

Disinformation squared

Was the HIV-from-Fort-Detrick myth a Stasi success?

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ABSTRACT

BACKGROUND. When in May 1983 the acquired immunodeficiency syndrome (AIDS) was first securely attributed to a virus, eventually called the human immunodeficiency virus (HIV), many controversies arose. Among these was one centering on HIV's origin. A startling hypothesis, called here the "HIV-from-Fort-Detrick myth," asserted that HIV had been a product, accidental or intentional, of bioweaponry research. While its earliest identifiable contributors were in the West, this myth's most dynamic propagators were in the East. The Soviet security service, the KGB, took "active measures" to create and disseminate AIDS disinformation beginning no later than July 1983 and ending no earlier than October 1987. The East German security service, a complex bureaucracy popularly known as "the Stasi," was involved, too, but how early, how deeply, how uniformly, how ably, and how successfully has not been clear. Following German reunification, claims arose attributing to the Stasi the masterful execution of ingenious elements in a disinformation campaign they helped shape and soon came to dominate. We have tested these claims.

QUESTION. Was the HIV-from-Fort-Detrick myth a Stasi success?

METHODS. Primary sources were documents and photographs assembled by the Ministry of State Security (MfS) of the German Democratic Republic (GDR or East Germany), the Ministry of Interior of the People's Republic of Bulgaria, and the United States Department of State; the estate of myth principals Jakob and Lilli Segal; the "AIDS box" in the estate of East German literary figure Stefan Heym; participant-observer recollections, interviews, and correspondence; and expert interviews. We examined secondary sources in light of primary sources.

FINDINGS. The HIV-from-Fort-Detrick myth had debuted in print in India in 1983 and had been described in publications worldwide prior to 1986, the earliest year for which we found any Stasi document mentioning the myth in any context. Many of the myth's exponents were seemingly independent conspiracy theorists. Its single most creative exponent was Jakob Segal, an idiosyncratic Soviet biologist long resident in, and long retired in, the GDR. Segal applied to the myth a thin but tenacious layer of plausibility. We could not exclude a direct KGB influence on him but found no evidence demonstrating it. The Stasi did not direct his efforts and had difficulty tracking his activities. The Stasi were prone to interpretive error and self-aggrandizement. They credited themselves with successes they did not achieve, and, in one instance, failed to appreciate that a major presumptive success had actually been a fiasco. Senior Stasi officers came to see the myth's propagation as an embarrassment threatening broader interests, especially the GDR's interest in being accepted as a

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scientifically sophisticated state. In 1986, 1988, and 1989, officers of HV A/X, the Stasi's disinformation and "active measures" department, discussed the myth in meetings with the Bulgarian secret service. In the last of these meetings, HV A/X officers tried to interest their Bulgarian counterparts in taking up, or taking over, the myth's propagation. Further efforts, if any, were obscured by collapse of the East German and Bulgarian governments.

CONCLUSION. No, the HIV-from-Fort-Detrick myth was not a Stasi success. Impressions to the contrary can be attributed to reliance on presumptions, boasts, and inventions. Presumptions conceding to the Stasi an extraordinary operational efficiency and an irresistible competence — qualities we could not confirm in this case — made the boasts and inventions more convincing than their evidentiary basis, had it been known, would have allowed. The result was disinformation about disinformation, a product we call "disinformation squared."

Thirty-two years ago, when first described,¹ the acquired immunodeficiency syndrome, AIDS, was a mystery. AIDS was like nothing else ever encountered. Numerous hypotheses were offered to explain its cause, but a natural infectious etiology soon dominated all other notions, although not to everyone's satisfaction. The scientific community, excepting a few doubters, concluded that the cause was a retrovirus,^{2,3} a microbial class discovered not long before AIDS itself was discovered. The name that stuck to the causative agent was the human immunodeficiency virus, the HIV.⁴ While two types, HIV-1 and HIV-2, and a great many variations of those two types, have infected humans — by 2012 more than 70 million, two-thirds sub-Saharan Africans, with at least 36 million deaths worldwide⁵ — the singular acronym "HIV" stands for any and all AIDS agents. Over many centuries numerous closely related immunodeficiency viruses have infected nonhuman animals: simian, bovine, feline. These viruses are not HIV.

Speculation about the AIDS agent's origin and spread differed far more widely early on than may now be remembered.^{6,7} An especially provocative theory held that HIV had originated at the United States Army Medical Research Institute for Infectious Diseases (USAMRIID) at Fort Detrick, Maryland. That theory we call "the HIV-from-Fort-Detrick myth" or simply "the myth."

Often accepted in recent years has been a reading of the myth's history in which the Soviet security service, the KGB, has been credited with and blamed for the myth's invention, and the KGB and the East German security service, the "Stasi," have jointly been credited with and blamed for the myth's management and

propagation. In this reading, the Stasi, singular, *was* — or, alternatively, the Stasi, plural, *were* — clever, intense, resourceful, and successful.

Often accepted as well, and often asserted in defense of past complicities with East German authoritarianism, has been the Stasi's omnipotence. Putatively, the Stasi's scope was wide, its reach long, its imagination extraordinary, its means ruthless. And its efficiency, its organizational perfection, focused its energies like a lens. The Stasi *was-and-were* fearsome, unassailable, irresistible. Or so the Stasi seemed.

And so security services generally have seemed until particular cases have been studied closely enough to arouse contrary suspicions. In United States history, for example, overt security-service failures — to anticipate Japan's attack on Pearl Harbor, to detect Soviet atomic-weapons spying, to prevent terrorist attacks — have periodically brought "omnipotence" into reputational rivalry with "incompetence." The Stasi, though, was a security service in a police state, one fearing not just its Cold War enemies but also any hint that the Cold War, which had turned the Soviet Occupation Zone into the German Democratic Republic, would end. In East German history, what failed overtly was the state itself. The Stasi, right up until its own extinction, appeared frighteningly "successful," invading any intimacy, poisoning any friendship, punishing any honesty, and guarding an externally defined pseudo-state from its internally captive population.

Ironically, the Stasi's "success" was to prove helpful as an ongoing presumption under democracy, as its "success" helped absolve a previously unnerved citizenry from complicity in its own past repression.

During and after *die Wende*, the process culminating in German reunification, “I had to...” became a routine and largely accepted regret, one voiced all along the power spectrum from the intimidated to the intimidator. “I had to spy on my neighbor” — plausibility here had to be robust for reconciliation to proceed, and plausibility required that the Stasi be remembered as too formidable to refuse.^{8,9}

The Stasi was formidable enough, surely, and crossing it would not have been planned casually, but the Stasi’s operational qualities are easier to doubt. We question the “success” presumption, but we do so under the arch of a broader inquiry, taking the myth as our specimen and primary-source evidence as our probe.

Was the HIV-from-Fort-Detrick myth a Stasi success? To answer this question, we analyzed primary sources of three sorts: archival records, decedent estates, and other historical materials; participant-observer recollections, interviews, and correspondence; and government-official and expert inquiries and interviews. We examined secondary sources — scholarly books and articles, news reports and analyses, interview transcripts, two television broadcasts, and two novels — in light of primary sources.

The archive studied first and most extensively preserved records of the “Stasi,” the Ministry of State Security of the German Democratic Republic (the MfS of the GDR, the former East Germany). One of us, E.G., conducted an unrestricted review of MfS archives over more than five years, seeking files, photographs, and artifacts directly or indirectly bearing upon our question and testing the plausibility of related theories. These archives are now held by *Der Bundesbeauftragte für die Unterlagen des Staatssicherheitsdienstes der ehemaligen Deutschen Demokratischen Republik*, the Federal Commissioner for the Records of the State Security Service of the former German Democratic Republic. The *Deutsche Demokratische Republik* (DDR) was, in English, the German Democratic Republic (GDR) or East Germany, a communist state extant 1949–1990. The GDR’s State Security Service archive — the Stasi archive — has become known by its German acronym, BStU. (Figure 1)

With transparency and reconciliation thought often at odds following German reunification, the BStU has redacted many mentions of many names, making ██████████ a familiar feature of files provided to

requesting researchers. Where redactions have been perfunctory and redacted names easily determined, or when identifiable persons have been deceased or agreeable, we have clarified identities.

A second archive was deposited by The Committee for Disclosing the Documents and Announcing the Affiliations of Bulgarian Citizens to the State Security and Intelligence Service of the Bulgarian National Army — a committee nicknamed KOMDOS. Christopher Nehring, a scholar working at the Institute of Eastern European History, University of Heidelberg, kindly shared insights gained from his ongoing study of KOMDOS documents detailing cooperation between Bulgarian and East German security services.¹⁰ As a condition of access, KOMDOS has required him and, by extension, us to redact all names from materials quoted, referenced, or cited. We have complied.

Also vital were a third and fourth public collection: the Berlin branch of the *Bundesarchiv*, the Federal Archives, commonly abbreviated as *BArch*; and *das Politische Archiv des Auswärtigen Amts*, the Political Archives of the Foreign Office.

Two private estates were examined. In 2007, E.G. gained access to the “AIDS box” in writer-and-interviewer Stefan Heym’s estate. Eventually, in January 2012, he gained unprecedented ongoing access to the estate of Jakob and Lilli Segal, central figures in the history to be explicated. The estate was held in *Stiftung Archiv der Parteien und Massenorganisationen der DDR im Bundesarchiv*, the Foundation Archives of the Parties and Mass Organizations of the GDR in the Federal Archives.¹¹

Recollections were solicited and interviews conducted with full disclosure of researchers’ intent to publish in the scholarly literature. Two subjects required clearance by the Bureau of Public Affairs, US Department of State. The first, a topic expert, agreed to an in-person on-the-record interview at the Center for Strategic Counterterrorism Communications in Washington, DC. The second, a topic participant, agreed to substantive on-the-record e-mail correspondence from the US Embassy in Cyprus.

We have throughout distinguished “misinformation” from “disinformation.” The first is false by mistake. The second is false by design, the intent being to advance a conspiracy, to manipulate an adversary, to alter a perception, to advance an interest or a career. “Disinformation squared” is disinformation *about*



Figure 1. Stasi documents as filed on 111 kilometers of shelving in BStU archives. Source: BStU, Kulick. Reproduced with permission.

disinformation, “squared” suggesting a multiplicative effect. In distinguishing the first two terms, we have adapted usage of the Bureau of International Information Programs (BIIP), US Department of State.¹² The third term is our own.

Was the myth a conspiracy from the start?

From the east and west coasts of the United States from 1979 throughout 1981 came reports that gay men were dying of an unusual malignancy, Kaposi’s sarcoma, and of unusual and aggressive infections.^{1,13,14,15,16,17} By December 1981, a novel ac-

quired immunodeficiency syndrome, AIDS as we now call it, had been recognized but not explained.

An agent causing AIDS took two years to find and three more years to characterize and name. The agent’s origin was fully open to discussion in the earlier years, less fully open later as evidence accumulated and interpretation advanced.

One legitimate question, urgently important initially, was whether correlation was being conflated with causation. HIV had never been shown — *could* never be shown ethically — to satisfy “Koch’s postulates,” four nineteenth-century criteria which if satisfied proved that a specific microorganism caused a specific disease in a specific animal. Did HIV cause AIDS in

humans at all, then?¹⁸ Or was HIV by *itself* sufficient to cause AIDS? Might HIV's presence have been a sign of AIDS, rather than its cause,¹⁹ which might actually have been, say, toxicological or in some nontoxicological way environmental?²⁰

A second legitimate question was whether HIV had accidentally been released from a virology or cell-biology or cancer-research laboratory or had contaminated a poliomyelitis vaccine used in Africa. A contamination calamity would have had a partial precedent: from 1955 to 1962 a hitherto unknown carcinogenic agent, simian vacuolating virus 40, abbreviated as the SV40, had unwittingly been administered to hundreds of millions of people in poliomyelitis vaccines, both Salk and Sabin.^{21,22,23,24}

A third legitimate question was whether HIV had been the product of natural selection, perhaps as altered by human activity, or directed DNA recombination, perhaps as spurred by scientific, industrial, or national-security interests. Such speculation became less justified as evidence accumulated that HIV had descended from closely related viruses of African nonhuman primates.

Today, all HIV-1s and all HIV-2s are known to have derived from simian immunodeficiency viruses, SIVs (see Text Box).

Origins of AIDS agents HIV-1 and HIV-2

Two different AIDS agents, HIV-1 and HIV-2, are described. They belong to the genus lentivirus, *lente* meaning "slowly." These are RNA agents of the retrovirus family. The diseases they cause are characterized by an early and ambiguous seroconversion syndrome, often unnoticed, and then, following an extraordinarily long incubation period, a far more serious chronic progressive illness.

HIV-1 occurs in four groups: M (major), O (outlier), N (non-M, non-O), and P (pending). Only group M viruses are spread world-wide; they occur in eleven subtypes, A through K.

HIV-2 occurs in eight subtypes, A through H.

Since 1985, lentiviruses more or less closely related to HIVs have been isolated from African non-human primates. Most of these lentiviruses do not cause AIDS-like diseases in their natural hosts, but they nonetheless have all been named simian immunodeficiency

viruses (SIVs). One of them, SIV_{mac}, causes an AIDS-like syndrome in macaques.²⁵

At least 18 different species of SIVs occur in more than 40 different primate species. They are designated according to the names of their natural hosts. For example, *Cercocebus mangabey*, the sooty mangabey, hosts the SIV_{sm}. *Pan troglodytes troglodytes*, a chimpanzee subspecies in Cameroon's eastern equatorial forests, hosts SIV_{cpz}. *Gorilla gorilla* hosts SIV_{gor}, a descendent of SIV_{cpz}. African green monkeys host SIV_{agm}, once thought to be the HIVs' proximal predecessor but now understood to be a distant relation.^{26, 27}

By epidemiological and molecular-clock analysis in recent years the demographic histories of the HIVs have been determined and differentiated. In independent transmissions from chimpanzees to humans, the HIV-1s of groups M, N, and O emerged in different regions of Cameroon from SIV_{cpz} and occasionally also from SIV_{gor}. Group M HIV-1s emerged around 1908 (plausible range 1884–1924) in a single transmission act; group O around 1920 (plausible range 1890–1940); and group N around 1963 (plausible range 1948–1977).^{28, 29}

HIV-2s are descendants of the sooty mangabey's SIV_{sm}. The different subtypes of HIV-2 originated in at least four and possibly six acts of transmission — group A around 1932 (plausible range 1906–1955). Like the HIV-2 viruses, SIV_{mac} descended from the sooty mangabey's SIV_{sm}.³⁰

Initially the HIVs spread slowly in Africa. Around 1966 (plausible range 1962–1970), HIV-1 M, subtype B, was transferred to Haiti. From there it reached the United States around 1969 (plausible range 1966–1972) and was soon transmitted worldwide.³¹

Less legitimate questions, ones intended to mislead, were also asked, and they too did get a hearing.

Nineteen months after AIDS was first described, a pro-Soviet daily newspaper in New Delhi, India, published an alarming article, "AIDS may invade India: Mystery disease caused by US experiments." The newspaper was *Patriot*, established in 1962 reputedly by the KGB as a disinformation outlet and supported subsequently by paid Soviet advertising.^{32,33} In a small text box, *Patriot* explained: "A well-known American scientist and anthropologist, in a letter to Editor, *Patriot*, analyzes the history and background of the deadly AIDS which started in the US and has now spread to Europe. The writer, who wants to remain anonymous, has expressed the fear that India may face

a danger from this disease in the near future.” The letter was from “NEW YORK” and predicted that AIDS would “invade” through Pakistan, which “some American experts” had selected as “the next proving ground” for their “experiments.” The “letter” reviewed America’s biological-weapons history, emphasizing embarrassments, real and imagined, and misstating some, but not all, facts. Then this:

... it is fairly safe to conclude that experts at Fort Detrick have developed one more type of biological weapons [*sic*] largely with the assistance of experts from the CDC (Centre for Disease Control), Atlanta, Georgia. Under a contract signed with the Pentagon, CDC scientists were sent to Africa, specifically to Zaire and Nigeria and later to Latin America, to gather information with a view to identifying highly pathogenic viruses that are not found in European and Asian countries. The information was then analyzed at the Maximum Containment Laboratory of the CDC and at Fort Detrick. That seems to be the most likely course of events that led to the discovery of an absolutely new type of virus (AIDS) that affects the human immune system. It might have been used to poison some blood donations, which were transfused to unsuspected [*sic*] patients during surgical operations for experimental purposes.

Some tests might have been conducted on certain groups of American citizens, who were most susceptible to the AIDS disease, primarily on people who came from Haiti and other developing countries, on drug addicts and homosexuals. ...³⁴

Although quoted frequently and in detail in secondary sources, this letter, either as an original or as a *Patriot* item, has disappeared from public archives, if it ever got that far, and its publication date is in some dispute: 16 July³⁵ or 17 July 1983. The second date was used by Thomas Boghardt,³⁶ historian of the International Spy Museum®,³⁷ Washington, D.C., in an influential paper on what we call the HIV-from-Fort-Detrick myth. Boghardt’s paper appeared in the journal *Studies in Intelligence* and was honored with an “Annual *Studies in Intelligence* Award” in 2009.³⁸ The journal is published by, and the annual award is sponsored by, the US Central Intelligence Agency, the CIA.

Gharat Bhushan of *The Times of India* reported 19 November 1986 that he had asked the editor of *Patriot*

for a copy. The editor “offered to look up the files. He said that doing so would take about ten days,” but he did not provide a copy.³⁹ Christopher Dobson of *The Sunday Telegraph* reported 9 November 1986 that “there was, however, a problem with the story . . . : the *Patriot* had never carried it.”⁴⁰ According to a Swiss daily, *Neue Zürcher Zeitung* [*New Zürich Newspaper*], on 6 November 1987, “if it [the letter] did exist at all, [it] did not appear up to now.”⁴¹ We received a copy from Todd Leventhal, formerly Chief of the Counter-Misinformation Team, US Department of State, and currently Lead for Academic and NGO Information and Europe, Center for Strategic Counterterrorism Communications, an inter-agency initiative headquartered at State. The US Embassy in New Delhi had secured a copy and sent it to Leventhal’s predecessor.⁴² Our copy’s date — “July 16, 83” — was handwritten within a type-set masthead, as was pagination.

In the Soviet Union two years later, 30 October 1985, *Literaturnaya Gazeta* published a story explicitly referencing the *Patriot* letter. Observing that the first cases of AIDS had been discovered in the United States and that the US had maintained a biological-weapons research program in the 1950s and 1960s, the story’s author, Valentin Zapevalov, claimed that the United States had sought dangerous viruses and had found the AIDS agent.⁴³ (Figure 2)

On 11 December 1985, *Literaturnaya Gazeta* followed with an interview of a virologist, Professor S. Drozdov, Director of the Research Institute of Poliomyelitis and Encephalitis of the Academy of Medical Sciences of the USSR. The AIDS virus, he said, might have been natural or taken from nature but could to some degree be artificial, even manufactured, although just how he could not say.⁴⁴

Others — a mix of Western scientists, commentators, and cranks — likewise doubted that the AIDS agent was the product of an entirely natural evolution. They suspected it had been “man-made.” It might have evolved accidentally during experiments with animal cell cultures, or it might have been created, even intentionally, by genetic engineering. It might have “escaped” from a laboratory or been released and spread deliberately to kill targeted groups.

In a November 1984 article in *Wechselwirkung* [*Interaction*], “Booby Hatch,” a pseudonymously veiled West German molecular biologist and biochem-

ПАНИКА НА ЗАПАДЕ,

ИЛИ ЧТО СКРЫВАЕТСЯ ЗА СЕНСАЦИЕЙ ВОКРУГ AIDS

В ОТ УЖЕ который месяц на Западе царит возбуждение в связи с таинственной болезнью, все больше принимающей размах эпидемии. С титульных листов газет и журналов кричат раздирающие душу аршинные заголовки, в которых неизменно присутствует слово AIDS. Печатаются множества фотографий жертв этого недуга, интервью со светилами медицины. Их ответы стандартны: «много загадочного», «неясно, как и чем лечить пациентов», «нужно подождать с выводами»...

Между тем болезнь не ждет. По данным Всемирной организации здравоохранения (ВОЗ), она пришла уже в США, Канаду, Англию... Францию, Бельгию, Голландию, Данию, ФРГ, Норвегию, Австралию, государства Африки, Латинской Америки. Только в Соединенных Штатах AIDS унес 6 тысяч жизней. Именно из США, кстати, он и пошел гулять по свету. Но об этом чуть ниже, сначала о самом явлении.

AIDS (Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome), или СПИД («Синдром приобретенного иммунного дефицита»), относится, по всей вероятности,

в Калифорнии, Флориде, Луизиане. Но и это не все. В ходе исследований, проводившихся тем же центром, была установлена прямая связь между увеличением заболеваний туберкулезом (на 5 процентов в первые 6 месяцев с. г.) и распространением AIDS, который, ослабляя защитные способности организма, создает особенно благоприятную среду для активизации туберкулезных бактерий. В ученом мире Запада уже сейчас высказывается мнение, что через несколько лет AIDS выйдет в США на первое место по количеству смертных случаев, оставив позади сердечно-сосудистые и раковые заболевания.

Известно также, что военное ведомство США совместно с экспертами из Лэнгли неоднократно проводило испытания вирусов опасных заболеваний, наркотиков и психохимических веществ на пациентах клиник, добровольцах, заключенных, наркоманах. Достаточно назвать программы (всего их более 150) «Синяя птица», «Арктишок», «МК-Ультра», «МК-

ставшего достоянием печати секретного документа Пентагона, «зараженные индивиды» должны были разнести бактерии более чем по 200 городам Соединенных Штатов. В результате экспериментов в ряде районов США вспыхнули эпидемии, погибли многие американцы.

ВЕРСИЯ

ния, в основном по манипуляции человеческого сознанием. Он лично руководил и необычными экспериментами с участием проституток. ЦРУ снимало для девиц легкого поведения апартаменты и снабжало их так называемыми нокаутующими каплями, которыми усыплялись доверчивые клиенты. Затем в дело вступали медики...

Готтлиб известен и как Виктор Шнайдер, под личиной которого в 1960 году он вылетал в

территорию других стран под видом открытия там медицинских лабораторий различного профиля. До сих пор слышны эхо скандала в такой лаборатории в пакистанском городе Лахоре, где выводились определенные виды комаров и других насекомых, зараженных затем опасными заболеваниями. Пила жесткой антималарии, лихорадки Денге, японского энцефалита Сентифи (СЭ), «ЛГ», № 5, 1982.



Figure 2. Valentin Sapewalow [Zapevalov], "Panic in the west or what is hiding behind the sensation surrounding AIDS," *Literaturnaya Gazeta*, 30 October 1985.

ist experienced in drug development,⁴⁵ worried that the AIDS agent might have originated under lax safety conditions during "biomedical research" involving RNA tumor viruses or other retroviruses.⁴⁶ This concern was shared by Professor Erika Hickel of the West German Green Party.⁴⁷ On 17 January 1985 she said in the West German parliament, the *Bundestag*, that one or more AIDS agents might have been created accidentally in a laboratory.⁴⁸ At the same time, some West Berliners were claiming that AIDS agents had been developed by the CIA on order of US President

Ronald Reagan so as to eliminate gay men worldwide.⁴⁹

Nor were Americans themselves shy. Their own government was not above their suspicion.

The retired Clinical Director of the Brooklyn State Hospital, Nathaniel S. Lehrman, a psychiatrist, grew concerned that AIDS was not caused by a virus alone but by a virus in combination with toxic waste or other poisons. Quite sensibly, Lehrman was reminding investigators to consider environmental factors. Less sensibly, Lehrman bounded far into conspiracy theory,

raising the possibility that the AIDS virus had been tested covertly by the CIA in Africa.^{19,20,50,51}

In 1983 two brothers were, supposedly, engaged by the Security Pacific Bank of Los Angeles, California, to form a health-maintenance organization, an HMO. The local prevalence and typical actuarial costs of AIDS cases would logically have altered the prospects of any such plan. One brother was Robert B. Strecker, presenting himself as an MD-PhD internist-gastroenterologist-pathologist-pharmacologist; the other was Theodore A. Strecker, presenting himself as an attorney. A literature review proceeded. Theodore “had difficulty estimating the probable cost of the ‘Human Retroviruses’ as related to [insurance] premium costs and was led deeper and deeper into the literature of virology attempting to solve the problem.” Soon, he “stumbled into a written order for the AIDS virus and a written plan to inject disease during preventive vaccinations for experimental purposes. . . . Apparently, individuals in the United States National Institute [sic] of Health and National Cancer Institute have combined with the United Nation’s World Health Organization to attack the United States with Bio-Weapons.” As seen now in its Internet afterlife, the document in which this charge appeared took for its title a warning: “THIS IS A BIO-ATTACK ALERT, MARCH 28, 1986.” Paranoid ideations flourished. “The purpose of the attack may be to prepare America by infection with immune depressing virus for a fast bio-attack. If that is true, it was started in the homosexuals in America because the enemy correctly judged that most Americans would not be alarmed by a homosexual disease.” Implications were clear: “The enemy hopes to impose despotic rule by the few” The first necessity was to remove communist scientists from laboratories. A list of imperatives followed. The eleventh and last was this: “The persons receiving this warning should allow the President of the United States until Friday, April 18, 1986, at 9:00 P.M. local time to act.”⁵² Nothing in the foregoing would recommend the Streckers for further attention, but they would yet make their mark.

Some experts assumed, rightly, that the AIDS agent or agents were descendants of viruses infecting nonhuman primates. A favorite ancestor candidate was a virus newly found in the African green monkey, *Chlorocebus sabaues*.⁵³ John Seale, formerly Consultant in Venereology at the Middlesex and St Thomas’

Hospitals, London, had worried since early 1983 about Western security implications resulting from AIDS, and he found a fully natural threat scary enough. He wrote about this candidate for an August 1985 editorial in the *Journal of the Royal Society of Medicine*. Citing recent work by Myron Essex, Seale had concurred: “A highly significant consideration is that the AIDS virus is spreading as a virgin-soil epidemic throughout mankind after crossing the species barrier, probably from a green monkey.” He had then asserted a startling implication: “. . . a new virus which produces a persistent viraemia for life, and causes a slow virus encephalopathy after a mean incubation period of many years, would produce a self-sustaining epidemic. Indeed, it would produce a lethal pandemic throughout the crowded cities and villages of the Third World of a magnitude unparalleled in human history. This is what the AIDS virus is now doing.”⁵⁴ Seale’s apocalyptic vision would come close to realization only in the worst hit cities and villages of the most traumatized countries, but it would have come far closer had effective preventives and therapeutics not been devised. In August 1985, with approval of the first antiretroviral drug still nearly two years away, evidence was sufficiently shocking to give Seale space.

Into his vision, though, Seale soon sketched less than fully natural factors, as depicted in pieces submitted to British, American, and German journals. Then, on 19 August 1985, he wrote a letter “to the editors of the major London papers and to four or five of the major medical journals. It’s headed ‘AIDS and National Security.’”⁵⁵ His letter languished, unprinted anywhere. With access to legitimate publication having narrowed, he was now being interviewed in *Executive Intelligence Review*, the print mouthpiece of a charismatic American political cultist, conspiracy theorist, soon-to-be-imprisoned fraudster, and serial presidential candidate, Lyndon H. LaRouche, Jr. Seale shoved on, quoting himself from his unpublished letter:

What I said was:

“Once the AIDS virus gets into an intravenous drug abusing community, it spreads even faster than among homosexuals. Long before even half of the NATO forces and their reservists were infected with the AIDS virus, the West would be a pushover for the Soviets. Employing the AIDS virus is much less messy and self-destructive than using nuclear weapons or nerve gas. Its

spread is easily prevented in a totalitarian state, unlike incoming missiles containing nuclear or chemical warheads. The Soviets did not deliberately start the AIDS epidemic as a form of biological warfare, but only a moron or an idiot in the Kremlin could fail to see its potential in the East-West power struggle, now that it is here. Gorbachov [*sic*] could easily contain the AIDS epidemic behind the Iron Curtain using methods far less draconian than those employed by Stalin in the '20s and '30s. And if he makes sure that heroin and cocaine keep flooding into the West, and the porno industry keeps pumping out propaganda glorifying ever more promiscuous and bizarre effects [*sic*], he could be laughing all the way to world domination by about the year 2000."⁵⁵

Yet, as represented in this interview, Seale was still convinced that the HIV had had a natural origin:

The virus in tropical Africa started there some time in the 1970s and the most likely thing that happened is that the virus that is present in the green monkey, and caused no harm, went across to man. What has now happened is that the extensive use in Central Africa and other similarly poor parts of the world, of very large amounts of modern medicine, medicines, [*sic*] without sterilizing the needles in between, has spread the disease.⁵⁵

On 20 December 1985, nine days after *Literaturnaya Gazeta* published its Drozdov interview, London's *Morning Star*, a communist newspaper, reported that the New Zealand AIDS Foundation had received a letter with claims similar to Professor Drozdov's. John Seale had been reconsidering his presumption that the origin of HIV had been natural. He now said that "the AIDS virus may have been manufactured in laboratories as a slow but deadly biological warfare weapon." He went on to say that "there was 'circumstantial evidence' to back the belief that the AIDS virus was genetically engineered in a laboratory."⁵⁶

On 26 December 1985, Moscow Radio's "World Service," broadcasting in English, presented Seale's ominous new inference as a conclusion.⁵⁷

Five months after his mention on Moscow Radio, Seale was contacted by an ambitious new ally soon to eclipse all earlier theorists. In a letter dated 29 May 1986, Jakob Segal, a Soviet citizen long retired from a professorship of biology in East Germany, wrote to suggest that "the AIDS virus is a chimera." By this he

meant a recombinant of the human T-cell lymphotropic virus type I (HTLV-I) and the Maedi-Visna virus, a sheep lentivirus first described in Iceland, in whose language "maedi" means dyspnea, or difficulty breathing, and "visna" means wasting. Furthermore, Segal wrote, "[t]here is no biologically known way by which such a chimera should arise, but it can easily be produced by gene splicing."⁵⁸

Several weeks later, 14 June 1986, a Soviet newspaper, *Sotsialisticheskaja Industriia* [*Socialist Industry*], ran a story called "Biomonsters from the USA" implying that HIV had been genetically engineered at Fort Detrick. The term "biomonsters" referred not to viruses but to Pentagon AIDS specialists.⁵⁹

At some point in this sequence, Zhores Aleksandrovič Medvedev, a Georgian-Russian dissident émigré biologist then working as a British citizen at the National Institute for Medical Research, London, wrote a letter responding to Seale. Back in 1969, Western publication of *The Rise and Fall of T. D. Lysenko*,⁶⁰ which originally had circulated reader-to-reader as a *samizdat* book, had cost Medvedev his job and made him an exile. He had unmasked the still living oppressor of Soviet genetics, the agronomist Trofim Denisovich Lysenko (1898–1976), proving him a charlatan.

Medvedev's letter appeared in the *Journal of the Royal Society of Medicine* in August 1986,⁶¹ one year after Seale's alarmist editorial. Addressing the journal's editor, Medvedev complimented Seale but then noted his usefulness in Soviet disinformation efforts:

... I would like to draw your attention to a commentary on his paper on Moscow Radio's "World Service" in English on 26 December 1985, 21.00 GMT:

"Identifying the origin of a disease makes the search for a remedy easier. Following this rule, Dr John Seale of Britain has concluded that the AIDS virus has been artificially created and its appearance is possibly the result of a human error. This conclusion supports the view that the AIDS epidemic has been caused by experiments with humans carried out in the USA as part of the development of new biological weapons.

Dr Seale claims in his report that, from the viewpoint of genetic engineering, to develop the AIDS virus artificially is not a problem, for this it is only necessary to add one gene to the virus causing a similar disease among sheep. There is ample evidence to believe that

such an operation has been carried out at a secret American laboratory.”

I would also like to stress that this is not the first time that Soviet official propaganda, and mass media sources inside the Soviet Union as well, have tried to connect the AIDS virus with genetic engineering and the Pentagon. ...⁶¹

Printed immediately below Medvedev's attack was Seale's defense, which opened disingenuously and proceeded assertively:

Sir, Dr Zhores Medvedev has shown courage as a distinguished biologist in raising the possibility, in a journal of medical science, that the Aids [*sic*] virus might have originated in a government laboratory as a weapon of biological warfare. ...

These Soviet articles [the Zapevalov article⁴³ and the Drozdov interview⁴⁴] led me to consider seriously the circumstantial evidence that the Aids virus might have been man-made. I concluded that it was feasible — indeed that it was quite likely, though not necessarily by military scientists. My conclusions certainly give no support for the Soviet claim that particular scientists, in particular laboratories, in a particular country, developed the Aids virus while searching for a biological weapon. Nevertheless, there are important reasons why all biological scientists should reflect, most carefully, upon the Soviet statements.

First and foremost, the modes of transmission of Aids are highly suggestive of a man-made virus [“man-made” here referring to tissue-culture and living-animal techniques, not to molecular-genetic techniques]. ...

The Soviet Government's hypothesis seems to be that the Aids virus was developed by the Pentagon which, through incompetence, scored a cold war version of an “own goal” by infecting their own population and their NATO allies.

On the other hand, an alternative hypothesis might be that the virus was developed in the Ivanovsky Institute in Moscow, or in laboratories in Novosibirsk, and released in the USA in the mid-1970s. This does not imply an updated, biological war version of Pearl Harbour. Suffice to say that any determined person, with access to the Aids virus in any laboratory, could start an epidemic in any country, which thereafter would inevitably spread to every country. ...⁶²

Robert Strecker now got his chance. Citing Seale's August 1985 opinion piece, the same one to which Medvedev had just responded, Robert joined the higher end of the HIV-origins discussion with a September 1986 letter to the editor of the *Journal of the Royal Society of Medicine*. The letter was too sophisticated to ignore yet uncomfortably bizarre:

Sir, Is the Aids virus the only member of the Lentivirinae family in addition to maedi-visna of sheep, infectious anaemia virus of horses, and caprine [*sic*] arthritis-encephalitis of goat? Or is bovine visna virus, cultured in leukaemic bone marrow in 1977, another member of the family?

It is the gospel of the United States NIH that the AIDS virus arose spontaneously in monkeys — animals not commonly known to harbour visna-like viruses or known to be adversely affected by the AIDS virus until they are inoculated.

Most likely the AIDS virus arose by hetrodimer [*sic*] recombination of bovine leukaemia virus and visna virus in a commonly infected host cell. Furthermore, it seems more probable that the virus expanded its host range and perhaps replicative rate (trivialities to those initiated in reaction rate kinetics of retrovirus recombination) by culture growth in malignant bone marrow tissue.

Where is the sorcerer to banish the flood created by the apprentices of the World Health Organization and United States National Institute [*sic*] of Health?

When the retrovirus strains, oncogenic genes and transacting genes are added to the airborne human DNA viral genomes in combination with host cell information, we all will regret the infinitely culturable HeLa [HeLa cells formed immortal human lines useful in medical research].

Robert B Strecker

Preferred Risk Partners Inc,
Glendale, California, USA⁶³

The Streckers were never taken seriously by any branch of government, federal or state, and in 1988 Theodore was found dead of a gunshot wound, presumptively self-inflicted.⁶⁴ Robert, however, stayed the course. In the same year, he and several partners, collectively The Strecker Group, produced a ninety-six-minute videotape, “The Strecker Memorandum,”^{65,66} which showed Robert delivering an extended alternative assessment of evidence from the virological and

epidemiological literatures. In the eighty-second minute, while taking friendly questions from four studio guests, he declined to agree that his was the only voice of reason on AIDS and its origins. He added that John Seale had compatible views, as did “Jakob Segal, an East German biologist who said that the virus was constructed at Fort Detrick in a biological warfare project.”⁶⁵

Two years on, in August 1990, Robert Strecker had become prominent enough to draw an audience — to a place unnamed — to hear him give a speech and take questions. The speech, in essence, was a celebrity retrospective, in which Robert reviewed his many insights, all *faux*, since 1983, when he and Theodore had accidentally discovered a longstanding conspiracy, also *faux*, of breathtaking scope, catastrophic import, and no substance:

Go back to 1969, a testimony before the Church Committee in Congress [the United States Senate Select Committee to Study Governmental Operations with Respect to Intelligence Activities, chaired by Senator Frank Church, Democrat of Idaho, in 1975, not 1969⁶⁷]; the Department of Defense representatives requested 10 million dollars to produce new viruses that could selectively destroy the immune system. ... So, in 1972, a group of virologists said, “Let’s make AIDS.” ...

This virus was produced in a laboratory by the recombination or the mixing or the melting together or the mating of two viruses, one named bovine leukemia virus of cattle, and the other named visna virus of sheep. ...

What we think happened was, in 1972 when the United States National Institute [*sic*] of Health was funded with millions of dollars to prove once and for all that viruses cause cancer, of which of course they didn’t pre-1972, and the reason that we know that, is because cancer was never infectious before, but it is now. In 1972, we produced a group of viruses that will cause cancer basically in the laboratories around the world and then in our opinion, these viruses were probably tested. We think they were tested in large populations in Africa, which explains how you get 300 million Africans probably infected today. We think that the entire continent of Africa will be extinct within the next 10 to 15 years. ...

Now that epidemiology [the geographic and demographic distribution of AIDS] is exactly the same as the

United States Hepatitis B Vaccine study. We think that the virus was introduced into the homosexuals in this country in that project [by intentionally adding the AIDS agent to the hepatitis B vaccine].

Robert Strecker then departed from the professionally educated conspiracy theorist’s mix of misinterpretation, misstatement, and mistrust. Now he ventured into quackery and grandiosity:

What’s the solution? The solution is an even more interesting problem which we stumbled into in all of this sort of rambling about reading, and what we discovered that was [was that], in our opinion, the disease can be fixed by a pulse electromagnetic wave, which led us into the theory of electromagnetic medicine, which led us to the theory of Raymond Roy Wright. The story of Wright is even more startling, because what if what Wright did is correct, and I believe that it was, then everybody who died of a cancer [or of] infectious diseases since 1920 died needlessly. ...

Wright’s theory is this, it’s very simple in principle. Just as with a crystal glass, if you radiate it with the right audiotone [it will shatter], what Wright said was that viruses and bacteria and cancers could be killed uniquely by a correctly pulsed electromagnetic radiation. ...

Now, what can we do? Everybody asks that question. ... The first thing is, we have a videotape for sale back in the corner back there ... We’re already on a radio network called Sun Radio Network; we’re in about 100 cities nationwide, every night for 3 hours, 9:00 to 12:00 midnight PST [Pacific Standard Time]. ... Starting September 3 [1990] across the country in 200 and perhaps 400 cities, we’re going to be on CBN which is Christian Broadcasting Network, every morning at 9:00 PST. ...⁶⁸

An anonymous Internet commentator⁶⁹ saw that Strecker had gotten the last figure’s name — Raymond Roy Wright — wrong. In his videotape, Strecker came closer, calling him Raymond Roy Rife, “perhaps the greatest inventor of all times.”⁶⁵ The real fellow was Royal Raymond Rife (1888–1971) of San Diego. Rife patented an improved microscope lamp in 1929⁷⁰ but would gain notoriety as a peddler of worthless medical gadgets. He claimed implausibly that he had made an optical microscope that could resolve viruses, but he claimed somewhat more plausibly that he could kill pathogens by oscillating them using radiant energy. In

the 1980s Rife was put forward as having been a victim of conspiracies led by established medical organizations, and “Rife devices” were widely sold in the American alternative-medical market.⁷¹ Strecker promoted “Rife techniques” as the best hope for curing AIDS.⁶⁵

Was the myth a conspiracy from the start? Judging from publication dates, maybe it was. We have no documented appearance earlier than the *Patriot* article, and that article was likely Soviet in conception if not composition, as were others coming from the Soviet Union overtly. Judging from presumptive “first-thought” dates, however, the myth must have flowed from several tributaries, perhaps from many, and one or more of these might have found its way, via the KGB, to New Delhi. *Patriot* did cite “a well-known American scientist and anthropologist,” and this attribution was not wholly unbelievable; for whatever reason, “American scientist” was to become Robert Strecker’s persona in the Soviet press.³³ The myth’s core idea, that a new disease killing thousands of gay men had a diabolical explanation, must have crossed many minds all around the same time, especially in the most severely affected areas, which then seemed to be in the United States, such as in California, near the Streckers. Some early exponents of a non-natural origin might have influenced some others well prior to July 1983 without leaving documentary evidence.

Whether or not a conspiracy from the start, the myth from *near* its start was certainly a conspiracy *theory*, one prompted by AIDS itself, by the AIDS agent’s hard-to-understand and immunologically sinister effects. No AIDS, no myth. But the Cold War was a factor, too, as was the bioweaponry temptation presented, East and West, by genetic engineering. It was in this East-West regard that *conspiracy* tried to capture conspiracy *theory*. Soviet efforts to blame AIDS on the United States made the most of independent conspiracy theorists, or tried to. Seale pointedly did not endorse Soviet claims of American culpability. The *Literaturnaya Gazeta* items and the “chimera” letter from Jakob Segal might have encouraged Seale to stress laboratory fabrication in considering the AIDS agent’s genesis, but Seale insisted the AIDS agent had as likely come from Moscow as from Maryland. In November 1986, he made this point again, to the *Sunday Telegraph*: “I do not rule out the possibility that AIDS could have been artificially created in some other country such as the USSR.”⁴⁰

Did the Segals make the myth more plausible?

The *Patriot* article had portrayed the United States as violating its treaty obligations under the Biological Weapons Convention so as to commit crimes against humanity. Americans had sought a bioweapon, the article alleged; they had gone to Africa and later to Latin America to find one, and they had succeeded in recovering the AIDS virus, presumably from a person or persons long enough infected to be noticeably ill. Despite an adult incubation period far too protracted ever to make it a tactical asset, the virus had not been abandoned; rather, the Americans had persisted in its study, knowingly introducing it into US blood banks and into naive US populations — Haitian immigrants, drug addicts, gay men — somehow foreseen to be especially susceptible.

Almost any biologist would have found *Patriot*’s scientific indictment implausible, even absurd. But biologists attracted to *Patriot*’s moral indictment might have been sufficiently intrigued to rework the science. The Segals, Jakob and Lilli, were such biologists.

Jakob Segal (1911–1995), was born to Lithuanian parents in Saint Petersburg, Russia, and moved with his parents to Königsberg, East Prussia, Germany — now Kaliningrad, Russia — in 1919, when he was eight years old. He finished high school there and went on to study biology in Königsberg, Berlin, and Munich. He was active in the Red Student Alliance and the Communist Party and during the National Socialist period moved, as a Lithuanian citizen, to Toulouse, France. There he met and married Lilli Schlesinger, a Berlin native and German citizen studying agriculture; Lilli Segal (1913–1999) became a Lithuanian citizen by marriage. The couple moved to Paris, where Jakob earned a PhD in physiology at the Sorbonne shortly before French capitulation.

Jakob and Lilli were both biologists, but they were also both Jews and communists and partisans of the French resistance. In Paris on 21 November 1943, Lilli was arrested by Vichy French police and interrogated over several weeks. On 20 December she was transferred to German authorities and spent the next eight months in a *Wehrmacht* prison nearby in Fresnes. In August 1944, with Allied armies threatening from the west and the south, Lilli was deported. After four days on a train she arrived at Auschwitz in Nazi-occupied Poland.⁷² Lilli was an inmate there while

anthropologist-physician Josef Mengele, “*Der Todesengel* [the Death Angel],” was conducting inhumane experiments — on twins when he could get them. Mengele sorted arriving prisoners, sending most to die, selecting some as workers, others as subjects. He selected Lilli. “Someone shouted: ‘Old people and mothers with kids to the left, women to the right [*Alte und Frauen mit Kindern links, Frauen rechts*].’ ... It was Dr. Mengele. ... The majority of us were killed immediately after arrival by gas, including 300 kids from an orphanage.”⁷³ In November 1944, after a second selection by Mengele, Lilli was transferred to a slave-labor camp near Zittau, in Saxony, to manufacture aircraft parts. From Zittau on 20 November 1944 she escaped. Lilli made her way to Switzerland and then in March 1945 to a liberated Paris.⁷⁴

The Segals had both become Soviet citizens following the Soviet Union’s annexation of Lithuania in 1940, and in autumn 1952, as Lilli later wrote, they “had been asked to see the Soviet consulate [in Paris]. The consul proposed to us that we move to Berlin, in the German Democratic Republic.”⁷⁵ They accepted the consul’s proposal, in late December 1952 going to Humboldt University, East Berlin. There Jakob joined the faculty as founding director of the Institute of General Biology, and Lilli, continuing studies begun in France in the 1930s, earned a doctorate in agriculture. In time she became her husband’s biophysical, physiological, and immunological research collaborator. Jakob taught in Cuba for three years and in Mexico for three semesters. He retired from Humboldt’s Institute of General Biology in 1971, Lilli retiring with him, but he did not lose interest in medical biophysical problems.^{76,77}

By 1985, fourteen years into retirement, Jakob Segal had become interested not only in AIDS but also, and intensely, in the HIV-from-Fort-Detrick myth. “Nine months ago I prepared a first report on the origin of AIDS,” he would write in August 1986, placing his earliest effort’s culmination around November 1985.⁷⁸

Lilli in one respect was exceptionally well prepared to share this interest. After her own retirement, this Auschwitz witness-survivor and runaway slave laborer had begun studying Nazi-era eugenics crimes, about which in 1991 she would publish her own book, *The High Priests of Extermination: Anthropologists, Physicians and Psychiatrists as Pioneers of Selection and Murder in the Third Reich*.⁷⁹ Lilli keenly knew that life

scientists could go astray morally when ordered or tempted by government. The misconduct her husband imagined did not exceed the enormities she herself had seen.

Her preparation in other respects might not have been as strong. “My wife had specialized in physiological genetics and immunology,” Jakob was to write in a 1993 biosketch,⁷⁶ yet Lilli’s doctoral discipline had been neither of these fields. Her research role was supportive, she told a visitor from the US Embassy in East Berlin on 12 September 1986.⁸⁰ “[S]ince she was lacking the biophysical and genetical overview,” she was a helping Jakob as a reference librarian, a “*Dokumentalist*.”⁸¹ This would remain her self-description. “Actually, the purely scientific arguments were developed by my husband,” Lilli said in 1989 in reference to HIV and AIDS; “I’ve been working mainly as a librarian.”⁸² (Figure 3)

With Lilli’s help, Jakob grasped the myth and embellished it. Or, rather, he grasped a complex outcome — the AIDS pandemic — and proposed to explain the AIDS agent and its depredations as products of a conspiracy: a malicious misadventure disguised as a natural calamity. He would have been offended to hear his explanation called a myth.

Segal’s theory came to comprise five main features, each open to objection based on understanding at the time.

Feature 1. *The AIDS agent had not descended from a virus hosted by nonhuman primates.* In the same year Segal started to deal with the origins topic, several experts suggested — without real evidence, he said — that the predecessor of the AIDS agent might have been a recently discovered virus that infected African green monkeys without causing disease.^{53,83,84} In an interview during which he discussed “the green monkey theory as the origin of AIDS,” Segal said, “It’s ludicrous and scientifically incredible — and has been promoted, I believe, by the United States Government as part of the cover-up.”⁸⁵ In a subsequent interview, Segal would argue that a “conversion of an apathogenic [harmless] monkey virus into an agent harmful for human beings would be so gigantic [an evolutionary jump] that it was beyond every probability.”⁸⁶ He was convinced that “the green monkey theory” was a disinformation campaign concealing American responsibility for creating the AIDS agent.



Figure 3. Lilli and Jakob Segal, 1987. Source: Jan Feddersen and Wolfgang Gast, “*Wie das AIDS-Virus nach Fort Detrick kam* [How the AIDS virus came from Fort Detrick],” *Die Tageszeitung*, 9–10 January 2010. Photo: Kuno Kruse. Reprinted with permission.

Feature 2. *The AIDS agent comprised parts of two different retroviruses.* Segal agreed with the Streckers and others that HIV might have been the product of directed recombination. Preliminary investigations had indeed prompted Hiroyuki Toh and Takashi Miyata⁸⁷ and “Booby Hatch”⁸⁸ to consider this possibility in communications published 4 July 1985 and November 1985 respectively. Like the Streckers, and as repeated by Seale, Segal assumed that one of the parents of HIV had been the Maedi-Visna virus, an agent infecting sheep. In contrast, though, he believed that the other parent had been the human T-cell lymphotropic virus, HTLV-1, which is similar to bovine leukemia virus.⁸⁵ The Streckers, who were manifestly eccentric, were never to be mentioned in Segal’s publications, never to be credited as an influence. The Segals did keep track of Robert Strecker, but they began to only in July 1987, as

Lilli told an East German writer, Stefan Heym, in a telephone conversation recorded by the Stasi.⁸⁹

Feature 3. *The AIDS agent was a recombinant virus and, as such, could not have arisen in nature.* Segal explained that a recombinant virus could not be natural “since viruses lack a sexual life, that is, their genomes cannot be combined such as the genomes of an American Indian and a Chinese woman. No normal biological mechanism exists for an exchange of parts of genomes. HTLV-III [one of the acronyms replaced by “HIV” in 1986⁴] originated either by a miracle or by a technology known and improved for about two decades . . . , by genetic engineering.”⁸⁶ But where did geneticists and virologists work scrupulously enough to construct such a dangerous agent? In the imperialist United States of America, especially in the bioweapons laboratory, USAMRIID, at Fort Detrick. According to

Segal the “creation of HIV was an action systematically prepared and performed to generate a novel type of biological weapon.”⁹⁰

Feature 4. *The AIDS agent had been studied in prisoners.* Segal seems to have known, roughly, that “the Church Committee” in the US Senate in 1975 had held hearings⁶⁷ exposing past research abuses; he focused on “experiments on human beings with radioactive substances.”⁸⁶ He also believed that the “use of voluntary test persons for experiments with pathogens” had become “by all means customary” in America.⁹¹ Extrapolating from these impressions, Segal asserted that “experiments were being carried out at Fort Detrick . . . on volunteer long-term prisoners who were promised freedom after the tests.”⁸⁵

Feature 5. *The AIDS agent became amplified when released prisoners entered a hyper-promiscuous setting.* “After the prisoners were infected with the newly made virus, there would have been no immediate signs of illness, and they would have been released as promised into the world.” Segal reasoned that some of them must have become gay during incarceration, and this subset would immediately have contacted New York City’s gay men’s community, the American AIDS epidemic’s index population.⁸⁵

Rather than probing an organism to infer the process by which it had evolved, Segal indicted a foreign government, positing its motives, its methods, its errors, and its attempts to hide crimes. As a normal-science hypothesis, then, the HIV-from-Fort-Detrick myth was unacceptable.

Among the objections Segal in his own day could have recognized, had he wished to recognize them, were these five.

Objection 1. The green-monkey hypothesis was rejected not because it had never been plausible but because retroviruses related to HIV were being found in many nonhuman animals — and, among nonhuman primates, not just in green monkeys. Eventually implicated as the retrovirus that had “jumped” to humans was simian immunodeficiency virus (SIV).⁹² AIDS was clearly a zoonosis, a human disease from a nonhuman animal, but, unlike some zoonoses, AIDS was highly transmissible human-to-human, assuming intimate contact.⁹³

Objection 2. The AIDS agents, plural, were direct descendents of several different SIV strains. They were

not recombinants of Maedi-Visna virus, HTLV-1, or bovine leukemia virus (BLV).

Objection 3. Viruses were indeed able to recombine, despite lacking sexual reproduction. In 1946 Max Delbrück and Alfred Hershey had discovered viruses recombining in infected host cells.^{94,95} Many years later, AIDS agents were found to recombine with high frequency.⁹⁶ This fact turned out to be no small detail but the greatest single obstacle to AIDS control through either vaccination or antiviral therapy. Indeed, recombination is fundamental to viral evolution and, thus, to virology generally, not just to retrovirology. For example, a newly discovered parvovirus-circovirus recombinant was implicated in 2013 as a cause of seronegative hepatitis.⁹⁷ Some HIV ancestors did appear to be recombinants of predecessor viruses,⁹⁸ but these recombinants had arisen in the jungles of Africa, not in the laboratories of Fort Detrick or any other facility.

Objection 4. Materials saved from puzzling pre-1981 patients whose histories and findings retrospectively suggested AIDS did in some cases show evidence of HIV. These patients had died as early as the 1950s, long before genetic engineering (Table 1). In 1985, Professor Victor Zhdanov, director of the Ivanovsky Institute of Virology in Moscow, had told the newspaper *Sovietskaya Kultura* [*Soviet Culture*] what almost any up-to-date scientist most anywhere in the world would by then have said, “that the disease [AIDS] seems to have originated in central African monkeys.”⁹⁹ In a letter dated 26 August 1986, Segal himself noted that Zhdanov had acknowledged at an April 1986 WHO conference that some samples saved from blood donated in the Soviet Union as far back as 1974 — still the infancy of genetic engineering — showed evidence of HIV.¹⁰⁰ Segal began pushing the HIV-from-Fort-Detrick myth only *after* this consensus had emerged and despite concurrence with it even at the pinnacle of Soviet science.

Objection 5. HIV did not make its debut by moving from a prison in Maryland to a hyper-promiscuous gay men’s community in New York City but by moving from Africa to Haiti in 1966 and from there to the United States in 1969.¹⁰¹ Segal in 1986 could not have known the details of that transit but in 1984 could have known other details, about an Air Canada steward — “Patient Zero” — and other hyper-promiscuous travelers to whom the initial spread of

AIDS was being attributed.¹⁰² This 1984 transit story, while less convoluted than the reality it sought to explain, was sensible conceptually and had been published prominently two years before Segal's first contact with Seale.

Did the Segals make the myth more plausible? Yes and no, depending on the audience. For the uninformed and misinformed and especially for the conspiracy-tropic, the Segals made the myth more impressive, provocative, and arguable. For any up-to-date clinician or scientist, they did the opposite. By adding specifics that failed tests of epidemiological and virological reasoning, the Segals, against their intentions, made the myth *less* plausible among the more expert.

Did Jakob Segal promote his own theory?

So fervently did Segal embrace the myth that he came to personify it. He would even be credited retrospectively for a quotation in its print debut. John O. Koehler, a former journalist who became an advisor on German affairs, wrote three paragraphs on the myth in his 1999 book, *Stasi: The Untold Story of the East German Secret Police*. Koehler reported that “[i]n late 1986 [*sic*] the New Delhi newspaper *The Patriot* ... quoted a Dr. Jakob Segal ...”¹⁰³

Yet *Patriot* in July 1983 — not “in late 1986” — had conjured “[a] well-known American scientist and anthropologist ... who wants to remain anonymous”³⁴ Segal's name nowhere appeared. *Patriot's* unnamed expert could have been anyone, or no one, but Segal would have been a surprise. We have no evidence of his interest until 2 December 1985,¹⁰⁴ and he would not enter the AIDS-origin arena openly until May 1986 when he wrote to Seale.

To support his three paragraphs, Koehler added a single endnote to a single source; he cited no page number. The source was a book published in 1992 by two former Stasi officers, Lieutenant Colonel Günter Bohnsack and Lieutenant Colonel Dr. Herbert Brehmer.¹⁰⁵ These “insiders” had missed the *Patriot* article entirely — and they had missed the *Literaturnaya Gazeta* items, too; Koehler must have been reporting hearsay.

In his third paragraph, Koehler added this: “I spotted Segal's name in Stasi documents. ... In a

1991 interview with me in Berlin, Segal presented himself as a die-hard Marxist, totally incapable of accepting the demise of communist East Germany. Segal, then eighty years old, insisted that his information on the origin of the HIV virus [*sic*] was solid, and he denied having had any contact with the Stasi. He was lying.”¹⁰³ Why did Koehler write that last sentence? Why did Koehler write Segal off as a fake? In 1992, while Segal was still alive and active, Bohnsack and Brehmer in a single ambiguous sentence, as we will soon see, had folded Segal's activities into a KGB-Stasi co-production.¹⁰⁵ Koehler, publishing four years after Segal's death, chose to disregard the ambiguity.¹⁰³

Segal's personification of the myth was real enough, however, and it suggests either of two possibilities. Segal thought he had solved a riddle and wanted the world to know. Or, scientific insights aside, Segal became the face of a propaganda offensive.

Might Segal have taken orders to concoct an accusatory theory and then to spread it through scientific contacts, all the while pretending to be an insightful retiree with no motive other than discovery? Yes, he might have taken such orders, but, as will be detailed further on, we have found no evidence that he did so.

Segal's own behavior, as tracked through his estate and through others' correspondence and recollections, affords a second approach to the same question.

As a highly intelligent and conspicuously imaginative scientist, Jakob Segal had formulated many hypotheses that deviated from prevailing theories. For example, he had developed structural models of proteins and nucleic acids differing completely from those accepted by the overwhelming majority of fellow scientists. Once asked by a journalist why his protein structural model was accepted by “only very few scientists,” Segal said he was not bothered: “You know, you must develop a certain arrogance and convince yourself: Firstly: I am right. Secondly: Seven Nobel prize winners do not agree with me, I am right, nevertheless. Thirdly: The others are wrong. It may last two hundred years, until they do understand that, but I am right.”¹⁰⁶

Having made the myth his own, Segal began behaving like a scientist with a genuine insight, one sure to overturn expert prejudice, one sure to bring him credit among the more perceptive of his peers and to ensure vindication eventually. He started at the top,

Table 1. AIDS, genetic-engineering, and myth-making events through 1986.

Timing	Events		
	AIDS	Genetic engineering	Myth making
1884–1924; most likely year 1908	First appearance of HIV-1.		
1906–55; most likely year 1932	First appearance of HIV-2.		
1948		Discovery of natural viral recombination.	
1952	First presumed AIDS case (USA); identified retrospectively.		
1959	First confirmed HIV infection (Kinshasa, Congo); identified retrospectively.		
1966	First confirmed AIDS case (USA); diagnosed retrospectively.		
1969	Numerous confirmed cases (Africa, Israel, USA); diagnosed retrospectively.		
1970		Discovery of bacterial restriction enzymes — “molecular scalpels.”	
1971–72	HIV-positive sera in 17 of 1,129 drug addicts (New York City); identified retrospectively.	Discovery of additional restriction enzymes.	
1972	First confirmed AIDS case in Europe (France); diagnosed retrospectively.	Directed <i>in-vitro</i> recombination of different DNAs.	
1974	HIV-positive sera (USSR); identified retrospectively.		
1981	AIDS first described, although not yet named.		
1983	First isolation of an AIDS agent, with American and French teams both publishing in <i>Science</i> , 20 May.		Strecker brothers begin to assert that the AIDS agent was a product of molecular genetic experimentation. Anonymous letter in <i>Patriot</i> (India), 16 July, reports that the AIDS virus was first isolated during a US search for novel bioweapons.
1985	A retrovirus distantly related to HIV is isolated from African green monkeys and is mistakenly assumed by some scientists to be HIV's immediate ancestor.		
October 1985			<i>Literaturnaya Gazeta</i> (Soviet Union) claims the HIV had been sought by the US and had been isolated at Fort Detrick.
November 1985			Jakob Segal (GDR) adopts, amends, and spreads the <i>Gazeta</i> message. Lehrman (US) suspects CIA testing in Africa.
December 1985			<i>Morning Star</i> reports claims by John Seale (UK).
1986	AIDS agent is named the “human immunodeficiency virus” (HIV).		“The Strecker Memorandum” is released.
4 August 1986			The Segals send a manuscript to California; US authorities notice.
August or September 1986			A handout summarizing Segal's claims is distributed in Harare; worldwide attention is gained.

presenting his notions to Benno Müller-Hill, an illustrious West German molecular biologist and Professor of Genetics at the University of Cologne.¹⁰⁴

Müller-Hill did not support Segal's hypotheses whatsoever. In his first reply letter, Müller-Hill answered, *inter alia*, "there is hard evidence that the virus was transferred in 1979 in Africa from monkey to men and spread afterwards. . . . The claim that AIDS was a product of DNA manipulation was not supported by evidence."¹⁰⁷ Segal disagreed. He expressed his conviction that the AIDS agent was a recombinant of two other viruses and pressed his belief that no such recombinant could have arisen in nature. Hence, genetic manipulation must have created the AIDS agent.

In the final letter of their correspondence, Müller-Hill summarized:

I still regard your hypothesis that the AIDS-virus has been constructed in Fort Detrick not proved by the circumstantial evidence mentioned by you. . . . I cannot agree with your claim that HTLV-III is of artificial origin, since direct ancestors are missing, [from] which the putative recombinant should have been formed [emphasis in original]. . . . Since the crime assumed (but not validated) by you would be such a major one it is irresponsible, in my mind, to regard the alleged in-vitro recombination performed in Fort Detrick as proven according to the data provided by you and to bring them [those data] before the public.¹⁰⁸

Segal ignored Müller-Hill's counsel and sought a broader audience. He continued to contact experts and continued to respond to non-experts who contacted him. On all fronts he promoted the very ideas Müller-Hill told him were mistaken.

Segal sent a paper describing his theses — the first such transmission, as far as we know — on 12 March 1986 to recipients in West Germany and Japan.

Having learned that Professor Volkmar Sigusch, director of the Institute of Sex Research, Goethe University, Frankfurt am Main, was editing a book on AIDS, Segal on 12 March 1986 submitted as a candidate for inclusion "an elaboration on the origin of AIDS just finished."¹⁰⁹ Sigusch wrote back 9 April 1986 expressing his thanks and proposing to include Segal's manuscript, pending revisions. Also, for Segal's interest, Sigusch sent along *Operation AIDS*, which included an article by "Booby Hatch."^{110,111}

Segal accepted the publication offer extended by Sigusch and on 24 April 1986 returned a draft improved along suggested lines:

We revised it [the manuscript] in the proposed way immediately. We confined ourselves to compiling the references without mentioning the full titles because otherwise the bibliography alone would have required about 10 pages. At this occasion we brought the manuscript up to date and included the results of some important papers published in recent months. Thus the manuscript covers the situation as of the end of March 1986. The information on the two authors [of our paper] requested by you is attached on a separate page. . . . Figure 5 [in Segal's draft] is an original sketch drawn by the authors for this publication.¹¹²

Segal's work was now ostensibly "in press" in West Germany — and under a distinguished editor. His other 12 March 1986 transmission was not in German but in English, and it went to Tokyo:

Dear Professor [Shingo] Shibata, our common friend Eva Brück [according to the Center for Jewish History a Holocaust survivor and the author of *Shadows of the Past: Childhood Years in Austria 1933–1938*] gave me the advice, to send you a paper my wife an [sic] I just finished. It deals with the origin of AIDS and concludes, that this disease did not originate in Central Africa and come to us via the Green Monkey, but that the AIDS virus is a chimera from HTLV-I and visna virus, performed by gene surgery in the P-4 laborators [sic] of Fort Detrick, Maryland, USA, in the fall 1977. Such assumptions have already been put forward, but, as far I am informed, without any scientific evidence and by persons well intentioned but lacking the necessary professional knowledge . . .¹¹³

Next, on 4 August 1986, in their boldest move so far, the Segals sent a "draft paper" to the United States.

Why would they have done this? How did they do it? Answers can be found in documents filed by BStU, but answers did not come quickly, even to the Stasi. Eleven weeks later, despite monitoring a great slice of society, including citizens communicating with persons and institutions abroad, the Stasi were still trying to understand how this transmission had occurred and to whom, if to anybody in particular, it had been directed. To our knowledge, the Stasi's earliest interest in the myth — and the surest proof that the Segals had

long preceded the Stasi as “mythologists” — is found here.

On 23 October 1986, Colonel Oldenburg, deputy head of HV A’s Department IX/C, sent a long report, with multiple attachments, to Lieutenant Colonel Bernd Häsel, head of HA II/3. Oldenburg’s unit was responsible for *external* counter-espionage in West Germany and observation of US facilities in both West and East Berlin. Häsel’s unit was responsible for *internal* counter-espionage, including surveillance of the US Embassy in the GDR. Responsibilities did overlap, then (Table 2).¹¹⁴

In a covering letter, Oldenburg wrote: “Attached I provide you with information on activities performed by SANDFORD, William Gregory, and KÖNIG, John Monroe, diplomats accredited to the Embassy of the USA to the GDR.”¹¹⁵ Oldenburg must have assumed his comrade ignorant of the context motivating these diplomats, so he tried to explain it succinctly. Attached was “Information on activities of US offices regarding a scientific publication on the origin of AIDS,” noting

that a married couple of GDR scientists ... had been contacted on 12 September 1986 by J. M. König, employee of the Embassy of the USA, born circa 1950, 2nd secretary of the political department. ... [The couple] is registered by HV A/SWT/XIII [and] had spread the thesis that the AIDS virus is a product of biological warfare research in the USA. ... The GDR scientists assume activities of the CIA behind the campaign that AIDS is derived from “green monkeys” in Africa.⁸⁰

Neither Oldenburg nor the author of the “Information” document named “the married couple,” but the latter did refer to two reports of home visits made by representatives of the US Embassy in the GDR. These two reports, which Oldenburg attached, had been written by Lilli Segal.^{81,116}

The “Information” document’s author might have thought the visiting diplomats familiar with, and uneasy about, an American’s accusation similar in conspiratorial spirit, although not in theoretical content, to Segal’s. For Häsel’s review, then, Oldenburg attached work by and about Nathaniel Lehrman, the psychiatrist who suspected that the CIA had tested the AIDS virus in Africa.^{117,118,119,120} We do not know how the Stasi received Lehrman’s papers; none of them is mentioned in Segal’s publications.

Lastly, the author of the “Information” document turned to the presumptive cause of the home visits, an unexpected American contact:

[T]he GDR scientists have submitted their elaboration, which was already distributed in numerous countries, to the US psychologist Dr. Nicholas Bond, ... at the California State University. He, in addition, works on behalf of the US Army. He provided the Department of Defense and Stanford Research Inst. with the material. In consequence an unknown employee of the government had contacted him and asked for the source of the material (see attached excerpt from letter from USA).⁸⁰

The external-internal counter-espionage overlap was not the Segals and not AIDS and not even Heym; it was the figure to whom “the GDR scientists” had apparently “submitted their elaboration.” Oldenburg inferred that Jakob Segal and his colleagues had sent their work directly to an identifiable figure well accepted within American academic-military circles. This figure was Nicholas Anderson Bond, Jr., Ph.D. (1922–2008), Professor of Psychology at California State University, Sacramento. His work included studies of man-machine interfaces such as those found in aircraft¹²¹ and was often funded by the US Department of Defense, especially its Office of Naval Research, for which he worked overseas from 1981 through 1985 as a “liaison scientist.”¹²²

Oldenburg seemed puzzled by Segal’s new move. Oldenburg took no credit for it, nor did he hint at any credit to be taken by colleagues elsewhere inside the MfS. How had “the GDR scientists” managed so bold an act of self-promotion? Oldenburg supposed that Bond himself or some member of Bond’s family must have been a relative of Jakob or Lilli Segal.⁸⁰

As unlikely as it may now sound, Oldenburg’s supposition was not fanciful. On a 1960 questionnaire still on file, Lilli had listed two California relatives: Gerda David and Dr. Herbert H. Shey,¹²³ neither by then still a “Schlesinger.” On a 1967 questionnaire still on file, Lilli had recorded Gerda’s date of birth as 21 March 1907; Gerda had been working as a school nurse in Berkeley, California.¹²⁴ Lilli recorded Herbert’s date of birth as 5 July 1909; Herbert had been living in Seal Beach, California, and working at a hospital in Los Angeles.

These details conform closely, but not precisely, with Lilli’s autobiography, published in 1986. Therein Lilli

described having grown up with an eldest sibling, a sister Gerda, and an elder brother, Herbert. In November 1918, when the First World War ended, Gerda was eleven-and-a-half and Herbert nine years old. Herbert had become a physician, had trained initially at the Jewish Hospital in Berlin, and had emigrated to the United States in 1937.¹²⁵

We have not found a Gerda Schlesinger or a Gerda Schlesinger David, but in the United States Social Security Death Index we have found a Gerda David, born 22 March — not 21 March — 1907 in Germany. She died in 1999 in Sacramento.¹²⁶

If *en route* his “Schlesinger” had shrunk to “Shey” then Lilli’s brother might have been the Herbert H. Shey listed in the 1940 United States Census as having been born in Germany in 1910 — rather than 1909 — and having resided in Berlin. In 1940 he was living at 327 Beach 19 Street, New York, Queens, New York. He was single, educated beyond college, and was employed full-time as a hospital intern; at least four other interns roomed in the same building.¹²⁷ MEDLINE, the electronic database of the English-language health-sciences literature maintained by the National Library of Medicine, now attributes to “Shey HH” four items, published from 1966 to 1972. The first three listed this author’s location as Long Beach,^{128,129,130} the fourth as Seal Beach,¹³¹ California.

On a preponderance-of-coincidences basis, these were Lilli’s long gone siblings. We have no evidence that either knew Bond, but Gerda did die in Bond’s professional hometown.

Oldenburg might have guessed correctly about a family connection, but he was far off on another point. He assumed that the letter whose excerpt he attached for Häselser’s review⁸⁰ had been sent to the Segals from Bond himself. The excerpt included neither a sender’s name nor a date and was familiar in tone:

Regarding your article which [name redacted] [name redacted] brought here — Three copies were sent to Stanford research, the Defense Dept. and a friend. A week later he received a mysterious call from an unidentified man from the government who wanted to know where the material originated. He told him. Next week he will be in Washington and shall look into it further with his friends at the National Institute of Health. Nothing further was said and we expected to be visited but so far no-one has showed up. Just as well.¹³²

The topic here was serious, but the mood was relaxed, even indiscreet, suggesting previous correspondence. And the author — the sender — was not the one being asked about the material’s origin; that was the courier, who had “friends at the National Institute [*sic*] of Health.” Bond might have been the “Defense Dept.” contact, or he might have been the “friend,” but he was not the author. Oldenburg was conflating identities.

The myth had become known to the MfS through surveillance of US diplomats, but the path Segal’s paper had taken to US recipients remained obscure until the next April, when an informant code-named “Maria” reported several details:

Lilli’s niece from California sent a friend to them [the Segals], and they showed him Jakob’s report. He was so impressed that he tucked the report under his arm and ran with it to a well known American Institute [*dass er sich den Bericht unter den Arm klemmte und damit zu einem bekannten amerikanischen Institut lief*]. What thereafter was in store for him can’t even be described as an “enormous annoyance [*mächtiger Ärger*].” For days the niece’s telephones did not remain silent [*standen nicht still*], although an expected invasion by the CIA did not take place. On the contrary, that friend of the niece is now accused by the CIA as having acted as Lilli’s and Jakob’s courier to spread the report in the USA. Lilli commented that: That is not true. The major part we sent by mail. But in consequence, according to Lilli’s opinion, her niece suspiciously calls them [the Segals] frequently by phone. Lilli suspects that the CIA will try to buy both of them [*dass die CIA versuchen will, sie beide zu kaufen*].¹³³

This April 1987 document described circumstances and events suggesting Lilli’s niece had been the author of the prior document, the undated anonymous intercept. Still unrevealed, though, was the recipient — or were the *recipients* — of “[t]he major part . . . sent by mail.”

The paths these manuscripts followed to their various United States destinations in and around August 1986 we cannot now trace. No clearer was the path to another August 1986 destination, this one better known. Jakob Segal’s theory surfaced in Africa — to his delight, as will be seen.

A pattern had emerged. Segal wanted to share his ideas, to get them where they would be seen, heard,

discussed, and validated and where he would be acknowledged as having had them first. He did indeed use family and family friends to disseminate his theory, but he used the mail, too. Most tellingly, he sent his work — and sent it initially — to experts and editors, whom he expected not to trick but to impress. He thought that Müller-Hill in time would be shown to have lacked imagination, that right-minded Americans would bring their government to account, and that Africans would realize their victimization by the imperialist West had taken a new and twisted form.

In the immediate afterglow of his news from Africa, Segal on 7 September 1986 confidently wrote to Professor Sigusch about the book chapter he, Segal, was finalizing: “The version of the manuscript I submitted to you recently covers the literature until April 1986. In the meantime a highly interesting congress was held in Paris in June 1986, where several presentations unequivocally disproved the legend of the Green Monkey. . . . I have compiled the most important of those results and provide them to you. Perhaps we should publish them as an attachment.”¹³⁴ Segal saw the first main feature of his theory confirmed and would have had new reason to feel that reliance on his scientific intuition had been well founded.

But Segal’s confidence in his acceptance by Sigusch was turning out to have been less warranted. Before finalizing his book,¹³⁵ Sigusch would reverse his initial judgment and reject Segal’s paper.¹³⁶ Sigusch does not now remember his decision in detail but assumes he had been worrying about involvement in “political business.”¹³⁷ Sigusch initially must not have appreciated Segal’s submission for what it was, and he nearly included it between his own volume’s covers: a narrow escape in a promising career.

The myth did get a mention in Sigusch’s book, not in any of its twenty-three contributed papers but in text Sigusch wrote himself, as editor. The mention was Aesopian, in that Seale was named rather than Segal, and the misconduct of a German newspaper, *BILD*, served as the cautionary tale.

It is not necessary to become an inverse *BILD* newspaper, which as early as 27 December 1985 allowed an English physician for venereal diseases, John Seale, to claim that the Russians already under Khrushchev “had started the breeding of the AIDS virus

in a biological weapons research laboratory” because AIDS would be “an ideal weapon to eradicate the Western World” and they [the Russians] now in return claim that the Amis [the Americans] had done it.¹³⁸

The titles of Segal’s manuscripts appeared in none of the letters cited so far. Some weeks later, however, in correspondence between Segal and Professor Gerhard Hunsmann, head of the Virology Department at the German Center for Primate Research, Göttingen, a title did appear but with no clear reference to the Sigusch submission. Hunsmann on 16 October 1986 expressed his thanks that Segal on 8 October had provided him with a manuscript entitled “AIDS – its nature and origin.”¹³⁹

On 2 January 1987, Segal responded to a request from Martin Ebbing, a West German free-lance journalist, by sending “a description of the problem (in English language) which represents our state of knowledge after the Paris congress in June 1986.”¹⁴⁰

On 1 March 1987, to a correspondent surnamed Kröker of the *Evangelisches Studentenpfarramt Bremen* [Evangelical Student Parish, Bremen], Segal explained that no recent papers in German described his theses. Hence, he sent Kröker a manuscript in English, saying it “covers the publications until end of September 1986 with an attached correspondence with Dr. Löwer, deputy director of the Paul-Ehrlich-Institute Frankfurt/Main, in which the publications until the end of 1986 are covered.”¹⁴¹

In the meantime, the manuscript was again revised. Writing 13 March 1987 to Peter Rudnick, a student in the Department of Medical Sociology, University of Freiburg,¹⁴² Lilli Segal said that

in November we compiled a new brochure [“*Broschüre*” being Jakob’s favored term for a typewritten manuscript], which however is available only in French and English — and more recently also in Spanish. We have refused to translate it into German since my husband intends a more extensive paper to be published in the journal *Wechselwirkung* [*Interaction*]. . . . We can provide you with the 50-page study with about 85 references from American and English journals. Perhaps you [would] inform us by letter or phone in which language you want to receive that material.¹⁴³

With no sign of the Stasi’s direction or supervision, except insofar as the routine monitoring of correspon-

dence continued, the Segals all during this period were citing new evidence friendly to their views, and Jakob was strengthening weak arguments rhetorically. And he was reaching west *beyond* West Germany — and south, too.

Müller-Hill's rejection must have stung, and Siggusch's must have annoyed, but Segal soldiered on. His theory would turn out to be implausible, but its plausibility would take years to melt away completely. We have found no evidence suggesting that Segal doubted his main assertions, which he repeated after both the German Democratic Republic and the Soviet Union had died and as late as 1992^{103,144} and 1993. For an anthology planned in 1993 — but appearing only posthumously, and online, in 1997 — he contributed a two-part article, “New state of the AIDS discussion.”¹⁴⁵ Therein he refreshed old charges, added new ones, made no apology, and admitted no mistake. Yet in closing the first part he did announce a shift in his scientific interest.

In the history of medicine there is not a disease that has been studied as intensively as AIDS. ... [R]esearch is at an impasse because it was started under false pretenses. Understanding this basic error would lead to an effective AIDS treatment. ...

[C]ountless dollars were wasted to comb the African jungle for new simian viruses. Every six months a new “Father of AIDS” was presented in triumph and soon forgotten. [This] great effort remained unsuccessful because the HIV is only distantly related to the SIV. ...

Despite all these failures — and others, which for reasons of space I cannot report here — the media spread ever further the lies about the African origin of AIDS, and the prominent experts remain silent in order not to violate the honor of the United States, perhaps also not to block access to the American research funds — after all, three billion dollars a year. ...

Can we suppress the fact that the visna [the Maedi-Visna virus] in sheep and AIDS in humans [are] virtually the same disease just to conceal [the fact] that HIV is a slightly laboratory-modified visna virus? Here lies a basic error that prevents official medicine from struggling against AIDS effectively.

These considerations led me to change my direction, and I [now] work mainly to address the pathology of AIDS. About the result of this work I will report in the second part of this work.¹⁴⁵

Did Jakob Segal promote his own theory? Yes, when still expecting his guesses would one day hit their marks. We have found no evidence whatsoever that Segal's theory was elicited by, dictated by, modified by, or authorized by any security service or government. We have, though, found scientific, historical, and rhetorical antecedents, among them ambient conspiracy theories, and we have found critiques, such as the one from Müller-Hill. Segal rejected all critiques, but their accumulated weight, the relentless push of evidence toward fully natural HIV origins, and the popular acceptance of that evidence¹⁴⁶ ultimately “led [him] to change [his] direction.”¹⁴⁵

Was the myth Soviet disinformation?

The 1983 *Patriot* letter was presumably a KGB plant. In Boghardt's words, “There can be little doubt about the KGB's authorship of the letter.”¹⁴⁷ We agree. The 30 October 1985 *Literaturnaya Gazeta* article — “Panic in the West or what hides behind the AIDS sensation” — cited the *Patriot* letter as if it had been genuine journalism from a non-aligned nation. Following the second 1985 *Literaturnaya Gazeta* piece and other Soviet media reports, if not before then, sophisticated observers in the West dismissed the myth as disinformation created and spread by the KGB.^{40,148,289}

Was Comrade Jakob Segal recruited by the KGB around this time? He was already a member of the Soviet Communist Party, and he might not have needed much, if any, recruitment. The Segals many years earlier had moved to East Berlin after the Soviet consulate in Paris had “proposed” they do so.¹⁴⁹ Jakob had then become an active unofficial Stasi informer.¹⁵⁰ His code name, playfully but discordantly, had been “Haeckel,”¹⁵¹ sounding like the verb *heckeln*, one of whose meanings was “to heckle,” and recalling Ernst Heinrich Philipp August Haeckel (1834–1919), eminent biologist, naturalist, artist, and philosopher, a pioneering yet heretical German Darwinist and founder of the German Monist League, ideologically an adumbration of National Socialism.¹⁵² Segal had been assigned to a *Führungsoffizier* — “an intelligence officer directly responsible for an individual agent”¹⁵³ — named Captain Kairies. But in 1955 Segal had been shuffled over to new direction. Captain Kairies had

Table 2. MfS divisions and departments mentioned.

<i>Divisions and departments</i>	<i>Tasks, inter alia</i>
ZAIG	Most important control center of the MfS.
Main Directorate HV A	Reconnaissance abroad, counter-intelligence, and “active measures.”
HV A/IX	External counter-espionage, especially in the Federal Republic of Germany (FRG or West Germany).
HV A/SWT	Gathering scientific and technical information in developed capitalistic countries.
HV A/SWT/XIII	Intelligence about basic research, including biology and biochemistry.
HV A/X	“Active measures,” disinformation.
HV A/XIII	Intelligence about foreign basic research.
Main Department HA II	Counter-intelligence in the GDR.
HA II/3	Counter-espionage against the US Embassy and other American agencies in the GDR.
HA II/6	Counter-intelligence in politics and economics.
HA II/13	Observation of activities of foreign journalists in the GDR.
HA II/15	Surveillance of embassies of non-European non-socialist countries.
HA II/AGA	Counter-intelligence among foreigners living in the GDR
HA II/AKG	Information gathering and evaluation.
Main Department HA III	Radio reconnaissance and radio counter-intelligence.
Main Department HA VII	Counter-intelligence
HA VII/1	Counter-intelligence in areas governed by the Ministry of Internal Affairs
Main Department HA IX	Investigations
HA IX/11	Investigation and prosecution of Nazi war crimes.
Main Department HA XX	Prevention and control of political-ideological diversion and underground activities.
HA XX/1	Public health.
HA XX/9	Control of political underground activities.
HA XX/AKG	Information gathering and evaluation.
Main Department HA XXII	Defense against terror.
Department 26	Telephone surveillance.
26/7	Support of other units [<i>Dienstleistungen</i>] in counter-espionage.
Regional Administration Berlin	
VI	Passport control.
XX	Prevention and control of political-ideological diversion and underground activities.
XX/3	Supervision of basic research, public health, and related fields.

AGA *Arbeitsgruppe Ausländer* [Foreigners Working Group]

AKG *Auswertungs- und Kontrollgruppe* [Evaluation and Control Group]

HA *Hauptabteilung* [Main Department]

HV *Hauptverwaltung* [Main Directorate]

SWT *Sektor Wissenschaft und Technik* [Sector Science and Technology]

ZAIG *Zentrale Auswertungs- und Informationsgruppe* [Central Evaluation and Information Group]

Note: II, III, VI, VII, IX, X, XIII, XX, and XXII were Roman numerals. Thus, XX was *Zwanzig* [twenty].

filed this note: “Today instructed by comrade advisor not to have additional meetings with Segal. All actions that can be performed by S. are to be arranged by instructor.”¹⁵⁴ The terms “comrade advisor” and “instructor” usually referred to officers of the KGB responsible for maintenance of cooperation with the MfS. By 1962 the MfS had decided to end its cooperation with Segal. Its reasons were substantive: “[H]e adopts a platform contrary to the DAW [*Deutsche Akademie der Wissenschaften zu Berlin*, German Academy of Sciences at Berlin]. ... Information provided by him is very general ... [and] the IM [the informer, Segal] is shunned by many scientists.”¹⁵⁵ (Figure 4)

Yet 1955 — or even 1962 — was long before 1985.

In 1990, not so long *after* 1985 but well before 25 December 1991, when the Soviet Union dissolved

itself, Oleg Gordievsky, a former Colonel of the KGB, acknowledged that the myth had been KGB disinformation. But this acknowledgement came on a single page in a long book, co-authored with Christopher Andrew, and cannot now count as evidence. According to Gordievsky, the article published in *Literaturnaya Gazeta* “was founded on a report of the East German biophysicist and Russian by birth Professor Jakob Segal, who attempted to demonstrate by ‘detailed proofs’ (which had been thoroughly disproved in the meantime) that the virus [causing AIDS] was artificially created in Fort Detrick from two naturally occurring viruses.”¹⁵⁶ Yet Gordievsky could not have known these details through his own experience. In May 1985, five months before the article appeared and six months before Segal took up the myth, Gordievsky had been recalled to Moscow and detained as a British double

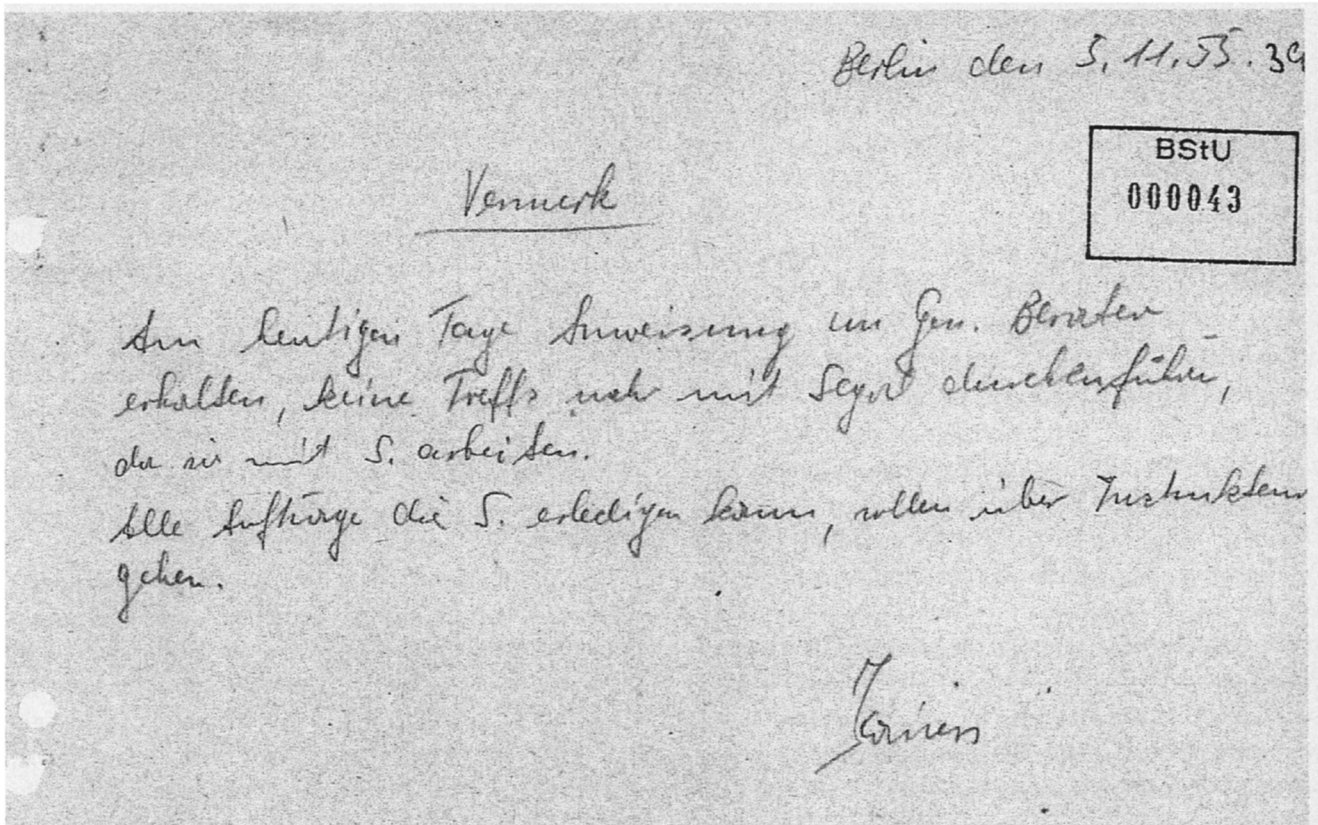


Figure 4. Captain Kairies, 1955, on Jakob Segal's future supervision. Source: BStU MfS Nr. 1459/62: 43.

agent, which he was. He escaped through Finland two months later, never to return, even to post-Soviet Russia, where he remains condemned to death *in absentia*. Gordievsky's acknowledgement, however earnest, must be set aside as hearsay.

In 2011, Colonel General Werner Grossmann — from 1986 Deputy Minister of State Security and successor to Markus Wolf as head of HV A¹⁵⁷ — said in response to our inquiry, but through his publisher, “that the KGB initiated the affair involving Segal [*die Sache mit Segal initiiert habe*].”¹⁵⁸ Grossmann's statement may sound definitive, but like Gordievsky's acknowledgement it adds little.

Sources such as these have remained influential, especially in background roles. Nicoli Nattrass, an economist who wrote a well received 2012 book on AIDS denialism among African Americans and black South Africans, blamed the “Soviet-Stasi-Segal misinformation campaign” for seeding the self-destructive behavior she had set out to explain.¹⁵⁹ But in

describing the HIV-from-Fort-Detrick myth she relied only on Andrew's 1990 book with Gordievsky¹⁵⁶ and Koehler's 1999 book about the Stasi.^{103,160} Thus into her information *about* disinformation had fallen unsuspected products of disinformation squared. Her understanding of AIDS denialism did not suffer, but her understanding of the myth *per se*, the myth as fringe-theory process and Cold War artifact, did.

No document available to us proves or refutes the claim that the KGB *invented* the HIV-from-Fort-Detrick myth or that the KGB in “initiating the affair” told Segal what ideas to have rather than urging him to promote the ideas he already did have or already had borrowed, whether or not he credited all his own sources. For public consumption, as noted by the *Los Angeles Times*, Soviet stories consistently cited four conveniently vocal conspiracy theorists:

Robert Strecker, invariably described only as an “American scientist;” John Seale, “a prominent specialist working in London;” and the East German husband-

wife team of Jacob [*sic*] and Lilli Segal, whom the Soviet press often identifies as French.³³

In the Segals' estate archive is a letter in which Lilli was commenting on responses to the propagation of the myth. She wrote this: "The Soviet press had published a bit only in the [Moscow] *New Times* and in *Literaturnaya Gazeta*, rather garbled."¹⁶¹ Here she was referring to Soviet articles as if they had been *responding* to the dissemination of Jakob's theory in Africa, even though those articles had preceded that dissemination. In Lilli's mind had events become conflated? Had the Soviet articles not been seen earlier? Had they not been seen as important enough to recall accurately? Was she dismissing on quality grounds — original ideas would not have been so "garbled" — any claim the Soviet authors might have had to priority? Alternatively, had Jakob avoided citing *Literaturnaya Gazeta* not to hog attention but to hide influence, specifically Soviet influence or even KGB control? Perhaps, but a Soviet science journal had already concluded that the HIV was a newly discovered agent, whereas Segal had concluded, as suggested by Japanese scientists writing in a British journal,⁸⁷ that the HIV had arisen when Fort Detrick had played the part of "evolution."

Originality notwithstanding, the KGB did see advantage in promoting the myth. Yet in so doing it might have misjudged the Soviet Union's priorities, which were being reordered.

On 11 March 1985, the Communist Party of the Soviet Union had installed a new General Secretary, Mikhail Gorbachev, who was surprisingly vigorous, unmistakably sophisticated, and refreshingly honest. Not much more than a year later, however, on 26 April 1986, Gorbachev's honesty came spectacularly into question. At Chernobyl, in the Ukraine, then part of the Soviet Union, a nuclear reactor, designed and operating with no containment vessel, exploded and burned, scattering radioactive isotopes across many borders. Immediate management lacked the *glasnost* — the transparency — the West by then had come to expect. While Gorbachev in his memoirs would "absolutely reject" the charge that the Soviet leadership had meant to mislead,¹⁶² the world that spring saw the Kremlin admitting the disaster only after other governments had detected Chernobyl's fallout.

Later that year, 11–12 October 1986, Gorbachev met President Reagan at the Reykjavik Summit, where nuclear disarmament — not just incremental arms control — was seriously, if unexpectedly and ill-advisedly, discussed. The summit ended ambiguously but with a deepening regard between the principals, who, for all the world to see, were beginning to like each other and also beginning to trust each other. The prospects were breathtaking — but, for entrenched Cold Warriors, threatening.

Nineteen days later, 31 October 1986, *Pravda* deployed the myth, publishing a cartoon showing an American officer paying a scientist for a test tube of AIDS viruses, depicted as tiny floating swastikas. Arrayed around the pair were the feet and legs of naked corpses, recalling death-camp liberation scenes. (Figure 5)

Just home from Reykjavik and with superpower *rapprochement* becoming thinkable, Gorbachev could not have been pleased to see — if he did see — so slanderous a jab at so sensitive an issue for so important a partner. While Gorbachev by this time had been recovering from Chernobyl, Reagan was increasingly vulnerable on AIDS. Reagan's policy, to the extent he had one at all, was simplistic, moralistic, and negligent, and he was derided viciously for it. His first speech forthrightly on AIDS was still seven months in the future, and on that occasion his audience would boo him and hiss.¹⁶³

Whether routine artwork from a diligent disinformation team or something special calculated to embarrass Gorbachev or Reagan or both, the *Pravda* cartoon was too obscene to ignore. Arthur Hartman, American Ambassador to Moscow, protested publicly.¹⁶⁴

Nonetheless, back in the US half a year later, on 30 March 1987, the myth made the *CBS Evening News* — as a serious new accusation, not as Soviet AIDS disinformation or even conspiracy-theorist fantasy. Dan Rather reported the story. The leading American television-news presenter of his day but a celebrity journalist with "sagging ratings," which would soon threaten his career,¹⁶⁵ Rather included no rebuttal from the departments of Defense or State.¹⁶⁶ The Department of Defense would have had nothing to hide and its honor to uphold, and the Department of State was by then well along in its documentation of Soviet AIDS disinformation and could have rebutted at length.¹⁶⁷



Figure 5. Cartoon by D. Agaev, *Pravda*, 31 October 1986. An American military officer pays a Pentagon AIDS specialist for a test tube labelled “Virus ‘SPID.’” The test tube swarms with swastikas. Dead victims lie about. Sources: *The Sunday Telegraph*, 9 November 1986; *Time*, 17 November 1986; and the cover of *Soviet Influence Activities: A Report on Active Measures and Propaganda, 1986–87* (Washington: Department of State Publications, August 1987 [released October 1987]). The upper caption reads: “Virus SPID [a Russian acronym corresponding to the English AIDS], which causes a deadly disease, and for which no cure has yet been discovered, was created in Pentagon laboratories, according to some Western experts. (According to newspapers).” The lower caption reads: “Pentagon AIDS-specialists. Drawing D. Agaev.” Translator’s note: The Russian “SPID” alliterates with “tsialisty,” corresponding to the English “specialists,” thus approximating “Pentagon SPID-cialists.” Translation by Daria Karetnikov.

Yet Rather did not present the myth as disinformation but instead offered it raw for public consumption, lending his credibility to a lie.

In October 1987, the Department of State released *Soviet Influence Activities: A Report on Active Measures and Propaganda, 1986–87*. Included in this report was an overlapping list of the myth’s global retellings: 1 false story in 1983; 13 in 1985; 49 in 1986; 13 Soviet print or wire stories from 1985 through 1986; 40 Soviet print, wire, or broadcast stories from January through June 1987, including a radio transmission directed expressly to southern Africa on 6 April 1987; 14 local sub-Saharan stories and 92 stories totally during the first seven months of 1987. Entries began well before the Segals became involved and continued through 10 July 1987.¹⁶⁷ For the report’s cover art, State had chosen the *Pravda* cartoon.

In Moscow on 23 October 1987, Secretary of State George P. Shultz met General Secretary Gorbachev. They discussed a wide range of issues. “Gorbachev suddenly turned sour and aggressive,” Shultz later wrote. Gorbachev picked up a copy of the report, objected to its “shocking revelations,” and waved it in the air. Gorbachev complained particularly about the portrayal of a people-to-people event, the Mississippi Peace Cruise, as having been scripted in Moscow.^{168,169} Shultz countered with a list of charges, finishing with AIDS disinformation: “I went on to object to more recent Soviet efforts to spread rumors that the United States had invented AIDS and was trying to spread it. . . . After some additional comments, Gorbachev mellowed.”¹⁶⁸ Gorbachev in his memoirs would recall the meeting less colorfully and would not mention AIDS.¹⁷⁰ In any case, one week later, Friday 30 October, *Izvestia*, the Soviet government’s official newspaper, printed an article in which two prominent Soviet scientists “disavowed” the myth, one saying he had previously protested its propagation. On Monday 2 November 1987, the Department of State “welcomed” the “disavowal.”¹⁷¹

Was the myth Soviet disinformation?

Yes, certainly. The KGB lied early and often, slandering the West, swaying the post-colonial world, and deflecting attention from Soviet bioweaponry activities, which were hidden and, to say the very least, extensive.^{172,173,174} After the Soviet Union dissolved, and with it the KGB, this much was freely admitted, and the Bureau of International Information

Programs (BIIP), US Department of State, declared the myth a classic:

March 17, 1992, Yevgeniy Primakov, who was then head of the Russian Foreign Intelligence Service, a successor of the KGB, admitted that “the articles exposing U.S. scientists’ ‘crafty’ plot against mankind [in allegedly manufacturing AIDS] were fabricated in KGB offices,” as reported in the March 19, 1992[,] issue of the Russian newspaper *Izvestiya*. The Soviets knew the allegations were false, but spread them as part of their policy of spreading vicious lies about the United States. This is disinformation.¹²

Disinformation: The USSR’s disinformation campaign on AIDS is the classic example. The Soviet intelligence and security service, the KGB, had a special service, Service A, for spreading false information. For example, soon after AIDS was recognized as a new disease, Service A concocted the story that the AIDS virus had been developed as a biological weapon by the Pentagon at Fort Detrick, Maryland, and was used in experiments on prisoners, which was allegedly why it initially appeared in New York, described as the largest big city near Fort Detrick. Several major U.S. cities are actually much closer to Fort Detrick than New York, including Washington, DC, Baltimore, and Philadelphia, but few non-Americans realize that. . . .¹⁷⁵

The BIIP did not mention Jakob Segal or his activities except in reference to an additional “tiny handful of fringe-group conspiracy theorists [who] also espoused the false charge.” These theorists included Theodore Strecker, whom the Bureau credited with claiming “that a giant conspiracy is going on to destroy the USA with biological warfare.”¹²

All that said, the myth was *not* Soviet disinformation insofar as the myth’s most imaginative champions were civilians in the Western world rather than intelligence officers in the Eastern bloc, were speculating rather than lying, and were speaking more for themselves than for Soviet interests. Theodore Strecker was a nativist anti-communist paranoid; Robert Strecker was a more presentable, more sophisticated, more influential version of his brother. “Booby Hatch,” who even today, three decades on, refuses to allow disclosure of his real name,^{45,176} worried about laboratory safety and biosecurity, not politics — except by identifying with “the Green movement [*der Grünenbewegung*]” and holding in contempt “the whole political complex

whether East or West [*der ganze politische Komplex ob Ost oder West*].” He did not support the myth, did not think the HIV had been produced artificially or purposefully, and willingly ascribed to simian origins for the AIDS agents.^{45,88} Seale in the 1950s would surely have been dismissed, or damned, as a “fellow traveler,” but Seale in the 1980s became as suspicious of Soviet laboratories as he was of American, and he said so. Jakob Segal, surely, believed in communism as a cause; he might often have been acting in its interest without direction — but acting, in his own self-estimation, as a scientist. Lilli Segal studied scientific misconduct still painfully remembered, and she did so just over the Berlin Wall from what had been compulsory euthanasia’s epicenter, *Tiergartenstrasse 4* [Zoo Street 4]. A hypervigilant response to renewed eugenics criminality, as imputed in the myth, whose many gaps her husband felt surely he had bridged, would not have been surprising.

Did the Segals accept Stasi advice or direction?

On 17 November 1989, the GDR’s Ministry for State Security became its Office for National Security. On 13 January 1990, the Office for National Security was disbanded with no successor agency constituted. Germany’s reunification would follow peacefully within the year.

Not long thereafter, on 27 January 1992, AIDS disinformation entered its exponential phase, its disinformation-squared phase. *Panorama*, a German television news magazine, was reporting that the story of HIV having spread from Fort Detrick “after a gene-accident . . . had been elaborated by the Russian KGB and the Stasi, as [Colonel Dr. Rolf] Wagenbreth and his team boast today. They also took responsibility for its world-wide dissemination.”¹⁷⁷ When Segal had most actively been propagating the myth, Wagenbreth had been head of Department X — the “X” meaning “10” — of the Main Directorate for Reconnaissance, HV A; thus, Wagenbreth had been head of HV A/X. His responsibility, about which he refused to comment during the broadcast, had been disinformation.

Stasi veterans, their civil liberties assured, were stepping up to brag: to take credit, not to take blame. More soon followed, Günter Bohnsack and Herbert

Brehmer most notably. Bohnsack said he had been head of HV A/X Section [Referat] 7, “Trade and Industry,”¹⁷⁸ but was later described as having been responsible for disinformation within HV A/X.¹⁷⁹ Brehmer said he had been responsible for Western agencies within HV A/X Section 5, “Secret Services.”¹⁷⁸

That same year, 1992, Bohnsack and Brehmer published a book, *Auftrag Irreführung. Wie die Stasi Politik im Westen machte* [Mission Misleading: How the Stasi Made Politics in the West]. “The superpower [the Soviet Union] dealt the cards,” they wrote, “and also took care not to reveal its own hand. It respected the junior partner [the GDR], but saw the appropriate balance of power at the negotiation table through Moscow’s eyes — and so the GDR shrunk back to being a small country in central Europe.” Then came five paragraphs about the myth:

But Moscow communicated clearly when it came to the planned AIDS campaign against the USA. The quick spread of this terrible disease to millions of people, especially in Africa, renewed the discussion about the origin of the virus. During this time, a number of theses and theories were proposed; a prominent one among them was that new genetic research undertaken in the US could have produced a deformed organism that threatened humanity. With this background, the concept for the campaign practically wrote itself. The campaign allowed us to tie in our other active measures, such as our argument, launched to reach across the world, that the United States already had experience with germ warfare in Korea.

The substance of our disinformation action consisted of the following propositions: The AIDS virus was created in a special secure virus and gene laboratory of the military research institute in Fort Detrick (Maryland/USA). By 1977 it had passed via experimental subjects [Versuchspersonen] uncontrolled into the public sphere and had initiated the deadly catastrophe. The USA as repository of all threats - the classic close-up used by the East. And the HVA went all out to publicize the idea.

First, the East Berlin professor Jakob Segal took up this version [Zunächst griff der Ostberliner Professor Jakob Segal diese Version auf]. Stefan Heym made sure, through an interview he conducted for the West Berlin [daily newspaper] *tageszeitung (taz)* with the scientist, to spread the AIDS lie in Europe, [and] journalists

carried the story to Africa and to other regions afflicted by the disease [Stefan Heym sorgte durch ein Interview, das er für die Westberliner tageszeitung (taz) mit dem Wissenschaftler führte, dafür, dass sich die AIDS-Lüge in Europa verbreitete, Journalisten trugen die Geschichte nach Afrika und in andere von der Krankheit stark heimgesuchte Regionen.]

Finally, the best-selling author Johannes Mario Simmel, who was then writing about the topic of genetic research, availed himself innocently of the materials sent to him and adopted the details of our construction [bediente sich arglos der ihm übersandten Materialien und übernahm die Details unserer Konstruktion]. The corresponding passages appear in the 1987 novel *Along with the Clowns Came the Tears* [Doch mit den Clowns kamen die Tränen], published by Droemer Knaur in Munich. A masterpiece of active measures, as one in the GDR leadership circle found it to be [Eine Meisterleistung aktiver Massnahmen, wie man in der DDR-Führungskreisen befand].

Who contributed knowingly to disseminating this dirty story and who deceived themselves and let themselves be used is an open question. The subsequent General Secretary of the Communist Party, Mikhail Gorbachev, did, by the way, apologize to the United States for this action.¹⁰⁵

Within this passage were serious ambiguities, among them the reference to Jakob Segal. Was Segal first to develop the “version” described, or was he first to adopt it once the KGB and the Stasi had devised it, or was his “taking up” the first step in the Stasi’s campaign? Also ambiguous was time. When did planning for this joint campaign begin? When did the listed acts and achievements occur?

Within this passage as well was a questionable implication: security services of the Soviet Union and GDR shared not only methods but also interests. From Gorbachev’s ascent to authority in spring 1985, long before the myth’s first appearance in extant Stasi records, those interests began to diverge, the Soviet Union becoming less repressive, “less Soviet,” the GDR more repressive, “more Soviet.” The East German Communist Party, in one view, required a Western threat to justify, and thus to retain, its power, and KGB-Stasi cooperation arguably declined during this period.¹⁸⁰

Boghardt's assessments of Bohnsack and Brehmer and also of Klaus Behling, a former GDR diplomat, were not limited to written records but were enhanced by more interactive personal contacts. These assessments occurred long after Jakob and Lilli Segal had died. According to Boghardt and his sources, the GDR Ministry of State Security became involved in the myth through its branch responsible for disinformation and other "active measures," Department X [10] of the *Hauptverwaltung Aufklärung* HV A [Main Directorate for Reconnaissance]:

Having decided to revive the AIDS campaign, the KGB informed its East German counterpart unambiguously that Moscow expected it to participate. The East Germans were told specifically to employ a "scientific approach" 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.¹⁸¹

"As Moscow shifted its active measures focus to subjects other than AIDS," Boghardt has related, "the East Germans became the AIDS campaign's primary sponsor."¹⁸² The East German "agent of choice"¹⁸¹ to spread the fiction on behalf of the KGB and MfS was, according to Boghardt and his sources, Professor Jakob Segal, retired director of the Institute of General Biology (and not, as written, of the Institute of Applied Bacteriology) of Humboldt University, East Berlin.

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 conversa-

tions. Its validity was typically not questioned. [Here Boghardt cited e-mails received 30 and 31 March 2009 from Klaus Behling.]

Segal's selection as the campaign's frontman was a master-stroke.¹⁸³

This faintly Promethean tale, wherein the Stasi at a first undocumented meeting ignited Segal's interest, then at subsequent undocumented meetings stoked that interest to a consuming ambition, competes with better evidenced influence sequences omitting the Stasi entirely.

Dr. Ronald Dehmlow (born 1949), co-author on English⁹¹ and German¹⁸⁴ versions of the Segals' principal HIV-origins manuscript, to which Dehmlow remembers having made only minimal contributions, has long assumed that Jakob Segal had been motivated by the 1984 "Booby Hatch" article.^{46,185}

As relayed to one of us, E.G., through a confidential intermediary in June 2013, "Hatch" had actually once met Segal:

At the first and only meeting with Segal, I realized quickly that Segal was not interested in a sound scientific discussion. As stated in my reply to the TAZ,¹⁸⁶ his arguments [were] not scientifically valid. About the idea that he was controlled by the Stasi, I did not [think he was;] my impression was more that he enjoyed standing in the spotlight.⁴⁵

In early 1987 Segal tried to contact "Hatch" after hearing "Hatch" was astonished at not having been cited by Segal. "The reason is very simple," Segal wrote defensively, if not believably. "We did not know your papers. ... Now it is clear for us that you had published warning articles at a time when we did not yet know about AIDS."¹⁸⁷

Despite this denial, Segal had had in his possession at least one "Booby Hatch" paper as early as April 1986. It was included in *Operation AIDS*, the book Sigusch sent Segal as a courtesy while Segal was writing his first myth-bearing manuscript, which Sigusch would later reject. Perhaps Segal ignored that paper, even if he had read it, because therein "Hatch" wrote this: "It is highly probable that AIDS had been transmitted from monkeys to man." In addition, "Hatch" asked, "[Is] the AIDS virus recombinant[?]"⁸⁸ and concluded that "a calculated production of infectious agents carrying the properties of AIDS viruses is unlikely."¹¹¹

“Booby Hatch” was a sharp critic of the myth, which he described as “deception of the public. There is no convincing argument for the assumption of an assembly of the AIDS-virus .. by means of gene technology as Segal assumes. Segal’s computational tricks [*Rechenkunststücke*] should only cause the shaking of one’s head [*Kopfschütteln*] ... Much more closely related to HIV [than Visna virus] are viruses isolated from different monkey species. Why Segal persistently ignores their existence will remain a riddle.”¹⁸⁸ “Booby Hatch” firmly advised the editor of *Wechselwirkung* not to publish Segal’s work.¹⁸⁹ That said, at least until 1988 — when the true descent of the AIDS viruses began to be clarified — “Booby Hatch” was convinced the HIV *could* have originated from careless experimentation.^{45,190} He was not a conspiracy theorist. He was an accident theorist. Segal was both.

Similarly dismissive of Segal was Regine Kollek, the leading West German critic of genetic engineering. In a comprehensive evaluation of all HIV-origin hypotheses up until 1988 she concluded, with special reference to her colleague “Booby Hatch,” that the least convincing of all extant theories was Segal’s: “Regarding the structure of HIV a direct construction de novo by genetic engineering can be theoretically as well as practically excluded.”¹⁹¹ In a subsequent paper dealing with the same topic she did not mention Segal’s ideas at all.¹⁹²

Segal might have been agitated by Toh’s and Miyata’s 4 July 1985 communication — “Is the AIDS virus recombinant?” — in *Nature*. The authors, noting its mosaic structure, reasoned that the AIDS agent, “a novel type of retrovirus,” had been generated by recombination of related viruses “during evolution.”⁸⁷ Segal might have been poorly prepared to accept this conclusion as calmly as Toh and Miyata had offered it. Understandably, as a retired biologist and neither a virologist nor a geneticist, Segal would have been out of date and out of his area reading this letter to *Nature*. But he was also bearing an old prejudice. In numerous earlier publications,^{193,194,195,196} he had always defended the Lamarckian theory of the inheritance of acquired characteristics, as promoted by Lysenko, Joseph Stalin’s “barefoot scientist.”⁶⁰

Alternatively, Segal’s interest might first have been triggered by the *Literaturnaya Gazeta* article published 30 October 1985.

On 29 November, Dr. Helmut Theodor, a high-ranking staffer at the GDR Ministry of Health, noted that Samuel Mitja Rapoport, Professor of Biochemistry at Humboldt University and a leading communist health politician as well as Segal’s colleague and close friend, had proposed “to publish in the daily news a paper on AIDS. Objective: The AIDS agent has been manipulated and has escaped from an American laboratory (biological weapons).”¹⁹⁷ Referring to reports about the presence of antibodies against the AIDS agent in sera taken in Africa between 1960 and 1965 — and presumably also because his superior, Health Minister Professor Ludwig Mecklinger, had decided already by early 1984 not to deal with the AIDS problem in public²⁹⁸ — Theodor rejected the proposal.

This story is a little strange, since Rapoport never dealt with the HIV-from-Fort-Detrick myth in any of his numerous publications. He might have realized soon that the myth was totally unfounded.¹⁹⁸ Or Theodor might not have been informed correctly. Perhaps the proposal came not from Rapoport but from Segal. Documents available to us are silent on this question.

On 2 December 1985, three days after Theodor’s rejection of the putative Rapoport proposal, Segal wrote to Müller-Hill, mentioning a suspicion raised primarily “in the Indian newspaper Citizen [*sic*] and” secondarily in *Literaturnaya Gazeta* that the AIDS agent had been assembled, through genetic engineering, to be a biological weapon.¹⁰⁴ Neither of the Segals was to mention either article in any published work.

Around the same time, late 1985, Jakob Segal obtained from Niels Sønnichsen — professor of dermatology and chair of the AIDS Advisory Group formed the previous year by the GDR ministry of health — abstracts as well as a bibliography entitled “African AIDS,” which had been distributed at the symposium, “On African AIDS,” held in Brussels 22–23 November 1985.¹⁹⁹ On the basis of this material, the Segals hurriedly compiled a 22-page draft paper, never published, and attached it 18 December 1985 to a second letter to Müller-Hill.²⁰⁰ In that paper, the Segals, *inter alia*, forcefully criticized the assumption, presented in Brussels by several speakers, that the AIDS agent had originated in Africa as a descendant of a monkey virus.

Jakob Segal himself repeatedly explained that he had become interested in the origin of the AIDS agent because he did not accept the green-monkey theory. Asked by a visitor from the US Embassy in East Berlin “what made us think about AIDS,” Lilli Segal “explained to him that my husband as a biologist regarded the ‘stories’ spread by the media on the African origin and the ‘green monkey’ so crazy that he started to deal with the biological aspects of this problem seriously.”⁸¹ On 16 July 1987 Jakob wrote that he had started to deal with AIDS in the summer of 1985, “provoked by the scientifically totally lunatic story of the ‘Green Monkey.’”²⁰¹ Two weeks later, in another letter, he reiterated: “The supposedly ‘scientific’ thesis that AIDS derived from green monkeys and originated in Africa was the actual motive for us to study publications on AIDS, which definitely revealed that it originated in the U.S.A.”²⁰²

How and where “in the U.S.A.”? The undated manuscript, “AIDS – its nature and origin,” included a section entitled “Gene manipulation,” wherein the Segals and Dehmlow wrote this: “The first laboratory of this kind [a laboratory designed to pathogen (or protection) level 4, or P4, later termed biological-safety level 4, or BSL4] in the USA — presumably in the whole world — was installed at Fort Detrick, Maryland, in building 550, in 1977 Fort Detrick had for a long time been the central laboratory of the Pentagon for the development of biological agents of warfare.”⁹¹ Their source was a 1983 popular-science book introducing the general public to the possibilities and risks of modern molecular genetics; this book was cited in two additional works by the Segals.^{203,204} Its author was Dr. Reinhard Piechocki, a young East German post-doctoral fellow in genetics at the University of Halle-Wittenberg. The book was published by the Urania-Verlag Leipzig.²⁰⁵

One chapter of Piechocki’s book dealt with the safety standards of genetic engineering and the importance of security and high-security laboratories. The first protection level, P1, applied to a typical microbiology laboratory. P4 laboratories, instead, were laboratories handling extremely dangerous organisms.²⁰⁶ One page dealt with the P4 laboratory opened at Fort Detrick in 1977 “to introduce DNA from cancer viruses into *E. coli* and to find out how dangerous the bacteria became” — meaning how dangerous they became within the frame of legitimate open cancer biology.²⁰⁷

How had the enhancement of laboratory safety²⁰⁸ become so dominant a theme in the myth’s endangerment fugue? First, malicious microbiological research, such as the development of biological weapons or racially discriminant poisons, would require robust safety. Second, the myth’s makers were overlooking similar projects in the Soviet bloc, including similar guidelines²⁰⁹ and projects²¹⁰ in the GDR and discussions on safety requirements²¹¹ in which Jakob Segal had himself participated.²¹² Third, according to Christopher Dobson of *The Sunday Telegraph*, Lilli Segal told officials of the US Embassy in East Berlin “that her source for the accusations that the virus was made at Fort Detrick was the East German Urania Press. Urania’s prime function is disseminating Soviet propaganda.”²³⁴ Whether Dobson’s description of the prime function of the URANIA was Lilli’s wording or his own is unclear. In any event, the description was wrong. URANIA’s Biology Section, which would have been the Segals’ contact point, was no mouthpiece, not the KGB’s, not the Stasi’s.

The URANIA Society — *Gesellschaft zur Verbreitung wissenschaftlicher Kenntnisse* [Society for the Dissemination of Scientific Knowledge] — was a “mass organization” of the GDR acting under the supervision and direction of the Socialist Unity Party, the SED. It was funded almost solely by the government, its main function being to spread Marxist ideology. Nonetheless, in its natural-sciences sections, members — mainly scientists and teachers — informed the public on progress in their respective fields. The Biology Section, headed by E.G. between 1971 and 1990, was heavily involved, for example, in “disseminating scientific knowledge” about modern genetics, cancer research, neurobiology, and so on. Even topics breaking a GDR taboo, such as the taboo against research into human behavior, URANIA could and did explore.

Some members of the Biology Section had also been involved in activities to prevent the military misuse of new developments in molecular biology. E.G., contributor to the 1984 yearbook of the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI)²¹³ and consultant to SIPRI from 1985 to 2000 for biological warfare matters,²¹⁴ expressed his concern about the potential of genetic engineering to develop biological and toxic warfare agents. The SIPRI Yearbook contribution was translated and reprinted in a booklet published by the Presidium of URANIA.²¹⁵ In another

SIPRI book, E.G. quoted,²¹⁶ *inter alia*, the US Department of Defense, which in *Soviet Military Power 1984* had explained “that for biological warfare purposes, genetic engineering could open a large number of possibilities. Normally harmless, non-disease-producing organisms could be modified to become highly toxic or produce diseases for which an opponent has no known treatment or cure. Other agents, now considered too unstable for storage or biological warfare applications, could be changed sufficiently to be an effective agent.”²¹⁷ This assessment was also quoted in a popular-science journal edited by the GDR Academy of Sciences.²¹⁸ Segal himself quoted a French translation of a passage from this assessment in 1986 in “*Le SIDA — sa nature et son origine*”²⁴¹ and quoted a shorter version in a chapter he wrote for another book.²¹⁹ After a 1986 experts’ meeting in which E.G. rejected allegations about Fort Detrick being responsible for AIDS, Segal stopped using this passage altogether.²²⁰

The Segals might well have been influenced by URANIA insofar as genetic engineering was described as making bioweaponry research more dangerous, and they might have wondered whether American concerns about Soviet efforts were designed to screen America’s own efforts. But the myth itself was not to be found there. To the contrary, in 1988, under URANIA’s aegis, E.G. published an article criticizing the myth expressly.²²¹ E.G.’s critique began with two mottos. The first, from Gustave le Bon’s book *Psychology of the Masses*, dealt with the deleterious impact of unfounded allegations. The second, which was later to prove pivotal in judging a post-Wende Stasi success claim, was from Simmel’s novel *Doch mit den Clowns kamen die Tränen* [*Along with the Clowns Came the Tears*]. This second motto dealt with Segal’s own myth-making:

The Polish scientist [Barski] answered slowly: “There are no indications that the AIDS virus escaped from some place where they did experiments involving viruses.”²²²

No evidence, let alone documentary proof, shows Department X of the HV A directing Segal’s activities along the myth line. Yet Boghardt has reported, from former GDR diplomat Klaus Behling, that “[a]round 1987, HV A/X gave Segal material ‘from secret service circles’” on testimony before a Congressional commit-

tee. In this testimony, 9 June 1969, Dr. Donald M. MacArthur, then deputy director of research and engineering in the Office of the Secretary of Defense, had “stated that ‘within a period of 5 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.’”¹⁸² MacArthur went on to assure the committee that the Department of Defense did not then engage in such research.²²³ Boghardt has added in an endnote that “[t]he text of MacArthur’s testimony was made available to the public long before Segal ‘discovered’ it.”²²⁴

The Segals did take note of this information, even saying it was “documentary proof” of their claims,²²⁵ but Jakob Segal credited Alistar Hay, writing in *The Guardian* 27 October 1986, as his source for MacArthur’s Congressional testimony.^{244,293,226} Yet this “proof” was not cited in the undated Segal-Segal-Dehmlow paper,⁹¹ nor was it mentioned in the Heym interview. Without giving details or naming his source, Segal said that “there are documents available showing that the Pentagon already in 1969 had ordered production of a novel virus by means of gene technology — a virus against which the human organism is unable to develop a defense.”²²⁷ The actual text of MacArthur’s testimony Segal had obtained not “around 1987” and from the Stasi, as recalled by Boghardt’s source, but only later, in June 1988, and from Bernhard Schmitz, a West German reader interested in Segal’s publications.²²⁸ The Segals and Dehmlow first cited this source in July 1988 in *Streitbarer Materialismus* [*Militant Materialism*], a pugnaciously Marxist West German journal.²²⁹

Jakob Segal was just an “IM,” an *inoffizieller Mitarbeiter* or “unofficial collaborator,” an informer for the Ministry for State Security — one of approximately 180,000 IMs reporting to the MfS.^{230,231} Whether he was actively informing in the mid-1980s we do not know. Lilli, however, did report to the MfS at least twice on the interest of the US Embassy in East Berlin in Jakob’s activities.^{81,116} No document reveals whether she was asked to provide such reports or provided them conscientiously — or prudentially.

In one document dealing with the HIV-from-Fort-Detrick myth, Colonel Oldenburg, deputy head of Department IX/C of the HV A, mentioned that Segal and his wife “are registered by HV A/SWT/XIII.”²³²

This registration was of long-standing and could not have related to AIDS. Moreover, responsibilities of the departments chancing upon the Segals' AIDS activities did not include "active measures." Department IX of the HV A performed external counter-intelligence, especially in West Germany. Department HV A/SWT was responsible for the gathering of scientific and technical information in developed "capitalistic countries." HA II, among whose filings were found Lilli's two reports and Oldenburg's comment on the Segals' registration, was responsible for counter-intelligence activities within the GDR proper. The possibility arises — and prevails — that HV A and HA II interest in the myth and in the Segals themselves had been prompted not by any campaign of any sort but, rather, by a routine defensive function: surveillance of US diplomats and their attempts to contact people living in the GDR.

Did the Segals accept Stasi advice or direction? Not in the early going, evidently; the Stasi's first documented awareness of the Segals' myth propagation came more than ten months after the Müller-Hill correspondence had begun. But, as will be seen, the answer might be yes when the Segals were expecting a visit to their flat by American diplomats. And the answer might be yes again, more enigmatically, when newly reviewed Bulgarian archives are considered.

Was the Harare venture a Stasi initiative?

About two months prior to Oldenburg's report, "pamphlets" or "brochures" publicizing Segal's theories had been distributed to delegates assembling for the Eighth Conference of Non-Aligned Nations, held in Harare, Zimbabwe, 26 August to 6 September 1986.

The Harare handout played, and in a roundabout fashion still plays, an important role. It has become legendary. We have found no copy of a "pamphlet" or a "brochure." The estate of Jakob and Lilli Segal¹¹ — closed until access was granted to one of us, E.G., in January 2012 — includes no master text, no original copy, no facsimile, but it does include relevant documents. Different titles are mentioned, but different titles for *what* exactly we do not know. Segal himself in one letter cited "AIDS: USA – home made evil, not imported from Africa."²³³ This title was almost the

same as "AIDS: USA Home-made evil, Not Made in Africa," mentioned in 1986 by Christopher Dobson of *The Sunday Telegraph*²³⁴ and in 1987 by Dr. Edward M. Malloy, Science Adviser of the US Embassy in Bonn, Federal Republic of Germany — the FRG or West Germany.²³⁵ In another letter, Lilli Segal cited "AIDS – U.S.A. man made."¹⁴³

We have found four versions of the same paper, but each used a fourth title, first in English, then in French, then twice in German.

Two of these versions listed a third author, Ronald Dehmlow. Jakob Segal had met Dehmlow in 1978, when Segal was seven years into his retirement and Dehmlow was a postgraduate working in Humboldt's *Sektion Chemie* [Department of Chemistry]. The two men shared a research interest in the hematological effects of ultraviolet irradiation and would go on to co-author papers on this topic.^{236,237} Robert Strecker, inspired by Rife, had the same interest.⁶⁵ Dehmlow was not, as Boghardt has written, "a fellow retired Humboldt University professor,"¹⁸³ as he was neither retired nor a professor. Beginning in 1986, he headed the Research Group for Medical Biophysical Chemistry [*Forschungsstelle für Medizinische Bio-Physikochemie*] of the GDR Ministry of Health.²³⁸

The first⁹¹ of the four versions came from Todd Leventhal, US Department of State. Its antecedent copy had been received by Leventhal's predecessor, who is now unavailable for comment; no annotation of provenance has been retained.⁴² Leventhal supplied a copy to Boghardt²³⁹ and kindly supplied an identical one to us. "AIDS – its nature and origin,"⁹¹ the title mentioned 16 October 1986 by Hunsmann,¹³⁹ was an undated draft paper "by Prof. Dr. Jakob Segal, Dr. Lilli Segal, Dr. Ronald Dehmlow." It was written in English; diction and syntax were good, misspellings frequent. The genre was molecular-genetic exposition interwoven with conspiracy theory.

The upper-right corner of the first page showed a cursive handwritten line of four to six words. At our invitation, eighteen German speakers — six of them at the University of Leipzig, including historians and librarians expert in graphology — tried to read it. None could, nor could six Russian speakers. The US Department of State has recorded no reading.⁴² (Figure 6)

One of the German speakers, contacted in June 2012, was Dr. Ronald Dehmlow himself. Could

Dehmlow recognize the handwritten line's style? "It could be [Jakob] Segal's, but I am not certain," he said. Dehmlow, too, had a copy of this same undated draft paper, but his copy's first page, he said, was free of handwriting. No, this had not been the material submitted to Sigusch, but it had been the basis for subsequent publications. And, no, he could not explain how any copy had turned up at the US Department of State.²⁴⁰

Antecedents of the Dehmlow and Leventhal copies differed at least insofar as the one had no inscription and the other did. But, inscribed or not, they might have been duplicates of the same item, either the original or — more likely, judging from our copy's appearance — one of the original's earlier facsimiles.

Thirty-eight type-written main-text pages preceded five single-sheet figures, a five-page addendum, and four pages listing 77 references: 52 pages in all. The "8" in "38" numbering the thirty-eighth page, the last page of main text, was missing much of its left side, in copy-of-a-copy fashion, making the "8" resemble a "3," perhaps explaining a five-page discrepancy between Boghardt's page count, 47,¹⁸³ and ours, 52. Included was an apparently original Figure 5, as Segal described to Sigusch on 24 April; unlike Figures 1 through 4, Figure 5 bore no attribution. Literature cited had been published "as of the end of March 1986" — or, as expressed in an addendum, "up to April 1986." That same addendum included a commentary on the Paris conference, as mentioned by Segal in his note to Sigusch dated 7 September, the day after the close of the Harare conference, and later mentioned in Segal's note to Ebbing.¹⁴⁰

We do not have a match on all points of comparison. Segal mentioned a page count: 50, not 52. Did page counts differ from one language to another? Was "50" an average or a rounded number? Segal mentioned a reference count: 85, not 77. Were extra citations added by March 1987? We can ask these questions but not answer them. Still, we are unaware of any extant document more likely to be a copy of the "draft paper" received by Bond.

A second version, also an undated draft paper, was filed by Department 1 of HA VII. We do not know how the Stasi came to have it. This second paper bore the first's title in French equivalent, "*Le SIDA – sa nature et son origine*," and it listed only the Segals as co-authors; Dehmlow's name did not appear.²⁴¹ Jakob

Segal had lived in France, as had Lilli; Jakob had earned his doctorate there and was a fluent French speaker. He did also say he had provided materials to African journalists,²³³ some of whom might have been Francophone. "*Le SIDA*" cited literature published as late as August 1986, making plausible a completion date just prior to the Harare conference. Handwritten on the title page is "*Erkenntnisstand August 86* [state of knowledge August 86]," suggesting someone's earlier attempt to use citation dates to mark a composition date.

In her 13 March 1987 letter to Peter Rudnick,¹⁴³ Lilli described French, English, and Spanish versions of the same study. Differences in the number and currency of references for the first two and the lateness of the third nominate the English version as the logical Harare candidate.

A third version, this one dated and published, bore the same title in German equivalent, "*AIDS – Natur und Ursprung* [AIDS – nature and origin]." Jakob and Lilli Segal alone were coauthors.²⁴² It was published in 1987 as "The original text [*Der Originaltext*]" by one of the founders of the *tageszeitung (taz)*, Kuno Kruse, in his book *AIDS – Pathogens from a Gene Laboratory? [AIDS – Erreger aus dem Genlabor?]*.²⁴³ Herein also appeared the Segal interview conducted by Stefan Heym,⁸⁶ positive and negative comments previously published in *taz*, and Segal's own response to critics.²⁴⁴ "The original text" cited 89 references extending into 1986.

A fourth version, also dated and published, bore a similar title, "*Das AIDS – seine Natur und sein Ursprung*," and appeared in *Streitbarer Materialismus* in July 1988. This fourth version, entirely in German, was attributed to the Segals and also again to Dehmlow. It was shorter than the previous version. It cited 50 references into 1987.¹⁸⁴

We did not find a German version with an English summary. In September 1988 the Bulgarian Secret Service filed a document citing receipt of such a version from the HV A/X in September 1986. Most closely resembling this non-extant item would have been the *Militant Materialism* article, which Bulgarian comrades listed as having been received from the HV A/X at a meeting in September 1988.²⁴⁵

Segal wrote that he and his wife had provided content for pamphlets passed out in Harare. On 2 March 1987 he wrote again to Professor Shibata in

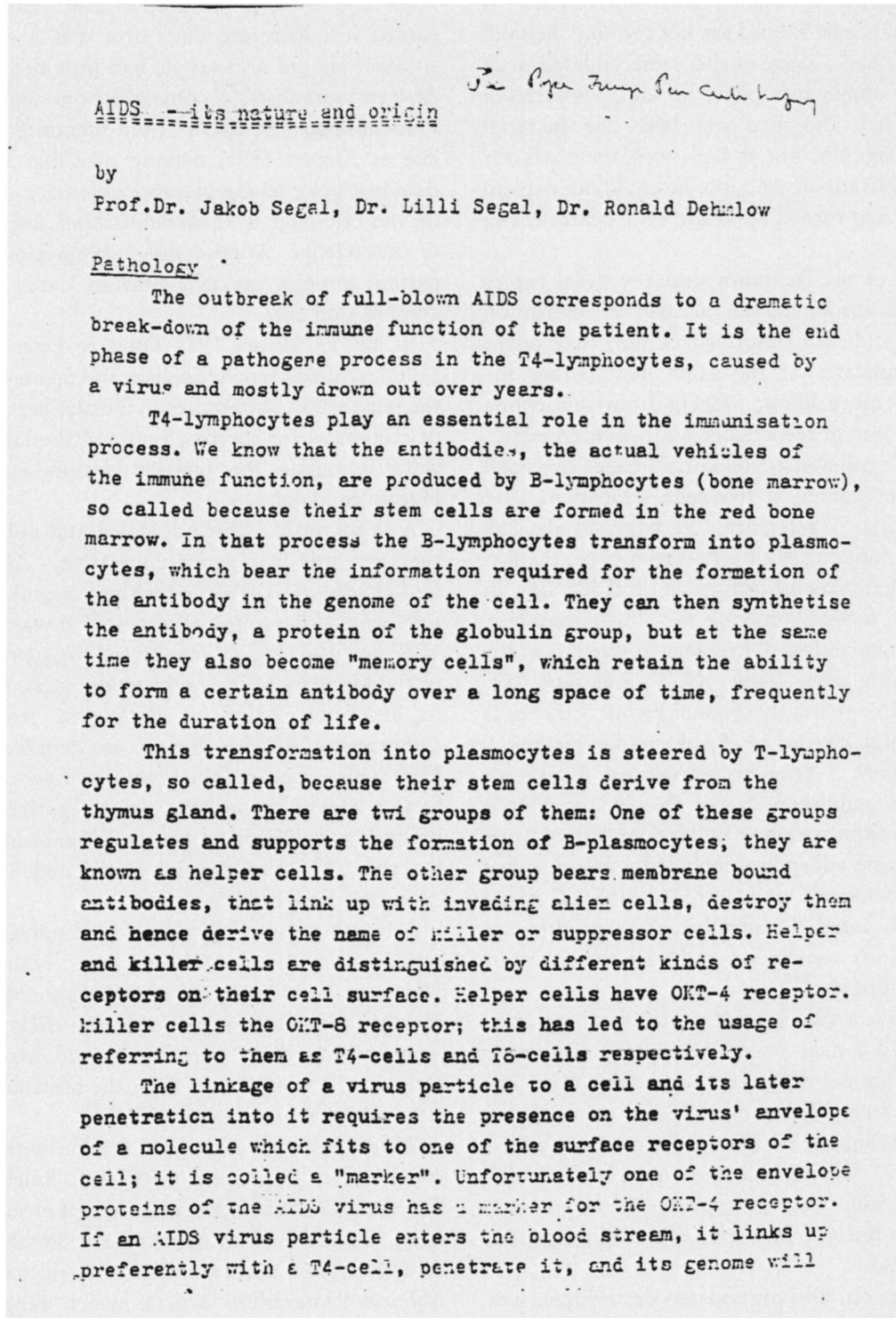


Figure 6. Upper part of the first page of a copy of an undated draft paper, "AIDS - its nature and origin," attributed to Jakob Segal, Lilli Segal, and Ronald Dehmlow. Copy kindly provided by Todd Leventhal, US Department of State. The cursive handwritten line in the upper-right corner has so far defied interpretation. Readers are encouraged to suggest credible renderings.

Tokyo, “Our original text was never published. African journalists had it transformed into a brochure, werry [*sic*] correctly made: Prof. Dr. Sc. J. Segal, Dr. L. Segal: AIDS: USA-home made evil; not imported from Africa. They distributed it last summer in Harare at the meeting of non-aligned nations.”²³³ Eleven days later, replying to a question posed by Peter Rudnick, Lilli wrote, “A brochure on AIDS had been published in Harare this summer, indeed. It deals with material we had completed in June 1986 and which was extremely well compiled by African journalists under the title ‘AIDS – U.S.A. man made.’ We are in the possession of only one copy of the pamphlet.”¹⁴³ Segal gave a similar explanation in a public statement in 1992: “On the basis of detailed material I had duplicated, African experts had compiled a brochure that was distributed at the conference of non-aligned states in Harare.”²⁴⁶

A route to these “African journalists” and “African experts” we may have discovered. Segal wrote in German 17 June 1986 to a contact in Yaoundé, the capital of Cameroon, a former German colony.

Dear Dr [Yalla] Eballa, presumably you have been informed by Maria that I have prepared together with my coworker a study on the origin of AIDS, which unambiguously [*eindeutig*] indicates that AIDS derives from the United States and that an African origin of that epidemic is completely out of the question. I assume that physicians and also journalists in your country are interested in these results. I ask you therefore to provide interested persons with the material attached.²⁴⁷

This “Maria” functioned as an intermediary. A previously mentioned “Maria” functioned as an informant, helping the Stasi understand the role Lilli’s family had played in Bond’s roundabout receipt of a “draft paper.”¹³³ Neither “Maria” is known to us.

Boghardt has described the undated draft paper supplied by Leventhal as “a copy of the pamphlet.”²³⁹ We cannot concur. The title is wrong. The number of authors does not fit. The appearance is too rough to represent a “transformed” product “very correctly made” and “extremely well compiled.” And Segal had only a single copy of the pamphlet during a period when he was sharing, enhancing, updating, and translating versions — and eventually publishing two German versions — of what we have come to know as the undated draft paper. If what we have now had been

“a copy of the pamphlet,” then Segal would have been “in the possession of” more than “one copy.” (See Addendum.)

We have no evidence placing the Segals or Dehmlow in Harare. The Segal estate contains no hint that Jakob or Lilli were there. The Political Archives of the Foreign Office [*Auswärtiges Amt*] of the Federal Republic of Germany, where documents of the foreign ministry of the German Democratic Republic are now filed, likewise contains no hint that either Segal was there.²⁴⁸ Dehmlow says he was not there and never heard the Segals say anything suggesting either of them had been there.²⁴⁹

We do not know whether the handout was made available passively to interested attendees or was distributed actively to all. Boghardt has relayed that “four HVA and 20 KGB officers ... were busily distributing Segal’s paper to the press and delegates” assembling for a conference of nominally non-aligned nations. In a single endnote following this statement Boghardt cited three sources. The first source, a US Department of State publication, was silent on the “officers” question.²⁵⁰ The second source, former Stasi officer Lieutenant Colonel Günter Bohnsack, named two HV A officers: Captain Hans Pfeiffer and Horst Schötzki.²⁵¹

Hans Pfeiffer we have not been able to locate. A source has told us he is dead, but the death of another Hans Pfeiffer, a writer, might have influenced recollection. According to Bohnsack und Brehmer, Pfeiffer was head of Section 1 [*Referat 1*] of HV A/X.²⁵² Section 1 dealt with the relations of the Federal Republic of Germany to Western and developing countries.²⁵³

Horst Schötzki is dead. He worked as a journalist for an East German monthly, *Horizont*, which dealt with international politics and economics. His widow says her husband traveled often to Africa as a journalist and spoke with her about AIDS having originated there, but she did not know whether he was in Harare during the conference.²⁵⁴ At least two reports dealing with the conference did appear as authored by Horst Schötzki.^{255,256} Neither “AIDS,” “HIV,” “Segal,” nor other related word appeared.

About Schötzki, however, more is known. According to the CIA, Schötzki had years earlier been an agent of the MfS. Under a cover name, “Martin Kiessler,” he had served as *Führungsoffizier* for a spy working as secretary to the deputy naval chief in the West German

Defense Ministry. In 1960, this secretary was uncovered as an East German agent, and she was arrested shortly before a meeting planned with Schötzki, who was also arrested. In the end, Schötzki was sentenced to five years in prison.^{257,258}

By our count, and setting Schötzki aside, the conference was observed by three journalists from the GDR: Hilmar König, special correspondent of *Neues Deutschland* [New Germany], the gazette of the Central Committee of the Social Unity Party; Dr. Rudi Bartlitz, the Harare correspondent of the GDR News Agency ADN; and, also representing ADN, Helmut Schulz, who died in the 1990s.²⁵⁹ Hilmar König and Bartlitz published numerous reports in *Neues Deutschland*,²⁶⁰ but topics relevant to our study were not mentioned. When asked afterwards whether they could remember conference circumstances with respect to AIDS and its origin and whether they noted an AIDS-related brochure being distributed, Hilmar König and Bartlitz answered that they had not noticed any activities related to AIDS.²⁶¹

Bartlitz told us that neither Pfeiffer nor Schötzki participated in the conference; Schötzki's reporting, Bartlitz suspected, had been second-hand. Another GDR journalist, Hartmut Kohlmetz, wrote an article for *Berliner Zeitung*, a widely circulated daily published in East Berlin;²⁶² this article also would appear to have been second-hand, as Bartlitz²⁶³ and Hilmar König²⁶⁴ are convinced that Kohlmetz did not participate in the Harare conference. Their recollection is not inconsistent with the fact that six *Berliner Zeitung* issues printed conference-related articles naming no author but crediting instead the GDR's news agency, ADN, with²⁶⁵ or without²⁶⁶ the newspaper's own acronym, BZ, attached.

The Harare conference was attended as well by three East German diplomats: Dr. Hans-Georg Schleicher, Ambassador of the GDR in Zimbabwe, and two observers of the East German Ministry of Foreign Affairs Directorate, Dr. Hartmut Bräsel and Dr. Hans-Bernhard Pfannenbergl. All three confirmed the information provided by Bartlitz and Hilmar König. They also confirmed that neither Pfeiffer nor Schötzki attended the conference, in contrast to Bohnsack's recollection conveyed by Boghardt.^{267,268,269}

Moreover, Bartlitz regarded as highly improbable that material as explosive as Segal's claims could have been distributed actively by persons from the GDR or

other Eastern bloc countries without the knowledge of the East German embassy. AIDS was not discussed at all during meetings of GDR representatives in their Harare embassy or, as far as he knew, during meetings held elsewhere. GDR personnel in Harare had no AIDS-related instructions from their home offices, and he was never asked about AIDS by West Germans or non-Germans.²⁷⁰ Bartlitz's assessment was corroborated by Ambassador Schleicher.²⁶⁷

Boghardt's third source was a 2008 book by Christhard Läßle. Ten lines addressed the myth. One sentence said four HV A and ten — not twenty — KGB officers distributed the pamphlet.²⁷¹ Läßle has told us his source was Bohnsack.²⁷²

We have found no surviving Stasi or non-Stasi GDR attendee who remembers any handout, any pamphlet or brochure or draft paper; on this point as on others, Bohnsack has not responded to our inquiry. We have seen no Stasi document either revealing or referencing plans to produce any handout, efforts to distribute it, or efforts to help the KGB or the Bulgarian secret service or any other group distribute it. One or more representatives of HV A/X discussed with Bulgarian counterparts a plan to collude in spreading the myth abroad, but neither the Harare conference nor any Harare handout was mentioned in that connection.

Was the Harare venture a Stasi initiative? No.

Did the Stasi embrace the myth after Harare?

The Harare handout's assertions were widely reported, prompting concern and curiosity around the world and inflaming sentiments below the Sahara. African interest was easy to understand, and material in "AIDS – its nature and origin" might readily have been "transformed" to play upon that interest compellingly. A long section dealt with "[t]he 'AIDS-explosion' in Africa," concluding "Nothing speaks in favour of the development of AIDS in Africa by natural ways."⁹¹

Segal seemed always to maintain that "African journalists"^{143,233} or "African experts"²⁴⁶ had compiled his "pamphlet," had conveyed it to Harare, and had handed it out there. While we cannot say precisely what, or who, he meant by these terms, we have no reason to disconfirm his claim, and it fit well enough with subsequent events. On 24 August 1986, two days before the conference convened, the *Harare Sunday*

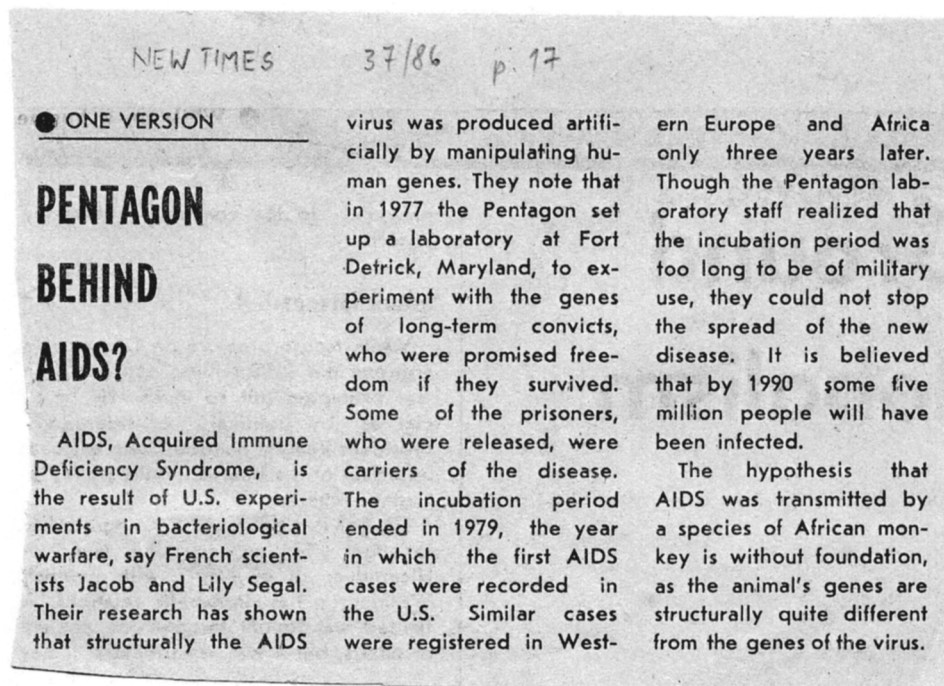


Figure 7. “Pentagon behind AIDS?” Moscow *New Times*, September 1986.

Mail reported that an American role in the creation and dissemination of the AIDS agent was being discussed by arriving attendees.²⁷³ Soon appearing in a Zimbabwean magazine, *The Journal on Social Change and Development*, was an unattributed “book review” of Jakob and Lilli Segal’s manuscript, “AIDS: U.S.A. – Home-Made Evil; Not Imported From Africa.” The Segals were acknowledged graciously:

by Prof. Jakob Segal (D. Sc.) — Licence in
Toulouse (France), graduated
at the Sorbonne (Paris) in 1940.
and Dr Lilli Segal — Licence in Toulouse,
graduated at the Humboldt University
(Berlin) in 1959.

The reviewer was avidly receptive to Africa’s absolutism but nonetheless expressed — or feigned — skepticism. “Time will tell whether Segal and Segals’ research is scientifically substantiated and accepted. But have we that time? And what role will the mass media in the West play?” A cover otherwise devoted to “food & farming” declared “AIDS: NEW BOOK ACCUSES U.S.A.”²⁷⁴

This review appeared again the following January in the *Ugandan Weekly Topic*²⁷⁵ as well as in other African mass media. In succeeding weeks, newspapers in Ghana and Tanzania, with the help of Soviet news-agency personnel, according to the US Department of State, repeatedly published the Segal-Segal-Dehmlow analysis and allegations. Papers in Zambia, Nigeria, and other countries recycled the story periodically, and media in more than a dozen other African countries carried the story at least once.²⁷⁶ It would even be noticed in West Germany. From Hamburg a teacher in an AIDS advice center wrote to Segal the following February saying he had “read with great interest the presentation of your investigation on the origin [of the] immunodeficiency AIDS in the journal *Social Change and Development*, published in Harare/ZIMBABWE.”²⁷⁷ Segal must have been pleased, as the teacher later wrote back to thank him for sending along a copy of his “report.”²⁷⁸

In September 1986, Moscow’s *New Times*, a multilingual newspaper, published an article headlined by a question: “Pentagon behind AIDS?”²⁷⁹ The same article was published in *Neue Zeit*,²⁸⁰ the East German edition of *New Times*. This article was in turn quoted

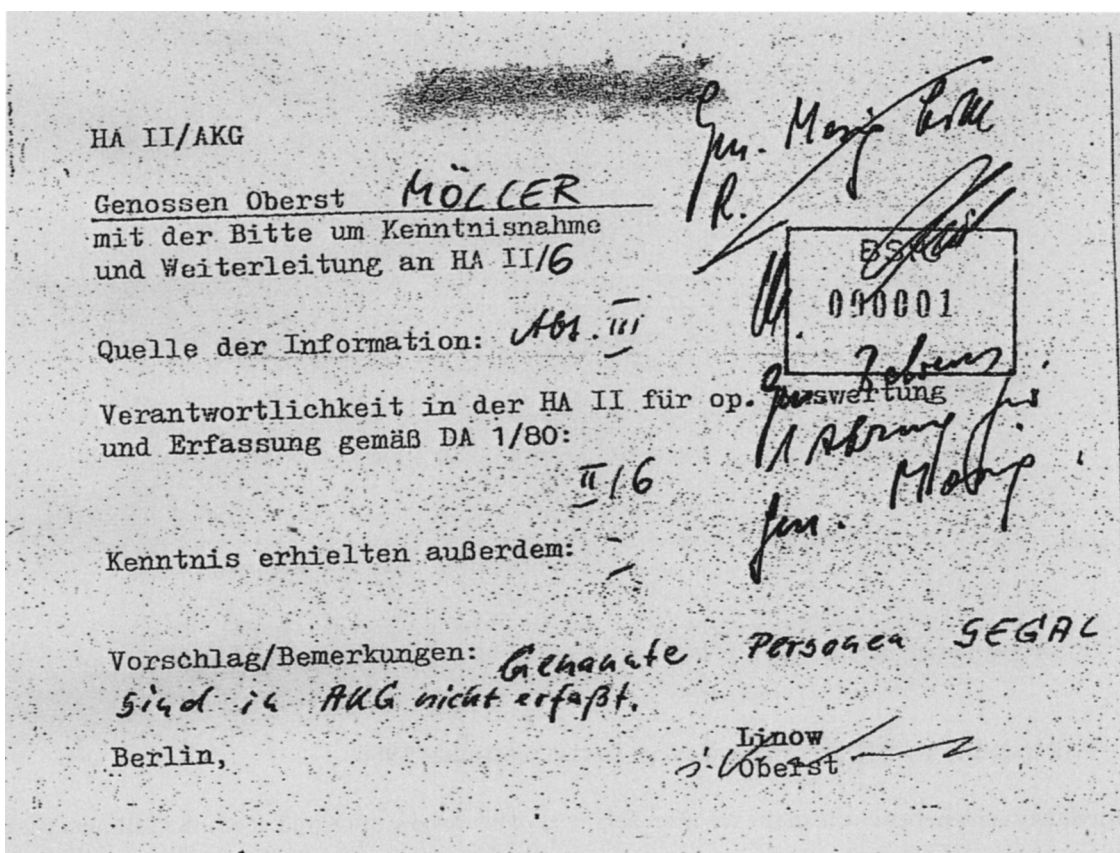


Figure 8. Colonel Linow’s note accompanying the clipping from *Neue Zeit*. Source: BStU MfS – HA II/6, Nr. 1271: 1.

25 September 1986 by London’s communist newspaper, *Morning Star*.²⁸¹ (Figure 7)

The *Neue Zeit* article was seen within the MfS. Colonel Linow, a member of group AKG of HA II — Main Department II [*Hauptabteilung II*] — sent it on to HA II/6, which handled counter-intelligence in politics and economy. In an accompanying note, Linow credited as his source Main Department III, whose responsibility was not press surveillance but radio reconnaissance and radio counter-intelligence. He added that the Segals were not registered by AKG — which was to say that he did not know who they were.²⁸² (Figure 8)

The MfS was so far behaving as a bureaucracy taking interest in a rumor, not yet as a security service taking advantage of an opportunity. Supervision of scientists’ activities and prevention of espionage were statist defensive functions and, as such, routine;

propagation of disinformation was only potentially advantageous and, as such, still discretionary.

Yet arousal was imminent. First to stir was Department X of HV A, the group responsible for disinformation and other “active measures.” From 16 to 19 September 1986 Colonel [redacted] [GDR name 1 redacted for KOMDOS], deputy head of HV A/X,²⁸³ met in Sofia with representatives of the Bulgarian Secret Service. Whether he was accompanied by other East German officers we do not know.

The start of this meeting, 16 September, was ten days after the Harare conference had closed and four days after John Monroe König had first visited the Segals’ flat.^{80,81} Among the topics discussed in Sofia was “action ‘DENVER,’” code-named by the Bulgarians “‘PANDEM,’ directed towards USA and NATO.” This action dealt with AIDS. “The Germans will provide us with the complete documentation regarding the disease including the AM [active measure] they have per-

formed in that direction for our use in a corresponding AM The German comrades informed us that GDR scientists had been requested to participate in that action. One of them has elaborated a scientific memo which proves that AIDS is a result of biological weapons [research] of the U.S.A. They have been and are using this memo in several active measures all over the world.”²⁸⁴

This Bulgarian report seems on its face to show HV A/X confident and ambitious. On second, reading, though, it shows them eager but unprepared. They promised “complete documentation” but apparently had none with them. Their scientists “had been requested to participate,” but only one — on his own initiative — had accomplished anything worth mentioning. The “active measures” claim could have referred only to KGB efforts or to the Harare venture. But to neither do we have evidence of Stasi contribution.

Another Bulgarian report mentioned “action ‘AIDS,’” in support of which MfS officers, “will provide us with the complete documentation. . . . It will be interesting to call in Bulgarian scholars who support the thesis of the German professor. The papers will be in English, with a summary in German.” Further, “[t]he action regarding AIDS was coordinated with the head of the department for public health. He has discussed that with the minister for health and other secretaries.”²⁸⁵

The future tense again dominated: “will provide.” German experts did not support the Stasi’s professor; maybe Bulgarian experts would. Papers “will be.” And public-health cooperation was in fact nil. No reference to any such action or coordination or discussion has been found in AIDS-related archives of the Central Committee of the SED²⁸⁶ or Ministry of Health of the GDR.²⁸⁷

Judging from these Bulgarian files, Colonel [redacted] [GDR name 1 redacted for KOMDOS] left four impressions: that Segal was a fully compliant Stasi asset, that the Harare venture had been a Stasi initiative, that the myth was under his own department’s control, and that his government was informed and complicit. Drawing on our German sources, we suspect this colonel was boasting abroad.

The Stasi — or at least one of its components, HV A/X — might now have been embracing the myth, seeing it less as a security problem and more as an “active

measures” opportunity, but embracing the myth did not mean being able to control it.

On 26 October 1986, London’s *Sunday Express* published “Aids sensation.”⁸⁵ This article evidently was John Seale’s doing. (Figure 9)

The day the article appeared, Segal wrote to Seale saying “it was a wonderful idea of yours to put this journalist of Sunday Express on the AIDS problem. He phoned us no less than three times in order to get additional information.”²⁸⁸ *The Sunday Express* quoted Segal at length:

I knew that in the mid-1970s experiments were being carried out at Fort Detrick, where the U.S. Army Medical Research Command has its headquarters, on volunteer long-term prisoners who were promised freedom after the tests. I believe that scientists there created the Aids virus by combining parts of the Maedi-Visna virus and Human T-cell Leukemia virus-Type 1. . . . Almost certainly the scientists were unaware of the extent of their terrible creation — the Aids virus. . . . After the prisoners were infected with the newly made virus, there would have been no immediate signs of illness, and they would have been released as promised into the world.⁸⁵

The Sunday Express reported also that, independent of Segal, two other scientists, Dr. Seale again and, in California, Dr. Robert Strecker, had come to believe “the AIDS virus is man-made” and “genetically engineered. . . . Dr. Seale said he did not necessarily agree with Professor Segal that this took place in a military establishment. ‘I think it is more likely to have been an ordinary laboratory where cancer research is being carried out.’”⁸⁵

The *Sunday Express* coverage got attention worldwide within hours.²⁸⁹ Lilli Segal reported to a GDR citizen in Dar es Salaam that the pamphlet “AIDS man made” had been noticed most especially in Africa. “The largest effect, however, [was] achieved [in] an article in Sunday Express in October where our theory as well as that proposed by Dr. Seal [*sic*] from London and a Californian Prof. Strecker, unknown to us, had been compared. Within 14 days there was an endless queue of journalists from different countries.”²⁹⁰

Together with the *Morning Star* article, the report in the *Sunday Express* finally got the Stasi’s other departments interested in Segal’s claims and their ramifications. The report was translated into German and placed in the files of Main Department HA II.²⁹¹ Yet judging from

by ALFRED LEE 000022 147

Aids sensation 148

From Page One

THE killer Aids virus was artificially created by American scientists during laboratory experiments which went disastrously wrong—and a massive cover-up has kept the secret from the world until today.

This is the sensational claim made independently by three international experts—and they reject the widely-held belief that Aids originated after an African green monkey bit a man.

They are compiling separate detailed dossiers on why they are convinced that the virus now sweeping the world is man-made. They will have the reports published soon.

The Sunday Express has spoken to all three experts and obtained details of their key conclusions.

DR. JOHN SEALE, the distinguished London-based specialist who has become widely known for his predictions about the spread of the disease told me yesterday: "I am now totally convinced the Aids virus is man-made."

DR. ROBERT STRECKER, of California, said: "It must have been genetically engineered."

PROFESSOR JACOB SEGAL, of East Berlin—"But he holds no particular political beliefs or views at all," said Dr Seale—pinpointed a secret American laboratory at Fort Detrick, Maryland, as the most likely place where this "engineering" took place.

Challenge

Dr Seale will detail his conclusions in the report he is now preparing.

Dr Seale said: "It is a claim I do not make lightly, because I know so many virologists will dispute it."

"But I am totally convinced I am right."

"I challenge medical experts with an opposing view to appear with me in a tough, live television debate. I am sure I can convince objective members of the public I am correct."

● Dr Strecker, the American expert, has been studying Aids since the first few cases were reported.

He said: "There is no known animal virus with all the symptoms of Aids. It must have been genetically engineered, from different viruses."

"The two viruses which were used, according to all my research and studies, are

some other Government laboratory site.

"HTLV-1 is found in southern parts of the U.S., the Caribbean and the northern part of Japan, and the virus could very easily have been taken deep-frozen to Fort Detrick."

"Almost certainly the scientists were unaware of the extent of their terrible creation—the Aids virus."

Released

"We all know that it takes years from the time of infection to the time of serious illness and death from Aids."

"After the prisoners were injected with the newly-made virus, there would have been no immediate signs of illness, and they would have been released as promised into the world."

Professor Segal's account coincides with the fact that the first-known case of full-blown Aids appeared in New York in 1978 or 1979.

About the green monkey theory as the origin of Aids, the professor said: "It's ludicrous and scientifically incredible—and has been promoted. I believe, by the United States Government as part of the cover-up."

Accident

A spokesman for the United States Embassy in East Berlin told me: "Two representatives from the embassy did visit Professor Segal to talk to him about Aids." The spokesman would give no details.

● Dr. Seale, a Fellow of the Royal Society of Medicine and formerly consultant in venereology at the Middlesex and St. Thomas' Hospitals in London, believed Aids was genetically engineered in a laboratory by accident by combining part of the Maedi-Visna virus found in sheep and Bovine Leukaemia virus from cattle, which is similar to HTLV-1.

Dr. Seale said: "Combined, these two lethal animal viruses would give all the symptoms of Aids."

"The Maedi-Visna virus is a slow, infectious virus causing wasting of the body."



Dr Seale: Convinced

Maedi-Visna and Bovine Leukaemia

"It almost certainly happened in a research laboratory in the United States."

Professor Segal, retired director of the Institute of Biology at Berlin University, is compiling a 30-page report expounding his conviction that the Aids virus is man-made and that there has been "a cover-up of the blunders which unleashed a medical catastrophe on the world."

Sunday Express investigations have revealed that two U.S. Embassy officials made a two-hour visit to Professor Segal at his home two weeks ago, questioning him about what he knows, what he thinks, where he got his information from, and what he intends doing with his report.

Freedom

The professor said: "The two men showed me their credentials. One said he was a historian and the other said he was a political consul."

"But I am positive they were from the CIA—and that they were deeply concerned that the cover-up over the origin of Aids was going to be exposed."

"I told them everything I knew and believed."

"I told them I knew that in the mid-1970s experiments were being carried out at Fort Detrick, where the U.S. Army Medical Research Command has its headquarters, on

Plague's famous victims

AIDS has claimed the lives of several famous people in the last two years.

Hollywood actor Rock Hudson was probably the best-known. He died in October last year, aged 53.

In August last year, Lord Avon, the 54-year-old son of former Prime Minister Anthony Eden, died from the "gay plague".

And earlier this month Stephen Barry, 37, a former valet to Prince Charles died.

Famous people suffering from AIDS include actor Douglas Lambert, 50, who plays the ruthless lawyer in ITV's *Inside Story*. Looking gaunt and haggard, he has been told he has about six months to live.

volunteer long-term prisoners who were promised freedom after the tests.

"I believe that scientists there created the Aids virus by combining parts of the Maedi-Visna virus and Human T-cell Leukaemia virus-Type 1."

"The Maedi-Visna virus comes only from sheep—and the infected sheep used in the experiments may have been kept at Fort Detrick or at

Turn to Page 2

Figure 9. "Aids sensation," *Sunday Express*, 26 October 1986, as filed by the Stasi. Source: BStU MfS – HA II, Nr. 22082: 22–23.

BStU documents available, no further action was taken at the time. For example, another branch of HA II, department II/3, which did become involved later, was not informed immediately about these publications.

Within a week of the *Sunday Express* article, and without the Stasi's knowledge, Segal was being interviewed by Stefan Heym.⁸⁶ The Segals were to

continue this independent and entrepreneurial pattern. Extending arguments in pre-Harare draft manuscripts, Jakob and Lilli, not always with Dehmlow, published on both sides of the West-East divide.^{184,242,292} On 26 April 1987 Jakob Segal himself published an article — "Where does AIDS come from?" — in the multilingual *Moscow News*.²⁹³ (Figure 10) Addressing female

10 SCIENCE

MOSCOW NEWS weekly No. 17, 1987

26 April

HYPOTHESIS

WHERE DOES AIDS COME FROM?

AIDS was dubbed the plague of the 20th century from the very beginning. Where did that scourge for humankind come from? Was nature to blame, or is AIDS just another product of today's militarism that uses violence against nature to use violence against humanity? There is no unanimous opinion among specialists on the issue. However, the facts uncovered so far are compelling ever more people to subscribe to the hypothesis that the AIDS virus originated inside the US laboratories developing means of biological warfare. A group of researchers at Harvard University recently concluded that there may be a Pentagon connection. The Pentagon was forced to admit that work was being done with viruses at its laboratories. What lies behind those admissions? We put this question to Dr. SEGAL, a reputed immunologist from the GDR.

By Prof. Jakob SEGAL, GDR

IN ORDER to understand the origin of the human immune-deficiency virus (HIV) which causes AIDS it is necessary to compare its genome, set of hereditary factors, with that of viruses of similar types. It becomes evident that the genome of the HIV is almost identical with that of the Visna virus which causes a disease in sheep destroying the central nervous system over several years (AIDS has the same effect if its victim doesn't die of immune deficiency first).

The Visna virus cannot penetrate the human cell, but the HTLV-1 virus can. In humans the virus causes an exceptionally rare disease of malignant lymphoma which is just one type of blood-cell cancer. If a gene from the HTLV-1 virus could be somehow attached to the hereditary apparatus of the Visna virus, the result would be



Florida and Chicago a year after the first cases were spotted in New York. There are many more such examples. Experts in biology started to feel uneasy about uncontrolled manipulations with genes because of the possible consequences. In order to diffuse their growing concern, the Western mass media supplied two versions as to the origin of the disease. Both looked quite convincing for the general public but were actually at variance with reality. The first one is the green-monkey version.

American virologist Max Essex caught 104 green monkeys in the tropical forests of Central Africa. All the monkeys were perfectly healthy, still the scientist discovered in half of them a virus which he claimed greatly resembled the AIDS virus. He also claimed, without supplying any proof, that one of the monkeys could bite or severely scratch a black hunter, and a harmless monkey virus changed in the human body into the deadly AIDS virus.

That assertion was not reliable from the onset, for even at that time, the scientists had at their disposal very detailed data obtained by a research group from Japan under Watanabe, which testified that both viruses in question belonged to different families and consequently couldn't beget one another. Thus, Essex tried deliberately to mislead his colleagues and the public. It is small wonder that not a single scientific publication supported his version.

However, a skillful manipulation of public opinion through the mass media resulted in making a lot of people, including scientists who do not watch the AIDS research publications, believe in the transformation of a monkey virus into the AIDS pathogen. And it is only under the influence of a sharp criticism uttered by many scientists at the Paris 1986 congress on the problem of

managed to establish one case as of December 1982. The first instances of AIDS in New York date as far back as 1979, and the date for Western Europe is 1981.

It should be noted that AIDS in Africa is mainly limited to the well-to-do public who mingle with white tourists and technical personnel. I would like to cite a very eloquent example – the screening of prostitutes in Nairobi for AIDS done by the research group headed by Kriss. There are two types of prostitutes in the city – very expensive and very cheap ones. The cheap prostitutes cater for the local people, the expensive ones – foreign tourists. The Kriss' group established that the disease among the group for the local people is non-existent, while the rate of AIDS among the second group is 53 per cent. How did AIDS get to Nairobi? From abroad or from the rural areas?

THE AFRICAN VERSION TO BE DISCARDED

GREAT importance was ascribed to the fact that AIDS antibodies which testify to the existence of the disease were discovered to be present in the blood serum samples collected long ago in Africa for the purpose of monitoring the spread of such infections as B-hepatitis, yellow fever and others. The conclusion was drawn that AIDS has been present in Africa for many years. American immunologist Namas and his group screened the serum specimens collected in Zaire in 1959: 90.5 per cent of those were regarded AIDS-positive. That means that hundreds of thousands must have died in 1961 at the latest. Was anything like that recorded?

My wife and I are immunologists by profession and have a wealth of experience in the field of conservation

Figure 10. Jakob Segal, "Where does AIDS come from?" *Moscow News*, 26 April 1987.

readers explicitly, Lilli Segal in the same year described AIDS and explained her version of its origin for an anthology published in Freiburg im Breisgau, a university town west of the Black Forest.²⁹⁴

Opportunistic interest may be thought to have spread inexorably, if not smoothly, throughout the MfS. Indeed, at least eight MfS divisions and seventeen of their constituent departments eventually would come to deal directly or indirectly with the origin of HIV. Yet ambivalence might have spread right along in step, partly because the Segals were activists whose activity the Stasi seemed unprepared to modulate but also because the myth itself — the myth's "wild type" — was susceptible to mutation. Just two months after Harare came the *Sunday Telegraph* interview in which Seale said again that the AIDS agent might have been made not in the United States but in the Soviet Union.⁴⁰

Did the Stasi embrace the myth after Harare? Yes, but belatedly and warily.

Did the East German Communist Party support Segal?

Only after bidding for a global audience did Jakob Segal approach the leadership of the East German Communist Party, *die Sozialistische Einheitspartei Deutschlands* (the SED or Socialist Unity Party). He sought their support. Segal's first contact was a member of the *Politbüro*, Hermann Axen,^{100,295} but Axen was in charge of international affairs and did not regard himself as responsible for Segal's area and forwarded his letters to Karl Seidel, professor of psychiatry and head of the Department for Medical Affairs of the Central Committee of the SED. Seidel met Segal on 17

September 1986 for an extended conversation and became convinced by Segal's arguments.²⁹⁶ Seidel then reported to his superior, another member of the *Politbüro*, Professor Kurt Hager, who was responsible for cultural, scientific, and medical affairs. Seidel summarized the HIV-from-Fort-Detrick myth and recommended: "The opinion forwarded by Comrade Prof. Segal on the origin and spread of AIDS could be — if it is validated or at least proved in part — regarded as an unmasking of activities of biological warfare by USA imperialism, which is of high political explosiveness."²⁹⁷ Seidel proposed that Segal should be encouraged to spread his message in public without any restriction, despite health minister Mecklinger's 1984 decision not to address AIDS openly.²⁹⁸ Mecklinger's decision must have been taken with at least tacit SED approval. At any rate, the East German leadership had not previously engaged the AIDS problem publicly and did not seem likely to favor this new suggestion. Hager responded to Seidel quickly:

Our restricted information policy regarding AIDS is to be continued. ... Publications in official media of the GDR should be avoided, especially since Comrade Segal himself concedes [that his idea is] a hypothesis. I do not know to what extent his assumptions can be published in appropriate foreign journals[.] ... Of course Comrade Segal himself as a scientist should take the responsibility for them.²⁹⁹

Evidently, then, the leaders of the ruling party were skeptical of Segal's allegations. They rejected the advice of the top official responsible for health policy and were not ready to use Segal's allegations as ideological weapons in the struggle against "USA imperialism." They did not allow Segal to spread his message in the GDR. They did not prevent him from disseminating his allegations abroad, but he could do so not as a representative of the GDR but only as an individual scientist. Yet Jakob Segal was not a citizen of the GDR but of the Soviet Union;³⁰⁰ he was not "a German of Jewish descent," as Boghardt has described him,³⁰¹ but a Russian-born Lithuanian citizen who became a Soviet citizen through Stalin's annexation of the Baltic States. Jakob's coauthor and wife, Lilli, although born German, had become a Lithuanian citizen by marriage and then a Soviet citizen by annexation.³⁰²

In his letters to Axen and during his meeting with Seidel, Segal *withheld* the fact that he had already been

spreading his message abroad, including in Harare. Axen and Seidel might or might not already have known. In any event, as the SED was barring his activities only in the GDR, Segal pressed ahead.

We do agree with Boghardt that "Segal's first major contribution" in the myth field occurred during the summer of 1986, when he contributed to the Harare handout. But we doubt that "[t]he East German Communist Party leadership was delighted to see Segal's theses included in the conference's final report,"¹⁸³ as Bohnsack told Boghardt. The reason is simple.

The first three Party leaders to learn of the myth were informed in different ways. Axen learned through letters and memoranda sent by Segal on 26 and 27 August^{303,304,78} and another letter sent by Segal 8 September 1986.³⁰⁵ Seidel learned indirectly through the items Segal had sent to Axen and then during a conversation with Segal himself on 17 September.²⁹⁶ Hager learned through a letter from Seidel on 22 September.²⁹⁷ The Axen dates spanned the Harare conference, although Axen did not deal promptly with the items received. The Seidel and Hager dates came well after the conference, which closed 6 September with the release of a final report, the "Harare Declaration." Seidel, for one, might have been "delighted" had the Harare Declaration referred to Segal's claims; he would at least have been surprised. But the Harare Declaration did *not* refer to Segal's claims. Sad to say, given the human toll already being exacted through denialism in non-aligned countries, "AIDS" appeared nowhere in the Harare Declaration, nor would it appear in any Non-Aligned Movement declaration until the twelfth summit, held in Durban, South Africa, in 1998. "HIV" did not appear until 2003.³⁰⁶ Moreover, the report submitted by the GDR Embassy in Harare to the Ministry for External Affairs mentioned no AIDS-related topic, dealing instead mainly with problems of disarmament and the disarmament attitudes of individual Non-Aligned Movement member states.³⁰⁷

Apart from the Harare Declaration, the correspondence between Hager and Seidel, mentioned above, showed that leadership opinion was mixed. Seidel might have been "delighted," with or without reason, but Hager presumably was not. We are not convinced that the GDR's party leadership had "heaped praise on the HV A/X for the operation." Further, the claim that

“HVA X had provided Segal with much of the material for his pamphlet”¹⁸³ is not supported by documentary proof; it relies instead on Boghardt’s personal communications with Behling and former Stasi officer Bohnsack. The MfS could hardly have provided Segal with background papers since it learned about the spreading of the myth first in September 1986 from foreign press reports and its own surveillance of US diplomats’ activities.

Did the East German Communist Party support Segal? At least one member of the party leadership did, but the party leadership on the whole did not.

Did Stasi officers impersonating CIA agents visit the Segals?

On 12 September 1986, the Segals’ home telephone rang. Lili answered. The call had been placed “by J. M. König, the second secretary of the political department of the US Embassy [in East Berlin], born about 1950.”^{80,81} This König — or, without the umlaut, “Koenig” — was not to be confused with Hilmar König, a GDR journalist who had just finished reporting from the Harare conference, concluded six days before. This König was an American.

In fluent German he explained that his embassy “had received a telephone call from the Embassy of the USA in Kuwait [saying] that there had been a report in Africa, in which Professor [redacted] [name redacted by BStU] had published important items on AIDS. [He asked if] he could obtain a copy of the report. We said: yes. . . . He asked for permission to pick it up in our flat. He turned up one hour later.” Lilli told him “that some copies of the material already exist [*sind vorhanden*] in the United States.” The visitor did not seize upon [*nicht aufgriff*] her remark, and Lilli wondered whether he already knew about the California contact but preferred to mention only the call from Kuwait as the motive for his visit. Whatever it was Lilli gave König he promised to study promptly and then get back in touch.⁸¹

A note filed by HA II preserves an intriguing error. In naming the embassy in Kuwait as his source, Lilli’s American visitor indirectly misled HV A/SWT Comrade Thielemann into thinking that “the Professor presented his thesis to the public for the first time in Kuwait.”³⁰⁸

Kuwait? No, Harare. “Kuwait” was a misinterpretation, not a code name, and it was a sign of trouble in a professional security service. Bad training, bad briefing, bad attitude, bad day — these and other potential explanations might explain such a mistake, but mistakes were not unusual among the Stasi,³⁰⁹ nor have they been unusual among security services elsewhere.³¹⁰

The “Kuwait” misinterpretation may tell us more, however. The Stasi might have been learning about the HIV-from-Fort-Detrick myth neither from the KGB nor from Segal directly nor from Seidel nor from other top officials of the SED who might have known about it. This error instead suggested dependence on intelligence emanating from the US Embassy in East Berlin. Moreover, it suggested the Stasi might have become interested in Segal’s claims not so much to disinform as to protect — in this instance, to protect the GDR by “protecting” its scientists and their research from foreign intelligence services.

The US Department of Defense might already have seen the “draft paper” the Segals had conveyed to California on 4 August; if so, State might have had a clue — or even a copy — prior to the news from Harare and the tip from Kuwait and this meeting with Lilli. Yet from 12 September the US Department of State, as represented in East Berlin, would have had from Lilli’s own hand some written form of the Segals’ version of the myth. Whether our copy of the Segal-Segal-Dehmlow undated draft paper has descended from one or the other of these antecedents, or from a third, we do not know, nor does Todd Leventhal.⁴²

The HVA and other departments of the MfS knew of this 12 September meeting because they monitored the activities of US diplomats in Berlin. And they may have known immediately; recent research by Christopher Nehring is consistent with this possibility. Within a week of König’s visit, HV A/X officers meeting their counterparts in Sofia reported US interest in Segal’s manuscript. A Bulgarian officer recorded that “the Americans asked the author [*sic*] for a copy of his [*sic*] study. Right now the German comrades have decided to refrain from providing the American representatives with the study.”²⁸⁴ What “the German comrades” did not know was that Lilli had already given König a copy. The Stasi learned of her gift because Lilli herself reported it.⁸¹ (Figure 11)

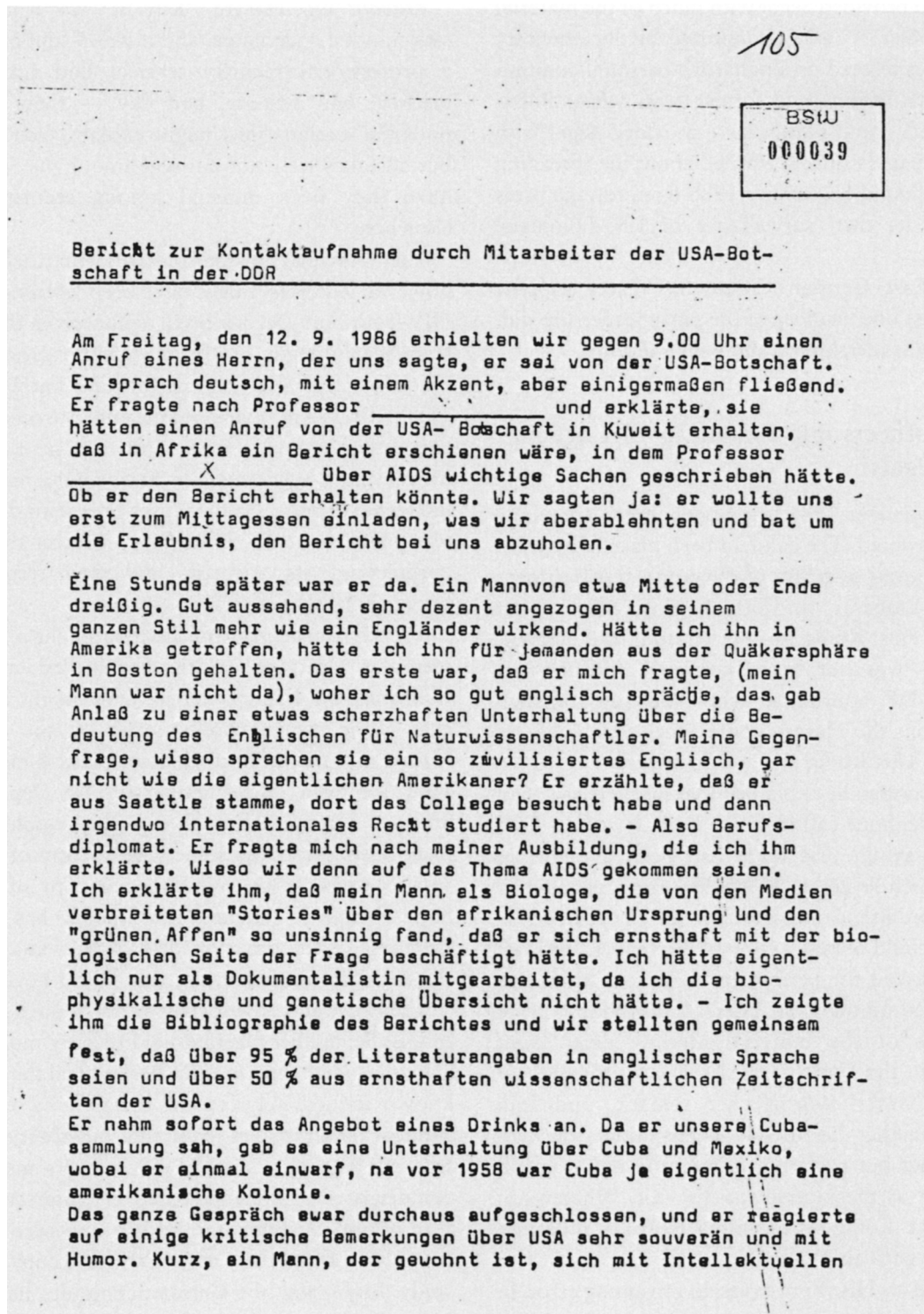


Figure 11. First page of Lilli Segal's report on the visit of US diplomats. Source: BStU MfS HA II 22082: 39-40.

At any rate, the Stasi soon enough learned that US officials and the Segals were planning a second meeting. Representatives of HA II/3 and HV A/SWT met 9 October 1986 to prepare in detail. They agreed that Jakob Segal should be instructed to find out why the Americans were interested in his claims and whether their embassy was acting on behalf of a secret service.³⁰⁸ This second meeting took place 12 October 1986, initially in the Segals' flat and then in a restaurant, "Praha [Prague]."¹¹⁶ (Figure 12)

The course of this second meeting was reported by Jakob Segal at least to *The Sunday Express*⁸⁵ and by Lilli Segal to the Stasi.¹¹⁶ *The Sunday Express* wrote that two representatives of the United States Embassy in East Berlin had "made a two-hour visit to Professor Segal at his home two weeks ago questioning him about what he knows, what he thinks, where he got his information from, and what he intends doing with his report." According to this newspaper, Segal said: "The two men showed me their credentials. One said he was a historian and the other said he was a political consul. But I am positive they were from the CIA — and that they were deeply concerned that the [American] cover-up over the origin of Aids was going to be exposed."⁸⁵

The MfS, too, assumed that at least one of the Segals' visitors was a CIA agent. A note written about one year later regarding a visit of a journalist from *The Dallas Times* recorded that "in the past, an employee of the station [*Residentur*] of the CIA in the Embassy of the USA in the GDR, [redacted] [name and rank redacted by BStU], Political Department, established contact with Segal. Besides, a representative of the CIA at the Mission of the USA in Berlin West, who was responsible for dealing with the disinformation on AIDS, asked the embassy of the USA for background information on Segal." Protection of the source of this information was requested explicitly: "*Source protection is required! [Quellenschutz erforderlich!]*," implying the MfS had access to information within — or, at least, about — the US Embassy in East Berlin and the US Military Mission in West Berlin; other sources document that access, as will be seen. Inferring from a word, "Mustang," handwritten near the political officer's redaction,³¹¹ the MfS had assigned a code name. (Figure 13)

In a letter covering the 23 October 1986 report to Häsel, whose unit was responsible for *internal* counter-espionage, Oldenburg, whose unit was respon-

sible for *external* counter-espionage, had mentioned neither the Segals nor the myth. They had not been his objects of surveillance. Oldenburg had included Lilli's notes^{81,116} on her visitations by Americans from the US embassy because his focus was on her guests, William Gregory Sandford and John Monroe König, both of them accredited US diplomats.⁸⁰ (Figure 14) The second identity closely fits "John M. Koenig (* [born] 1958 in Tacoma [Washington]) ... [F]rom 1985 to 1987, Koenig was accredited at the U.S. Embassy in East Berlin [*von 1985 bis 1987 war Koenig an der US-Botschaft in Ost-Berlin akkreditiert*]."³¹² On 8 October 2002, "John Monroe Koenig, of [the State of] Washington" was nominated to the Senior Foreign Service, Class of Counselor.³¹³ On 17 August 2012, he was sworn in as US Ambassador to the Republic of Cyprus.³¹⁴

Boghardt has interpreted these visits differently. On 10 November 1986, the West German weekly *Der Spiegel* addressed the HIV-origins question in "Ancestors wanted: Who has introduced the Aids virus into mankind? The CIA? The KGB?"³¹⁵ As Boghardt has related, *Der Spiegel* "reported a mysterious visit of two 'US diplomats' to Jakob and Lilli Segal in East Berlin ... in mid-October 1986[.]" The visitors "began to 'cross-examine' Segal for two hours about his hypothesis. Segal was 'certain they were from the CIA.'"³¹⁶ Boghardt has been convinced that "Segal was unlikely to have invented the story" but has not believed that the visitors were CIA officers. "[T]he story can hardly be taken at face value. ... [I]t 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." Moreover, "US intelligence knew Segal's theory was humbug and therefore had no incentive to have him 'cross-examined,' in Berlin or elsewhere."³⁰¹

Yes, "cross-examination" by CIA officers in the capital of a country of the Soviet bloc would have been strange, indeed, as Boghardt has suggested. But the term "cross-examine" [*Kreuzverhör*] was typical *Spiegel* language. And normal conversations and unofficial interviews, even with Western diplomats, did take place in those days, more often than might now be supposed.

Boghardt has offered another explanation: "In all likelihood Segal's visitors were HV A officers intent on

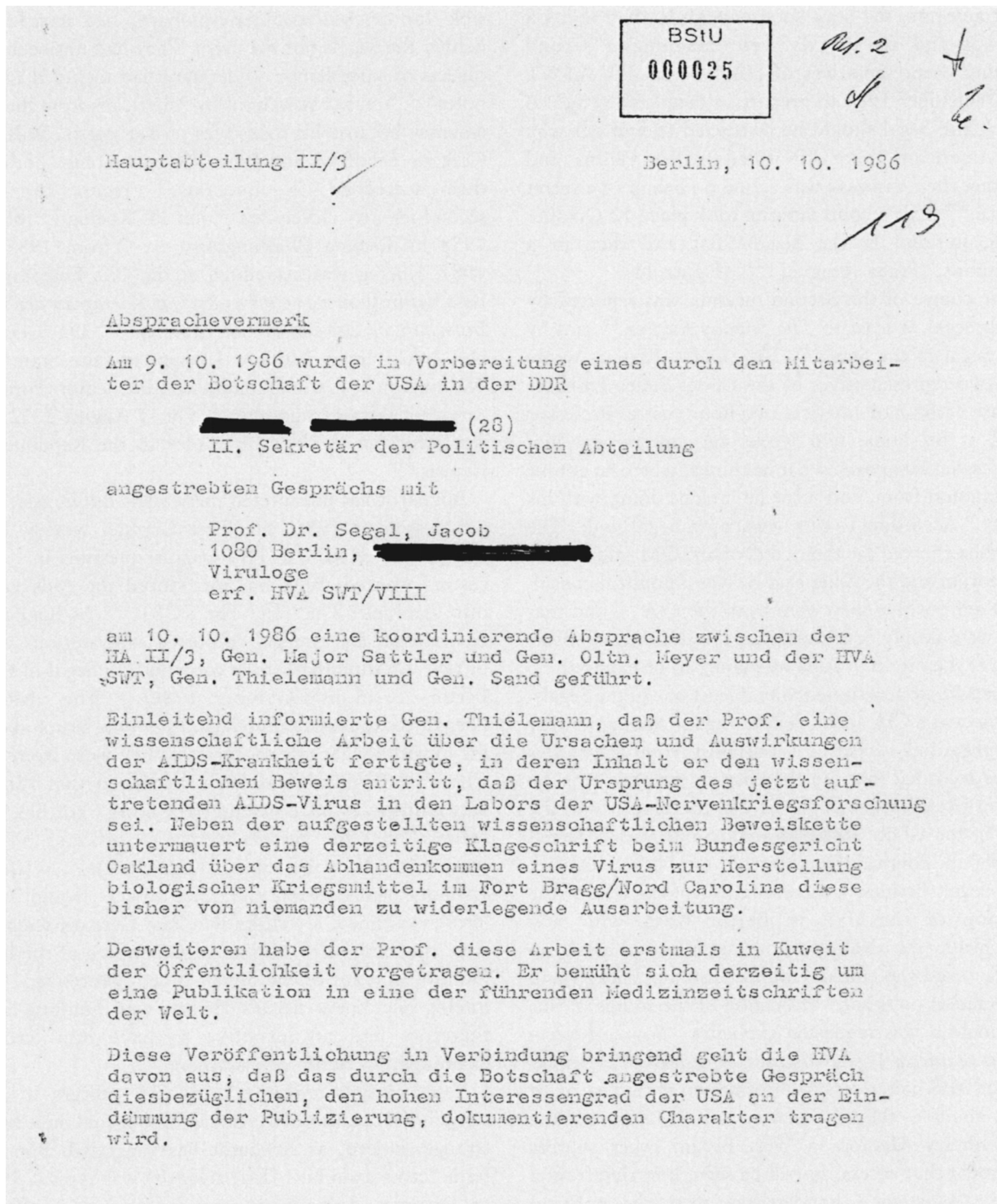


Figure 12. First page of a note on a meeting of Stasi officers preparing for the next visit of US diplomats. Source: BStU MfS HA II 22082: 25–26.

Bearbeitung	Datum	Stp.
X Koordinierungssoffz.	3.11.87	W
X Leiter AKG	3.11.87	
X Stellv. N	3.11.87	
Stellv. G		
Leiter G/P		
X Leiter A1	3.11.87	
X Leiter A2	3.11.87	
Verantw. Kartel		
Leiter EDV		

101688
 Berlin, 2. 11. 1987
 Informations-Nr.: 342
 BStU
 0233/
 Blatt

Abt. 26

AKG, HA II/13, II/15, HV A SWT

Original: HVA/SWT

Durchschläge: I/13

Abzüge: I/13, I/15

VSH-Kartel nicht / erfasst für: Reporters in der DDR

ZMA:

Information

Person identifizieren bei I/13 Erfassung prüfen, um Risiko abstimmen. Ergebnis vorlegen zu sichernde Person

Inoffiziell wurde bekannt, daß der Reporter der USA-Zeitung "Dallas Times"

[REDACTED]

im Zeitraum vom 4. bis 8. 11. 1987 sich in der Hauptstadt der DDR aufhält. Anlaß des Aufenthaltes sind geplante Interviews mit

Prof. Segal, Jacob

über die Ursprünge von AIDS sowie mit einem Vertreter des ANC-Büros in der DDR bzw. Personen, die mit der Veröffentlichung und Vervielfältigung von ANC-Material befaßt sind.

[REDACTED] wandte sich an die Botschaft der USA in der DDR, um Hintergrundinformationen zu Segal zu erhalten. Segal vertritt die Theorie, wonach das AIDS-Virus in Labors der biologischen Kriegsführung der USA entstanden ist.

In diesem Zusammenhang hatte in der Vergangenheit der Mitarbeiter der CIA-Residentur der USA-Botschaft in der DDR

[REDACTED] („Mustang“)

Politische Abteilung

Kontakt mit Segal aufgenommen. Zudem hatte im Juni 1987 ein CIA-Mitarbeiter an der US-Mission Berlin (West), der für die Bearbeitung von AIDS-Desinformationen verantwortlich ist, die USA-Botschaft um Hintergrundinformationen zu Segal gebeten.

Quellenschutz erforderlich!

Figure 13. A 2 November 1987 note anticipating a visit by a *Dallas Times* reporter who planned to interview Professor Jakob Segal. Also mentioned was interest in Segal demonstrated by Americans thought to be CIA agents, one working in the Political Department of the US Embassy in East Berlin, the other assigned to the US Embassy in West Berlin. Handwritten in parentheses was „Mustang“ — a codename. [Redactions by BStU.] Source: BStU MfS HA II Nr. 41639: 233.

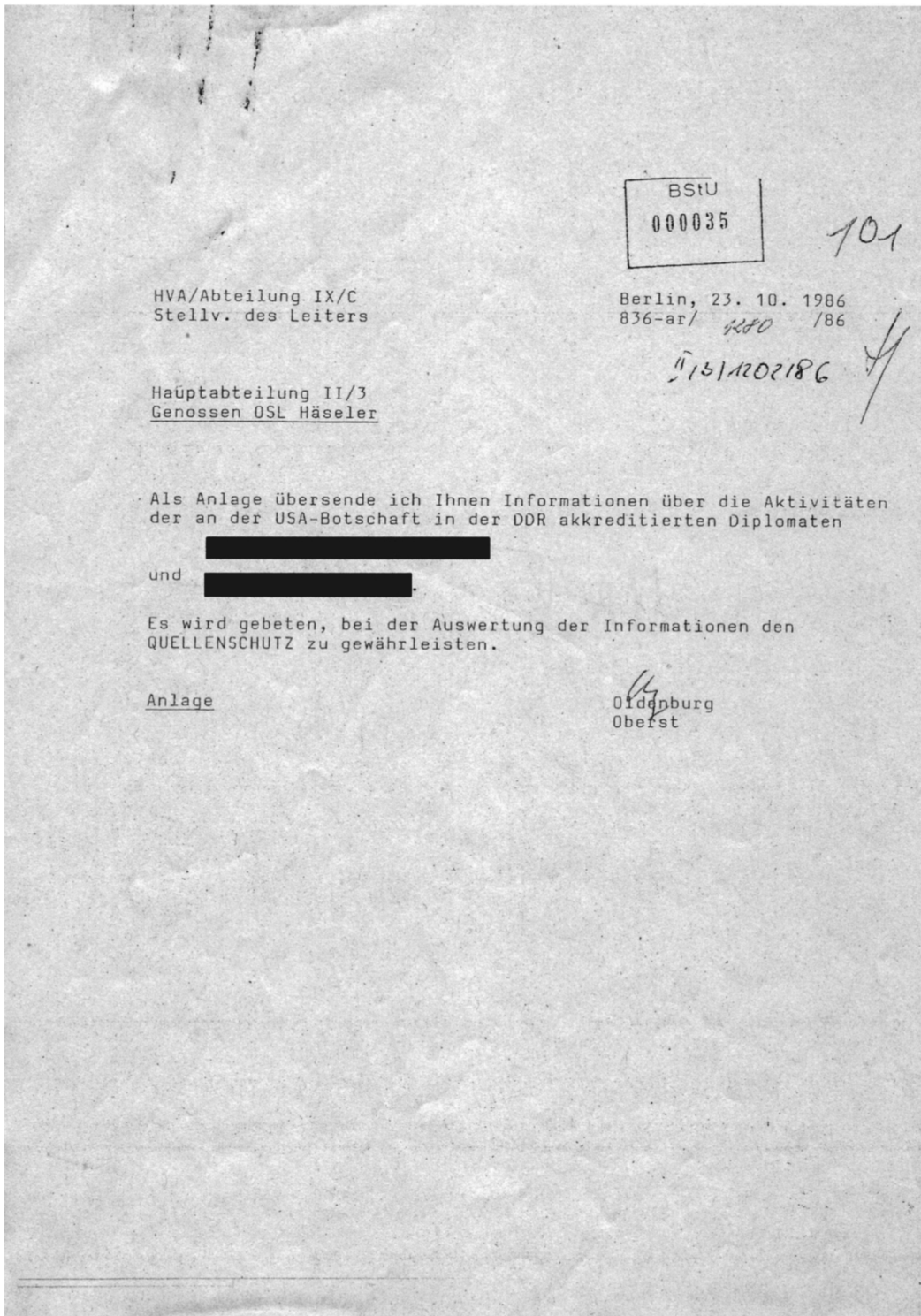


Figure 14. Report naming the US diplomats who visited the Segals' flat. Names redacted for BStU. Source: BStU MfS HA II 22082, p. 35.

building up Segal's resolve by *posing* [emphasis in original] as CIA men visiting in diplomatic guise and raising questions that allowed Segal to conclude that his theory had struck a nerve in Washington." With this interpretation Boghardt has followed his main source:

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. [Markus] Wolf to the effect that the dear professor needed to be 'propped up' . . . This 'CIA visit' was certainly staged."⁶⁸ [Boghardt's note 68] Given that Segal repeatedly referred to the "CIA visit," the HVA operation must be rated a success.³⁰¹

Note 68 in the preceding passage referred to letters from Bohnsack to Boghardt dated 14 August and 26 November 2008. Bohnsack claimed that between 1970 and 1989 he had been "HVA X liaison with the KGB and was thus informed about joint East German/Soviet disinformation campaigns."³¹⁷ Colonel General Markus Wolf was misplaced, though; he acted as superior of HA V only until February 1986.³¹⁸

We have reached a conclusion contrary to Boghardt's. The Segals were contacted at least twice by representatives of the US Embassy in the GDR. One of these contacts was confirmed by the Embassy itself. The first contact was a surprise to the MfS, while for the other one the MfS prepared in advance. This preparation led to the only clear instance of the Segals accepting Stasi advice and direction.¹¹⁶

We tested our conclusion for external validity by asking Ambassador Koenig himself if he could confirm or disconfirm events in dispute. On 27 August 2013 in response to our inquiries he wrote this: "The International Spy Museum is wrong. I will be back in touch after checking with the State Department on what I can say."³¹⁹ On 8 September 2013 he responded fully, differing just slightly from the account we had pieced together from archives but adding greatly in nuance and context.

As Ambassador Koenig related to us, he and Greg Sandford were both in the Political Section of the US Embassy in East Berlin. State had been interested in the myth ever since the *Patriot* article and had now become interested in the Segals. State's interest had prompted Koenig and Sandford to arrange a visit to the Segals'

flat. Koenig and a colleague — Sandford again or maybe someone else — visited a second time, too. The Segals were pleasant but reticent. And a bit cagey:

We never met with Lilli alone, as I recall. Though Lilli did most of the talking, I believe Jakob was always present. . . .

They were both charming throughout the two meetings. Jakob and Lilli would not really engage in a discussion of their paper on Ft. Detrick and HIV. I got the impression it was not their idea, but who knows? I recall that they were evasive on the matter, and quickly moved on. They moved on to the story of their lives, their youth as Jewish members of the German Communist Party, their move to the Soviet Union, their return in old age to the GDR, and their travels. They talked about the backwardness of Cuba and all sorts of personal impressions. When we first met one morning in their apartment in a high rise near the center of East Berlin, they plied Greg and me with very potent spiked ice teas. The whole scene was very *kleinbuergerlich* [petty bourgeois] in the East German fashion. . . . I believe the Segals did give us the document, but I don't remember very much about it. . . . I don't remember distinctly what we did with it, but I am quite sure we would have sent it to the State Department. We were working based on information from the State Department when we approached the Segals.

After our second meeting at the restaurant, which may have been the Praha [as that was not far from the Segals' apartment in downtown East Berlin], Jakob telephoned the London tabloid, the "Sunday Express," and described our very pleasant table chit chat as an interrogation by the CIA. But it was nothing of the sort — it was all very cordial, with the Segals acting more like friends of my grandparents than anything else I can suggest. But that certainly closed off any possibility that anyone from the Embassy would see the Segals again. (Needless to say, it is interesting to me that Jakob evidently gave the same interrogation story to the Stasi.) . . . I don't remember clearly whether Greg Sandford was with me for the second visit, but I believe he was. . . . I believe we may have received the document during our second meeting.

As I said, all very pleasant, all very *gemuetlich* [cozy], despite what is in the Stasi files.³²⁰

Did Stasi officers impersonating CIA agents visit the Segals? No. US diplomats did.

Was Stefan Heym a recruit?

While Segal's allegations became better known after coverage of the Harare conference and after *The Sunday Express* report, the German public, especially in the Federal Republic of Germany, were reading completely different explanations of the origin of the AIDS agent, and experts in a *Spiegel* article were dismissing Segal's claims out-of-hand.³¹⁵ Soon, though, readers would see Segal himself defending his claims eloquently in an interview published 18 February 1987 in West Berlin in the daily newspaper *tageszeitung (taz)*.⁸⁶

The interview was performed and published by Stefan Heym (1913–2001), a widely admired journalist and public intellectual. In 1933, Helmut Flieg, a German Jew, fled to Czechoslovakia, becoming Stefan Heym. In 1935, he moved on to the United States, where he attended the University of Chicago and became an American citizen. In 1943 Heym joined a psychological-warfare unit of the US Army and the next year took part in the Normandy landings; these experiences formed the background for one of his best known novels, *The Crusaders*. Protesting the Korean War, Heym in 1951 returned all his American military decorations and left the US for Prague, Czechoslovakia, and in 1952 for East Berlin, where he became famous as a writer and dissident, his pseudonym by then a pen name. Although steadfastly a socialist, Heym published articles and books sharply critical of the politically repressive behaviors of Soviet-bloc leaders, including leaders in the GDR. Much of his work could be published only in the West, and Heym was observed and harassed by the Stasi intensely.^{321,322,323,324} Not least because of harassment itself, Heym's publications found broad interest in both Germanies and abroad, and attention to the Segal interview was widespread. In following issues the *taz* published numerous received comments, many of which were later compiled by Kuno Kruse in his book *AIDS — Pathogens from a Gene Laboratory?*²⁴³

Heym became the subject of an *Operativer Vorgang* or OV, an “operational procedure,” and he became a victim of *OV Diversant*. The aim of *OV Diversant* was to monitor and frustrate: “by evaluation of the manner of his connections into the NSW [non-socialist currency area, meaning the West] to examine whether Heym acts on demand of secret services [or] other

hostile organizations of individuals ... [and] to restrict his further hostile activities by appropriate politically operative measures[.]” This was all to be accomplished through IMs — unofficial informers to the MfS — and by activities of HA XX in cooperation with HV A, HA II, and friendly security services.³²⁵ (Figure 15)

According to Boghardt, Heym's “enlistment in the AIDS campaign was a major coup for Segal and the HVA.”³⁰¹ The term “enlistment” suggests that Heym became a knowing participant in disinformation, yet Boghardt and his sources have not speculated on how the Stasi might have succeeded in recruiting one of their most resilient victims. Boghardt has also written that “like his interviewee [Segal] he [Heym] was probably unaware of HVA involvement.”³⁰¹ The implication here is that the Stasi controlled these two, making them act as they otherwise would not have acted, that it controlled them so effectively, so cleverly, so subtly that they “probably” never caught on. Heym had been “enlisted” subliminally. This implication is not reconcilable with archival findings or live questioning.

Actually, the Stasi initially were aware of neither Heym's interest nor his Segal interview. Heym's physician, Professor Doctor Dagobert Müller, had drawn his patient's attention to an item written by Jakob Segal.³²⁶ Heym immediately grew fascinated by the HIV-from-Fort-Detrick myth. This was 9 October 1986; in his diary, unpublished but kindly provided to us by his widow, Inge Heym, he recorded the date.³²⁷ What was the item his physician had? A copy of the draft paper received by Bond? A copy of the material Segal had provided to African journalists? A Harare handout? We know neither what it was nor how he came to have it. In June 2007, one of us, E.G., gained access to part of Stefan Heym's estate. There, in a box containing many AIDS-related books and articles, was nothing likely to have been the item shown to Heym by his physician.

Heym, once intrigued, soon decided — as early as two days later — to interview Segal himself.³²⁷ His new topic grew hot quickly. On 26 October the *Sunday Express* published its own Segal interview.⁸⁵ Heym met with Segal six days later, 1 November 1986, and interviewed him at the Segal flat on 8 November. Then on 10 November came the *Spiegel* critique.³¹⁵ Heym must have seen at least this second article. In a 15 November 1986 telephone conversation recorded by the Stasi, Heym told journalist ██████████ [name

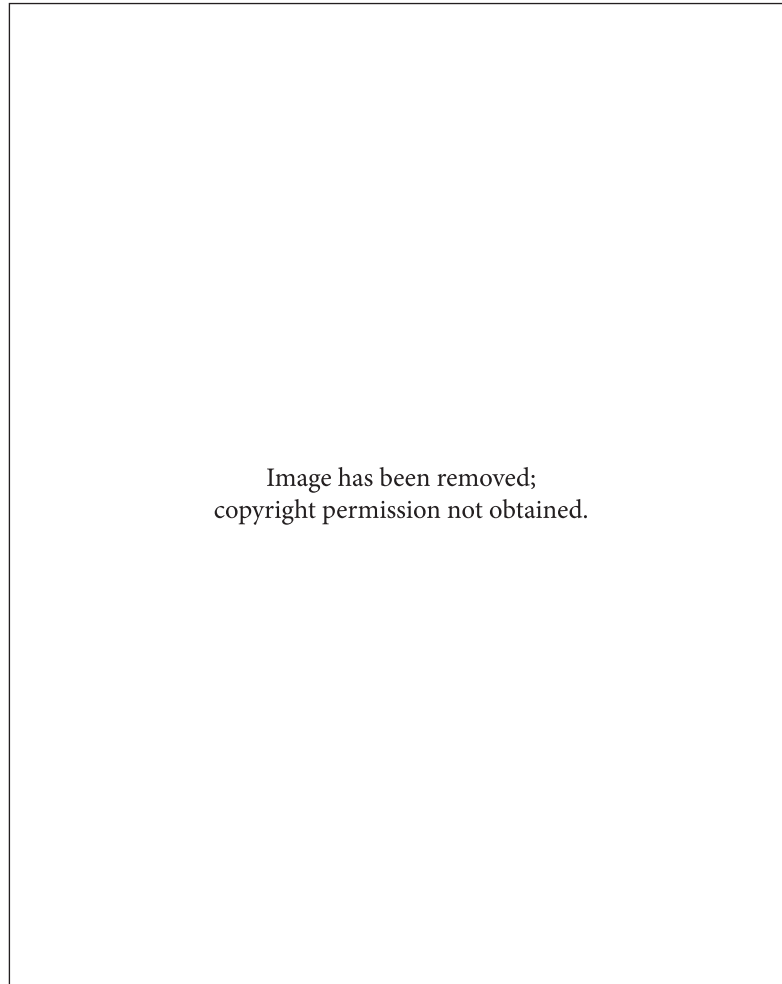


Figure 15. Stefan Heym.

redacted by BStU] that the “ancestors” question was being asked not only by the Soviet press but also by the Western press: “The Americans say that AIDS was ‘planted’ by the KGB, and the Russians claim that regarding the CIA.”³²⁸

The Stasi did not learn of Heym’s Segal interview for several weeks. On 26 November 1986, one of their highest ranking officers, Lieutenant General Rudi Mittig,³²⁹ was informed of it. Mittig was deputy to the Minister for State Security, Erich Mielke, and was the overseer of nine main departments, including HA II.³³⁰ He along with others within the MfS read “that it was known by secret investigations [data collected by Second Lieutenant Tustanowski] that author Stefan Heym in October 1986 was provided by Prof. Dr. Segal ... with a report on AIDS written by himself.” They

would have read further that the AIDS virus had been artificially created in the US within the scope of military research and had been tested on prisoners who after release had introduced it into the general American population.³³¹ (Figure 16, Figure 17)

“The report was the basis for an interview performed by Heym on 1 November 1986 with Professor Segal, which initially was to be published in the FRG-weekly ‘Spiegel.’ Despite repeated attempts by Heym the magazine refused to publish the interview,”³³¹ presumably because *Der Spiegel* had already published an article discussing putative origins of the AIDS virus and treating Segal’s assertions as dismissively as deserved.³¹⁵ Virologists Karin Mölling and Reinhard Kurth and other experts had been quoted in that article explaining that Segal’s claims were unbelievable. “To

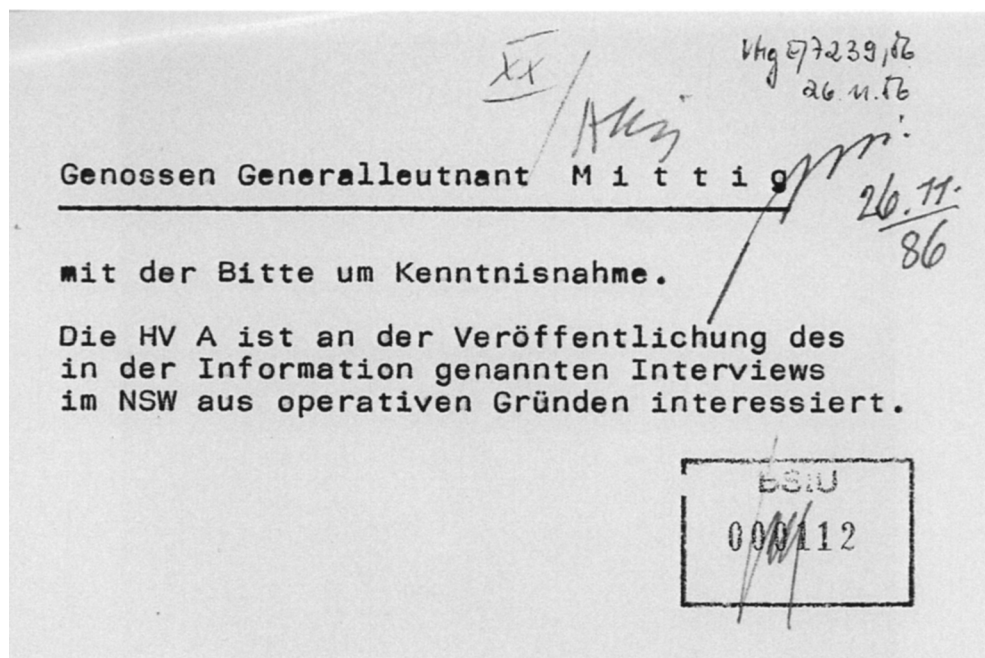


Figure 16. Lieutenant General Mittig learning of Heym's Segal interview. Source: BStU MfS HA XX/AKG 6443: 112.

get the interview published in the FRG [Federal Republic of Germany or West Germany] nevertheless, Heym contacted on 7 November 1986 [redacted] [the name Marlies Menge redacted by BStU], a correspondent of the FRG magazine 'Die Zeit' accredited in the capital of the GDR and on file with HA II/13, and provided her the completed interview comprising 21 pages. The relevant department of the editors of 'Die Zeit' has not yet decided on a possible publication of the interview ...³³¹ This information was sent to Mittig himself, to the head of Main Department XX, and to three departments of HA XX and to HV A. In Main Directorate A, however, the recipient was not HV A/X but HV A/XIII,³³¹ whose responsibility was foreign basic research. Details here were to differ from those found in Stefan Heym's diary, wherein Heym met Segal on 1 November to prepare the interview and conducted it on 8 November in Segal's home in the presence of Marlies Menge, whom Heym had invited on one day's notice on the advice of his wife, Inge.³²⁷ Asked twenty years later to confirm or correct these details, Menge could do neither.³³²

Three West German publications — *Der Spiegel*, *Quick*, and *Die Zeit* — refused to publish the

interview. Heym telephoned Lilli, assuring her he would keep trying.²²⁰ He next approached *Stern*, a weekly. Electronic surveillance of Heym's telephone conversations by Department 26/7 showed that on 18 December 1986 Heym was called by Mr. [redacted], the caller's name redacted by BStU.³³³ This caller was *Stern* journalist Hans-Herrmann Klare,³³⁴ who later published a critical review of the myth.³³⁵ He told Heym that *Stern* would not publish the interview "because of a very simple reason: The fundamental argument of Segal's chain of evidence in my view collapses [underlining added by a recipient of the message in the MfS]." According to Klare, Segal's data regarding the interaction between the genomes of two different viruses were irreproducible. Klare asked Heym where Segal had published his experimental data. Heym answered that the said experiments had not been carried out by Segal himself. Heym conceded he would not be able to comment on Klare's critique but would have to call Segal for clarification.³³³ (Figure 18)

Heym himself believed he had seen evidence of the phenomenon Segal had described. In his files at home, Heym had copies of electron micrographs showing

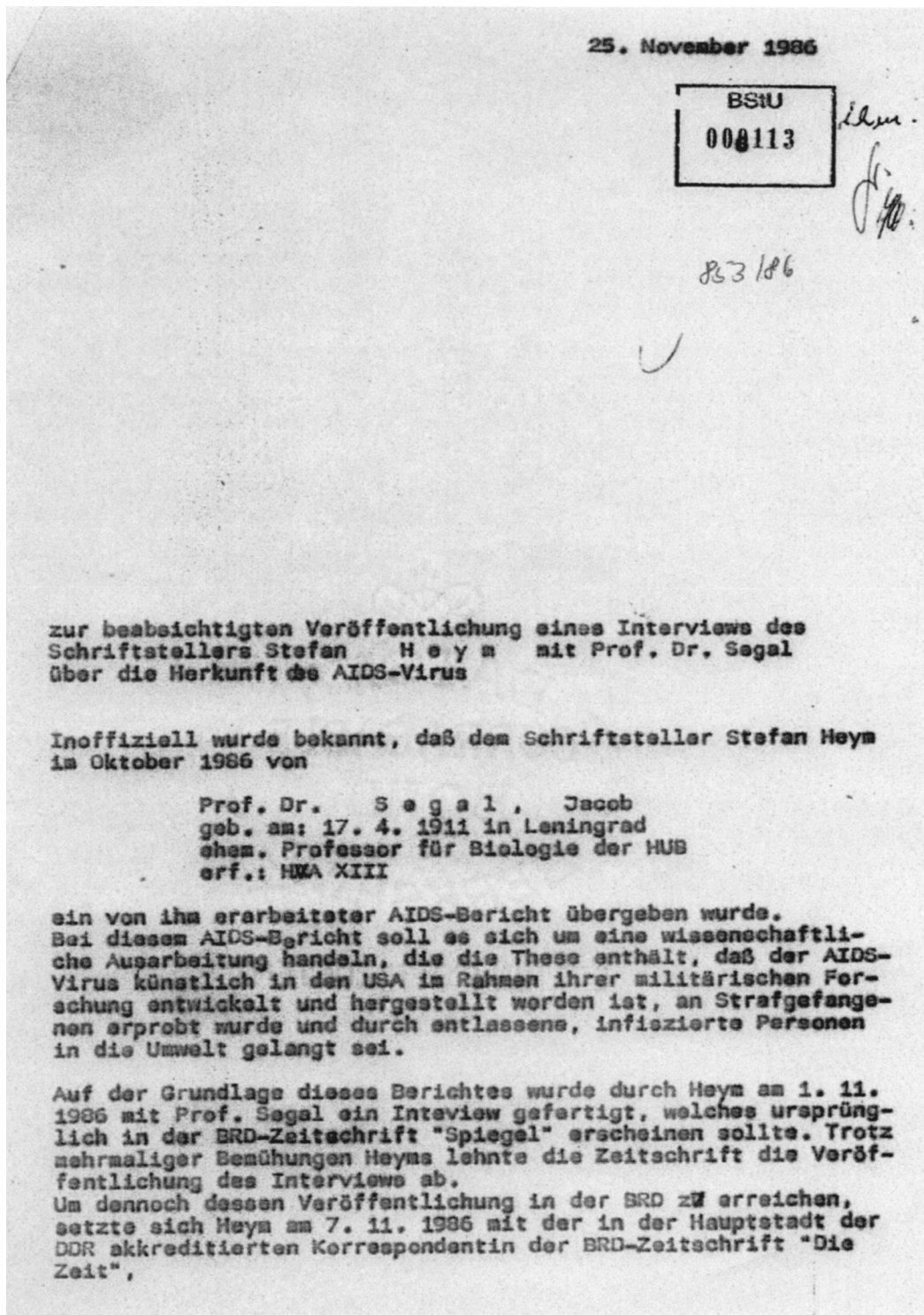


Figure 17. Attachments provided to General Mittig. Source: BStU MfS HA XX/AKG 6443: 113-114.

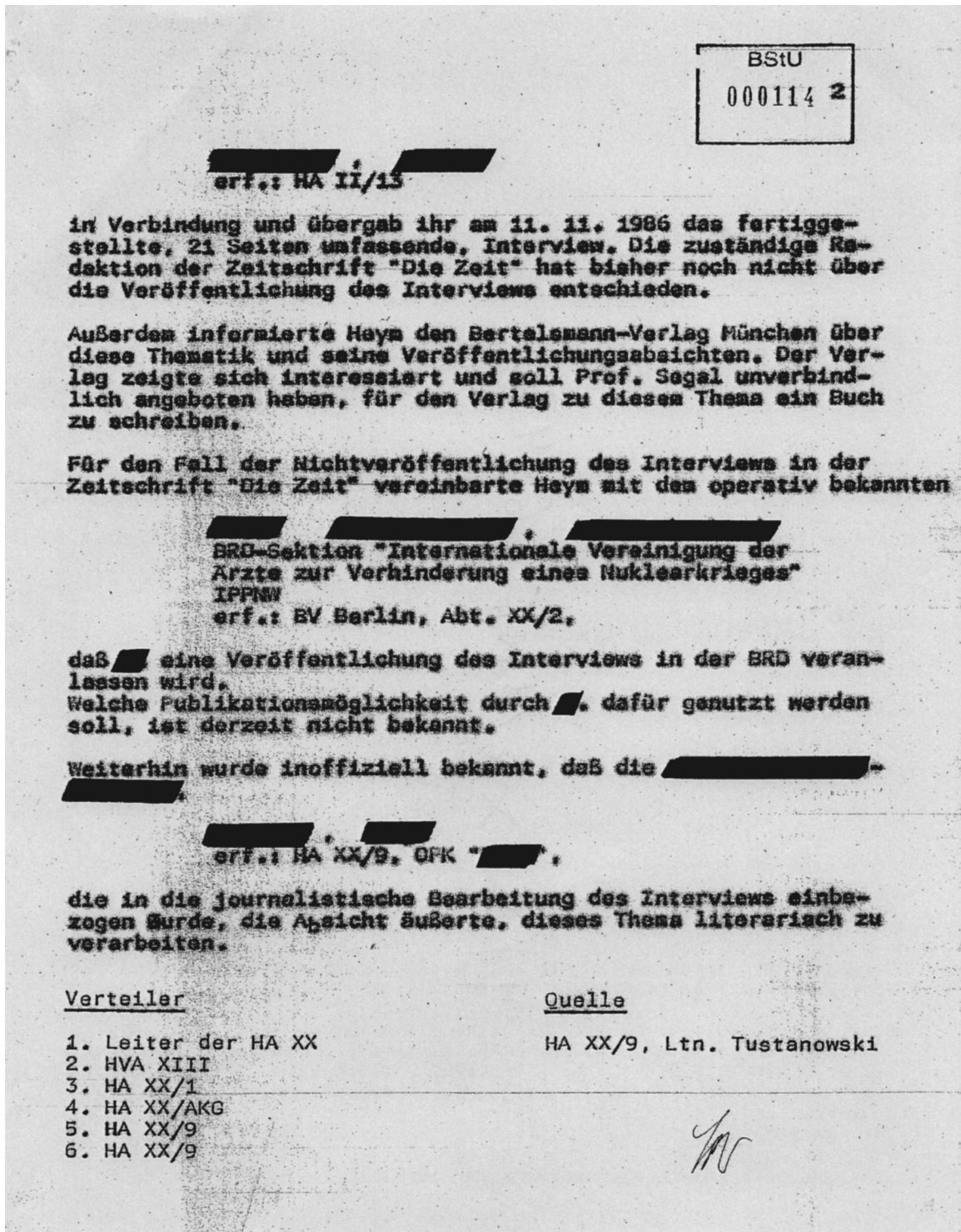


Figure 17. (Continued.)



Figure 18. A Stasi officer eavesdropping at his workstation, circa 1985. Source: BStU, MfS, HA III, Fo 0299, Bild 24.

“these gene threads that stick together.”³³³ Heym presumably was referring to electron micrographs presented by the Segals in several papers.^{91,336,337} These pictures had not been created by Segal or his collaborators but had been reproduced from a paper already published in early 1985.³³⁸ The “gene threads” shown were strains of viral nucleic acids fused by heteroduplex hybridization, a technique developed in 1961 to estimate the relationship between different species, including viruses, before more precise evaluations had been made possible by sequence analysis. Nevertheless, Jakob Segal described the heteroduplex technique as “a gene manipulation at the highest level [*Genmanipulation auf höchster Ebene*]”³³⁹ — by 1986 a false description. (Figure 19)

Klare said also that Segal had discussed his hypothesis with one or another West German virolo-

gist, with whom Segal had been corresponding. Heym was surprised to hear this and asked for the names of Segal’s supposed contacts.

Immediately after that conversation, Heym called Lilli Segal.³⁴⁰ He told her about the skepticism of the *Stern* journalist, who had mentioned contacts the Segals had had with West German professors ██████ [the name Reinhard Kurth redacted by BStU] and ██████ [the name Gerhard Hunsmann redacted by BStU] in Göttingen. These professors, according to the *Stern* journalist, had told Jakob Segal he was wrong. Lilli Segal contradicted him: they had had no contact with ██████ [Kurth] so far, only correspondence with ██████ [Hunsmann] in Göttingen. These professors had not proved her husband wrong.³⁴⁰

Lilli was narrowly correct: Professors Reinhard Kurth³⁴¹ and Gerhard Hunsmann³⁴² told us they never

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Figure 3: L'hybridisation en hétéroduplex des génomes de HTLV-I, de HIV et du virus visna.
en haut: l'image vue au microscope électronique
en bas: interprétation graphique
A et a: hétéroduplex de HTLV-I et de HIV
B et b: hétéroduplex de HTLV-I et du virus visna
C et c: hétéroduplex de HIV et du virus visna
D et d: hétéroduplex de HIV et du virus visna, l'élément HIV étant implanté en position inversée
En a et en b, les flèches désignent les zones hybridées

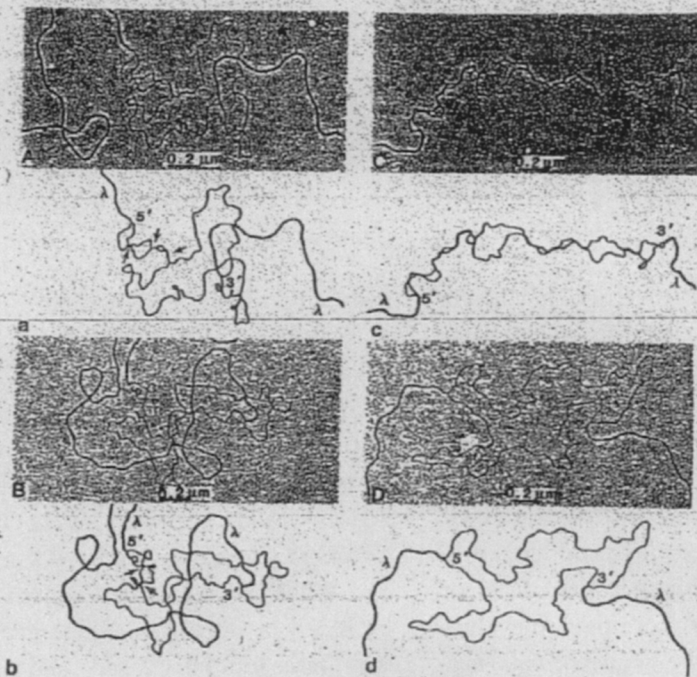


Figure 19. A page of the Segal-Segal-Dehmlow draft paper showing heteroduplex analyses by electron microscopy, above, and interpretive drawings of discussed viruses, below. Source described in text.

had direct contact with the Segals. Hunsmann, though, did correspond with Jakob insofar as to tell him this: “I do not agree with your explanation about the origin of AIDS.”³⁴³ Notably omitted from the record of Lilli’s telephone conversation with Heym was any mention of the Segals’ intense correspondence with Professor Müller-Hill during the winter of 1985–6. This correspondence had climaxed with Müller-Hill advising the Segals not to publish their hypothesis.

At 8:37 on the same evening that he called Lilli, Heym called his Swiss agent [name redacted by BStU], in Zürich. He related his conversation with the *Stern* journalist, who had referred to correspondence between Segal “and that Professor [name redacted] [the name Reinhard Kurth redacted by BStU] who had been quoted by *Der Spiegel* as declaring Segal’s hypothesis absurd and with another expert in West Berlin [Meinrad Koch, then head of the Department of Virology of the Robert Koch Institute] who supposedly had proved that Segal was wrong. Such correspondence, however, did not exist at all [according to Heym, who was relying on Lilli].”³⁴⁴ Existence of the correspondence notwithstanding, this last cited expert, Meinrad Koch, soon published his negative assessment of Segal’s theory in a *taz* interview³⁴⁵ and in a book.³⁴⁶

Heym had been taken in not only by the myth itself but by the Segals’ disingenuous claims that the myth’s rationale had not been rejected by Western experts. While pushing on to find a publisher for his interview, his behavior began to suggest misgivings. On 15 January 1987 Heym talked with [name redacted], a West Berlin television journalist. Heym said he had suggested that Segal include in their interview text some additional sentences dealing with the reported presence of anti-HIV antibodies in human sera collected before AIDS became known.³⁴⁷ On 30 January 1987, HV XX/9 informed HV A/X that Heym, in a monitored telephone conversation, had proposed a round-table discussion featuring himself, Jakob Segal, Professor Kurth from the Paul-Ehrlich Institute in Frankfurt/Main, and “Hunzemann (ph)” from Göttingen. The abbreviation “ph” meant “phonetic”: the eavesdropper had not quite gotten the name of Professor Gerhard Hunsmann, head of the Virology Department at the German Center for Primates Research, Göttingen. Also passed along to HV A/X were xeroographed records of Heym’s contacts

with the *Stern* journalist and with a correspondent at the Paul-Ehrlich-Institute. Evidently, then, the unit Bohnsack told Boghardt had been managing the myth learned of Heym’s Segal interview in the subject line of an internal message.³⁴⁸

Report of Heym’s interview with Segal circulated slowly but widely within the MfS. It reached the deputy minister and then the head of HA XX, the unit responsible for prevention and control of political-ideological diversion and underground activities; it reached HV A XIII, the unit responsible for intelligence about foreign basic research; it reached HA XX: XX/1, the unit responsible for public health, *inter alia*; it reached XX/AKG, the unit responsible for gathering and evaluating information; and it reached XX/9, the unit responsible for control of political underground activities. The department performing active disinformation, HV A X, was not mentioned in the distribution list, but a handwritten note covering the report submitted to General Mittag affirmed that “The HV A is interested in a publication of the said interview in the NSW [non-socialist currency area] for operative reasons.”³⁴⁹ Circulatory pace within MfS suggested a mundane interest in the monitoring of events but no more than an intermittent interest in affecting events. (Figure 20, Figure 21)

On 18 February 1987 the interview was published in *taz*,⁸⁶ not because HV A/X had specifically selected *taz* to spread the myth, as Bohnsack later claimed,³⁵⁰ but because Heym had failed to secure publication more reputably in a weekly paper rather than in a daily. In West Germany the interview nonetheless attracted broad attention, including radio and television commentaries that millions of Germans, East as well as West, could receive. The MfS recorded West Berlin radio station RIAS [*Rundfunk im Amerikanischen Sektor*] on 18 February 1987 at 8:45 in the morning as it broadcast a report by Harro Zimmer entitled “AIDS – a virus from military research laboratories.” This broadcast polemically *disputed* the Heym-Segal interview.³⁵¹ Nevertheless Jakob Segal was invited to lecture in several West German cities, including Aachen, and even abroad. (Figure 22)

On 27 February, the MfS learned the interview had been published. From his *OV Diversant* perspective, Colonel Buchholz, head of HA II/AKG, reported on

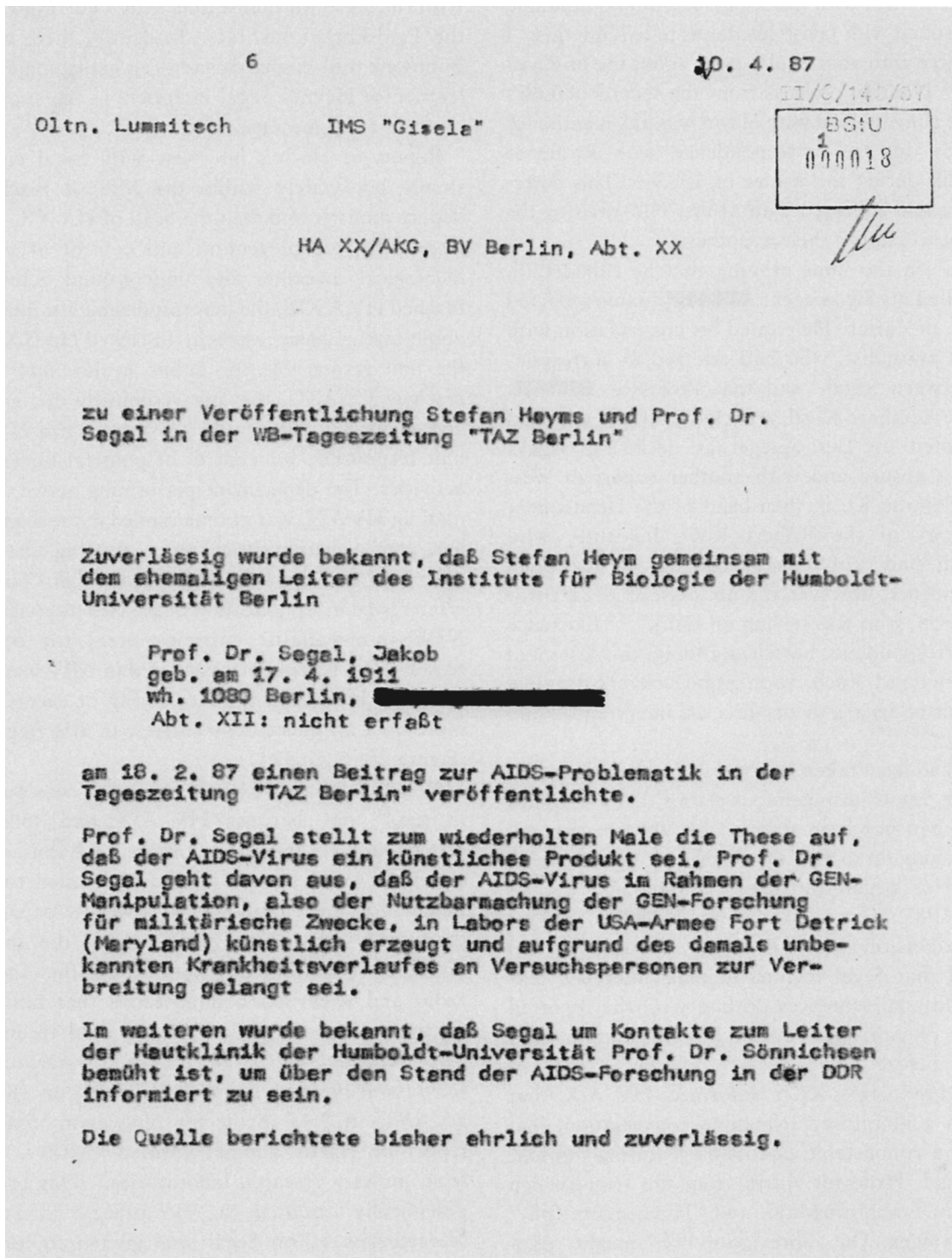


Figure 20. The Stasi learning that Heym's Segal interview had been published. Source: BStU MfS HA II/6 1271: 18.



Figure 21. Excerpt from taz interview.

telephone surveillance of the US Embassy in East Berlin:

Because of an interview of author Stefan Heym (OV “Diversant,” HA XX/9) published in the alternative newspaper Tageszeitung “taz” in Berlin (West) [a lady’s name redacted by BstU] of the Embassy of the USA in the GDR, contacted [redacted] in the US Mission [in West Berlin] by telephone. In the taz interview the opinion of scientist Jakob Segal was described [as being] that the AIDS virus is a product of biological warfare research of the USA. The US diplomat pointed out that the

Embassy of the USA takes the view that Heym obviously consciously is participating in a disinformation campaign. [The lady emphasized that the Embassy would have no more contact with Stefan Heym although it had had good relations with him up to that point.]³⁵²

On 12 March, a critical comment about the interview appeared in *Stern*. HA II filed this article.³⁵³ On 18 March, Department XX/3 of Regional Administration Berlin learned of the publication of the interview.^{353,354} On 10 April, First Lieutenant Lummitsch of HA II/6, the department responsible for

Aachen 5

Wer fabricierte das Virus?

1969 Pentagon (J. Kap) Retroviren
 aber Humane Retroviren

1970 - 1976 - Gallo

1925 - HL-23-V (HTLV?)

~~Anglikum 1980~~

1977 - Lab 555 F4 Detrick P4

1978 - Konstruktion des HSV

Primärinfekt → New York

Gallo Dec 1986 - Jan 1987 - HTLV-I 1980

Gentechnologie noch nicht reif?

Heteroduplex seit 1970 bekannt

1974 - Aufruf zu Trilowar

1973 - erste erfolgreiche Genmanipulation

1972 - 48 Gesellkaffee

1972 Somatostatin

Karin Kölling 2. Gallo

1972 - 1975

Frederic Cancer Research Facility

AIDS-9 seronegativ für HSV-1

Viruskultur .. HSV-2

seropositiv

Immunschwäche - 0%

→

Figure 22. Excerpt from Jakob Segal's notes for his Aachen lecture. Source: SAPMO-BArch NY 4516/vorl. K. 7 (undated; most likely 1987 or '88).

counter-intelligence in economy and science, reported on the interview's publication to HA XX/AKG and Department XX of the regional administration of the MfS responsible for Berlin.³⁵⁵ (Table 3) On 21 April, another official report, its content identical to Lumitsch's message, was filed by HA II.³⁵⁶

With the interview published and criticized, Heym returned to his January plan, a round-table discussion among invited experts. On 4 June in a series of notes, Häsel, head of HA II/3, learned of these plans. Heym was organizing an event in West Berlin. Mr. ██████ of the political department of the US Embassy had just told a woman in the political department of the US Military Mission West Berlin, that "he has information for the person who deals with 'AIDS – Disinformation.' Mr. ██████ received that information from Mr Stefan Heym — a writer in the GDR — and believes that this information might be interesting. There will be a debate on 8 June 10:00 hours at the [West Berlin] Free University between Jacob [*sic*] Segal — 'author of disinformation on AIDS in the GDR' — and Dr. Kurt [*sic*] — [']West Berlin personality regarding AIDS'"³⁵⁷

The surveillance mode had at some point been aural, as an eavesdropper's error was evident: the debate would be staged in the Art Academy on "*Hagenbergstrasse*," a street name that should have been *Hardenbergstrasse*. Heym, the perennial "diversant," was not mentioned as an asset, even an unwitting one, and his association with Segal was a surprise: "Mr. ██████ emphasizes that Segal and Stefan Heym — writer — are good friends. He reports that Stefan Heym before he published on the origin of AIDS very frequently spoke with Segal and that here presumably a connection has to be registered."³⁵⁸ Mr. ██████ of the department for publications and cultural affairs of the US Embassy alerted a Reuters correspondent that a debate was forthcoming.³⁵⁹ Seven Stasi officers added initials; several added marginal notes.

The debate finally took place 8 June 1987 not at the Free University but at West Berlin's Technical University under sponsorship of the "*Volksuni*" — the "*Volksuniversität*" or "People's University" — an annual event organized by trade unions, environmentalist parties, and other groups. The debate was moderated by Reinhard Behnisch, editor of *Wechselwirkung*, as Segal and Koch exchanged their totally incompatible views. A capacity crowd, more than 400

people, attended.³⁶⁰ A summary of embassy and mission reactions to the debate was submitted the next day to HA/AKG and HV A SWT/XIII/5 by Second Lieutenant Chod of *Abteilung* [Section] 26. Chod's summary happened also to include yet another confirmation, contrary to Bohnsack and Boghardt, that "representatives of the US Embassy ██████ and ██████, political department, had got in touch with Segal in September/October 1986."³⁶¹

Six months later, the Stasi were still reporting this "news" internally. On 5 December 1987, Colonel Buchholz, head of HA II/AKG, informed the head of HA II/AGA about "increased contacts [by] a citizen of the USSR, living in the GDR, Segal, Jakob[,] to diplomatic missions and press agencies at least since 1986."³⁶² Attached to this Buchholz letter were several highly confidential reports submitted from Department 26/5 to Comrade Häsel, of HA II/3, dealing with contacts Segal had had with employees of the US Embassy, East Berlin, and with certain other persons, whose names were redacted by BStU. Among the contacted parties was the West Berlin correspondent of Reuters. Some of this information had been gathered by monitoring Stefan Heym's telephone conversations. A recipient of these messages noted, "HA to be informed."

Was Stefan Heym a recruit? No. He was a self-deluded writer following a bad lead. He was impetuous enough to imagine he could judge intuitively what many others knew they could judge only scientifically and forensically. He set out to tell a story and ended up among its characters. Thus did this notable victim of hard-at-work Stasi manage to become, after *die Wende*, a notable victim of *out-of-work* Stasi.

Did the Stasi's "biggest coup" actually happen?

Prominent among the Stasi's surmised successes was inducing a venerable Austrian author to write a novel advertising the myth as reality.

Johannes Mario Simmel was born in Vienna in 1924. His father, a chemist, was a Jew; at the *Anschluss*, the annexation of Austria by Germany in 1938, the elder Simmel fled to London. Johannes remained in Austria with his mother. He trained as a chemical engineer, but he worked eventually as a translator, a journalist, a

Table 3. The myth as planted, spread, and noted.

1983	
17 July	Anonymous letter in the <i>Patriot</i> (India) asserts AIDS to be a result of Pentagon research.
1985	
30 October	<i>Literaturnaya Gazeta</i> (Soviet Union) claims HIV had been sought by USA and had been isolated at Fort Detrick.
November	Jakob Segal (East Germany) adopts, transforms, and begins to spread <i>Gazeta</i> message.
1986	
17 June	Segal sends myth materials to “African journalists” through a contact in Cameroon.
26 August through	Eighth Conference of Non-Aligned Nations, Harare, Zimbabwe. Handout describing the myth reportedly
6 September	distributed before or during conference.
September	<i>New Times</i> (Moscow) and <i>Neue Zeit</i> (GDR) report on Segal’s “pamphlet.” The Stasi notice.
12 September	US diplomat visits Lilli Segal.
16–19 September	HV A/X colludes with Bulgarian secret service to disseminate Segal’s claims.
25 September	Party leaders forbid Segal from spreading his claims in the GDR but condone publishing abroad.
9 October	Stasi prepare the Segals for a second visit by US diplomats.
12 October	US diplomats again visit Jakob and Lilli Segal.
26 October	<i>Sunday Express</i> (London) publishes Segal’s claims and causes worldwide concern. The Stasi notice.
8 November	Heym interviews Segal.
10 November	<i>Der Spiegel</i> publishes views contrary to Segal’s.
25 November	The Stasi learn about Heym’s interview with Segal.
19 December	The Stasi learn that “Segal’s claim is not tenable from a scientific and medical view.”
1987	
18 February	<i>taz</i> (West Berlin) publishes Heym’s interview of Segal.
11 March	Party leader prevents article criticizing Segal’s claims.
13 March	Erich Fried mentions Segal’s interview in the <i>Wochenpresse</i> (Vienna). Johannes Mario Simmel notices.
18 March	The Stasi ascertains that “Segal’s activities are politically harmful.”
10 April	The Stasi take note of Heym’s interview of Segal in <i>taz</i> .
23 October	Shultz confronts Gorbachev about the myth.
30 October	Two Soviet scientists disavow the myth in <i>Izvestia</i> article.
2 November	US Department of State welcomes Soviet disavowal.
1999	
February	<i>Der Spiegel</i> reports that the origins of different types of AIDS agents has been elucidated, with several SIVs shown to have been natural ancestors of HIVs.

scriptwriter, and a novelist. He wrote often on Cold War themes, including the application of genetic engineering to bioweaponry research. His works, including 27 novels, sold tens of millions of copies in many languages, and a number were adapted successfully for cinema and Broadway.

Long famous as a liberal and a pacifist,^{363,364} Simmel was now being portrayed as a dupe — by communists seeking royalties. “[T]he best-selling author Johannes Mario Simmel, who was then writing about the topic of genetic research, availed himself innocently of the materials sent to him and took over the details of our construction[: a] masterpiece of active measures[.]”¹⁰⁵ Or so wrote Bohnsack and Brehmer.

Still more information, especially about how and with what success the Stasi used Simmel as their instrument, was added by Klaus Behling, the former GDR diplomat, in a short article in the widely circulated German newspaper *BILD*¹⁷⁹ and in an additional book.³⁶⁵

Boghardt has written that the “biggest coup” of the HV A was to send Simmel “material pertaining to

Segal’s AIDS theory” and then to find that he had used it as hoped in a work of popular fiction.³⁶⁶ The background for this claim was Behling’s 8 April 2000 *BILD* article, “Stasi eavesdropper: The AIDS lie and the misused Simmel.” Behling had quoted Bohnsack, who

reveals the disinformation campaigns of the Stasi. By means of telephone surveillance we learned that Johannes Mario Simmel planned to write a book on biological weapons. We passed material on to him, [and] a GDR scientist named Prof. Segal — our IM [our informer] — provided expertise. In his novel *Doch mit den Clowns kamen die Tränen* [Along with the Clowns Came the Tears] the legend was disseminated a million times over that the AIDS virus escaped from a weapons laboratory of the USA. Our aim was to make the Africans angry against the USA because that plague is most widespread there.¹⁷⁹

In the book he published three years later, Behling added further details. A telephone eavesdropper employed by HA III, headed by Major General Horst

Männchen, had been helpful. “By chance they record a conversation in which Simmel’s name was mentioned. The record protocol lands on the desk of lieutenant colonel Günter Bohnsack . . .”³⁶⁵

Boghardt has repeated this story and has concluded:

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 [as the agent was called before it got the name “HIV”]. 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.[Boghardt’s note 72] [quotation³⁶⁷ translated by Thomas Boghardt]

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.[Boghardt’s note 73]³⁶⁸

We are not sure which desk was used: Markus Wolf had left his office more than one year before the book was published.³¹⁸ Bohnsack explained to Boghardt that Wolf had remained at HV A headquarters as “consultant and ‘guiding spirit.’”³⁶⁹

The section of Simmel’s novel as quoted above — but only as quoted above — leaves little doubt that the Stasi successfully manipulated this one novelist into

disinforming hundreds of thousands of readers. Indeed, translations appeared in China, Denmark, Finland, the Netherlands, Israel, Italy, Norway, Poland, Portugal, Russia, Sweden, Spain, Slovakia, the Czech Republic, Turkey, and other countries.³⁷⁰

Yet in 2007 Simmel described this same manipulation story as “*eine freche Lüge*” [an impudent lie].³⁷¹ He denied getting information on Segal’s claims from the Stasi. He denied getting publications or manuscripts related to AIDS from unknown senders.³⁷² Instead, Simmel had read about the Segal interview in a short article by a friend, Erich Fried, an Austrian poet. Under the title “AIDS as weapon,” Fried on 13 March 1986³⁷³ wrote about Heym’s Segal interview and the HIV-from-Fort-Detrick myth — four weeks before the MfS received a copy of the interview itself. But Simmel did not believe Segal’s allegations, and he was shocked to find them conveyed by a man, Heym, whom he previously had much admired.³⁷⁴

Simmel’s first impulse, which he suppressed, was to call Heym to accuse him of spreading a completely crazy story.³⁷²

Simmel’s second impulse was to insert additional paragraphs into the draft of his book, then nearly completed. Dr. Jan Barski — one of the fictive characters of the novel — would now explicitly refer to Heym’s interview with Segal:³⁷⁵

“Could it be that the virus causing AIDS escaped from a gene laboratory?”

Barski remained silent.

“Doctor!”

“I believe it . . . not. There are many people, however, who believe that. After what we just experienced [a laboratory accident earlier in the novel] it is not impossible, however. . .”

Norma answered very excitedly: “Not impossible? Doctor, writer Stefan Heym recently interviewed a skilled biologist and immunologist — Professor Jakob Segal. Of course you know him.”

Barski nodded.”³⁷⁶

Skipping these paragraphs, Boghardt has quoted subsequent text: “He [Segal] is convinced . . .,” as cited above. Boghardt has also then skipped what Barski says just a bit further on:

“I do know what Professor Segal claims,” Barski said and turned his head aside. “A controversial allegation.”

“Controversial?” Norma shouted. [She went on to say that thousands were killed every day by AIDS and that the death toll was increasing.] “What do you say about that, doctor?”

The Polish scientist [Barski] answered slowly: “There are no indications that the AIDS virus escaped from some place where they did experiments involving viruses.”²²²

“Barski” did not believe Segal, and neither did Simmel: “no indications.” Simmel denied manipulation by the MfS, and no documentary evidence now available contradicts him. No surviving Stasi document links him to a disinformation campaign. Some records filed by BStU showed collateral electronic surveillance of Simmel’s telephone conversations; Heym, not Simmel, had been the object.³²⁴ No such records were filed while Simmel was writing *Doch mit den Clowns kamen die Tränen*. All were filed after the novel had been published. Some dealt with persons whose names had been redacted by BStU and could not be identified by us. Some recorded conversations mentioning Simmel were actually conversations between Heym and Lilli or Jakob Segal or both Segals. Some dealt with a visit by Simmel to Berlin.^{377,378} We have no evidence that Simmel accepted Segal’s claims. Taking the latter Barski passage at face value, Simmel might have used his book not to support those claims but to undermine them.

Did the Stasi’s “biggest coup” actually happen? No.

Did the Stasi think the myth usable?

When earlier describing Segal’s story “as an unmasking of activities of biological warfare by USA imperialism,” Professor Karl Seidel, a leading politician in East Germany, had inserted into his comment a condition: “if it is validated or at least proved in part.”²⁹⁷ Within three months, still in 1986 — and well before Heym’s interview with Segal was published and Simmel’s manipulation was said to have been attempted — the Stasi, or at least some of its departments, had grown cautious. On 19 December 1986 First Lieutenant Lummitsch of HA II/6, the department responsible for counter-intelligence in economic and scientific affairs, reported this: “Officials of the ministry of Health as well of Humboldt University Berlin, who deal with the AIDS problem and with homosexuality,

share the opinion that Segal’s claim is not tenable from a scientific and medical view.”³⁷⁹ According to its distribution list, this report was submitted to HA XX/AGK and to Regional Administration Berlin but not to any HV A department.

The information forwarded by Lummitsch was correct. On 21 November 1986 Segal was asked to defend his hypothesis before a group of experts empaneled by AIDS Advisory Group chair Niels Sönnichsen at the behest of the Minister of Health, presumably in turn at the behest of Karl Seidel, head of the health department of the Central Committee of the SED.²⁹⁸ Among the defenses Segal offered was at least one lie, that Benno Müller-Hill accepted the HIV-from-Fort-Detrick hypothesis; Müller-Hill did not accept it. The examiners were not impressed. A “highly confidential” report submitted by the department surveilling Heym’s telephone conversations said that in the early evening of the same day, at 5:32 pm, Lilli Segal told Heym, among other things, that a colloquium organized by Sönnichsen had been attended by 20 people. As this same report noted, “At that occasion they [the Segals] had been quite heavily attacked by [Erhard] Geissler.”²²⁰ According to Sönnichsen, “the participants unanimously shared the view that the aggressivity of US imperialism is not to be doubted and undoubtedly all means available are being used. If it is claimed, however, that HIV has been constructed in the USA by genetic engineering for biological warfare purposes, it must be proven beyond doubt. Otherwise it could have only negative consequences for the GDR and the other socialist countries.”³⁸⁰

Indeed, negative consequences were already in evidence. In Greece, at the margin of an international congress on arms reduction, one of us, E.G., was able to discuss Segal’s hypothesis and its ramifications with an influential East German politician, Manfred Feist, who was Party leader Erich Honecker’s brother-in-law and head of the department of foreign affairs of the Central Committee of the SED. Feist reported that the GDR’s ambassador in Rome, along with other diplomats, had been extremely concerned about the HIV-from-Fort-Detrick assertion. E.G. was intending to write a paper disproving Segal’s theories and asked Feist for his support; Feist encouraged him to proceed. The paper was to have been published in *The Journal of Medical Education* [*Zeitschrift für ärztliche Fortbildung*], a GDR journal concerned with physicians’

postgraduate training. E.G. set about to coauthor a paper with Professor Hans-Alfred Rosenthal, director of the institute of virology of the Charité, the medical school and teaching hospital of Humboldt University, and a member of the AIDS Advisory Group. The paper explained that

... if genetic engineers would have recombined the genetic material of HTLV-1 with that of Maedi-Visna virus [as claimed by Segal] and had been already in the possession of the technical prerequisites they in addition would have had direct access to the genetic material of these viruses. However, HTLV-1, allegedly one of the parents of HIV, had been discovered only by the end of 1978 and beginning of 1979, and a corresponding publication appeared only in 1980 — that is, after the first cases of AIDS had been described [that is, while the first recognized AIDS cases, most still under treatment, were being described for publication in 1981] and long after the first contacts of the affected patients with the AIDS agent (because of the relatively long period of latency until the first clinical symptoms appeared). In addition, the genetic material of the Maedi-Visna virus was available for genetic manipulation only in 1984. Furthermore, several RNA-containing viruses now known are much more closely related to HIV than HTLV-I and Maedi-Visna virus. [Examples given.] HIV hence is a member of a group of more or less related viruses and by no means is a unique specimen.³⁸¹

In early March 1987, E.G. called Feist and told him the paper was ready for publication. Feist now hesitated: “We do not have to defend the USA, but we should not have someone stick candy to our shirt [*Wir müssen die USA nicht verteidigen, dürfen uns aber kein Bonbon ans Hemd kleben lassen*].”³⁸² Sticking candy to someone’s shirt was a childish prank, one intended to make the shirt’s wearer look ridiculous.³⁸³ Feist was expressing the same concern expressed previously by Sönnichsen; the GDR had no reason to defend American methods but had to prove any accusations made, lest it appear foolish.³⁸⁰ Moreover, Feist faced a dilemma, making his hesitation understandable. Yes, the Party risked embarrassment by being blamed for the myth, but if publication proceeded then the Party risked internal division by having *exposed* as a myth the very claims whose propagation some in the Party had welcomed.

Feist directed E.G. to give him the manuscript, and he, Feist, would discuss the matter with Karl Seidel, head of the health department of the Central Committee, *das Zentralkomitee* or ZK.³⁸⁴ After delivering the manuscript, E.G. was to see Seidel, on 9 March.

Seidel was extremely reserved. He made no mention of the manuscript’s factual arguments but emphasized that the CIA of course would appreciate being absolved of AIDS-related accusations. Then he threatened distinctly. If E.G. were to publish the manuscript, the leadership of the Party would assume that he had acted on behalf of the CIA.³⁸⁵ Since any such interpretation of his intentions could have been lethal in East Germany, E.G. decided to forgo publication.

On 11 March 1987, two days after E.G.’s appointment with Seidel, an anonymous HA XX/1 document noted that Comrade Seidel had been informed only the day after the appointment, 10 March 1987, about Heym’s interview with Segal. Presumably an officer of HA XX/1, responsible for public health, had been the informer since an addendum noted: “Comrade Prof. Seidel knows the circumstances of the publication of Prof. Segal’s opinions about the AIDS problem and [the theories that] have been supported by him. Prof. Seidel immediately realized that any internal discussions of Segal’s hypotheses regarding the origin and spread of AIDS counteract the political [purpose] of these publications and have to be prevented.” This note was forwarded on the same day to Colonel Wolfgang Reuter, head of Department XX/9, because the sender, presumably Colonel Eberhard Jaeckel, declared himself “interested in additional developments in that area becoming appropriately influential.”³⁸⁶

Seidel’s decision revealed a bizarre situation. While officers of the Ministry for State Security considered ways to dissociate themselves from Segal’s myth and restrain his activities, a responsible Party leader prevented public criticism of the myth itself. No less bizarre was that E.G. at that time had already been able to reject the myth in a book published in Oxford, England, in 1986 and distributed widely — but not distributed at all in East Germany. This book had been edited by the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute as a contribution to the Second Review Conference of the States Parties to the Biological and Toxin Weapons Convention. Seidel might not have known about this project and most certainly learned nothing of it from E.G.,

who had welcomed the opportunity to write material such as this:

Detection of viruses possessing highly variable antigenic structures, such as the AIDS agent HTLV-III, renders the possibility of providing BW [biological-warfare] agents with such determinants of high plasticity. HTLV-III is not considered to be a potential BW agent, although some persons have expressed concern that HTLV-III might be a “killer” virus developed on behalf of the CIA in order to eliminate male homosexuals (Noack, 1985, p. 180 [49]; Zapevalov [Sapewalow], 1985 [43]). These suggestions, however, are absurd and ridiculous. HTLV-III is not a product of genetic engineering; it is a genuine virus that presumably emerged in Central Africa decades ago as a derivative of a monkey virus (Kanki *et al.*, 1985 [83]). Besides, BW-agent designers might well hesitate to introduce analogous hypervariable antigen-determinant genes into the genome of potential BW agents, because it would become extremely difficult, or even impossible, to develop protection for one’s own forces against such agents.³⁸⁷

In March 1987, a few days after Seidel’s threat, a comprehensive four-page memorandum about Segal and his claims was released by Major Dewitz of the East Berlin Administration of the MfS. After summarizing Segal’s career and his claims, Dewitz stated: “According to present knowledge all GDR experts are convinced that Prof. Segal’s theory is untenable. They expressed this opinion in a dispute with Segal in November 1986. . . . There is not a single real proof for any of Segal’s claims; on the contrary, interpretations presented by him are unequivocally wrong in many details.”³⁵³

Dewitz was obliged as a Stasi officer to protect the GDR and its ruling party. He saw the myth as a threat to core interests:

Disadvantages for the GDR.

— Scientific disadvantages: Frequently scientists from the NSW [non-socialist currency area] . . . have had to assume that Segal’s claims are shared by the majority of scientists in the GDR. Scientists from the Free University West Berlin and from Munich, who cooperate with us in the area of AIDS research, have decided to end this cooperation. . . .

— Economic disadvantages: There could be consequences from the situation just mentioned. Analogous remarks have already been made by representatives of Chemie-Linz (Austria) to Prof. von Baehr [an East German AIDS expert].

— Political disadvantages: The impact of the activities of Prof. Segal is regarded to be explicitly negative, directed against détente. The question is not whether the USA would not be ready to perform such experiments but that such allegations have to be proved. Since that is not the case [since the allegations have not been proved], the whole affair has a backlash effect on us, see the headline of the “Spiegel”: “Who are the fathers — CIA or KGB?”³⁵³

Dewitz had grown concerned that “negative contact persons might gain room for maneuver by misuse of Segal”:

— There are many activities, inquiries, personal visits etc. of Western journalists in branches of the university, which [visits] provide them with an area of actions which steadily offers the possibility of wrong reactions of affected employees, who are informed less or not at all.

— Direct contacts with circles of persons who are to be observed politically (see the interview with Stefan Heym for the “taz,” contacts to journalists of the “Spiegel,” etc.).

— Activities of persons who presumably are direct informants of secret services. Prof. Segal, for example, met already in 1986 two persons, who introduced themselves as employees of the US embassy and who had been regarded by Segal as representatives of the CIA. After that the headline already mentioned was published by the “Spiegel.”³⁵³

Dewitz continued: “Co-workers [*Mitarbeiter*] have repeatedly been asked by senior scientists of the Charité an explicit question: Are you not able to slow him down?”³⁵³ Whether the co-workers mentioned were members of the MfS or of Segal’s staff is an open question. Although Segal had retired in 1971, Segal’s wife Lilli and the chemist Dehmow as well as Manuel Kiper²⁹² from West Germany cooperated with him.

According to Dewitz, “Everyone is convinced that Prof. Segal would not be able to act in such manner if he were not protected in some way. Regarding such backing there exist several opinions. Some assume

Prof. [Karl] Seidel is responsible, others instead [suspect] Axen's office. Unspoken also the possibility is considered that the MfS might be involved."³⁵³

Dewitz continued:

Segal's activities increasingly reveal [themselves] as inhibitory in the daily activities of the university, especially regarding international cooperation. In addition, the constant dispute with him and his ideas and the permanent necessary denials waste much time, especially of those scientists who are desperately needed for priority projects. Actually, a more efficient sabotage of important research projects is not conceivable. ... [A]ccording to present knowledge Prof. Segal's activities prove scientifically untenable and are considered to be politically harmful. Appropriate measures are possible only in coordination with the ZK [Central Committee of the SED], considering also the aims and activities of the unit of the MfS dealing with [the Segals]. ...³⁵³

This extraordinary document, written from within the East Berlin Administration of the Ministry of State Security, showed "everyone" guessing that powerful figures in the East German Communist Party were protecting an eccentric biologist while he embarrassed — practically sabotaged — their country. This Dewitz and his colleagues could not understand. Some unit within the Ministry must have been dealing with the Segals, but could any unit staffed by their own fellow Stasi really be to blame for encouraging or allowing such behavior? This they did not know.

Enclosed with Dewitz's information was a report of questions put to Hans-Alfred Rosenthal on 17 March 1987.³⁸⁸ Dewitz wrote first that Rosenthal had provided background information on Segal's biography and on his numerous hypotheses:

[Segal] continuously appeared with novel theories that had not been substantiated scientifically and continuously caused controversies which even caused international protests (e.g., because he denigrated Nobel Prize winners he was expelled from the Biochemical Society of the GDR after a complaint by the British Biochemical Society). In Rosenthal's view, Segal permanently opposes prevailing opinions; however, he just won't listen to reason and never admits to being wrong. Hence, a real scientific dispute is never possible with him.³⁸⁸

Rosenthal had also offered a comprehensive critique of Segal's claims regarding the origin of the AIDS virus.

Moreover he had expressed his opinion that Segal's activities increasingly were becoming problematic politically and had to be managed through unrestricted scientific debate:

According to Comrade Rosenthal the following aspects have to be taken into account: any opposition against Segal gives the impression of misjudging imperialism and especially the USA. An efficient unmasking of imperialism is possible with facts only, not with unproven theories, and certainly not with obviously false claims. Segal is hence objectively supporting imperialism, which he subjectively, with certainty, does not want to do.³⁸⁸

On the same occasion, Dewitz discussed with Rosenthal the ZK's decision and Seidel's offer to Segal to publish without restriction in the West while avoiding any mentioning of the GDR. Some in the Stasi had known since December 1986 that *Politbüro* member Kurt Hager had cleared Segal to spread his speculations in foreign countries. Dewitz referred to the same information provided by Lummitsch some weeks before: "The Health Policy Department of the ZK of the SED has permitted Segal to publish abroad."³⁸⁹ But we do not know exactly when and how Lummitsch had become informed of Hager's decision. Perhaps Segal himself had been the informer. As Major Jahnke of Department XX/9 recorded on 14 April 1987, Lilli Segal told the informant code-named "Maria" that the ZK of the SED had decided their conclusions should be not published in the GDR "since Western governmental agencies and mass media would immediately point to a propaganda action of the KGB."¹³³ Jakob Segal had at least told Dewitz of having been encouraged by Seidel "to raise a clamor [*Klamauk*] in the West, but [to] leave the GDR out of it."³⁵³ In reference to this decision, Dewitz recorded Rosenthal's interpretation: "They all got cold feet."³⁸⁸

Notably, though, Hager and Seidel had not "offer[ed] Segal unrestricted possibilities to publish in the NSW" but had decided that Segal should not be prevented from publishing there — in the "non-socialist currency area" — if, but only if, the GDR could avoid reputational damage.

Regarding reputational concern, Dewitz recorded Rosenthal's suggestions:

To protect the esteem of the GDR with appropriate measures Comrade R. considers the following possibilities: [...] Prof. Geissler, Erhard (AdW [Akademie der Wissenschaften der DDR or the Academy of Sciences of the GDR], ZIM [Zentralinstitut für Molekularbiologie or the Central Institute of Molecular Biology, where E.G. headed the Department of Virology]) and he [Rosenthal] have elaborated on behalf of Comrade Manfred Feist (ZK) an article, in which they as experts in the field of genetics describe the aspects mentioned above regarding where the AIDS virus has originated in their view. This paper was submitted [to Feist] about 1 week ago. It shall be passed with high probability to persons in the NSW (possibly the DKP [Deutsche Kommunistische Partei or German Communist Party, founded in West Germany in 1968]). That would virtually assure that a refutation written by GDR scientists becomes known, which can be referred to in disputes with colleagues. ...³⁸⁸

Yet Seidel had already *prevented* the publication of the article mentioned, without considering whether it might be published abroad.

Although they knew about the negative judgements of GDR experts, HV A/X continued to support the myth. For experts to find false information full of errors was, of course, no surprise, nor was it any impediment. Yet HV A/X continued to support the myth despite knowing the Berlin Department of the MfS had concluded not only that Segal's claims were illusory but also that his propagation of them was deleterious. Clearly, the Stasi were not all thinking alike. More remarkably, one Stasi unit was behaving not only as if unconcerned with Ministry misgivings but also as if unaware of Party priorities and superpower rapprochement.

In September 1987, six months after the Dewitz critique, Erich Honecker made a five-day state visit to West Germany, beginning in Bonn, where Helmut Kohl, Chancellor of the Federal Republic, received him as the leader of a sovereign foreign country. This was a career's culmination for Honecker, the man who had overseen construction of the Berlin Wall, had maintained a shoot-to-kill order for anyone trying to escape westward, and as General Secretary of the Central Committee of the Socialist Unity Party of Germany had insisted the GDR be accepted not as a Cold War artifact but as an enduring state, the two Germanies

having become, as he had said, "as different as fire and water."^{390,391,392} The communiqué issuing from this across-the-Wall summit listed *first* among its outcomes an agreement to cooperate in AIDS research.³⁹³

Six weeks later, 30 October 1987, pursuant to the Shultz-Gorbachev confrontation, the Soviet Union disavowed the myth, admitting it had been a lie all along, and began winding down propagation efforts.¹⁷¹

Undismayed by, if not oblivious to, these greater events, HVA/X worked on. Or it pretended to work on.

From 26 to 29 September 1988, Colonel [redacted] and [redacted] [GDR names 1 and 2 redacted for KOMDOS] met Bulgarian counterparts in Sofia. The second of these officers was later said by Bohnsack, but not by others, to have been at the Harare conference two years previously.²⁵¹ A Bulgarian minute-taker, [redacted] [name redacted by KOMDOS], wrote

that the USIA [United States Information Agency] report demonstrates that the enemy is increasingly unnerved by the AM [active measures] performed by the Soviets, especially by Operation "Detrick," [but] that, similar to the situation the Soviet comrades are faced with, their own [East German] scientists also show no inclination to support [redacted] [name redacted by KOMDOS]. Nevertheless they have decided to continue with the operation [Detrick] in coordination with HV I of the KGB. [Furthermore, the officers of HV A/X] ordered, by means of their operational possibilities [through their operatives], production of a movie in West Germany The film . . . becomes a task of their undercover agents. They have already made a contract with the West German television. They take all measures so that nobody can realize that the GDR is connected with the film, although they have to provide financial support. The interview Prof. [redacted] [GDR name 3 redacted for KOMDOS] will give in October 1988 will be a highlight of this project. When the film is complete it will be officially provided to the Bulgarian television. It will be a documentary film in the style of English detective studies. The message is provided not obtrusively, with one exception, when it is demonstrated that the Americans perform disinformation in the case of AIDS [and] that they misuse technological capabilities.³⁹⁴

The Bulgarian minute-taker described [redacted] [GDR name 2 redacted for KOMDOS], the officer

said by Bohnsack to have been at Harare, as “head of section ‘Disarmament, USA, Peace Movement.’”³⁹⁴ We have not seen this description elsewhere and cannot explain it here; according to Bohnsack and Brehmer, ██████ [GDR name 2] headed HV A/X Section 1.²⁵² Also worth noting is that HV A/X support for “production of a movie in West Germany” is found in Bulgarian records but — as far as we yet know and as far as Boghardt knew in 2009 — not in Stasi records. Boghardt found “no evidence of direct HVA X involvement in this production.”³⁹⁵ Through Christopher Nehring’s efforts we do have evidence although, without corroboration, evidence of an assertion only.

While in Sofia, HV A/X officers gave their Bulgarian partners some number of documents, five of which were “to be used in Action Detrick.”²⁴⁵ These documents were an odd and meager assortment, an incoherent collection:

1. A copy of Segal, Segal, and Dehmlow, “*Das AIDS – seine Natur und sein Ursprung*,” not from Segal’s hand directly but from *Streitbarer Materialismus*, July 1988.¹⁸⁴ This was not the paper “in English, with a summary in German” promised to the Bulgarians two years earlier.²⁸⁵ HV A/X might never have gotten a copy of that paper or might never have made an extra copy to share.
2. An article published in the GDR weekly *Horizont* on the “criminal experiments of American scientists” undertaken to develop nuclear weapons and novel bioweapons. Neither AIDS nor HIV was mentioned in this article. Prominently discussed were activities undertaken by environmental activists, including Jeremy Rifkin, to oppose defensive bioweaponry research at Dugway Proving Ground, Utah.³⁹⁶
3. A copy of a lawsuit filed against the US Secretary of Defense, Caspar Weinberger, by the Foundation on Economic Trends, whose founder and president was the aforementioned Rifkin. The filing might have drawn on MacArthur’s 1969 testimony²²³ but did not cite it. The Foundation had sought to prevent — and succeeded in preventing — the field testing of a genetically modified *Pseudomonas syringae* at Dugway.³⁹⁷ The organism was designed to reduce crop loss from freezing. Dugway, like Fort Detrick, was a military facility, and the minute-taker made a note:

“For use with ,Detrick‘ [*Zum Gebrauch bei ,Detrick‘*].”

4. A newspaper clipping, “Against AIDS so far there are few prospects for an effective vaccine.”³⁹⁸ The author did not exclude the possibility that HIV might have been artificially created.
5. An eleven-page excerpt from a March 1988 report³⁹⁹ by the United States Information Agency (USIA) dealing with Soviet AIDS disinformation.³⁹⁴

The names redacted by us for KOMDOS in the minutes of this 26 to 29 September 1988 meeting in Sofia did not include Bohnsack or Brehmer.

While some of their own security officers were trying to keep the myth going, East German political leaders, having appreciated experts’ advice, were trying to shut the myth down. Segal’s claims could now be criticized publicly without interference. The GDR Academy of Sciences permitted, and the MfS did not prevent, travel by E.G. for four weeks through the United States — from Los Angeles, California, to Cambridge, Massachusetts — in early 1989 to discuss matters of biological arms control. In numerous lectures and interviews, including presentations at the annual meetings of the American Association for the Advancement of Science (AAAS) and The American Society for Biochemistry and Molecular Biology, as well as in lectures at the Institute for East-West Security Studies, New York; the United Nations NGO Committee on Disarmament, New York; the Subcommittee on Arms Control, International Security and Science of the Committee on Foreign Affairs; and the Committee on Virology of Harvard University, and on other occasions, the HIV-from-Fort-Detrick myth could be, and was, criticized without restriction.

The only document available in BStU dealing with E.G.’s activities during that journey related to a report on the AAAS meeting in the West German newspaper *Rheinischer Merkur / Christ und Welt*. The author mentioned that E.G. had criticized Segal’s theory in San Francisco and had said, *inter alia*: “That is complete nonsense. In the meantime molecular-biological and epidemiological studies have been published that disprove [the myth] univocally.”⁴⁰⁰

The head of main department HA IX, Major General Rolf Fister, and his deputy, Colonel Achim Kopf, saw E.G.’s name in a Western newspaper, the *Rheinischer*

Merkur, an organ of the *Klassenfeind* [class enemy], and made inquiries at the Academy of Sciences. Presumably this department's interest resulted indirectly from the fact that the KGB long before had asked if N. W. Timofeeff-Ressovsky — a Russian who became Director of the Genetics Division of the Kaiser Wilhelm Institute for Brain Research and kept his laboratory working throughout the Battle of Berlin — had been involved in Nazi war crimes. Fifteen years later, E.G. had succeeded him and thus became associated with the KGB's old suspicion. The deputy head of department HA IX/11, Dieter Skiba, informed his superiors that one of his officers, Major Diener, had been told by the Academy of Sciences forthrightly: "As a peace researcher, [E.G.] is a member of the Committee for Peace and Disarmament. He deals with chemical and biological warfare. He is not a member of the Party [the SED] but a very engaged and internationally acknowledged scientist."⁴⁰¹

The West German news agency *Deutsche Presse-Agentur* (*dpa*) interviewed E.G. and reported as follows:

Long-lasting rumor on AIDS virus — an unsavory political thriller San Francisco, 18 January 1989. An accusation put forward prominently by a scientist from the GDR against the USA has been rejected by GDR scientist Erhard Geissler. Jakob Segal, a retired professor of biology, raised attention some time ago with the — frequently repeated — claim that the USA had developed the AIDS virus in the course of their biological weapons research. The allegation of his fellow countryman and colleague is "absolute nonsense," Geissler said on Tuesday on the occasion of the annual meeting of the American Association for the Advancement of Science (AAAS) in San Francisco. There is good evidence that it is impossible to construct the AIDS-causing HIV from other retroviruses. Such a rumor would only create mistrust . . .⁴⁰²

Segal struck back. He copied the text of the interview and sent it to a member of the *Politbüro*, Hermann Axen, accusing E.G. of performing anti-socialist activities in the very center of imperialism. Axen arranged for E.G. to be asked to see the head of the department for medical affairs of the Central Committee of the SED — Seidel again — on 3 March 1989. Seidel asked him why and with what arguments he had rejected Segal's allegations in his

presentations in the US. In contrast to his attitude two years before, Seidel on this occasion accepted E.G.'s arguments, possibly since Seidel himself had gotten into trouble with Segal in the meantime. Segal had proposed to treat the blood of HIV-infected persons with ultraviolet light. This proposal had been rejected by Seidel, and Segal had then complained to Axen.⁴⁰³ Now, though, with the GDR itself sliding perceptibly toward history's ash heap, Segal's accusation had no negative consequences for his accused.

██████ and ██████ [GDR names 1 and 2 redacted for KOMDOS], the same two HV A/X officers who had gone to Sofia in 1988, welcomed their Bulgarian counterparts to Berlin exactly one year later, 26 to 29 September 1989. Joining the hosts was a third HV A/X officer, ██████ [GDR name 4 redacted for KOMDOS]. A Bulgarian minute-taker noted that ██████ [GDR name 2 redacted for KOMDOS], "expressed the opinion that, contrary to some points of view, the issue [Action Detrick] is still topical. There is no reason for us to distance ourselves from the action, as they have noted the trend toward ever greater interest in the origin and essence of the disease and that the initial thesis of Prof. ██████ [GDR name 3 redacted for KOMDOS] is now supported by a number of other scientists. In their view we could assist them by recruiting authorities who defend Prof. ██████'s [GDR name 3 redacted for KOMDOS] thesis."⁴⁰⁴

The hosts added that several significant articles had been published recently. "For example, the weekly *Stern* covered the topic in connection with bacteriological weapons."⁴⁰⁴ *Stern* had indeed published an article in 1987 dealing with the myth, but in this article *Stern* had excoriated Segal.³³⁵ And *Stern* had refused to publish Stefan Heym's Segal interview.^{333,334}

Still, the hosts did have other news, and this was more positive. The film project described a year earlier had gone forward, and the finished piece had been broadcast three times in the Federal Republic.

The film was produced by a privately owned film production company in cooperation with the WDR, which even supported the production of the film with a certain amount [of funding]. The West German partners paid 80,000 DM [Deutsche Mark] for the production of the film, and the [East] German comrades have paid 40,000 DM. The Soviet comrades have also proposed to pay 60,000 DM for the film, but the [East] German

comrades have rejected that participation. ... It is not planned to broadcast the film in the socialist countries but in the developed West European countries and in countries of the Third World. ... Comrade [redacted] [GDR name 2 redacted for KOMDOS] provided us with two video cassettes each with an English and a German version of the film.⁴⁰⁴

Gorbachev had terminated myth propagation in October 1987. Nothing we have seen from the records of these September 1988 and '89 meetings would place the 60,000 DM Soviet funding proposal prior to that termination. The Stasi might have had nothing to "reject."

This KOMDOS document did not name the film but did name the film's production partner: WDR, which we take to have meant *Westdeutscher Rundfunk* or West German Broadcasting. Taken together, the topic, the year, the German script, and the WDR label yield, to our knowledge, only one match: *AIDS – Die Afrikalegende* [*AIDS – The Africa Legend*],⁴⁰⁵ created by Heimo Claasen and Malte Rauch. This film was broadcast first on 3 January 1989 as a WDR "Weltweit [Worldwide]" feature on the main West German television network, First German Television, known as ARD. *Südwest Rundfunk* [Southwest Broadcasting], or SWR, ARD's Stuttgart station, distributed a promotional summary: "The thesis that the AIDS virus came from Africa is scientifically hardly tenable. There are indications instead that the immunodeficiency disease had been artificially created in civilian or military research laboratories."⁴⁰⁶ This film was broadcast a second time on 22 May 1989 by ARD's Cologne station *Westdeutscher Rundfunk* 3, WDR 3.⁴⁰⁷

AIDS – Die Afrikalegende was nearly 43 minutes long. New York City was the opening scene, followed by a conference in Stockholm. AIDS luminaries — Robert Gallo, Myron Essex, and Luc Montagnier — appeared in short clips; none doubted a simian origin. The scene shifted to sub-Saharan Africa. Two African doctors spoke against an African origin. Rosalind and Richard Chirimuuta, coauthors of a contrarian book, *AIDS, Africa and Racism*,⁴⁰⁸ said the AIDS-from-Africa theory was motivated not by scientific evidence, which they thought to be weak, but by racial prejudice, which they knew to be strong. The Segals, shown working in their East Berlin apartment,

appeared in a four-minute segment. Jakob and then Lilli argued that Africa could not be the continent of origin and that the retrovirus isolated from the African green monkey could not be an ancestor of HIV. This was followed by an eight-minute session featuring Gerhard Hunsmann, then Montagnier again, and then Hunsmann again, wherein puzzles were cited and frustrations expressed. Hunsmann, like Gallo, Essex, and Montagnier, assumed a simian origin but emphasized that so far — 1988 — no direct nonhuman-primate ancestor of HIV had been discovered. Back in the Segals' apartment, the HIV's origin was asserted to be non-African and unnatural. Jakob spoke for about a minute, claiming the HIV was artificial, and for another minute he was shown reading and writing while the myth was explained by the film's narrator. Then Regine Kollek of the Hamburg Institute for Social Research explained how unnatural descent might have occurred through accident, such as vaccine contamination, but she also explained why she did not accept Segal's theory: the HIV had to have existed prior to the development of the techniques Segal said were used to make it. The scene changed to Maryland, near Fort Detrick. Pentagon connections to biotechnology firms were mentioned, as were Fort Detrick's relationships with AIDS researchers. Fort Detrick's barbed-wire perimeter was inspected, as if surreptitiously, from a slowly moving vehicle. Jeremy Rifkin was interviewed in a Washington office. Rifkin cited the 1969 MacArthur testimony but doubted the options MacArthur envisioned had been pursued, and he concurred with Kollek in rejecting Segal's claims. He then shifted the film's focus to a broader and concluding charge: US biodefense research was endangering humankind. The scene cut back to Africa for four minutes on the plight of the poorest societies struggling against an epidemic of suspicious pedigree. The film then concluded with a twenty-three-second train ride over a New York slum. In all, less than five minutes dealt with the myth; of the thirteen people shown expressing their opinions, only Jakob and Lilli Segal believed it, and six others either endorsed a simian origin or in some other fashion rejected the myth.

Dietrich Peter Winterberg, the journalist who had introduced the film, followed with a summary comment:

The conclusion of the film is then: legend, all legend if today anyone claims he knows where the AIDS virus comes from. Only someone bearing guilt for its origin — if anyone at all should be blamed for the emergence of the virus — can be disinterested in the truth, and nothing has been proven. [*Das Ergebnis des Films also: Legende, alles Legende wenn heute jemand behauptet, er wisse wo das AIDS-Virus herkommt. An der Wahrheit kann nur der nicht interessiert sein, der mit Schuld an der Entstehung trägt, falls es Schuld an der Entstehung des Virus überhaupt geben sollte, und auch da ist nichts bewiesen.*]⁴⁰⁹

One year later, “with some extra detail [*noch etwas ausführlicher*]” and an English script,⁴¹⁰ this film, now called *Monkey Business — AIDS: The Africa Story*, was broadcast in Britain by Channel Four.^{411,412} *Monkey Business* ran 65 minutes and included eight additional segments. One, toward the end of the film, was a minute with Jakob Segal speaking not about AIDS at all but, ironically, about the dependence of scientists — Galileo being his example — on their governments.⁴¹³

An African journalist reviewing *Monkey Business* wrote respectfully of the Segals and thought escape or theft of a laboratory AIDS virus “very probable,” but conceded that “[a] number of scientists have strongly refuted this theory.”⁴¹⁴

Controversies reported by Claasen and Rauch were authentic at the time. Of the suspicions conveyed only the Segals’ was conspiratorial. Yes, Fort Detrick was portrayed menacingly and American AIDS researchers unflatteringly. And leading contemporary AIDS-from-Africa theories, not just the already discredited green-monkey theory, were criticized relentlessly. But the Segals’ story, the HIV-from-Fort-Detrick myth, paled in plausibility beside alternatives and got no endorsement other than the Segals’ own. The Stasi’s money, if any, had not bought much, if anything.

Had the GDR survived to employ them further, ██████, ██████, and ██████ [GDR names 1, 2, and 4 redacted for KOMDOS] would eventually have been able to boast that the film supposedly financed by the HV A/X had gone on to radiate its own conspiracy wave. In the FRG, suspicions planted by Segal, as presented by Claasen and Rauch, led a professor of surgery, Gerd J. Winkeltau, using “Johann Schulz” as *nom de plume*, and a philosopher, Juan Rodriguez, using

the name “Juan Sherry,” to co-author a 1996 detective novel, *Die Impfung [The Vaccination]*,⁴¹⁵ which adopted the myth as its premise.⁴¹⁶ Five prisoners were infected with an engineered HIV in August 1975 and, after leaving prison, spread AIDS. The US military, to hide its responsibility, murdered the former prisoners and, to obscure the HIV’s origin, invented the “Africa legend.” The novel was dedicated to Claasen and Rauch, to Lilli and Jakob Segal, and to Rosalind and Richard Chirimuuta. Claasen and Rauch cowrote the preface. On 25 February 1997, in the seventeenth year of AIDS-related science, one of their broadcasters, WDR, presented a topical item, “Die Impfung – ein Aids-Roman [The Vaccination – an AIDS novel],” including interviews with the co-authors and clippings from the film.

Rauch did not respond to Boghardt,³⁶ but both Claasen and Rauch eventually did respond to one of us, E.G.^{410,417} Both wrote that they knew nothing about Stasi involvement. According to Claasen, the film was funded by WDR and Channel Four. Neither broadcaster would have needed funding from external sources, especially not from unknown and perhaps sinister ones. Moreover, Claasen had started investigating the source of AIDS in 1984, during a trip to Zaire, now the Democratic Republic of Congo, and had planned from that year to produce a film on this topic. He had been motivated by what he regarded as racist claims, from the West, that AIDS had had an African origin. All this was well before the Segals had engaged the topic. Later, both Claasen and Rauch were influenced by ongoing discussions of HIV origins, but they were influenced also by direct contact with Segal and his ideas. Claasen met with Segal late in 1986 and followed with a Claasen-Segal-“Booby Hatch” meeting.⁴¹⁸ According to Segal, Claasen proposed that Segal, “Booby Hatch,” and others collaborate in a book to be called *AIDS aus dem Genlabor? [AIDS from a Gene Laboratory?]* and find a leftist publishing house to produce it.⁴¹⁹ Claasen himself had a Segal manuscript; he does not now remember when and how he got it, but we do know what he did with it. Reinhard Behnisch, the editor of *Wechselwirkung*, wrote to Segal 7 January 1987 saying one of his — one of Segal’s — manuscripts had come to him directly from Claasen.⁴²⁰ This manuscript had passed from Segal to Claasen to Behnisch at least twenty months before HV A/X officers meeting in Sofia announced

that they had “ordered . . . production of a movie in West Germany.”³⁹⁴

KOMDOS archives show that HV A/X officers knew in advance that film makers would interview Prof. ██████ [GDR name 3 redacted for KOMDOS] in October 1988. How did these officers know that? Was their prediction accurate? If it was accurate, did such foreknowledge show they were controlling the project?

On the three-part assumption that the film was *AIDS – Die Afrikalegende*, that the interviewers were Claasen and Rauch, and that the interviewed “Prof.” was Jakob Segal, we asked Claasen how the Stasi could have predicted that he and Rauch would interview Segal in October 1988. Claasen answered that he and Rauch “had been requested to apply for an official permission for the entry of our team into East Berlin, which [permission] was provided by means of the formal (and rather bureaucratic) assistance of the Association of GDR producers of documentary films. Hence our project presumably was known to all possible authorities of the GDR long before our film was finalized and broadcast.”⁴²¹ We know from the film itself and from its broadcast history that Claasen and Rauch interviewed the Segals in East Berlin prior to 3 January 1989. An October ‘88 interview date would have fit this timing.

What HV A/X officers told their Bulgarian counterparts about the film’s financing might have been true. Stasi money might have been laundered so cleanly that Claasen and Rauch and their broadcasters all thought nothing amiss.

Alternatively, HV A/X officers might have been bragging about a project they had known to be underway in West Germany and knew to require an interview in the East but with which they had no involvement and over which they exercised no influence. The film in both its final forms, German and English, was surely more artful and less one-sided than might have been expected had HV A/X been vetting script and direction. Had it been a Stasi project, or at least an HV A/X project, the film might have been featured as such in subsequent disclosures by former HV A/X officers Bohnsack and Brehmer, but neither mentioned it in his own writings. Nor did Behling.

The names redacted by us for KOMDOS in the minutes of this 26 to 29 September 1989 meeting in Berlin did not include Bohnsack or Brehmer.

Active-measures cooperation between the East German and Bulgarian security services was planned into the first quarter of 1990. The plans were not exciting. The East Germans were to keep the Bulgarians informed of current developments and convey Western European publications and broadcasts [*Medienbeiträge*]. The Bulgarians were to spread the myth, especially near US bases in Greece and in Turkey and in Islamic countries broadly.⁴²² This was a KGB trick, and a good one, acknowledged as such in the Western press for at least two years; AIDS disinformation had already complicated the renewal of leases for US bases in the Philippines and in Greece.³³

Did the Stasi think the myth usable? At least two departments did not. There, internal disagreement delayed decisions, but negative judgments forcefully prevailed in the end. In one other department, the myth was thought usable even until the Soviet bloc itself dissolved.

Was the HIV-from-Fort-Detrick myth a Stasi success?

The least sustainable claims encountered in the myth’s history have been those to originality. Many people in many places simultaneously were trying to understand, and to avoid, a threat whose emergence had been insidious and whose clinical presentation was exotically protean. Conspiracies were easy to imagine, and some conspiracies were even real, although these latter tended *not* to have been imagined before being discovered; among them were conspiracies to sell presumptively infectious blood products as if they were safe to infuse.⁴²³

The HIV-from-Fort-Detrick myth was a chimera, not in the molecular-genetic sense, of course, but in the mythological sense: the myth was a monster of mismatched parts. Experts would not believe it, but cranks — some of whom were expert enough to have no excuse for their actions — would promote it or even try to enhance it, to make it more seductive, more widely acceptable. Agents who knew the myth was a lie might still push it for political gain. Agents who knew the myth had *been* a lie might claim to have pushed it brilliantly, and they might so claim with little risk of contradiction. We set out to see if such agents were truly as brilliant as their claims had made them seem.

The claims in question — claims of operational success — appeared in six batches. The first was the *Panorama* broadcast, 1992;¹⁷⁷ the second a book by Bohnsack and Brehmer, 1992;¹⁰⁵ the third an article by Behling, 2000;¹⁷⁹ the fourth a book by Behling, 2003;³⁶⁵ the fifth Boghardt's interpretation of recollections by Bohnsack, Brehmer, and Behling, 2009;³⁶ and the sixth HV A/X officers' portrayals of their achievements as recorded in meetings with Bulgarian security-service officers, September 1986,²⁸⁵ '88,^{245,394} and '89.⁴⁰⁴

We have vetted these claims and their resultant assumptions against primary-source evidence, and we can describe each now as confirmed, unconfirmed, or disconfirmed (Table 4).

The HIV-from-Fort-Detrick myth was disinformation, but it was not only that. No evidence available to us proves the KGB created it, rather than plagiarized it, but the KGB was certainly near the crime scene, with the Stasi nowhere around. Hints have suggested invention by others — paranoids, cranks, contrarians — and these characters unmistakably mutated the myth as soon as they touched it. But the priority question, the ultimate credit-and-culpability question, remains unanswered. That much set aside, the myth was *propagated* by figures and organizations ranging from the believably suspected to the clearly responsible.

Jakob Segal came late, but he came with ideas. He was not the myth's creator, but he was more than its conduit. Whether claiming pseudo-scientific priority or just cheating his sources or covering for co-conspirators, Segal jealously emphasized his role, as if proud of his work — not as a disinformant but as an unmasker.

In 1987 he complained to a Japanese professor that “American and African right-wing papers declared that our theory is a legend invented by the K.G.B.”⁴²⁴ When in 1990 the claim regarding the KGB's responsibility for arranging Segal's activities was repeated in the *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*,⁴²⁵ Segal immediately asserted that the HIV-from-Fort-Detrick theory was itself created not by the KGB but by himself and his coworkers: “In no stage of our studies did Soviet authors or administrations contribute to the development of our theory regarding the origin of AIDS.”⁴²⁶ Lilli similarly complained that “the misinformation about our AIDS theory continues. Lately there was a notice in the Russian *Izvestia*, saying that, following the latest information, the theory pretending that AIDS

Table 4. Assumptions and claims vetted against primary-source evidence.

	Confirmed + Unconfirmed — Disconfirmed X
The KGB briefed the Stasi on the myth in 1985.	—
The Stasi were the myth's co-inventors.	X
Jakob Segal was the Stasi's agent of choice.	X
Segal's selection as campaign frontman was a master-stroke.	X
The Stasi instructed Segal in the myth's details.	X
Ronald Dehmlow was a retired Humboldt University professor.	X
Lilli Segal's California relatives helped spread Jakob's ideas to the US.	+
Segal “submitted” a manuscript to Nicholas Bond specifically.	X
Nicholas Bond reported back to Segal directly.	X
Segal's first major contribution to the myth was in the summer of 1986.	+
HV A/X introduced Segal to MacArthur's 1969 Congressional testimony.	X
HV A/X provided Segal with material for the Harare handout.	X
“African journalists” or “African experts” managed the Harare handout.	+
The US Department of State has a copy of the Harare handout.	X
HV A officers Pfeiffer and Schötzki attended the Harare conference.	X
Stasi officers helped distribute the Harare handout.	X
Segal's theory was featured in the Harare communique.	X
Party leaders were delighted to find the myth in the Harare communique.	X
US diplomats visited the Segals' flat.	+
Visiting “US diplomats” were Stasi officers impersonating CIA agents.	X
One of the US diplomats who visited the Segals' flat was a CIA agent.	—
Lilli Segal gave a US diplomat a copy of her husband's report.	+
HV A/X enlisted Stefan Heym in the myth-propagation effort.	X
Heym's enlistment was a major coup for Segal and the HV A.	X
HV A/X selected <i>taz</i> to publish Heym's Segal interview.	X
Johannes Mario Simmel was tricked into spreading the myth in a novel.	X
Simmel's use of the myth was a “phenomenal result” for the Stasi.	X
“Action ‘AIDS’” was discussed with Party and Health Ministry officials.	X
The KGB ceded worldwide myth propagation to HV A/X.	—
HV A/X ordered production of a West German film advancing the myth.	X
HV A/X surreptitiously funded a West German film advancing the myth.	—
The Bulgarian security service, invited by HV A/X, promoted the myth.	—

came from a genetic laboratory in Fort Detrick was created and spread by the Russian or Soviet NKVD [the law-enforcement agency and state-security service replaced by the KGB in 1954; underlining in original].⁴²⁷

Lilli presumably was referring to, and trying to refute, the 17 March 1992 *Izvestia* article mentioned by Primakov.¹²

How could the Segals have made such denials? The *Patriot* article had preceded Jakob's own documentable interest by years, and it included myth features he later adopted. And the GDR's former disinformation chief, as cited above, told us "the KGB initiated the affair involving Segal."¹⁵⁸ How? The answer is easy. The first three main features of his theory owed nothing, in his view, to any Soviet source, covert or overt. The fourth and fifth main features, dealing with Fort Detrick's prisoners and New York's gay male community, had already become off-the-shelf plot elements whose composition required no more than a layman's educated guesswork.

Accordingly, then, Segal responded to *Panorama*, the television newsmagazine,¹⁷⁷ that "the claim the Stasi came up with that theory and had made use of me to spread it is completely ridiculous. They could have elaborated it only with thorough specialist knowledge, with which Stasi officers had hardly been equipped. I repeat again explicitly that the theory regarding the construction of HIV from a cancer-causing virus infecting sheep is my personal scientific achievement."⁴²⁸

Jakob continued to propagate the HIV-from-Fort-Detrick myth until he died, in 1995, although it had long since lost the status of falsifiable hypothesis and was now almost everywhere ridiculed as falsehood. Why he continued cannot be known satisfactorily. Lilli in 1987 explained in a chat with a lady, who turned out to be "Maria," an IM of the Stasi, that she, Lilli, and her husband would fight out their struggle with nonbelievers "for two reasons: 1. One day the USA has to be stopped, meaning worldwide. 2. If it does not become known that the AIDS virus is an artificial product [*ist ein Kunstprodukt*], it is then impossible to direct research in the right way to find an efficient vaccine."¹³³ In 1992, Jakob himself pondered "why no one believes his theory that the AIDS epidemic was made in the United States. 'If the United States were recognized as the producer of the AIDS virus, it would destroy the economy,' Segal said. 'Think of the compensation claims! This is why they will never admit it.'" And he continued: "Scientists who argue that the virus is a natural phenomenon are either blind or afraid of the United States."¹⁴⁴ According to another

source, "he and his wife, Lilli, seemed to have developed the idea [the myth] in the honest conviction that the disease's true origin would provide a clue to its elusive medical treatment."⁴³⁹ We can offer three additional hypotheses. Jakob Segal was an imaginative eccentric. He was a loyal servant of the communist cause. He was both.

Günter Bohnsack was seemingly the inventor of the disinformation-squared campaign, the effort to claim for the Stasi a role it did not play and successes it did not achieve. Perhaps he intended to glorify the bright ideas and activities of his former employer, Department X of the Main Directorate for Reconnaissance — HV A/X — and, by extension, himself. Perhaps he shared with Segal the art of imagination, especially as an officer of the Stasi department responsible for "active measures." Fantasy was required in his profession; quasi-facts and whole-cloth fictions were and are produced continually by secret services — East and West, North and South.³¹⁰ When, after the peaceful revolution, the "Fall of the Wall," the files of the Ministry of State Security became accessible, the Stasi could be seen less monolithically, more granularly. As soon became obvious to one of this paper's authors, E.G., personally, individual Stasi officers and their informers not only discovered extremely intimate details of the lives of the persons they watched but also recorded more-or-less funny stories of their own invention. Much of what they recorded was simply wrong, and much of what they *might* have recorded, such as at-home meetings with foreigners, completely escaped their notice.³⁰⁹

Suggested by Bohnsack's story is inventiveness of a different sort. What he and his comrades claimed, and Boghardt then credited, we could not substantiate in archives most likely to contain substantiating documents. Nor have Bulgarian archives endorsed Bohnsack's line. Although boasting of "our disinformation action," Bohnsack was going unnamed in reports of joint meetings of East German and Bulgarian officers taking an interest in the myth; Bohnsack went unnamed even in a joint meeting held in East Berlin. Whatever HV A/X did or hoped to do in league with Bulgarian comrades Bohnsack might not have known — or might have known but chose not to acknowledge.

The East German Security Service did not invent the HIV-from-Fort-Detrick myth, did not direct it, did not track it competently, and did not agree internally in

decisions related to it. Among files in BStU archives, no document issued by or received by HV A/X related to the myth. Still, at least one HV A/X officer was briefed about developments on the myth front; Lieutenant Colonel Müller was made aware of Stefan Heym's contacts with television and print journalists and with a virologist in West Germany. Among files in Bulgarian archives, however, documents do show HV A/X officers seeking and offering assistance in keeping the myth alive, even after Gorbachev had ordered Soviet efforts to cease.

Many myth-related documents filed by BStU were left by two other Main Directorate departments — HV A/SWT and HV A/IX/C⁸⁰ — but none preceded the appearance of the Harare handout. As for the handout itself, neither a draft nor an original nor a copy has been found among these documents. Two officers of HV A/SWT were involved in secret preparations for Segal's October meeting with representatives of the US Embassy,³⁰⁸ but Department X of the HV A was not involved. Neither Bohnsack nor Brehmer seems to have been included in these preparations or informed about the meeting prospectively or retrospectively. Colleagues knew who the Segals' visitors had been, and the US Embassy knew, too, but Bohnsack himself was left speculating — or, perhaps for some private reason, disinforming — that these visitors had really been Stasi officers pretending to be American diplomats.

We asked Bohnsack for documents — and, if written proofs were no longer available, for verbal details — related to the claimed activities of Department X. Which officers of HV A were involved in the AIDS disinformation campaign? When was the involvement of HV A/X in the campaign requested by the KGB and by which department of the KGB was it requested? Who was the *Vorgangsführer*, the Stasi officer responsible for the campaign? What was the code number of the campaign, the *Vorgangsbezeichnung*? What was the period of registration, the *Erfassungszeitraum*, of the campaign? Again, Bohnsack has not responded. Moreover, as stated 9 July 2013 in “*Die Aids-Verschwörung* [The AIDS Conspiracy],” a Central German Broadcasting television report highlighting our research, Bohnsack has now refused all future interviews.⁴²⁹

Many HV A documents, maybe most, were intentionally destroyed after the peaceful revolution in East Germany in 1990.⁴³⁰ BStU employees have been

piecing some together from scraps, but much remains lost. Documents related to any HIV campaign might have been included in the cull. HV A/X officers were unlikely to have laundered money for *Die Afrikaliegende* — assuming for a moment that they did so — or to have arranged meetings with Bulgarian security officers or to have probed along other myth-related lines without generating memoranda or annotating receipts. Still, with Major Dewitz of the Berlin department of the MfS trying, unsuccessfully, to suppress Segal's activities, HV A/X officers might have had cause to be discreet internally. In any event, many putatively missing HV A filings would have been filed *also* by HA II or other departments which either received messages from, or sent messages to, HV A/X. (Figure 23, Figure 24)

Among the HV A documents that survived destruction and were filed by BStU was a paper dealing with the external implications of AIDS from the view of the Federal Republic of Germany. Its recipients were few but included *Politbüro* members Hermann Axen and Kurt Hager. The myth was not mentioned at all. The authors did, though, recognize, *inter alia*, that “North-South relations are noticeably impaired, e.g., by the claim of Western scientists that the AIDS-virus presumably originated in Africa.”⁴³¹ HV A deserved no credit here other than credit for keeping up with external developments.

Regarding the Federal Republic, some documents filed by the MfS dealt with actions taken by a West German communist organization opposing policies implemented by the Bavarian Government 25 February 1987. These policies aimed to contain the spread of AIDS by forcing the examination of anyone suspected of carrying HIV.⁴³² A flyer calling people to participate in a 4 April 1987 Munich demonstration bore this motto: “The Government of Bavaria is worse than any epidemic.”⁴³³ One leaflet argued as follows: “Fact is: The [AIDS] epidemic is man-made, the virus put together by US genealogists [*sic!*] greedy for war, consisting of two parts that occur in nature but could never combine in nature except by unscrupulous gene manipulation.”⁴³⁴

In this connection it was noted that the Munich demonstration organizers “will make use in the argumentation of the idea advocated by Segal, that the AIDS virus was created as result of military-scientific research in the USA and that it was spread



Figure 23. Scraps of MfS documents stored in some 5,500 sacks and cartons. Source: BStU / Kulick. Reproduced with permission.

from there.” To support these measures, Thomas Schmitz-Bender, an official of the DKP, the German Communist Party, contacted Segal and requested documents and information on his theory.⁴³² Bender, through a citizen of East Berlin, was to contact “a Geissler.” The MfS assumed Geissler would be “presumably Geissler, Wolfgang, Prof. Dr. med. habil.”⁴³⁵ But E.G.’s former colleague Wolfgang G., who died in 2009, was Professor of Cardiology and, according to a longstanding coworker, he had no substantive professional contact with Segal or with others in Segal’s field.⁴³⁶

The file where these documents were collected also contained a copy of Stefan Heym’s interview with Segal. Clearly, the MfS was interested in AIDS, interested in public response to AIDS, and interested very much in whether GDR citizens might have been involved unofficially in AIDS activities. And, just as

clearly, HV A/X was interested in spreading the myth, although activity resulting from that interest was minimal or has gone missing.

Inside the United States, the myth would never leave the conspiracy-theorist fringe, where volunteer myth mongers — William Campbell Douglass II, MD,⁴³⁷ Leonard Horowitz, Louis Farrakhan,¹⁶⁶ and others — would monger on for years, sustaining a resilient tertiary literature, largely now electronic. By June 1990, in a New York City telephone survey, 10 percent of African Americans would affirm the charge that the AIDS virus had been “deliberately created in a laboratory in order to infect black people,” and an additional 19 percent would say this charge “might possibly be true.” Percentages for white respondents were 1 percent and 4 percent respectively.⁴³⁸ First an outrage but then a curiosity, the myth came to be

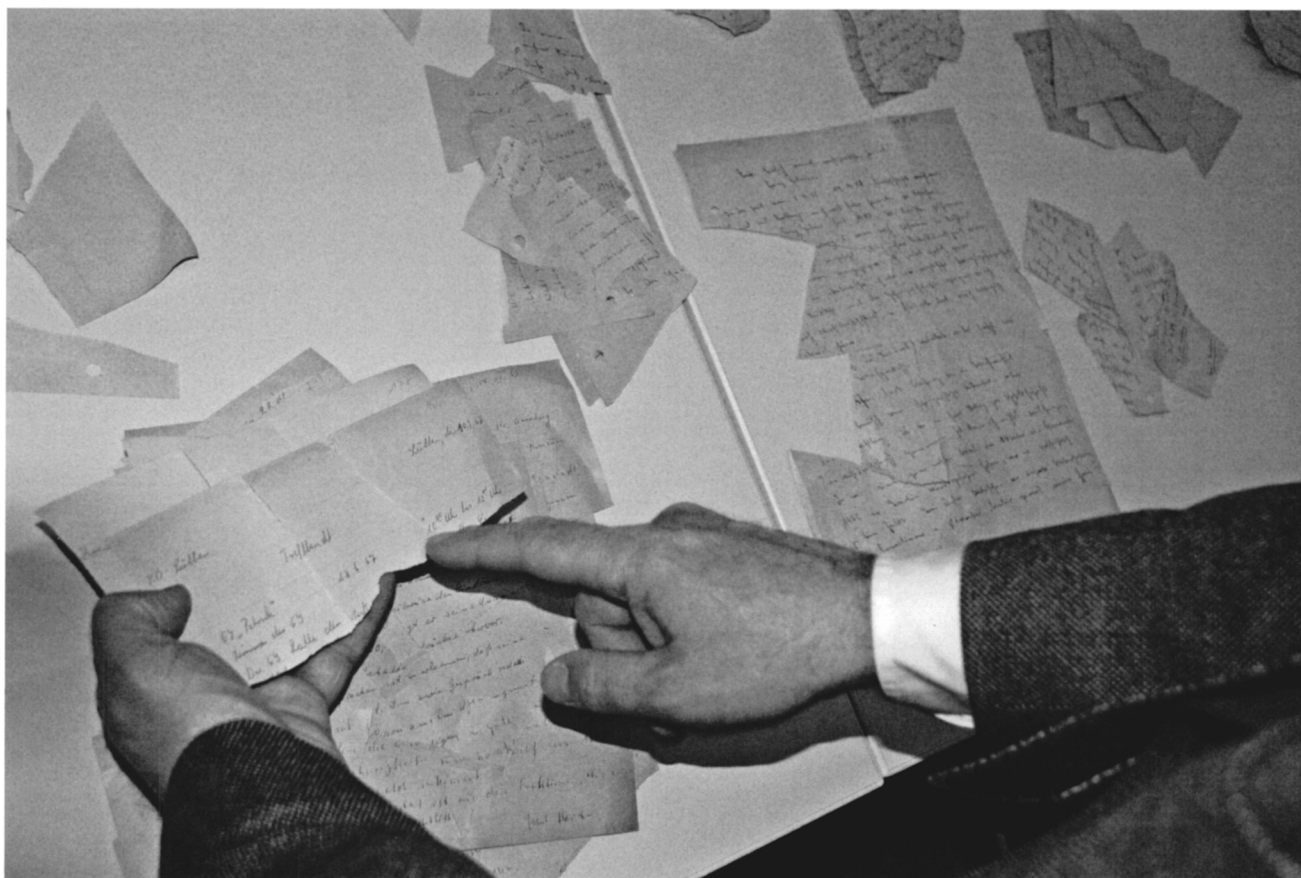


Figure 24. BStU employee piecing together scrapped documents. Source: BStU/Kulick. Reproduced with permission.

studied most seriously by State Department propaganda specialists, the readership least likely to believe it.⁴³⁹

Outside the United States, the myth continued to attract a range of players, not all obscure. In April 2001, speaking in Abuja, Nigeria, Moammar Kadhafi, late Libyan dictator, used the myth to attack his traditional enemies and excuse a few of his failures, such as those in public health.⁴⁴⁰ Also in April 2001, Sam Nujoma, former leader of the South-West Africa People's Organization (SWAPO) and from 1990 president of Namibia, claimed HIV was developed during the Viet Nam War as part of an American bioweapons program. This allegation was repeated one year later by a representative of SWAPO and also by Nujoma's deputy minister for environmental affairs. In 2004, Wangari Maathai — a biologist and Kenya's own deputy minister for environmental affairs and the first African woman to win the Nobel Peace Prize —

said HIV had been engineered by scientists of industrialized nations expressly to eliminate black people.²³¹

In one desperate country after another, leaders have misled. They have misled for a mix of reasons, surely, but the myth has often boosted rhetorical assault. Thabo Mbeki headed a South African government that from 2000 until 2006 rejected scientific explanations and opposed evidence-based interventions, including antiretroviral therapies, wasting many lives by so doing.⁴⁴¹ Mbeki spoke most genuinely from an anti-post-colonialist and pro-nativist platform, and he was encouraged by the specious claims of renegade American virologist Peter Duesberg, but Mbeki did also show the myth's signature by asserting that the CIA had misinformed Africans about the origins of AIDS.^{159,442,443} Regrets notwithstanding, the myth does what myths do. It lives.^{444,445} And still in those

Disinformation squared

parts of the AIDS-afflicted world where denial drives out reality, it kills.

What about those in the rich world who should have known better than to play upon the myth? Admissions and boasts have outnumbered apologies. As late as 2001 Dan Rather had not apologized.¹⁶⁶ The *taz*, uniquely, *has* apologized, but it did so only in 2010 — and in doing so replaced the HIV-from-Fort-Detrick myth with the Stasi-success myth, thus still conveying disinformation about disinformation: disinformation squared.⁴⁴⁶ The *taz* apology was reported in the *Berliner Zeitung*,⁴⁴⁷ which itself had published disinformation about disinformation and has not yet apologized.

Compared to the HIV-from-Fort-Detrick myth, the Stasi-success myth may seem innocuous. And it might have been socially useful, smoothing Germany's truth-and-reconciliation path by implicitly absolving old informants of their sins. But to traumatized police-state survivors, Stasi success had been no myth. When former Stasi officers began illuminating the accomplishments of their foreshortened careers, millions of people — including veteran scholars, experienced journalists, and security professionals — thought at last they were seeing in true colors what up until then

had been grayed out. Yet in the AIDS case accomplishments had been painted vividly onto a barely sketched wall.

The Stasi might have controlled their countrymen less through acting than simply through listening, following, collecting, knowing. Reifying a malicious eavesdropping version of the data-heavy but hypothesis-light government Francis Bacon had imagined in *New Atlantis*, they buried themselves in mostly useless information whose gathering and filing must have numbed every mind it employed.^{448,449} “Active measures” was not a ministry motto, not an institutional identity; it was among the several functions of the tenth department in a particular directorate overseeing divisions and subdivisions arrayed in lettered and numbered ranks. The Stasi had trouble simply *following* the myth; we have trouble believing they ever led it.

Disputing a more respectful assessment, an “overt [American] spy who confronted Stasi agents on a daily basis for two years” during the Berlin crisis of the early 1960s recently summarized his own era's Stasi as “completely inefficient, ... continually unsuccessful[,] ... ineffective and wasteful[.]”⁴⁵⁰ Estimations differ, of course, and organizations do change, but the AIDS-era

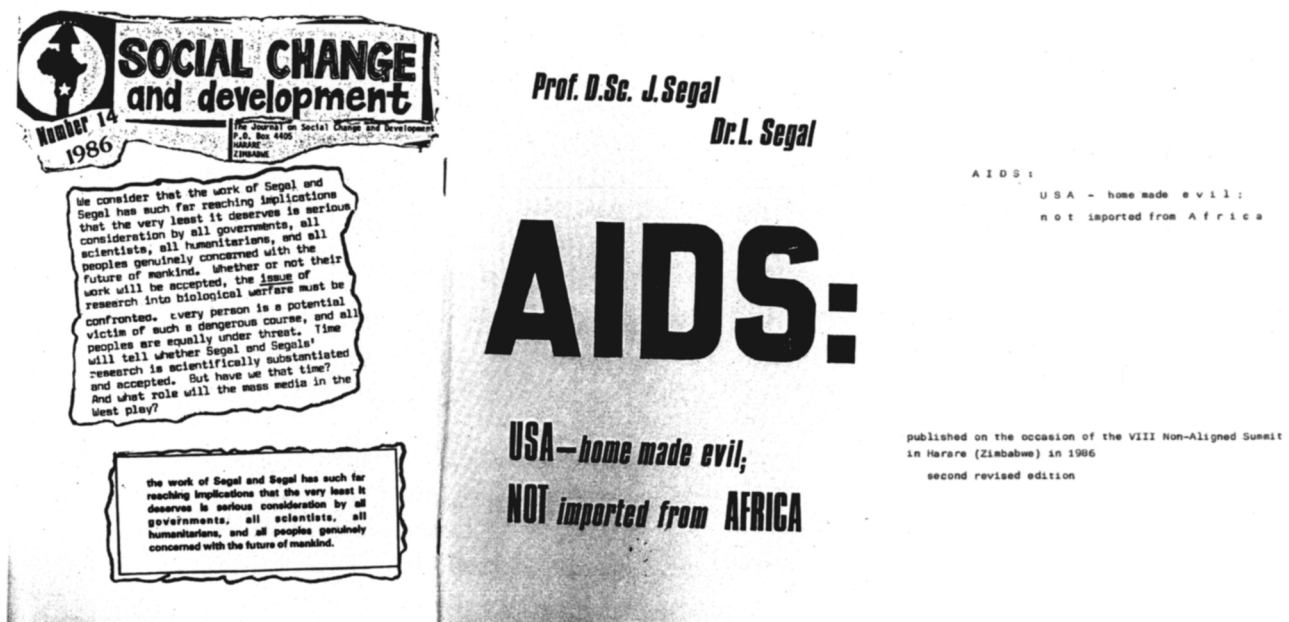


Figure 25. Back and front covers and the internal title page of the “brochure” prepared for the Harare Conference.

Stasi we have come to know through their own archives and through other primary sources we would be tempted to describe in similar terms.

Was the HIV-from-Fort-Detrick myth a Stasi success? No. The Stasi's myth "success" was the false product of disinformation squared.

Addendum

Just before our paper went to press, Douglas Selvage, PhD, an American historian and *Projektleiter* [project manager] at BStU, kindly sent us a copy of a document he had purchased over the Internet from a used-book store in the United States. It was "AIDS: USA-home made evil; NOT imported from AFRICA" by Jakob and Lilli Segal.⁴⁵¹ This appeared to be what we have been calling the Harare handout, the "brochure, very correctly made ... by African journalists" who "distributed it last summer in Harare at the meeting of non-aligned nations" as mentioned by Segal in his letter to Shibata on 2 March 1987.²³³

Counting front and back covers, the "brochure" was 70 pages long. The front matter included these lines:

published on the occasion of the
VIII Non-Aligned Summit
in Harare (Zimbabwe) in 1986
second revised edition

After the front matter came two distinct parts, the first of just 3 pages, the second of 53.

The first part we did not recognize. It was titled "AIDS and Africa" and summarized "the annexed study" in six main points.

The second part, the annexed study itself, we recognized immediately. In most respects it duplicated "AIDS - its nature and origin," the Segal-Segal-Dehmlow undated draft paper, a copy of which we had received from the US Department of State (USDOS). Small differences were obvious, however. The annexed study showed none of the draft paper's marginalia. It listed its authors as "Prof. Dr. Jakob Segal, Dr. Lilli Segal," with a dangling comma after Lilli's name and "Dr. Ronald Dehmlow" missing from the third author's spot. It split "Fig. 2" between two pages, one for the caption and one for the image, explaining an overall length discrepancy: 53 pages rather than 52 for the USDOS version. Finally, the annexed study's endnotes preceded its addendum, rather than the other way around. This annexed study and the USDOS document shared a common ancestor; both had been made on a copier machine, but neither was a copy

of the other. The dangling comma suggests that the common ancestor had been a three-author version. "Dr. Ronald Dehmlow" must have been whited-out prior to copying.

When was this "brochure" produced? Its back cover displayed three scraps of paper casually arranged, top to bottom. The highest scrap showed the masthead of *The Journal on Social Change and Development*, Number 14, 1986, P.O. Box 4405, Harare, Zimbabwe. The next two scraps showed words and typography matching the last two paragraphs of the journal's review of the annexed study.²⁷⁴ One scrap had been pieced together from separate clippings of text spanning two columns. Clearly, this "brochure" was created *after* the journal had printed its review (Figure 25).

Could this "brochure" have been produced in time for distribution at the Harare conference, 26 August to 6 September 1986? We have found no date for Number 14's printing other than "1986." But we do know Segal had sent material to Dr. Eballa in Yaoundé, Cameroon, as early as 17 June 1986.²⁴⁷ If that material was "AIDS - its nature and origin," the work the Segals were disseminating in one form or another, one language or another, in 1986, then the African journalists would have had until late August to examine it, to review it, to prefix an "AIDS and Africa" section to it, and to copy the whole for distribution.

Note

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