

# BRIXMIS (British Commanders'-In-Chief Mission to the Soviet Forces in Germany)



BRIXMIS was a military liaison which operated behind the Iron Curtain in East Germany during the cold war. The area covered was as illustrated.



The British Commanders'-in-Chief Mission (BRIXMIS) to the Soviet Forces in Germany (GSFG) was formed on 16 September 1946 under the Robertson-Malinin Agreement between the chiefs of staff of the British and Soviet forces in occupied (east) Germany. The agreement called for the reciprocal exchange of liaison missions in order to foster good working relations between the military occupation authorities in the two zones.

Similar agreements were made the following year by the Soviets with the French (FMLM) and the Americans (USMLM). For unexplained reasons the agreements differed significantly as BRIXMIS was allowed to have almost as many liaison staff in the Soviet Zone as the other two missions combined. The agreements remained in force until 2 October 1990 when all three missions were deactivated on the eve of Germany's reunification.

For the first 2-3 years BRIXMIS was part of the Control Commission Germany (CCG) and the military personnel were paid by the FCO and were registered with CCG.

The original BRIXMIS charter in 1946 included the following tasks:

- Repatriation of POWs, displaced persons and deserters.
- The search for war criminals and their extradition.
- Graves registration.
- Settling of border disputes.
- Anti black market operations.
- Passage of information between the Soviet and British Commanders-in-Chief.

The first BRIXMIS Tour was on 5 October 1946 when it crossed the Glienicker Bridge to take over the Mission House in Potsdam. Lunch was cooked for the crew by a Soviet Field Kitchen team and the next four days were spent in trying to obtain the services of plumbers, carpenters and electricians.

Potsdam was chosen as the location for the Mission House because it was the Rear HQ of GSFG, which after some years moved to Zossen Wunsdorf, just south of Berlin, the former HQ of the German Wehrmacht and German Army High Command. The liaison staff consisted of 31 members – 11 officers and 20 others in each mission. They were issued with passes allowing freedom of travel and circulation. Those involved had to wear uniform and clearly identifiable vehicles. So far, so good, but BRIXMIS along with the other missions were busy gathering military intelligence through reconnaissance and surveillance. While the Wireless Operators and Linguists were busy 24/7 gathering signals interception BRIXMIS could identify military targets and new military hardware.

#### BRIXMIS military mission in Potsdam



It was well known that the mission was “bugged” and this was confirmed when the staff complained about lack of maintenance issues i.e. light bulbs blown no hot water. Next morning a crew turned up and lo and behold bulbs were replaced and so was the immersion heater.

The East German secret police (Stasi) paid the housekeeping staff to spy on the BRIXMIS men who lived there. BRIXMIS mission house in Potsdam. BRIXMIS mission house in Potsdam. The Stasi also positioned a long-range microphone on the far side of the lake to try and pick up the conversations in the gardens.

#### How did BRIXMIS differ from FMLM and USMLM?

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Perhaps it is because we got on very well with the Soviets and many examples are given in an excellent book BRIXMIS by Tony Geraghty.

## **Lifting of the lid of the Soviet tank T- 64**

Two brief examples of the work of BRIXMIS

On May Day 1981 the Warsaw Pact threatened NATO Europe with 45000 main battle tanks, a numerical advantage of two to one.

Captain Hugh McLeod of the Argyll & Southern Highlanders and his tour NCO Sergeant Tony Haw QGM were interested in just one of those vehicles. It was a shiny sample of the new T-64 armed with a 125 mm smoothbore gun and, as the Soviet Army caroused away a public holiday, the tank was safely under lock and key. Or so they thought.

McLeod, Haw and their driver Corporal Anderson drove deep into a tank gunnery range, broke into a locked hanger, found the tank, opened the turret lid with a forged key and pillaged the secrets within before making a successful getaway. Four years later an American Mission major tried the same thing on a T-80 tank and was shot dead.

Another arduous duty that the Mission had to perform was Rubbish Duties which consisted of rummaging through the rubbish for information. As the Soviet army didn't issue the troops with toilet paper they used anything that was handy, used signal pads, classified orders etc. Horrible job as you can imagine but an essential one.