



Kidnap City: Cold War Berlin (Contributions to the Study of World History)

Arthur L. Smith

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After more than 50 years, some of the secrets behind the post-war kidnappings in Berlin remain classified. Following Second World War, West Berlin residents found themselves as prime targets for kidnapping by communist agents. Lurid press accounts of these abductions left Berliners frightened and intimidated. The central connection of American intelligence agencies (CIC, CIA) to most of these cases, however, was not well known at the time. Delving into these various kidnapping cases, Smith discovers a distinct profile for the abductees. Almost all were former residents of East Germany and, as such, had an intelligence value for the Americans. This connection in turn made them prime targets for Soviet and East German intelligence units.

Examination of the climate of fear in West Berlin reveals the complexity of politics in the early Cold War. Many targeted individuals had Nazi pasts—a factor that the Americans took great pains to conceal. At one point, the United States even risked a diplomatic rupture with West Germany when American authorities went so far as to block prosecutions of a German citizen in German courts for aiding in the kidnapping of a number of West Berliners. Exactly why Washington was so willing to go to extreme lengths in this case remains unknown, but Smith's research sheds new light on the clash between East and West in one troubled city.

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