Soviet bloc intelligence network, permitting individual KGB departments to work directly with their territorial, counterintelligence and disinformation counterparts in Eastern Europe. Henceforth, HVA X informed the KGB directly of active measures planned by East Berlin, and HVA and KGB held annual bilateral meetings, alternating between Berlin and Moscow, to discuss operations against the United States and other nations.⁴⁴

The rest of this story is largely about the role played by a dedicated East German scientist known to the KGB and East Germany’s Ministry for State Security, the MfS (colloquially known as the Stasi) and the Soviet and East German prac-

tice of exploiting unwitting servants of seemingly good causes for their own ends.

While most of the KGB's junior partner services conducted active measures to some extent, by the 1980s, East German intelligence had emerged as the KGB's most valuable partner in loyalty, professionalism, and technical expertise. Having decided to revive the AIDS campaign, the KGB informed its East German counterpart unambiguously that Moscow expected it to participate.⁴¹

The East Germans were told specifically to employ a "scientific approach"⁴² and produce disinformation contending the AIDS virus had been developed at Fort Detrick, from where it spread to the general population through human testing. Beyond those obligatory details, the East Germans were given a free hand in devising their own strategy and spreading the story. The HVA code named the operation INFEKTION and VORWÄRTS II [Forward II] and henceforth was the KGB's junior partner and main ally regarding AIDS.⁴³

The KGB was particularly keen on employing another of its standard active-measure practices, the use of unwitting agents who were held in high esteem in their home countries. Such individuals did Moscow's or East Berlin's bidding through their speeches, publications, and personal networks. Often, these individuals were journalists, scientists, or other public figures with left-wing

The Segal Arguments in AIDS—its nature and origins

Segal and his coauthors mixed truth, to establish professional credentials, and fiction—the heart of their story. At the outset, the three detailed well established facts about the illness, including that it was caused by the HIV virus and disabled a body's immune system.

Rejecting theories about the simian origins of the virus, the three asserted that Fort Detrick was "for a long time...the central laboratory of the Pentagon for the development of biological agents of war" and operated a "P-4 type" high security laboratory for gene manipulation in "building 550" since 1977.⁴⁹ There, voluntary human test subjects were probably infected with the AIDS virus, which they alleged was the product of two natural, artificially synthesized ("recombined") viruses, VISNA and HTLV-I. When the test subjects showed no symptoms for six to 12 months, due to AIDS' long incubation period, the Pentagon concluded its virus was ineffective, and the infected volunteers were released.

Since the test subjects were criminals who had spent a long time in jail deprived of female companionship, the three argued, most of them had become homosexuals. Many of the infected volunteers headed for New York, mixing with the local gay population, thus initiating the epidemic whose first victims were registered among homosexuals in that city in 1979—two years after the alleged Fort Detrick experiments. Displaying a wobbly grasp of US urban reality, they added that it "was logical for the released prisoners to seek out a major city close by, but not Washington, where the political climate is rather unsuitable for criminals [in fact, Washington, D.C. had one of the highest crime rates of the nation in the 1980s]. New York with its developed underworld was more promising."⁵⁰

views who were not openly pro-Soviet. Bloc intelligence referred to them as "agents of influence," "subconscious multipliers," or simply as "useful idiots."⁴⁵

The agent of choice in this case was the retired East German biophysicist Professor Jakob Segal. Born in St. Petersburg in 1911, Segal grew up in interwar Germany, where he studied biology, but as a Jew and communist he was forced to flee to France when the Nazis assumed power. According to Segal, he completed his PhD at Sorbonne University in Paris, just before the German invasion in 1940 and joined the French resistance during the occupation. His connection with Soviet intelli-

gence probably originated in those years. After the war, Segal settled in East Berlin, where he became head of the Institute for Applied Bacteriology at East Berlin's Humboldt University in 1953.⁴⁶ After his retirement, he and his wife Lilli—also a scientist—developed an interest in AIDS, although neither of them was an expert on the subject.⁴⁷ Both Segals were unwavering believers in international communism and staunch supporters of the GDR. As an established KGB contact and an MfS informer (*Inoffizieller Mitarbeiter*, or IM),⁴⁸ Segal was a known quantity, and Soviet bloc intelligence had enough information to judge him politically reliable.

How Segal was actually brought into the process is not known with certainty, but in all likelihood “evidence” of the US origins of AIDS would have been given to him in personal meetings, perhaps with a professional colleague previously briefed by the MfS. In this first meeting, Segal would not have been told explicitly that the material came from Soviet bloc intelligence or that it was part of a disinformation campaign. Rather, he simply would have been encouraged to look into the matter. Given Segal’s background, he would have been expected to reach the intended conclusion. While Segal may have suspected the real source of the AIDS material, it was common practice in the GDR for authorities to share “background information” quasi-conspiratorially in one-on-one conversations. Its validity was typically not questioned.⁵¹

Segal’s selection as the campaign’s frontman was a masterstroke. As a German, he could speak unfiltered to the population of a major member of the Western alliance, and as an established scientist, he possessed professional authority. By concealing their hand, the intelligence services ensured that Segal would speak convincingly, with the voice of a true believer not that of a paid informant.

In the event, Segal became genuinely and passionately devoted to his cause, and many people found him winsome and convincing. A Montreal *Gazette* reporter, who interviewed him in 1992, wrote: “For those who

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have met him, the theory’s appeal [about the origins of AIDS] may lie in the man himself. Engaging and well-read, he is sympathetic to AIDS sufferers and wants to help out in the fight against the disease.”⁵²

The Segal Contributions

Segal’s first major contribution to the AIDS disinformation campaign was a 47-page pamphlet titled *AIDS—its nature and origin*, co-authored by his wife Lilli and Ronald Dehmlow, a fellow retired Humboldt University professor.⁵³ In it, the authors went to great lengths to refute the more and more widely accepted theory about the African origins of AIDS, inter alia by pointing to the fact that the epidemic’s first cases were reported among the gay populations of New York and San Francisco, not in Africa. Like the *Patriot* letter and Zapevalov’s article in *Literaturnaya Gazeta*, Segal’s pamphlet tediously detailed several well-established facts about AIDS, and he described accurately how Western scientists had identified HIV. Having demonstrated his professional expertise on the subject matter, Segal then detailed his theory about US government experimentation, specifically among homosexual prisoners who went on to infect gay populations in New York City and San Francisco. (See text box on facing page: Segal Arguments.) Even though Segal and his coauthors

conceded that the theory was based on circumstantial evidence, they concluded that the “assumption that AIDS is a product of the preparation of biological warfare can therefore be quite plainly expressed.” According to press reports, Segal subsequently claimed the project was code-named “MK-Naomi.”⁵⁴

HVA X had provided Segal with much of the material for his pamphlet,⁵⁵ which began circulating in Harare, Zimbabwe, on the eve of the Eighth Conference of NonAligned Nations (1–6 September 1986). The conference was attended by representatives of more than 100 Third World countries—as well as four HVA and 20 KGB officers, who were busily distributing Segal’s paper to the press and delegates.⁵⁶ Segal’s explicit repudiation of the thesis that AIDS originated in Africa was tailor-made for an African audience, and his claims subsequently appeared in the press of 25 African countries. The East German communist party leadership was delighted to see Segal’s theses included in the conference’s final report and heaped praise on the HVA for the operation.⁵⁷

Disappointment at the Politburo

Meanwhile, Segal began aggressively pushing his theory at home. In late summer of 1986, he asked for a meeting

Segal Memorandums to the Ministry of Health

1. If AIDS spread at the current rate, Segal predicted, American hospitals would soon be overwhelmed, as every AIDS patient “is on average being hospitalized for 82 days until death and costs on average \$49,348.” By 1990, the cost of care for patients would “ruin the country economically.” If one could persuade Americans that AIDS was the result of war preparations, Segal argued, the epidemic could become “an important political factor.” And since a majority of AIDS victims were young men eligible for military service, the disease would lead to “a military and economic weakening.... Overall, the United States is facing a decade of gravest economic problems.” Since AIDS spread exponentially, countries currently less affected—such as the Warsaw Pact states—would be much better off for many years. “This optimistic prognosis, however, has a reverse side,” Segal cautioned. Due to the expected rapid spread of AIDS in the West, the Americans would lose their capability to wage war against Moscow in the next 10 years. When the American president became aware of this decline, “would he not contemplate the idea of a preemptive strike in the next years? With [President Ronald] Reagan and [Vice President George H.W.] Bush, such a reaction cannot be ruled out.”⁵⁸

2. In the second memo, Segal took swipes at his critics. One of these, Professor Niels Sönnichsen, representing the GDR at an AIDS summit of the World Health Organization in Graz, Austria, in April 1986, had concluded his lecture by saying that AIDS originated—“as we know”—in Africa. “This statement is, as a matter of fact, false,” Segal commented and added:

“[Sönnichsen’s] remarks can only be viewed as a formal kowtow to the US-supported thesis.” Then Segal took on Professor Viktor Zhdanov, director of the Ivanovsky Institute of Virology, the Soviet Union’s top AIDS expert, at the second international conference on AIDS in Paris in June 1986. Zhdanov had reported on the case of a 14-year-old girl who had contracted lymphadenopathy, an early indicator of infection with HIV. Soviet scientists had traced the girl’s infection to a series of blood transfusions in 1974 and concluded the AIDS virus must already have existed at that time—a blow to Segal’s theory of its 1979 origins in the United States. Segal indignantly pointed out, “One could infer [from Zhdanov’s statement] that AIDS did not spread from New York to the rest of the world but was imported to America from the Soviet Union.” He then accused Zhdanov of lying.⁵⁹

with Hermann Axen, the East German Politburo member responsible for foreign affairs, and offered two memorandums for consideration. The first memorandum demonstrated that Segal deemed AIDS to be both a medical problem and a political weapon. As a medical problem for the United States, he predicted, AIDS would eventually overwhelm the nation’s economy, and, if Americans could be made to believe their government had caused the

disaster, the US political situation would change drastically. At the same time, he warned, the economic consequences would lead US leaders into desperate and warlike acts. (See Segal Memorandums in text box.)

In the other memorandum, Segal took on East German and Soviet scientists who contradicted him. Segal charged the East German with being subservient to the United States

for having agreed that the HIV virus had originated in Africa. After detailing what was wrong with the Soviet scientist—the USSR’s top AIDS expert had in 1986 pinpointed a case of HIV infection in the USSR that preceded the virus’s supposed birth at Fort Detrick—Segal accused him of lying.

It is evident from the second memorandum that Segal was solely interested in bringing political pressure to bear upon colleagues from bloc countries with opinions that differed from his own, rather than engage them in a professional dialogue. Indeed, as a political activist, Segal had reason to be upset with Zhdanov. The Soviet scientist’s comments threatened to pull the rug from underneath Segal’s own theory. When asked by a reporter whether the United States had developed the AIDS virus, Zhdanov replied bluntly: “That is a ridiculous question. Perhaps it was the Martians.”⁶⁰

Axen referred Segal to Karl Seidel, head of the health department of the central committee of the SED (East Germany’s ruling communist party), and the two met on 17 September 1986. In this meeting, Segal reiterated his “assumption” (underlined in the minutes of the meeting) that AIDS was the result of biological warfare experiments at Fort Detrick. Segal conceded that this assertion was merely “a hypothesis, albeit a probable one.” Since the Soviet bloc was only minimally affected by AIDS, Segal argued the GDR

should abandon its “defensive publishing practice” and begin denouncing the “true culprit” of the AIDS epidemic, i.e., the United States.

Segal solicited guidance from the SED central committee as to how he should proceed and expressed interest in working with the Ministry of Health AIDS task force under Professor Sönnichsen—even though one of Segal’s memorandums disparaged Sönnichsen. Segal also expressed disappointment that officials had not paid sufficient attention to his own work.

Seidel briefed Kurt Hager, a hard-line Politburo member and the SED’s chief ideologue, on the meeting and suggested how to deal with Segal and the AIDS issue. Seidel pointed out that Segal’s theses, even if only partially substantiated, would portend the “unmasking of steps for biological war preparations of US imperialism, which is politically highly explosive. Especially the well-founded polemics against the long-tailed-monkey theory of the origins of AIDS [in Africa], should reinforce anti-imperialist sentiments and activities of numerous political forces in Africa who must perceive this theory as an insult and disparagement by the schemes of US imperialism.” He recommended that Segal be allowed to pursue his work without restrictions and that he and his wife become consultants to the AIDS task force. He also suggested that the GDR publish more material on AIDS, which “also takes into account the above-

West German media reported a mysterious visit of two “US diplomats” to Jakob and Lilli Segal in East Berlin.

mentioned anti-imperialist goal.”⁶¹

Hager may not have been aware of the details of the AIDS disinformation campaign, but he probably knew about it in general.⁶² In any event, he rejected most of Seidel’s recommendations, although he authorized the Segals’ participation in the AIDS task force. Hager concluded that the GDR should maintain its restrictive AIDS information policy, and “since Comrade Segal himself speaks of a hypothesis, reproduction [of his theses] in official GDR publications must be avoided. I do not know to what extent his assumptions can be published in relevant foreign journals. Of course, he alone would be answerable for them.”⁶³

For Segal, support from the SED leadership would have carried obvious advantages. His AIDS hypothesis offered him the chance of a lifetime—advancing the cause of communism while increasing his own name recognition far beyond the scientific community and East Germany. Segal doubtlessly also realized that his work would endear him to the SED leadership, which would have supported his research efforts and sponsored trips abroad, a major perk for a GDR citizen.

But why did Hager turn down most of Segal’s proposals and avoid anything that could be

construed as an official endorsement? In fact, Hager’s decision to keep Segal at arm’s length was a clever move from a disinformation operation perspective. By keeping Segal at a distance, Hager maintained at least a semblance of scientific independence for the AIDS campaign’s front man and denied Western observers the opportunity to quickly dismiss Segal’s utterances as state-controlled propaganda. Another reason for Hager’s reluctance to endorse Segal was probably East German leader Erich Honecker’s angling for an official state visit to Washington, DC. The last thing Honecker needed was to have an anti-American active measure of his own secret service blow up and derail his cherished project.⁶⁴

A Mysterious Visit

Shortly after Segal’s correspondence with the SED leadership, West German media reported a mysterious visit of two “US diplomats” to Jakob and Lilli Segal in East Berlin. According to a report in the weekly *Der Spiegel*—apparently based on an interview with Segal—the two showed up at his doorstep in mid-October 1986, flashed their credentials, politely asked for permission to enter, and began to “cross-examine” Segal for two hours about his hypothesis. Segal was “certain they were from the CIA.”⁶⁵ He later elaborated that the two visitors “wanted to

Heym's words carried significant moral weight ... and his enlistment in the AIDS campaign was a major coup.

know where we got our information. They were interested to know whether the information was correct or not. They were merely looking for the traitor [who had revealed the secrets to Segal]. In turn, they offered us wonderful working conditions, which we did not accept, though.”⁶⁶

Segal appears not to have questioned the credentials of his visitors. With his conspiratorial mindset, the incident must have confirmed his worst suspicions; the appearance of the two “CIA men” showed US authorities to be totally unconcerned about the consequences of their “actions” and merely interested in tracking and presumably punishing those responsible for leaking the secret.

However, the story can hardly be taken at face value. For one thing, it is virtually inconceivable that CIA officers would have “cross-examined” a well-known East German scientist with connections to MfS and KGB in one of the best monitored cities of the Soviet bloc. As one former CIA station chief in Germany wrote, “East Germany’s ubiquitous security service had such an iron grip on its people that almost no one dared spy for the Americans.”⁶⁷ Had the CIA really wished to contact Segal, it could have done so easily on one of his trips abroad. But why would it? US intelligence knew Segal’s theory was humbug and therefore

had no incentive to have him “cross-examined,” in Berlin or elsewhere.

In all likelihood Segal’s visitors were HVA officers intent on building up Segal’s resolve by *posing* as CIA men visiting in diplomatic guise and raising questions that allowed Segal to conclude that his theory had struck a nerve in Washington.

Segal was unlikely to have invented the story. By this time he was a sincere believer in the veracity of his theory, and the invention of such a fairy tale does not correspond with his missionary zeal for spreading the “truth.” Moreover, a yarn about CIA operations in East Berlin, published in the Western media, would have gotten him into serious trouble with the GDR security apparatus. Yet there were no repercussions for Segal.

Only one organization in East Germany, the MfS, had the authority and wherewithal to carry out a deception operation—if that is what it was. Günter Bohnsack, a former HVA X officer deeply involved in the East German AIDS disinformation campaign, has little doubt that the two visitors were from the HVA, and he recalls “overhearing comments from M. Wolf to the effect that the dear professor needed to be ‘propped up.’ ... This ‘CIA visit’ was certainly staged.”⁶⁸ Given that Segal repeatedly referred to the “CIA visit,” the HVA

operation must be rated a success.

Another Dupe

On 18 February 1987, the major West German daily newspaper *tageszeitung* published a lengthy interview by the famous East German author Stefan Heym with Jakob Segal on AIDS.⁶⁹ Segal and Heym had much in common. Like Segal, Heym was a German of Jewish descent with communist sympathies, and like Segal he left Germany when the Nazis came to power in 1933. Heym emigrated to the United States in 1935, became a US citizen, and served in a psychological warfare unit of the US Army in World War II. In 1952, he returned all his American military commendations in protest of the Korean War, moved to Prague, and in the following year to East Germany, where he quickly became a literary and political icon.

Heym’s words carried significant moral weight in East Germany and beyond, and his enlistment in the AIDS campaign was a major coup for Segal and the HVA. Heym looked favorably on Segal’s theses, but like his interviewee, he was probably unaware of HVA involvement. The *tageszeitung* was an anti-status-quo, left-of-center newspaper, independent of Moscow but critical of the United States. As such, it represented the perfect vehicle for Segal and the HVA, and the interview had the intended

effect. As a contemporary reader observed:

Consider the peculiarity of the situation: Two well-known, respected East Germans publish a theory propounding the notion that AIDS is caused by a man-made virus produced by American biological warfare researchers—but they do so in West Berlin. They are not permitted to publish their theory in newspapers in their own country, which is officially anti-American and especially vituperative about the CIA. It is impossible to give a verifiable explanation for this reticence, but one may surmise that in the GDR the politics of AIDS has remained the province of medical personnel rather than political propagandists.⁷⁰

This naive conclusion by a Western academic would have pleased intelligence headquarters in East Berlin.

Still Another Dupe

The HVA's biggest coup was yet to come. In the mid-1980s, the Austrian-born best-selling author Johannes Mario Simmel mulled over a book project on the perils of genetic manipulation and biological warfare. By that time, Simmel had already authored 20 novels, numerous screenplays, and various short stories and children's books. His works had been translated into 25 languages and sold over 65 million copies. By sheer coincidence, HVA Department III (elec-

The naive conclusion by a Western academic would have pleased intelligence headquarters in East Berlin.

tronic surveillance) recorded a phone conversation referencing Simmel's project and forwarded a copy to Department X. The disinformation specialists spotted an opportunity and decided to anonymously send Simmel material pertaining to Segal's AIDS theory.⁷¹

The result was, from the East German perspective, phenomenal. Released in mid-1987, Simmel's 500-page novel, *Doch mit den Clowns kamen die Tränen* [Along with the clowns came the tears] revolved around a biological arms race between the United States and the Soviet Union. The two superpowers were portrayed as equally cynical, ruthless, and unethical in their pursuit of a super germ. In the foreword, Simmel insisted that "The monstrous experiments I report on have already been successfully conducted by some scientists." One protagonist cites Heym's interview with Segal in the *tageszeitung* as evidence for the monstrosity of the superpowers' goals:

He [Segal] is convinced that genetic scientists at Fort Detrick have experimentally generated the AIDS virus HTLV III [sic]. However, since the infection's initial effect is minor and the incubation period lasts two to five years, they didn't consider the virus viable in humans and sent the infected test persons—yes, yes, yes, they work with test persons there, in this

case long-term inmates of a prison for men!—back to their cells.⁷²

The book quickly became a bestseller and spawned a popular three-part TV program. Raving about his agency's coup, Markus Wolf proudly piled 10 copies of Simmel's novel on his desk. Bohnsack and his colleagues were both happy and surprised that Simmel accepted the HVA material as genuine and made such extensive use of it.⁷³

Simmel's uncritical acceptance of the HVA's disinformation package most likely was the product of naivety, moralistic zeal, and eagerness to tell a good story. Shortly after the book was released, Simmel said about himself more insightfully than he would have realized at the time: "Simmel is in a fatal way naive and starry-eyed. He may come across as cunning and clever, but he steps into every trap that's out there."⁷⁴

Back to the USSR

Meanwhile, the Soviets' own propaganda machine went into high gear. Moscow understood that repetition of a particular theme over an extended period of time was key to a successful disinformation campaign,⁷⁵ and the Soviets promoted the AIDS story's worldwide dissemination through radio broadcasts, rumors, posters, handbills, forgeries, and leaflets (some of which displayed pornographic

The merger of the ethnic weapons and AIDS campaigns created a powerful narrative in Africa.

caricatures of US soldiers). Soviet propagandists even lifted some stories about the US government's alleged creation of AIDS verbatim from a New York gay magazine, the *New York Native*, which in November 1986 called for a US congressional investigation into the origins of AIDS.⁷⁶

Soviet efforts promptly paid off. Third World media reported the AIDS falsehood widely, and even the established British newspapers *Sunday Express* and *Daily Telegraph* recounted Segal's "findings" uncritically. By late 1987, the story had circulated in the media of 80 countries, appearing in over 200 periodicals in 25 languages.⁷⁷ "If media replay is an indication of success," noted a US official, "then this campaign has been very successful."⁷⁸

The Soviets paid special attention to countries with US military bases on their soil. In late 1985, North Korea began its own AIDS propaganda operation, portraying US troops in South Korea as carriers of the epidemic. Turkish broadcasts emanating from the USSR urged the closure of US bases because they were allegedly breeding grounds for AIDS. And an English-language, Soviet-inspired broadcast in Asia alleged that outbreaks of AIDS "are as a rule registered in the areas near American war bases."⁷⁹ By targeting nations where American troops were based, such as South Korea and

Turkey, the Soviets sought to stir concern among the local population, create pressure on US allies to send American troops packing, and generally discourage contact with American citizens.⁸⁰

The Soviets also began to broaden the campaign's focus, merging it with other disinformation campaigns. A particularly effective twist was the claim that the US government had designed AIDS as an ethnic weapon against black people. The "ethnic weapon" theme had first appeared around 1980 in the Soviet active measures repertoire. In an effort to hitch the United States to the widely detested South African apartheid regime, Moscow spread the rumor that Washington was aiding Pretoria in the development of weapons to eliminate nonwhites.⁸¹

Since these claims were baseless, the Soviets employed the well-established technique of propping up their conspiracy theories with circumstantial evidence. For example, an American military manual had indeed noted in 1975 that "it is theoretically possible to develop so-called 'ethnic chemical weapons,' which would be designed to exploit naturally occurring differences in vulnerability among specific population groups. Thus, such a weapon would be capable of incapacitating or killing a selected enemy population to a significantly

greater extent than the population of friendly forces."⁸²

In June 1987, Novosti news agency editor Valentin Falin told a USIA official slyly: "And given the US treatment of American Indians, putting smallpox blankets on them, and the placement of Japanese-Americans in detention during the Second World War, the development of an ethnic weapon by the US sounds pretty logical."⁸³

The Impact in Africa

The merger of the ethnic weapons and AIDS campaigns created a powerful narrative that threatened to undermine America's reputation in Africa. Allegations that Washington was using AIDS as a racial weapon against Africans began circulating across the continent in the wake of the nonaligned nations summit in Harare in 1986, where HVA and KGB had promoted Segal's paper so diligently.⁸⁴ On 7 June 1987, the *Patriot* rejoined the fray with an article accusing the US Department of Defense of conducting experiments in Africa to determine the "depopulating effect" of AIDS in strategically important areas of the continent like Zaire.

In early 1988, a Nigerian newspaper varied the theme somewhat by claiming that the spread of AIDS in central and western Africa was the result of rich Americans testing contaminated polio vaccine on poor blacks during the 1960s.⁸⁵ The tale was told and retold in a

number of variations in media reports across the continent.

The US Watch over the Story

In 1981, the US government created the Active Measures Working Group (AMWG), an interagency committee chaired by the Department of State, and including representatives of the CIA, USIA, the US Arms Control and Disarmament Agency (ACDA), and the Departments of Defense and Justice.⁸⁶ AMWG officials monitored Soviet disinformation campaigns, issued regularly updated reports, talked to the Western press, personally called editors of newspapers that ran Soviet-sponsored disinformation stories, and occasionally confronted Soviet officials directly about particular active measures. Herbert Romerstein, who joined USIA in 1982, and his assistant Todd Leventhal, played a critical role in monitoring and countering the AIDS campaign for AMWG.⁸⁷

The disinformation campaign first appeared on AMWG's radar with its resumption in the pages of the *Literaturnaya Gazeta* in October 1985. Zapevalov's reference to the *Patriot* as source of his allegations, led USIA to take a closer look at the Indian newspaper. The agency was aware that the *Patriot* was being financed by the KGB and that its editor was the recipient of the Stalin peace prize.⁸⁸ However, the Americans were initially unable to locate the original *Patriot* let-

Because the AIDS disinformation campaign jeopardized cooperation with US scientists, Moscow began to listen to Washington's complaints.

ter. Zapevalov had not mentioned the date of the item, and USIA only searched back to 1 January 1984. State Department spokesman Charles E. Redman responded in early November 1986 that no such article had ever appeared in the *Patriot*.⁸⁹

The Soviets took advantage of the mistake with gusto. On 19 November, *Literaturnaya Gazeta* printed a lengthy article titled, "It Existed, It Existed, Boy" that triumphantly reproduced the first page of the *Patriot* letter. Turning the US effort to pillory the Soviets' disinformation campaign on its head, the paper referred to AMWG as a bureau for "disinformation, analysis and retaliatory measures" and lambasted Redman for his erroneous claim: "We don't know whether Redman is part of the personnel of the bureau of disinformation, but one could boldly recommend him. He has mastered the methods of disinformation."⁹⁰

Undeterred, US officials continued their counter-campaign. USIA officers repeatedly discussed the techniques and goals of Soviet disinformation with the media.⁹¹ And AMWG spent time and effort dissecting Segal's theses and highlighting their inconsistencies and contradictions to lawmakers and the public. For one, they argued, the two viruses Segal claimed were used to create the

AIDS virus—VISNA and HTLV-I—were too distinct from one another to be cut and spliced together. The State Department also pointed to recent findings that suggested AIDS had existed in human populations since at least 1959—long before the AIDS virus, per Segal's contention, had been created at Fort Detrick.

In addition, AMWG collected opinions from reputable AIDS experts who contradicted Segal. The Americans were especially keen on airing the comments of scientists from the Soviet bloc, such as Segal's nemeses Dr. Zhdanov, who stated categorically that "an AIDS virus has not been obtained artificially," and Dr. Sönnichsen, who told *Der Spiegel* that "Segal's comment is nothing but a hypothesis, and not a very original one at that. Others before him have claimed the same. If you open Meyer's Dictionary under the term 'hypothesis' you can read: hypothesis is an opinion unproven by facts. That is my comment."⁹²

The Environment Shifts

In the late 1980s, AIDS began spreading through the Soviet Union, and Moscow developed a greater interest in exchanging medical research on the subject than it had a few years before. Because the AIDS disinformation campaign jeopardized cooperation with US scientists,

As Moscow shifted its focus to subjects other than AIDS, the East Germans became the campaign's primary sponsor.

Moscow began to listen to Washington's complaints. In a 23 October 1987, meeting with Mikhail Gorbachev, US Secretary of State George Shultz charged that the USSR had peddled "bum dope" on the AIDS subject.

Shortly thereafter, the Soviet Academy of Sciences, through the government's official newspaper *Izvestia*, disavowed the thesis that AIDS was artificially created.⁹³ In the summer of 1988, the Academy's president, Dr. Vadim I. Pokrovskiy followed up in an interview with the Russian federation's official newspaper *Sovetskaya Rossiya*, by stating that "not a single Soviet scientist, not a single medical or scientific institution, shares this position."⁹⁴

The End of the Campaign?

But did the Soviets genuinely believe in the wisdom of discontinuing their AIDS disinformation campaign and did they really tell their active measures apparatus to stand down? For one, Moscow had never publicly acknowledged authorship of the campaign. The Soviet Academy of Sciences merely confirmed what many respectable Soviet and East European scientists believed anyway and had uttered before—that AIDS was not artificially created.

But the Academy's statement could not and did not commit Soviet intelligence and propa-

gandists to stop saying the opposite. Soviet media coverage of Segal's theses did decline markedly in late 1987, but it did not disappear altogether. On the same day that *Izvestia* published the Academy's disavowal, *Sovetskaya Rossiya* repeated the AIDS disinformation claims and defended the Soviet media's right to "report different views."⁹⁵ And on 13 February 1988, Radio Moscow broadcast an uncritical interview with Segal who reiterated his theses.⁹⁶

Even though Soviet bloc media broadcasting of the AIDS disinformation campaign had largely ceased by summer 1988, the story continued to appear in Third World papers with reputed Soviet links. On 3 July 1988, the Ghanaian weekly *Echo* reiterated a Novosti article about the alleged link between AIDS and US biological research, as did the Indian *Maharashtra Herald* on 26 August 1988. When confronted by US officials two months later, Novosti chief Falin issued a standard defense by quoting alleged "foreign sources" and freedom of the Soviet press under *glasnost*.⁹⁷ As late as 1989, AIDS disinformation appeared in over a dozen media reports throughout the world, including in the Soviet Union, India, Pakistan, West Germany, Brazil, Panama, Yugoslavia, Peru, Turkey, Great Britain, and Zambia.⁹⁸

Concurrently, the Soviets conceived other, no less vicious disinformation themes. In January 1987, Moscow launched a campaign to assign responsibility for the mass-suicide of over 900 members of the People's Temple in Guyana in 1978 to the CIA. Its centerpiece was the book *The Death of Jonestown: Crime of the CIA* by three Soviet journalists who contended that CIA hirelings had killed the cult members "for their intent to gain asylum in the USSR."

Another heinous disinformation campaign was initiated in April 1987 when the Soviet media began reporting false allegations to the effect that wealthy Americans were importing children from Latin America and had them butchered in order to use their body parts for organ transplants.⁹⁹ Like the AIDS disinformation campaign, these disinformation themes were designed to tarnish America's image in the world, and particularly to alienate developing countries from Washington.

HVA X and Segal Still at It

As Moscow shifted its active measures focus to subjects other than AIDS, the East Germans became the AIDS campaign's primary sponsor. Around 1987, HVA X gave Segal material "from secret service circles" on the 1969 congressional testimony of Donald MacArthur, then deputy director of research and engineering in the Office of the Secretary of

Defense. In his testimony, MacArthur stated that “within a period of five to 10 years it would be possible to produce a synthetic biological agent, an agent that does not naturally exist and for which no natural immunity could have been acquired.” He elaborated further that “A research program to explore the feasibility of this could be completed in approximately five years at a total cost of \$10 million.”¹⁰⁰

For Segal, the MacArthur testimony was near-certain evidence that the Pentagon had not only contemplated an HIV-type virus since 1969 but also had gone through with the project within the 10-year time frame MacArthur had suggested. Henceforth, MacArthur’s testimony became a cornerstone of Segal’s conspiracy theory. Segal ignored the fact that MacArthur left the Pentagon one year after his testimony to go into private business.¹⁰¹

Segal also continued to brush aside President Richard Nixon’s 1969 ban of offensive biological research by contending that such programs continued unabated under the guise of the National Cancer Institute (NCI). Part of the Bethesda-based National Institutes of Health, NCI opened a branch at Fort Detrick in 1971, which focused on identifying the causes of cancer, AIDS, and related diseases—more than enough circumstantial evidence to earn the institute a prominent place in Segal’s conspiracy theory.¹⁰²

An HVA X influence agent in West Germany did the East Germans’ bidding with loyalty and little regard for the historic changes sweeping through Europe.

The reference to NCI led Segal straight to another “villain.” It so happened that Robert Gallo, one of the pioneer scientists involved in the identification of HIV, was appointed head of the NCI’s Laboratory of Tumor Cell Biology in 1971. In his earlier publications and utterances, Segal had dispassionately and largely accurately described Gallo’s contribution to the identification of HIV, but he sharply changed his tack in the late 1980s, when Gallo became the key figure in Segal’s theory. In his final years, Segal developed an apparent pathological hatred of Gallo as the man personally responsible for creating AIDS, and he seized every opportunity to lambast the American scientist.

In 1989, just one year before East Germany’s demise, Segal went on a lecture tour across West Germany. Even though the SED leadership had avoided endorsing Segal and he did not travel as an official GDR representative, his trip was inconceivable without the Politburo’s knowledge and approval. In his presentations, Segal touted his latest piece of evidence—the MacArthur hearing of 1969—and pilloried Gallo.¹⁰³ According to the recollections of one of his listeners, Segal referred to Gallo as “a huge gangster” [*ein ganz grosser Gangster*] who was responsible for creating the virus.¹⁰⁴

West German and British TV picked up Segal’s story. The West German TV production “AIDS: The African Legend” uncritically featured Segal’s disinformation claims. The “documentary” was broadcast by Westdeutscher and Hessischer Rundfunk in the first half of 1989, and by Britain’s Channel Four in January 1990.¹⁰⁵ There is no evidence of direct HVA X involvement in this production, but East Berlin certainly rated the broadcasting of their disinformation by gullible Western journalists—the “useful idiots” of Soviet bloc intelligence—a major success.

HVA X also used a tested vehicle to spread Segal’s thesis directly in the West German media. One of the department’s influence agents in West Germany was Michael Opperskalski, listed under the code name “Abraham” in HVA X records.¹⁰⁶ Opperskalski’s Cologne-based magazine *Geheim* and its English-language edition *Top Secret* published crude Soviet bloc disinformation stories throughout the late 1980s. “Abraham” did the East Germans’ bidding with loyalty and little regard for the historic changes sweeping through Europe. The summer/autumn 1990 issue of *Top Secret*, published on the eve of German reunification, carried an article by Jakob and Lilli Segal, titled “AIDS—Its Nature and Origins.”¹⁰⁷

Segal died in 1995, completely unrepentant and utterly convinced of the American origins of AIDS.

Segal's last major accomplishment during the Cold War was the publication in 1990 of his book *AIDS—die Spur führt ins Pentagon* [AIDS—the trail leads to the Pentagon], which incorporated the bits on Gallo and the MacArthur hearing into his original thesis. The book was published by *Neuer Weg*, a publishing house closely associated with the far-left, Maoist Marxist Leninist Party of Germany (MLPD).

By then, the HVA was already dissolving, and its employees spent much of their time shredding files. In the book's appendix is an anonymous letter addressed to Segal and his wife, dated 8 October 1989 (one month before the fall of the Berlin Wall). The letter's author relays information allegedly obtained from someone linked to the US "military intelligence establishment." This person confirmed "everything you [Segal] have said—the Pentagon grant, the work at Ft. Detrick, the experiment on prisoners who first brought the virus to the streets of New York." The writer insinuated that it would be too risky to reveal his contact's name because "he truly recounts so many amazing things....My God, it's easy to become paranoid when looking into these matters. These shit-heads [*Diese Scheisskerle!*]"¹⁰⁸ Whether the letter constituted a final active measure of HVA X disinformation or not, it was certainly the kind of material that had been fed to Segal throughout the late 1980s.¹⁰⁹

Post-Cold War

The end of the Cold War threw the KGB into disarray, and the MfS disappeared altogether. Yet Segal continued his crusade as vigorously as ever. In May 1991, he gave a lengthy interview to the left-of-center Berlin weekly *Freitag*. He reiterated many of his earlier theories and claimed that "in Germany, only a single publication has contradicted us." In August 1991, the Swedish channel TV-2 featured an uncritical news program with Segal. In a February 1992 interview with the Montreal *Gazette*, Segal, echoing past arguments, focused on the economic ramifications of his thesis: "If the United States were recognized as the producer of the AIDS virus, it would destroy the economy. Think of the compensation claims! This is why they will never admit it."

When confronted by critics, Segal stood his ground. A former USIA consultant, who interviewed Segal in 1991, recalled that the retired professor "presented himself as a die-hard Marxist, totally incapable of accepting the demise of communist East Germany. Segal, then 80 years old, insisted that his information on the origin of the HIV virus was solid, and he denied having any contact with the Stasi."¹¹⁰ Segal died in 1995, completely unrepentant and utterly convinced of the American origins of AIDS.

Still Kicking, but Why?

Neither the end of the KGB HVA campaign, nor Jakob Segal's death, or the "confessions" of those responsible for the AIDS disinformation campaign stopped the further diffusion of the theory. Whence its longevity?

A few individuals involved in the original campaign carried on after the end of the Cold War.¹¹¹ More importantly, however, the conspiracy theory assumed a life of its own. In sub-Saharan Africa, where KGB and HVA had directed much of their firepower, media and word of mouth spread and developed the legend of AIDS as a biological weapon, often adding bizarre twists to the story. In March 1991, for example, a letter to the Zimbabwean daily *Bulawayo Chronicle* charged not only that the United States had invented AIDS, but that the CIA had exported "AIDS-oiled condoms" to other countries in 1986.¹¹²

As AIDS took a progressively greater toll on Africans, the notion of a conspiracy became more deeply entrenched on the continent. Zimbabwean President Robert Mugabe once described AIDS as a "white man's plot." And in 2004, Kenyan biologist and Nobel peace prize winner Wangari Maathai reportedly ascribed AIDS to the machinations of "evil-minded scientists" and contended that the disease was meant to "wipe out the black race."¹¹³ Even though reliable statistics are hard to come by, it seems rea-

sonable to conclude that many Africans believe the claims.¹¹⁴

The AIDS conspiracy theory has a firm hold in other places. In 1992, 15 percent of randomly selected Americans considered definitely or probably true the statement “the AIDS virus was created deliberately in a government laboratory.” African Americans were particularly prone to subscribe to the AIDS conspiracy theory. A 1997 survey found that 29 percent of African Americans considered the statement “AIDS was deliberately created in a laboratory to infect black people” true or possibly true. And a 2005 study by the RAND Corporation and Oregon State University revealed that nearly 50 percent of African Americans thought AIDS was man-made, with over a quarter considering AIDS the product of a government lab. Twelve percent believed it was created and spread by the CIA, and 15 percent opined AIDS was a form of genocide against black people.¹¹⁵

Certainly, beliefs in a government conspiracy to create and/or spread AIDS cannot be ascribed solely to the Soviet bloc disinformation campaign. The marginalization of homosexuals and the long history of oppression and discrimination of blacks made these groups inherently suspicious of government institutions. And some disclosures—e.g. the infamous Tuskegee experiment sponsored by the US Public Health Service, which deliberately left several hundred African Americans suffering from syphilis untreated in order to

Soviet bloc intelligence had created a monster that has outlived its creators.

observe the natural progression of the disease—not surprisingly leave African Americans predisposed to believe the AIDS conspiracy theory.¹¹⁶

In addition, since the scientific community was initially unable to explain the outbreak and spread of AIDS, groups disproportionately affected—such as homosexuals and blacks—predictably sought a communal interpretation of the mysterious disease. Indeed, conspiracy theories about the US government’s responsibility for creating AIDS cropped up independently of KGB and HVA manipulation in gay communities in the early 1980s.¹¹⁷

In Sum

Yet it would be mistaken to dismiss the Soviet bloc disinformation campaign as irrelevant or as the US government’s knee-jerk reflex to “blame the Russians.”¹¹⁸ Studies have shown that whoever makes the first assertion about an event or occurrence has a large advantage over those who deny it later.¹¹⁹ When AIDS emerged in the early 1980s, Soviet bloc disinformation specialists quickly recognized the opportunity the mysterious epidemic offered, acted with alacrity, and planted disinformation only months after the scientific community had coined the term “AIDS” and established the existence of a causative virus. Equipped with an intuitive understanding of the human

psyche, Soviet and East German disinformation specialists applied the techniques that stimulate the growth and spread of rumors and conspiracy theories—simplistic scapegoating, endless repetition, and the clever mixing of lies and half-truths with undeniable facts. Once the AIDS conspiracy theory was lodged in the global subconscious, it became a pandemic in its own right. Like any good story, it traveled mostly by word of mouth, especially within the most affected sub-groups. Having effectively harnessed the dynamics of rumors and conspiracy theories, Soviet bloc intelligence had created a monster that has outlived its creators.¹²⁰



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Endnotes

1. In a lecture to Department X recruits in 1986, cited in: Günter Bohnsack and Herbert Brehmer, *Auftrag: Irreführung: Wie die Stasi Politik im Westen machte* (Hamburg: Carlsen, 1992), 19.
2. Michael Herman, *Intelligence and Power in Peace and War* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 55f.
3. House Committee on Intelligence, *Soviet Active Measures*, (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 1982), 31.
4. Christopher Andrew and Oleg Gordievsky, *Instructions from the Center: Top Secret Files on KGB Foreign Operations 1975–1985* (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1991), 3.
5. For the Panorama broadcast of 28 January 1991, see *Rote Fahne*, 30 December 2004, and Bohnsack letter to author, 22 September 2008; Bohnsack and Brehmer, *Auftrag: Irreführung*.
6. Statement by CIA Deputy Director of Operations John McMahon, House Committee on Intelligence, *Soviet Covert Action: The Forgery Offensive*, (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 1982), 6.
7. According to Michael Herman, in 1987, only 3 percent of the CIA's staff was involved in covert action, and only 5 percent of the agency's budget went into it. (Hermann, *Intelligence Power*; 56.)
8. For information on the KGB's planting of the Kennedy conspiracy theory, see Aleksandr Fursenko and Timothy Naftali, *One Hell of a Gamble: Khrushchev, Castro, and Kennedy, 1958–1964: The Secret History of the Cuban Missile Crisis* (New York: W.W. Norton, 1998), 343–50; for East German Nazi disinformation campaigns against West Germany, see Hubertus Knabe, *Die unterwanderte Republik. Stasi im Westen* (Berlin: Propyläen, 1999), 121–52.
9. Ladislav Bittman, *The KGB and Soviet Disinformation: An Insider's View* (Washington, DC: Pergamon-Brassey's, 1985), 49. In the same vein, see Ilya Dzhirkvelov, *Secret Servant: My Life with the KGB and the Soviet Elite* (New York: Harper & Row, 1987), 304f.
10. Operation RYAN (the KGB codename) had KGB officers in Western capitals carry out a regular census of the number of cars and lighted windows at all hours at government buildings and military installations possibly involved in preparations for nuclear war and to report immediately any deviations from the norm. See Andrew and Gordievsky, *KGB*, 589.
11. House Intelligence Committee, *Soviet Covert Action*, 30.
12. Bittman, *Deception Game: Czechoslovak Intelligence in Soviet Political Warfare* (Syracuse, NY: Syracuse University Research Corp., 1972), 125.
13. Bittman, *Deception Game*, 125.
14. The West German security service publication *Innere Sicherheit*, 1 (20 March 1985), 2, noted that such letters were typically provided not as originals but as photographs of alleged originals, so as to make it more difficult to detect the forgery.
15. Bittman, *KGB and Soviet Disinformation*, 44.
16. *Innere Sicherheit* 1, (3 March 1985), 2; US Department of State, *Soviet Influence Activities: A Report on Active Measures and Propaganda 1986–87* (Washington, DC: Department of State Publications, 1987), ix, 4; US Department of State, *Soviet Influence Activities: A Report on Active Measures and Propaganda, 1987–1988* (Washington, DC: Department of State Publications, 1989), 23.
17. US Department of State, *Soviet Influence Activities...1986–87*, 34f. The “confessions” had no basis in fact.
18. Andrew and Gordievsky, *KGB*, 503f. Again, the Soviet claim was spurious.
19. *Washington Post*, 22 April 1980.
20. Lee Richards, “Whispers of War: The British World War II Rumor Campaign,” *The Intelligencer* 16, no. 2 (Fall 2008): 54.
21. Jonathan B. Tucker, “The ‘Yellow Rain’ Controversy: Lessons for Arms Control Compliance,” *The Nonproliferation Review* 8 (Spring 2001): 31.
22. Bohnsack and Brehmer, *Auftrag: Irreführung*, 219.
23. Bohnsack letter to author, 6 March 2009.
24. Primakov, then SVR (Russian foreign intelligence) director, made his remarks to graduate students in Moscow during an SVR recruitment drive in 1992; *Boston Globe*, 19 March 1992; *Izvestiya*, 19 March 1992.
25. *Patriot*, 17 July 1983.
26. “Interagency Intelligence Study,” cited in House Intelligence Committee, *Soviet Active Measures*, 55.

These charges were intended to undermine the regime of the Pakistani president, General Muhammad Zia-ul-Haq, a pivotal ally in Washington's efforts to assist anti-Soviet Afghan mujahideen.

27. Interviews with KGB Major-General (ret.) Oleg Kalugin, 1 October and 22 December 2008.
28. *Army Research, Development & Acquisition* 23, no. 4 (July–August 1982): 48f.
29. Andrew and Gordievsky, *KGB*, 628.
30. Bittman, *Deception Game*, 227; Todd Leventhal, "The origins of AIDS disinformation," January 9, 2009, available online at <http://blogs.america.gov/rumors/2009/01/09/the-origins-of-aids-disinformation/>. Additional comments on the KGB's use of non-native speakers as translators were provided to the author by Todd Leventhal, 25 February 2009.
31. Christopher Andrew and Vasili Mitrokhin, *The World Was Going Our Way: The KGB and the Battle for the Third World* (New York: Basic Books, 2005), 324; Andrew and Gordievsky, *KGB*, 507.
32. The *Patriot* was established under the auspices of the KGB resident in New Delhi, Radomir Aleksandrovich Bogdanov, with the assistance of KGB officer Ilya Dzhirkvelov, see Andrew and Gordievsky, *KGB*, 503, and Dzhirkvelov, *Secret Servant*, 303f. For a US assessment of the *Patriot*, see State Department, *Soviet Influence Activities... 1986–87*, 44.
33. David A. Spetrino, "Aids Disinformation," *Studies in Intelligence* 32, no. 4 (1988): 10.
34. Andrew and Gordievsky, *KGB*, 608, 628.
35. Department of State, *Soviet Influence Activities... 1986–87*, 34f.
36. *Literaturnaya Gazeta*, 30 October 1985. I am grateful to Kristina N. Terzieva for an English translation of this and a later article.
37. Department of State, *Soviet Influence Activities... 1986–87*, 40.
38. Oleg Kalugin, *The First Directorate: My 32 Years in Intelligence and Espionage against the West* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1994), 158. See a statement to the same effect by Martin C. Portman of the CIA's Directorate of Operations in House Intelligence Committee, *Soviet Active Measures*, 21.

39. *Literaturnaya Gazeta*, 30 October 1985. Zapevalov's name was not a pseudonym. After the collapse of the Soviet Union, he became a successful businessman, author, and spokesman for Russia's arms-export agency Rosvooruzhenie.
40. The station chief, Larry Devlin, decided not to carry out the assignment. Lumumba was later killed by local rivals. See Larry Devlin, *Chief of Station, Congo: A Memoir of 1960–67* (New York: Public Affairs, 2007), 94–97, 113–14.
41. Bohnsack and Brehmer, *Auftrag: Irreführung*, 219.
42. Bohnsack letter to author, 14 August 2008.
43. Bohnsack and Brehmer, *Auftrag: Irreführung*, 219f; Bohnsack letters to author, 25 July and 14 August 2008.
44. Bittman, *Deception Game*, 141; Bohnsack and Brehmer, *Auftrag: Irreführung*, 40f, 218; Oleg Gordievsky e-mail to author, 20 September 2008; Oleg Gordievsky, *Next Stop Execution: The Autobiography of Oleg Gordievsky* (London: Macmillan, 1995), 183.
45. *Innere Sicherheit*, 1 (March 20, 1985), 3; Bohnsack letter to author, 14 August 2008.
46. Segal provided his biographical data to edition monochrom in 1993, <http://www.monochrom.at/segal>. See also John O. Koehler, *Stasi: The Untold Story of the East German Secret Police* (Boulder, Col.: Westview Press, 2000), 260f.
47. Aktennotiz (note for the record) by Kurt Seidel on conversation with Jakob Segal, 17 September 1986, SAPMO-BArch, DY 30/vorl.SED 36832 [henceforth SAPMO].
48. Bohnsack letter to author, 25 July 2008. Bohnsack describes Segal as "partly a convinced scientist, partly an operative assistant [*operativer Helfer*], probably a colorful mix."
49. According to Todd Leventhal, who visited Fort Detrick and saw building 550, it was an ordinary looking bungalow with a front porch; interview with Todd Leventhal and Oleg Kalugin, 22 December 2008. Segal may have thought of building 470, locally referred to as "anthrax tower," a pilot plant for testing optimal fermentor and bacterial purification technologies. It was torn down in 2003. Also, he evidently meant "BSL-4" or "Level-4" rather than "P-4" laboratories. BSL-4 or Level-4 laboratories handle

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- deadly diseases that have no cure; see House Committee on Energy and Commerce, *Germs, Viruses and Secrets: The Silent Proliferation of Bio-Laboratories in the United States* (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 2007), 1, 54.
50. Jakob Segal and Lilli Segal, *AIDS-Die Spur führt ins Pentagon*, second edition (Essen: Verlag Neuer Weg, 1990), 138.
51. Behling e-mails to author, 30 and 31 March 2009.
52. Michael D. Morrissey letter to Noam Chomsky, 14 September 1989, <http://educate-yourself.org/cn/morrisseycorrespondencewithnoamchomsky.shtml>; *Gazette*, 16 February 1992. However, others considered Segal a “pompous ass” (*pene-tranter Wichtiguer*), Behling e-mail to author, 18 November 2008.
53. Jakob Segal, Lilli Segal, and Ronald Dehmlow, *AIDS-its nature and origin* (no place, no date [1986]). I am grateful to US Department of State Anti-Misinformation Officer Todd Leventhal for a copy of the pamphlet.
54. Stefan Nickels, “Geheimprojekt ‘Naomi’: Um den Ursprung von Aids ranken sich seit langem obskure Hypothesen,” *Frankfurter Allgemeine Sonntagszeitung*, 17 October 2004. As mentioned earlier, MKNAOMI was the CIA codename for an early Cold War bacteriological weapons research program at Fort Detrick.
55. Behling e-mail to author, 15 July 2008, based on an interview with Bohnsack. In his 1986 pamphlet, Segal quotes an East German publication for his allegations about Fort Detrick: Reinhard Pieckocki, *Genmanipulation: Frevel oder Fortschritt* (Leipzig, Jena, Berlin: Urania Verlag, 1983).
56. Department of State, *Soviet Influence Activities...1986-87*, 35; Bohnsack letters to author, 25 July and 14 August 2008. According to Bohnsack, the HVA deployed Capt. Hans Pfeiffer and “officer on special assignment” [Offizier im besonderen Einsatz or OibE] Horst Schoetzki, officially a journalist representing the GDR magazine *Horizont*, to the conference. See also Christhard Läßle, *Verrat verjährt nicht: Lebensgeschichten aus einem einst geteilten Land* (Hamburg: Hoffman & Campe, 2008), 299f.
57. Bohnsack letter to author, 25 July 2008; Spet-rino, “Aids Disinformation,” 11.
58. Segal to Axen, 8 September 1986, memorandum regarding economic aspects of AIDS, SAPMO.
59. Segal to Axen, 27 August 1986, SAPMO.
60. Department of State, *Soviet Influence Activities...1986-87*, 37.
61. Kurt Seidel, note for the record, 17 September 1986, SAPMO.
62. Bohnsack letter to author, 26 November 2008. Bohnsack writes that MfS director Erich Mielke did not necessarily inform his Politburo colleagues about ongoing active measures but that Hager was probably aware of the AIDS campaign.
63. Hager to Seidel, 26 September 1986, with copy to General Axen, SAPMO.
64. Bohnsack letter to author, 26 November 2008.
65. *Der Spiegel*, 10 November 1986.
66. Jakob Segal interview, *Freitag*, 17 May 1991.
67. Milt Bearden and James Risen, *The Main Enemy: The Inside Story of the CIA's Final Show-down with the KGB* (New York: Random House, 2003), 385.
68. Bohnsack letter to author, 26 November 2008. Between 1970 and 1989, Bohnsack was HVA X liaison with the KGB and was thus informed about joint East German/Soviet disinformation campaigns. Bohnsack letter to author, 14 August 2008.
69. The interview was subsequently published in book form in Kuno Kruse (ed.), *Aids-Erreger aus dem Genlabor? Die Diskussion der rätselhaften Krankheit, die die Welt bedroht* (Berlin: Simon & Leutner, 1987), 15-27.
70. John Borneman, “AIDS in the Two Berlins,” in Douglas Crimp (ed.), *AIDS: Cultural Analysis/Cultural Activism* (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1988), 234.
71. Klaus Behling, *Kundschafter a.D.: Das Ende der DDR-Spionage* (Stuttgart, Leipzig: Hohenheim Verlag, 2003), 252f.
72. Johannes Mario Simmel, *Doch mit den Clowns kamen die Tränen* (Munich: Droemer Knauer, 1987), 9, 110f.
73. Wolf resigned his directorship in 1986 but, according to Bohnsack, retained his secret service ID card, personal driver, and assistant and remained as consultant and “guiding spirit” at HVA headquarters; Bohnsack letter, 25 July 2008.
74. *Der Spiegel*, 7 September 1987.
75. Department of State, *Soviet Influence Activities...1986-1987*, 29; Shankar Vedantam, “Persis-

tence of Myths Could Alter Public Policy Approach,” *Washington Post*, 4 September 2007.

76. Alvin A. Snyder, *Warriors of Disinformation: American Propaganda, Soviet Lies, and the Winning of the Cold War: An Insider's Account* (New York: Arcade, 1995), 113f; Ladislav Bittman, *The New Image-Makers: Soviet Propaganda & Disinformation Today* (Washington, DC: Pergamon-Brassey's, 1988), 25.

77. Spetrino, “Aids Disinformation,” 9, 11; *Sunday Express*, 26 October 1986; *Daily Telegraph*, 27 October 1986. On the other hand, the *London Times*, 31 October 1986, lambasted the *Express* for giving Segal a platform.

78. USIA official Herbert Romerstein, quoted in *Toronto Star*; 28 April 1987.

79. *Times*, 31 October 1986. See also *Der Spiegel*, 10 November 1986.

80. Department of State, *Soviet Influence Activities...1986-87*, 33.

81. United States Information Agency (USIA), *Soviet Active Measures in the Era of Glasnost: A Report to Congress* (March 1988), 12; Department of State, *Soviet Influence Activities...1986-87*, 35.

82. Robert Harris and Jeremy Paxman, *A Higher Form of Killing: The Secret History of Chemical and Biological Warfare* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1982), 240.

83. Snyder, *Warriors of Disinformation*, 116.

84. Spetrino, “Aids Disinformation,” 11.

85. Department of State, *Soviet Influence Activities...1986-87*, 40; Spetrino, “Aids Disinformation,” 14.

86. USIA, *Soviet Active Measures in the Era of Glasnost*, 82, 86; Department of State, *Soviet Influence Activities...1986-87*, iii. The West Germans established a similar group, *Innere Sicherheit* [internal security], which included representatives from foreign intelligence (BND) and counterintelligence (BfV) agencies; Bohnsack letter, 25 July 2008.

87. Snyder, *Warriors of Disinformation*, 93, 113.

88. Koehler, *Stasi*, 260. Koehler was then working as a consultant to USIA director Charles Z. Wick.

89. Murray Feshbach, “The Early Days of HIV/AIDS Epidemic in the Former Soviet Union” (paper prepared for the conference “Health and Demography in the Former Soviet Union,” Harvard University, April 2005), 9, argues that the 1983 *Patriot* letter was a “ghost source” generated by Service A specialists to enable Soviet propagandist to quote a non-Soviet source. Even though the technique of using “ghost sources” was not unknown to Soviet bloc intelligence, it was not employed in this instance. The Indian National Library at Kolkata holds a copy of the *Patriot*, dated 17 July 1983, which carries the AIDS letter.

90. *Literaturnaya Gazeta*, 19 November 1986. (Translation by Kristina N. Terzieva.)

91. See, for instance, *Christian Science Monitor*, 11 December 1986, and *New York Times*, 8 April 1987.

92. Department of State, *Soviet Influence Activities...1987-88*, 33-36; *Der Spiegel*, 9 March 1987.

93. *New York Times*, 5 November 1987.

94. Snyder, *Warriors of Disinformation*, 182f.

95. USIA, *Soviet Active Measures in the Era of Glasnost*, 11.

96. Department of State, *Soviet Influence Activities...1987-1988*, 2f.

97. Department of State, *Soviet Influence Activities...1987-1988*, 4.

98. USIA, *Soviet Active Measures in the “Post-Cold War” Era 1988-1991: A Report Prepared at the Request of the United States House of Representatives Committee on Appropriations* (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, June 1992), 71-75. Pagination according to online edition.

99. USIA, *Soviet Active Measures in the Era of Glasnost*, 12-49.

100. Behling, *Kundschafter a.D.*, 253; House Committee on Appropriations, *Department of Defense Appropriations for 1970* (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 1969), 129. The text of MacArthur's testimony was made available to the public long before Segal “discovered” it. Paxman and Harris, *A Higher Form of Killing*, 241, also quote from it.

101. Obituary, Donald Malcolm MacArthur, *Washington Post*, 29 November 1988. After leaving government, MacArthur founded Dynamac, which

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helped conduct anthrax sampling after the anonymous attacks in 2001 and performed cleanup at two anthrax-contaminated federal buildings in Washington, DC.

102. Segal mentioned the MacArthur testimony first in a reply to his critics in 1987, see Kruse, *Aids*, 51, 55. Disinformation on the NCI's alleged role was provided by HVA X, see Behling, *Kundschafter a.D.*, 253.

103. Raimund Geene, *AIDS-Politik: Ein neues Krankheitsbild zwischen Medizin, Politik und Gesundheitsförderung* (Frankfurt a.M.: Mabuse, 2000), 294.

104. Michael D. Morrissey letter to Noam Chomsky, 14 September 1989; Chomsky replied that the MacArthur testimony "sends a chill up the spine," Chomsky letter to Morrissey, 28 December 1989; <http://educate-yourself.org/cn/morrisseycorrespondencewithnoamchomsky.shtml>.

105. USIA, *Soviet Active Measures in the "Post-Cold War" Era*, 70, 73, 75. The producer, Malte Rauch, did not respond to an inquiry from this author regarding the making of his documentary.

106. Knabe, *Der diskrete Charme*, 170.

107. USIA, *Soviet Active Measures in the "Post-Cold War" Era*, 62.

108. Segal and Segal, *AIDS-die Spur führt ins Pentagon*, 243. The book also contains a censorious essay on U.S. biological warfare research, titled "Biokrieg." The author, Manuel Kiper, subsequently served as a Green Party member of the German parliament from 1994 to 1998.

109. Bohnsack comments: "Maybe he [Segal] wrote it himself, maybe the HVA did. Heaven knows, I don't have a clue." Bohnsack letter to author, 19 January 2009.

110. *Freitag*, 17 May 1991; USIA, *Soviet Active Measures in the "Post-Cold War" Era*, 64; *Gazette*, 16 February 1992; Koehler, *Stasi*, 261.

111. Gordon Schaffer, *Baby in the Bathwater: Memories of a Political Journalist* (Sussex: Book Guild, 1996), 240, 244; Schaffer was London correspondent

of the *Patriot*. See also the MLPD newspaper *Rote Fahne*, 30 December 2004.

112. USIA, *Soviet Active Measures in the "Post-Cold War" Era*, 66.

113. Peta Thornycroft, "Mugabe Highlights HIV/AIDS Crisis in Zimbabwe," *Voice of America News*, 5 December 2006; *New York Times*, 10 December 2004. Maathai subsequently said her words were taken out of context, but the African journalist who first reported her remarks stood by his original report.

114. Laura M. Bogart, Seth C. Kalichman, Leikness C. Simbayi, letter to the editor, "Endorsement of a Genocidal HIV Conspiracy as a Barrier to HIV Testing in South Africa," *Journal of Acquired Immune Deficiencies* 49, no. 1 (1 September 2008): 115f.

115. Ted Goertzel, "Belief in Conspiracy Theories," *Political Psychology* 15, no. 4 (December 1994): 731–33; Anita M. Waters, "Conspiracy Theories as Ethnosociologies: Explanation and Intention in African American Political Culture," *Journal of Black Studies* 28, no. 1 (September 1997): 117; Laura M. Bogart and Sheryl Thorburn, "Are HIV/AIDS Conspiracy Beliefs a Barrier to HIV Prevention Among African Americans?" *Journal of Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndromes* 38, no. 2 (February 1, 2005): 215.

116. Goertzel, "Belief in Conspiracy Theories," 740.

117. Kruse, *Aids*, 3.

118. Cf. Patricia A. Turner, *I Heard It through the Grapevine: Rumor in African-American Culture* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993), 156, dismissing a statement by the CIA's Coordinator for Academic Affairs Arthur S. Hulnick, who wrote her on 23 August 1988 that his agency believed rumors linking the CIA to AIDS were the result of Soviet disinformation.

119. Vedantam, "Persistence of Myths," *Washington Post*, 4 September 2007.

120. For an analysis of rumor dynamics, see Robert H. Knapp, "A Psychology of Rumor," *The Public Opinion Quarterly* 8, no. 1 (Spring 1944): especially 26f on the importance of sub-groups.



The disinformation campaign aimed, according to the Stasi, to generate, for us, a beneficial view by other countries that this disease is the result of out-of-control secret experiments by U.S. intelligence agencies and the Pentagon involving new types of biological weapons. A month later, the Soviet journal Literaturnaya Gazeta published a paper titled "Panic in the West or What Is Hiding Behind the Sensation Surrounding AIDS." It included accurate information about the disease and Fort Detrick but cited the Patriot letter to connect the dots. The paper received international attention and its... "In the case of the AIDS disinformation campaign, they were forced to give up on it," he said. crucial part of Soviet intelligence strategy involving forgery as covert operation, subversion, and media manipulation.[18] The 2003 encyclopedia Propaganda and Mass Persuasion states that disinformation came from dezinformatsia, a term used by the Russian black propaganda unit known as Service A which referred to active measures.[17] The term was used in 1939, related to a "German Disinformation Service".[19]. The extent of Soviet disinformation covert operation campaigns, came to light through the defections of KGB officers and officers of Campaigns were usually planned to last several years and encompassed many elements of the Soviet state, including the International Information Department (IID), which directed official press organs, such as TASS, Novosti, and... They still are, "state sponsored" is a euphemism for "state controlled" in Russia. Operation INFEKTION: Soviet Bloc Intelligence and Its AIDS Disinformation Campaign. The Creation and Perpetuation of a Myth. By Thomas Boghardt. Studies in Intelligence Vol. 53, No. 4 (December 2009). "Our friends in Moscow call it "dezinformatsiya." Our enemies in America call it "active measures," and I, dear friends, call it "my favorite pastime." Col. Rolf Wagenbreth, director of Department X (dis- information) of East German foreign intelligence.