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The GDR's Westpolitik and everyday anticommunism in West Germany

CASE STUDY

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The GDR's *Westpolitik* and everyday anticommunism in West Germany

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Abstract

West German anticommunism and the SED's Westarbeit were to some extent interrelated. From the beginning, each German state had attemted to stabilise its own social system while trying to discredit its political opponent. The claim to sole representation and the refusal to acknowledge each other delineated governmental action on both sides. Anticommunism in West Germany re-developed under the conditions of the Cold War, which allowed it to become virtually the reason of state and to serve as a tool for the exclusion of KPD supporters. In its turn, the SED branded the West German State as 'revanchist' and instrumentalised its anticommunism to persecute and eliminate opponents within the GDR. Both phenomena had an integrative and exclusionary element.

When talking about anticommunism in West Germany, we should not neglect to mention the GDR's so-called *Westpolitik* (policy towards the West) directed against the Federal Republic. The SED leadership could count on a number of different allies for its activities in the West. These were first and foremost the KPD (Communist Party of Germany), under the direct control of the SED, which was eventually banned by the Federal Constitutional Court (*Bundesverfassungsgericht*) in 1956. Although East Berlin spared no expense for its attempts to influence the development of West German domestic policy, overall results were meagre. The hoped-for crisis of Rhenish capitalism and the Federal Republic's constitutional order refused to materialise. Political decision-makers in the West meanwhile used East German infiltration attempts to stimulate their own side's latent anticommunism, so that they could stigmatise and clamp down on communists, neutralists and other representatives of a political 'Third Way'. Both the GDR's *Westpolitik* and West German anticommunism had shared aims in the context of the East-West conflict: marginalisation of political opponents and stabilisation of their respective systems.

In the 1950s and early 1960s, the Cold War was as much a contest over public opinion on both sides of the Iron Curtain. 1949 saw the founding of two German states, both of whom claimed to speak for Germany as a whole. This claim to sole representation (*Alleinvertretungsanspruch*) was closely linked to the 'magnet theory' which was propagated not only by the West, but also by the East German government. As early as 1946/47, top politicians on both sides – including Kurt Schumacher (SPD), Konrad Adenauer (CDU) and Otto Grotewohl (SED) – were convinced of the superiority of their own respective economic and political systems. With at times missionary

zeal they attempted to win the sympathies of each other's populations. By the time the Berlin Wall was built in 1961, the number of people proverbially voting with their feet had clearly demonstrated the East German government's failure to have a magnetic effect even on its own public. But even so, the GDR's policies towards Germany (*Deutschlandpolitik*) and the west (*Westpolitik*) should not be dismissed merely as propaganda.

GDR *Westpolitik*: protagonists, instruments and political scope

The GDR's *Westpolitik* was based on its image of 'Bonn's revanchism and militarism'. In consequence, the East German state distanced itself from the Federal Republic but attempted to influence West German domestic developments. The SED developed its own political apparatus, which expanded over time. Due to of its ineffectiveness and lack of results, this so-called *Westapparat* was continually being restructured. The leading actors were, initially, the SED departments responsible; they also included the bloc parties (*Blockparteien*), mass organisations and individual ministries (in particular the Ministry for State Security). Until the early 1960s, the chief targets of East Berlin's activities were the SPD and the DGB (the German Federation of Trade Unions), also the Union parties CDU/CSU. Within the SED, *Westarbeit* was for a long time the domain of former communists. Not until the late 1960s did the process of staff consolidation within each particular department in the party and state apparatus begin. The instruments of *Westpolitik* included, amongst others, financial support for allies in West Germany; the distribution of leaflets and other propaganda materials, and establishing contact with individuals which East Berlin believed could be instrumentalised for its political ends. In the following section I will present some examples of GDR *Westpolitik* as well as the direct reactions they provoked from West German politicians and, in some cases, the Western Allies. They are: trips to the west by SED politicians; the People's Congress Movement (*Volkskongressbewegung*), and the Grotewohl letter of 1951.

The first journeys of politicians from the Soviet-occupied zone to the west in the autumn of 1945 were wholly dominated by the SED's campaign to merge the two workers' parties, which met with a certain amount of sympathy among West German workers (Süß, 2003: p. 64). Before long, however, the rivalry between the Social Democrat leaders in East and West, Otto Grotewohl and Kurt Schumacher, became plain. On 17 November 1945, Grotewohl, Chairman of the SPD's Central Committee, left for a ten-day trip to the American zone. Schumacher observed his progress with suspicion. Both politicians had staked their claims at a recent conference in Wennigsen near Hannover, and the undisputed leader of the Western SPD had made sure that both sides kept to the agreement. Grotewohl visited Frankfurt/Main, Stuttgart, Munich and Regensburg. He was received with great warmth in some places, but in political terms the trip was not a great success. In his report on the journey, Gustav Dahrendorf (SPD) wrote of attempts at intervention by Schumacher, and indirectly blamed him for the lack of success.[1]

After the forced merging in April 1946, a noticeable change to both the content and the intention of those journeys occurred. Now that the unity of the working class had apparently been achieved in the Soviet zone, the SED believed that the main objective was to urge the Western zones more openly to follow suit. Initially the situation looked fairly promising, with West German SPD politicians indicating that they were willing to

continue the dialogue; 'in the interests,' as Wilhelm Knothe, chair of the district of Great Hesse, explained, 'of the party as a whole' (Archiv der sozialen Demokratie (AdsD), Bestand Kurt Schumacher).[2] While the number of those who still believed in an all-German SPD decreasing rapidly, the SED leadership believed it could use to its advantage what expectations remained; so it continued to advocate a merging of SPD and KPD in the West.

Three months after the forced merging the two SED chairmen travelled to the Western-occupied zones. They had planned public appearances in the British zone, where they would convince the West German population of the necessity of a merger of the two workers' parties. The British authorities said they would issue entry permits only on condition that the rallies in Essen, Cologne, Düsseldorf and Braunschweig were held under the banner of the KPD, which would have significantly reduced their propaganda effect (Spilker, 2006: p. 77). Grotewohl defended the merger with the KPD in all four West German cities; he accused Schumacher of having stood in the way of the creation of an all-German SPD, and as such of having jeopardised the unity of the country as a whole.[3] The persistent campaigning had not gone unnoticed by the West German SPD, which responded by printing leaflets with pointed questions for the SED leadership, and by organising a counter-rally in Braunschweig which included an appearance of the Social Democrat Minister-President Alfred Kubel. Opposition from the British occupiers halted further plans for the time being. But official bans could be circumvented. At their visit to the former Hermann-Göring plant in Salzgitter, Pieck and Grotewohl had invited members of its works council to a return visit in the Soviet zone. Richard Stahlmann, one of a number of people engaged in setting up the KPD in the West (he would subsequently be active in the development of the GDR's foreign intelligence service) finally helped to smuggle the West German delegation over the border illegally, and organised a meeting with Pieck in Unity House (*Haus der Einheit*) in East Berlin.[4]

While the delegates at the Moscow conference of foreign ministers discussed not only the question of reparations but also the possibility of a peace treaty with Germany (Kessel, 1989: p. 249), Grotewohl and Pieck again headed west in mid-March 1947: this time to the American zone. At their public appearances, which included an event in Stuttgart where they spoke in the Althoff and Schulte circus buildings before a 7000-strong audience, the two leading politicians again underlined the necessity for a merging of the two workers' parties in the three western zones. Leaders of the SPD observed the propaganda offensive with misgivings and tried to prevent official meetings between SED and SPD politicians. At the SPD party executive HQ, the mayor of Frankfurt, Walter Kolb, who had asked the two SED co-chairs to his city's historic city hall (known as the *Römer*), was subjected to a tirade by his party colleague Erich Ollenhauer (Albrecht, 2000: p. 175). It seemed that East Berlin had at least partially succeeded in softening the otherwise uncompromising stance that Schumacher pushed his western colleagues to assume in the face of East German overtures. While there were no tangible results, the SED leadership did its best to milk the trip of two of its leading members to the American zone for its propaganda value, and duly organised an international press conference on 18 March. Journalists, however were not only interested to hear about the project to set up a West German SED, but also enquired whether the ban on the SPD in the Soviet zone might be lifted.[5]

It was to be the last visit of a high-profile SED delegation to the western zones. From now on, administrators for the British and American zones would refuse entry permits. The SED had not even tried its luck with the French. Although Grotewohl had received his official invitation on time, he was unable to journey to Dortmund in April 1947 as planned. If they wanted to reach their west German audiences and promote their policies for Germany, Grotewohl and Pieck now had to turn to the airwaves.[6] At this point the probable collapse of the Moscow conference was becoming apparent, so that the broadcasts can be seen as part of the subsequent propaganda battle that tried to blame the West for the diplomatic failure. The three western powers upheld entry bans for SED delegations to their respective zones,[7] making it impossible for SED leaders to cross the zonal boundaries. They were now unable to exert any direct influence through speeches at public rallies.

Undoubtedly the most prestigious destination of the official trips to the west was the Munich conference of Minister-Presidents in early June 1947. It was attended not by an SED delegation, but by the five Minister-Presidents from the Soviet zone, four of whom were however party members (Hoffmann, 2008: pp. 336–339). It had been intended that the conference, which was hosted by the Bavarian Minister-President Hans Ehard (CSU), would suggest ways of solving Germany's desolate economic and appalling food situation to the occupying powers. It was hoped that a joint all-German initiative might also revive the stalled talks between the four Allies. Not long after the conference was announced it became obvious that East and West had very different expectations of the event. Delegates found it utterly impossible to agree an agenda: while the West German Minister-Presidents only wanted to talk about the serious food situation, their East German counterparts demanded that Germany's political future also be discussed. With only 48 h to go, it was still unclear whether the East German leaders would even attend the conference. When they did appear, they repeated their demand, which had been agreed with the SMAD (Soviet Military Authority) and the SED leadership. At a stormy pre-conference meeting of the Minister-Presidents on 5 June, the West German delegates insisted upon their own agenda and rejected the requests of their Eastern counterparts, who packed their bags and left.

Disputes about who was at fault started before the conference had even ended. The West German media put the blame squarely on the East German Minister-Presidents and the SED. According to the Hamburg-based news magazine *Der Spiegel*, which cited a press conference in East Berlin as its source, the SED Minister-Presidents had arrived with a draft of the 'rejection communiqué' already in their pockets.[8] The weekly broadsheet *Die Zeit* wrote that the Minister-Presidents had appeared as 'a collective unit' that 'embraced the remote-controlled agenda advocated at the Moscow conference by the Soviet Union, and in Germany by the SED.'[9] The state-controlled press in the Soviet-occupied zone put a rather different spin on things. Grotewohl had given the official line in a radio broadcast: he blamed the 'failure' on the West.[10] The editor-in-chief of *Neues Deutschland*, Lex Ende, penned an editorial in which he criticised the SPD Minister-Presidents who, he wrote, had experienced 'enlightenment by the holy spirit of Dr Schumacher' in Munich.[11] The hope that an East-West summit might bridge the chasm between the Allies had not come true. Instead of finding a fresh political perspective for Germany, the Munich conference now stood as a stark symbol of the country's division.

As a means of escaping from the political dead end, the SED leadership decided in late 1947 to hold a 'German People's Congress for Unity and a just Peace' (*Deutscher Volkskongress für Einheit und gerechten Frieden*) in East Berlin. This was for three main reasons: firstly, to strengthen the Soviet position at the conference of foreign ministers in London; secondly, to further limit the influence of the two non-socialist parties in the Soviet zone; and thirdly in reaction to the negative stance adopted by Schumacher's West German social democrats. The SED had to admit that its advances so far had not been successes. It had failed to win over even part of the SPD for a co-operation in any shape or form. In early 1948, the SED leadership formally protested against the entry bans imposed by the western zones, but by then the fate of the SED-KPD joint venture was sealed. The end of talks in the Allied Control Council about an all-German law on political parties also meant the end of what could have been an all-German unifying force across internal borders. The SED could no longer use political parties as possible points of contact for its political initiatives. Members of the SED leadership continued to be banned from travelling to the western zones, so that East Berlin had to find new ways to reach the West German public.

Together with the People's Congress Movement (*Volkskongressbewegung*) the SED leadership brought a new propaganda tool into play: the plebiscite. The direction had come from Moscow (Hoffmann, 2009: p. 295). In late September 1947 the Soviet Foreign Secretary Molotov had suggested a referendum as a mean of torpedoing western plans for federalism. But the moment was not auspicious. At the Conference of foreign ministers in London from 25 November to 15 December 1947, the negotiating stances of the three western powers on the one hand and the Soviet Union on the other were thrown into sharp relief. Opinions clashed over plans to introduce national governments and over Moscow's demands for reparations. The SED leadership began to resign itself to its fate. After all, it had not even been possible to send a German delegation to London. While France continued to refuse to contemplate an extension of the Bizone, February 1948 saw the start of six-power talks in the British capital – the Six being the three western Allies plus the Benelux states. The most important results were Germany's inclusion in the Marshall Plan, the establishment of a supervisory authority for the Ruhr area, and the recommendation that a western German state be formed.

The People's Congress Movement was unable to prevent the foundation of a western German state. The propaganda machinery continued unabated despite this obvious failure, intending to show to all of Germany that the blame lay, again, with the west. The staged referendum in east and west would not only demonstrate that a united Germany was wanted by all Germans with equal fervour; it would also indicate that the population of the western zones did not approve of the proposed western state. The Second German People's Congress initiated a petition for a referendum on German unity, which collected 13 million signatures in the period between 23 May and 13 June 1948, one million of which came from the British-occupied zone (Amos, 1999: p. 16). The American and the French Zones had not permitted the petition, so the People's Congress Movement could hold public events only in Lower Saxony and Schleswig-Holstein in early March 1948. But the scheme was doomed to failure on purely formal grounds, since at that time there existed no joint Allied authority which might have arranged for such a referendum in Germany. The departure of the Soviet representative on 20 March meant the de facto end of the Allied Control Council. But the SED would not give up on its

petition over German unity. It set up a Work Group West (*Arbeitsgemeinschaft West*) as part of the German People's Council (*Deutscher Volksrat*), whose job it would be to liaise between East Berlin and its delegates and sympathisers in the western zones (Ibid., p. 17). The three western Allies' prohibition policy, however, made it impossible for the SED to organise spectacular activities with potential mass impact. In the meantime the party's priorities slowly shifted. The fourth German People's Congress on 3 August 1948 was – as previously – followed by a big press campaign which aimed to popularise East Berlin's constitutional guidelines, but this was overshadowed by the government-controlled discussion about the two-year-plan. Attention now increasingly focused on how to create the infrastructure necessary for establishing a planned economy within the Soviet-occupied zone.

The SED went looking for West German allies not only among Social Democrats and trades unions, but also among more establishment parties. East Berlin sought to woo even national-conservative critics of Konrad Adenauer. After the People's Congress Movement had largely failed to impact the writing of a new constitution in Bonn in the autumn of 1948, a new way of influencing developments in the four occupation zones had to be found. Against the background of the founding of the GDR and in close consultation with Moscow, the so-called *Nationale Front* was formed in order to win support from all possible political forces and groups in West Germany. In this situation, of course, Stalin was able to fall back on his own pre-war politics. But political leaders realised already by late 1949 that the success of their rallying movement in the Federal Republic very much depended on developments within the GDR. The SED's room for manoeuvre in terms of its German policies were increasingly determined by domestic developments and the success of East Germany's ambitious economic plans.

East Berlin spared no expense to make its magnet theory come true and to paper over the cracks of its less-than-democratic reality. This might explain the extravagance in terms of both manpower and material for the party leadership's propaganda battles with the west. Since the young western state was struggling, in the words of Hans Günter Hockerts, with a 'founding crisis', this approach appeared promising. Between May and July 1950, each month saw an average of some 400,000 brochures, leaflets and newspapers or magazines leave East for West Germany, sent mostly individually (Ibid., p. 60). By August the volume had doubled, and in both September and October 1950 it reached one million. On 1 February 1951 Herbert Wehner, speaking before the Intra-German Committee (*Gesamtdeutscher Ausschuss*) of the West German parliament (*Deutscher Bundestag*), called it a 'paper offensive' and lamented the inactivity of a 'listless western press' (Biefang, 1998: p. 124). In fact, the west had by this time prepared for the paper offensive from the east (Stöver, 2002: pp. 444–466).

Until at least the early 1950s, the SED's stated aim of a united Germany was more than just lip service. East Berlin attempted to influence Allied talks about the future of Germany through large-scale campaigns. The SED leadership also wanted to prevent the by then already foreseeable Western integration of the Federal Republic. All-German domestic political offers appeared the best way to do this. Six weeks after the elections to the People's Parliament (*Volkskammer*), the SED launched a fresh attempt. The so-called Grotewohl Letter (For a more detailed discussion see Hoffmann, 2009: pp. 567–586), which the East German Minister-President sent to Chancellor Adenauer on 30 November 1950, proposed the formation of an all-German Constituent Council

with equal representation of both German states, which would prepare the establishment of an all-German government. The scheme echoed a proposal made at the Prague Conference of the USSR and its eastern European allies on 20 and 21 October, which had in turn been a reaction to the New York conference of the foreign ministers of the three Western powers in September. The Grotewohl Letter fits seamlessly with the rest of Soviet general strategy (Lemke, 2001: p. 134). In the open letter, which had been initiated by the Soviets and drafted by Ulbricht, Grotewohl made skilful use of a widespread yearning for peace and reunification and presented himself as the advocate of an ostensibly large majority of the German population.

Although this foray was again unsuccessful, the GDR managed to stir up a good deal of anxiety in government circles in Bonn. Writing in the news magazine *Der Spiegel*, Rudolf Augstein called on both government and opposition to take Grotewohl's apparently extended hand, and to accept his offer (Gallus, 2001: p. 118). There was wild speculation among members of the cabinet about what the SED's real motives might be. Vice Chancellor Franz Blücher (FDP) thought it was a put-up affair between East Berlin and Schumacher. Jakob Kaiser (CDU), the Federal Minister for all-German Affairs, regarded the open letter as a piece of Soviet propaganda (Dokumente zur Deutschlandpolitik (DzD), 1997: pp. 1141 f.). Adenauer, who worried about a return of Four-Power talks which would delay the founding of a western defence alliance and the Federal Republic's participation in it, wanted first to talk to the leader of the SPD opposition. He also managed to convince his cabinet to seek speedy clarification from the High Commissioners. Since Adenauer had exclusive access to the representatives of the three western powers – who resided on Petersberg near Bonn – he was able to steer the talks in accordance with his own ideas and without having to give too much consideration to the sensitivities of other members of his government. His strategy worked, and he succeeded in forging an agreement with the Western Allies.

Adenauer also had the backing of the outspoken leader of the SPD opposition. Schumacher declared, 'If you want to see things how they really are, you have to say, There is no Grotewohl Letter, there is only a Russian foreign policy campaign by correspondence. The signatory might as well have been one Herr Meier or Herr Müller or Herr Schulze, but a Russian name would have been better and more honest.'[12] Schumacher brusquely rejected the East German Minister-President's suggestion and said he believed the Grotewohl Letter did not aim to further German so much as Soviet interests: 'It asks Germans to become political Russians.' The SPD parliamentary party backed its chairman and even ruled out giving a statement on the matter, since it was keen to avoid official recognition of the SED regime (Bracher, 1993: p. 225). At this time the policy towards Germany (*Deutschlandpolitik*) of the conservative Union parties and the SPD did not yet significantly differ. The Federal Chancellor gave his reply to the SED leadership at a press conference on 15 January 1951. Without mentioning details, he called for free elections in the GDR, political liberties for the East German population and the disbanding of the People's Police in barracks (*Kasernierte Volkspolizei*). Adenauer made clear that he was unimpressed by the offer from East Berlin.

The Politburo, which had adopted further measures to 'popularise' the Grotewohl Letter in early December 1950, was pleased to note the stirrings it had caused in Bonn. The SED leadership appeared to believe that members of the West German government would contact government circles in East Berlin in order to initiate secret

consultations.[13] Grotewohl did his best to increase the pressure on Adenauer by penning articles in *Neues Deutschland* that were critical of the formal reason given by the Bonn government, namely that the Federal Republic of Germany did not have a foreign ministry and was thus unable to enter into direct talks with the German Democratic Republic. He also reined back his Foreign Secretary, Georg Dertinger, who in an interview with a Dutch journalist had indicated a measure of understanding for the West German position (Lemke, 2001: pp. 136 f.). Grotewohl told all members of his government to refrain from publicly commenting on the question. This 'gagging order' was to ensure that the East German party and government leadership would be perceived as a political unit. The Grotewohl Letter was flanked by a missive from Johannes Dieckmann, the President of the People's Parliament (*Volkskammer*), to the President of the Federal Parliament (*Bundestag*), Hermann Ehlers (CDU).[14] The SED did not doubt it would succeed. After talks in Karlshorst, Pieck noted, '*Bundestag* won't say no' (Badstübner and Loth, 1994: p. 361).

The Grotewohl Letter had been addressed to the Federal government and the West German public. When the government's negative attitude became obvious, the SED leadership concentrated its efforts on mobilising the public so as to put the cabinet in Bonn under pressure. It wasn't a bad strategy. A December 1950 survey by the Allensbach Institute for Public Opinion Research (*Institut für Demoskopie*) had asked respondents whether Adenauer should have accepted Grotewohl's offer: 49% answered in the affirmative, 27% said no, 14% were undecided and 10% had no opinion in the matter (Hüllbüsch, 1988: p. XXXV, note 78). Pieck, Grotewohl and Ulbricht did their best to exploit this widespread apathy (known in German as *Ohne-mich-Haltung*, 'count-me-out attitude') by playing the pacifist card. An occasion occurred in March 1951. Leading representatives of the four Allied governments met in Paris to prepare the agenda for a conference of foreign ministers. East Berlin launched a rallying cry through the People's Parliament (*Volkskammer*), calling for 'Germans [to] unite around a single table' (*Deutsche an einen Tisch*) and demanding a referendum (Lemke, 2001: pp. 142 f.). The intention was twofold: to demonstrate cross-party unity in East Germany's sham parliament, and to counter western voices that had called the initiative a put-up affair initiated by Moscow.

Although Bonn's answer was unambiguous, East Berlin persevered. The SED leadership softened its stance towards West Germany's call for free elections. The debate between the two Germanies was now dominated by discussions about the right to vote and election procedure. An open letter sent to members and officials of the SPD and KPD by the SED's Central Committee on 1 September 1951 was the opening salvo in a fresh campaign to drive a wedge between the SPD rank and file and its leadership (Zentralkommittee der SED, 1952: pp. 552–564). The attack specifically targeted Schumacher and Christian Fette, the new chairman of the German Federation of Trade Unions (DGB) who had succeeded Hans Böckler after the latter's death on 16 February 1951. In a speech to members of the People's Parliament (*Volkskammer*) on 15 September, Grotewohl repeated his call on the West German government for joint talks on German unity. He had moderated his stance and no longer insisted on an all-German Council (Ibid., pp. 444–464). Between late 1950 and the beginning of 1952, the *Volkskammer* was Grotewohl's favourite forum for airing official policies for Germany.

There were stormy discussions in the coalition government in Bonn. While the liberal FDP closed ranks behind Adenauer, Jakob Kaiser and Franz Josef Strauß (CSU) indicated that they might be open to the GDR's initiative (Schwarz, 1986: p. 881). On 27 September Adenauer drafted fourteen principles for the holding of free elections. It was a way of creating fresh obstacles for East Berlin without explicitly turning down Grotewohl's proposal (Wettig, 2002: especially p. 175). The Chancellor proposed an international commission under UN supervision which would oversee all-German elections. The ball was now back in the East German court. In Grotewohl's policy statement of 10 October there was no reaction at all to the West German proposal. Instead, he repeated that the GDR's fundamental willingness to talk, adding that any talks should take place on a basis of equality (Grotewohl, 1959: pp. 509–527). Policy exchanges between the two Germanies increasingly turned into public battles of rhetoric where each side tried to blame the other whenever the talks threatened to founder.

The SED leadership had been on the lookout for a figurehead to support its policy even before Grotewohl's *Volkskammer* speech on 15 September 1951. It appeared to have found one in the person of Martin Niemöller, one of Adenauer's most outspoken domestic critics. A personal meeting was scheduled for 16 July at the official residence of the East German Minister-President. The party leadership around Ulbricht, Pieck and Grotewohl was upbeat, drawing additional encouragement from the fact that the governing board of Germany's Protestant church (*Bruderrat der Evangelischen Kirche*) planned to draw up a memorandum which would criticise the government. At the same time, the SED launched Social Democratic Action (*Sozialdemokratische Aktion*), an initiative to unite its Social Democratic followers (Amos, 1999: p. 68). Only in 1952 did the SPD succeed in having this communist cover organisation banned by a court order.

At first glance, it appears that the East German initiative succeeded in making an impact in Bonn. There was intense engagement with the issue by both the government and the *Bundestag* (West German parliament). The SED scored a brief victory in terms of opinion leadership in the divided Germany. But in fact both the government and the opposition parties in the *Bundestag* were of one mind in their assessment of the proposals, resulting in a consensus on German policy that lasted until the Stalin Notes of spring 1952. Closer scrutiny shows that the SED leadership's propaganda offensives did not succeed. Its aggressive strategy even forged a temporary solidarity between the West German government and opposition. Its attempt to split the SPD failed. Schumacher did not deviate from his firm line against the SED leadership, confident that in this point he had his party wholly behind him. Pieck, Grotewohl and Ulbricht now decided to concentrate on using public campaigns to influence the West German public and media. But the SED's adaptive abilities were limited: there was no deviation either from its pauperisation strategy or its unshakeable belief that the West German people would topple Adenauer's government.

Everyday anticommunism in West Germany: labour, reparations, political education, film and television, packages

The various activities of East German *Westarbeit* triggered reactions within the Federal Republic's government and administrative apparatus (See Stefan Creuzberger's article in this volume), but it also had a lasting impact on the societal and cultural development of West Germany. This is particularly true for the 1950s and 1960s. Of course,

anticommunism was not invented in post-1945 West Germany. Its roots go back much further, to the Weimar Republic at least, possibly even the Bismarck era. In the following section I will introduce a number of fields that are relevant in socio-political terms, but that can of course give only a cursory sense of the range of anticommunist manifestations from the early years of the Federal Republic of Germany.[15] I will also discuss the depth of penetration, contradictions, and the limits of West German anticommunism.

The actions of West German political decision-makers in the early years were marked by a degree of uncertainty over the loyalty of the population to the Federal Republic's democratic order. This was also true for trades unions, which suffered from a widespread fear that communists might influence the governing bodies of workers' representations, and thus workers in general. The trades unions played an important role in ousting communist officials and criminalising their activities. Anticommunism at company level swiftly developed a specific dynamic (Kössler, 2014). However, it also became swiftly apparent that in the early years of the Federal Republic there still were some safe areas for the West German KPD and its supporters. As late as the mid-1950s, communist works councils managed to stand their ground against social democrat competitors (For an illuminating example see the case of Maxhütte in the *Oberpfalz* region: Süß, 2003: pp. 97–106). West German society was, in fact, not wholly infected with an anticommunist 'anxiety psychosis' (Kössler, 2014: p. 236). On the contrary: communists were offered participation, particularly at local level, so long as they did not support the SED's policies. This pragmatic approach towards communists enables us to take a view of the political, administrative and social practice of anticommunism that is broader than the one currently held by historians, one that stresses instead the complexity and ambivalence of those exclusionary processes. Although the spring of 1951 saw all of the democratic parties agreeing on the desirability of launching large-scale anticommunist measures, there was a great deal of discussion about details from the start. German Federalism turned out to be 'a counterweight to radicalisation' (Ibid., p. 240), since individual states did not agree on ways to deal with communist satellite organisations, while individual resolutions and regulations did not stand up to judicial scrutiny. Administrative courts repeatedly ruled that basic rights to the freedoms of opinion and assembly had been broached, thus hampering the anticommunist measures of more than one federal state. With the ban of the KPD in 1956 the perceived threat decreased, and this in turn spelled the beginning of the end of the anticommunist consensus. In future, the way to deal with communists would be subject to pluralist and vigorous debate (For more detail on this process of transformation see Kössler, 2005: pp. 357–368).

The Federal Republic of Germany refused to pay reparations not only to top KPD officials, but in some cases also to less prominent communists. The legal basis for this was the 1953 Federal Supplementary Law (*Bundesergänzungsgesetz*, BErG), which stipulated, amongst other things, that claimants who 'oppose[d] the free democratic order' (Quoted in Spernol, 2014: p. 252) had no legal claim to reparation. The Federal Reparations Act (*Bundesentschädigungsgesetz*, BEG) of 1956 clarified the ruling and backdated it to 23 May 1949, the commencement of the Bonn Constitution. Since legislation on reparations (For a general discussion see Goschler, 2005; Hockerts, 2001) had initially been dominated to a high degree by victims of National Socialist persecution, this inevitably changed the relationship between communist and non-communist NS

victims. The trajectory of the 'Victims of the Nazi Regime' (*Verfolgte des Nazi-Regimes*, VVN) – initially a cross-party association – is an example for this sort of development. The 'Königstein Circle' (*Königsteiner Kreis*), a group of lawyers and civil servants who had fled the GDR, lobbied forcefully against the payment of reparations to former Nazi victims who were communists, and found ready agreement among members of the Bonn government, which eventually advocated access restrictions. The result was a 'communist clause' in West German legislation on reparations, for which there was no predecessor in the reparation legislation of the American-occupied zone of August 1949. It would have considerable repercussions for compensation practice from 1956 onwards. Disputed cases went to the federal courts, which had to define the difference 'between mere membership and particular activities' (Spernol, 2014: p. 273) of the individuals concerned. In the early years such court rulings could vary widely. Not until 1961 did the Federal Constitutional Court (*Bundesverfassungsgericht*) provide clarification with its ruling that work for the KPD prior to 1956 – the year the party was banned – did not count as unconstitutional. Although we have no regional or national statistics, Boris Spernol has found a number of indicators that show that 'a general problem in terms distribution justice [was] inherent'(Ibid.) in reparation procedures. Patterns of definite discrimination – i.e. the specific exclusion of communists – can be shown only to some extent. But this example illustrates how official and societal agents 'reacted off each other in their excessive anticommunism', (Ibid., p. 272) creating a bogeyman in order to exclude communists from reparation payments.

Political educational work was an important tool of official anticommunism. Here we must distinguish between the politically motivated fight against communism on the one hand, and scientific debates on the other. Perfect examples for the charged relationship between anticommunism and science are the case of the Federal Bureau for Homeland Service (*Bundeszentrale für Heimatdienst*, BfH), and the founding of the *Ostkolleg* (Thomas, 2014). To start with, the *Bundeszentrale* had an unsavoury connection with the Reich Bureau for Homeland Service (*Reichszentrale für Heimatdienst*), an agency that had been set up in the last phase of the First World War in order to mobilise the German public for the war effort. Political education after 1945 was to support democracy and to educate the public on the risks posed by both National Socialist and communist dictatorships. The Federal Government dropped its original plan to integrate the *Bundeszentrale* into a 'Ministry for Information', and set it up instead as part of the Federal Ministry of the Interior (*Bundesinnenministerium*). While in its early years the BfH mainly confronted the history of Nazism and worked to develop a democratic consciousness, critical analysis of communism fell within the domain of the Federal Ministry for intra-German Issues (*Bundesministerium für gesamtdeutsche Fragen*, BMG). The relationship between the two government agencies was marked 'by mutual mistrust and dislike' (Ibid., p. 127). By 1954, the Federal Agency had a total budget of 3.14 million deutschmarks, of which 1.41 million were used for publishing (Ibid.). There were two high-circulation BfH publications from quite early on (*Informationen zur politischen Bildung*, 'Information for political Education', and *Aus Politik and Zeitgeschichte*, 'Politics and Contemporary History'), through which the BfH was able to exert significant influence on public opinion.

With the intensification of the Cold War in the mid-1950s, opposition against communism and ideological delimitation from the GDR – which by suppressing the People's Revolt on 17 June 1953 had provided striking proof of its dictatorial character

and its blatant lack of legitimacy – became the main subject areas for the BfH, which in 1963 was renamed Federal Agency for Civic Education (*Bundeszentrale für politische Bildung*). Around the same time the KPD was being banned, the journal *Aus Politik and Zeitgeschichte* (APuZ) increasingly printed articles about German communism. Rüdiger Thomas sees the reason for the comparatively large number of articles in 1956/57 in 'intensifying [...] initiatives' by the Federal Ministry of the Interior vis-à-vis the BfH (Ibid., p. 136). Secretary of state Hans Ritter von Lex (CSU) had chosen Joseph M. Bochenski to serve as consultant for the government during the trial to ban the KPD. Bochenski was also very active in the profiling of *Ostkolleg*, which had been set up in late 1957. Bochenski's report was printed in ApuZ while the case was still being heard.[16] In 1958, he and Gerhart Niemeyer edited a 'Handbook on Communism' which contained work by fifteen internationally known specialists on the subject. However, in its early stages *Ostkolleg* had been shaped by civil servants of the Federal Ministry of the Interior, whose anticommunist orientation went back to the years before 1945. One member of *Ostkolleg*'s board of directors had been 'massively' involved in National Socialist *Volkstum* policies (For a more detailed discussion see Thomas, 2012).

While APuZ printed Bochenski's report for the West German government, the journal *Das Parlament* published excerpts from the Federal Constitutional Court's ruling, as well as a number of political statements. In a supplement to the same edition, Günter Nollau, the resident expert on communism of the West German intelligence service (*Verfassungsschutz*) underlined that 'the government hopes to see it applied'. Writing anonymously, Nollau also stressed that what was needed was 'the immunising of the German people against communism through scientific actions and wide-spread information' (Thomas, 2014: p. 134). In the wake of the KPD ban, the party-political balance of BfH publications could be seen from the fact that ApuZ published articles penned, amongst others, by members of the SPD's Eastern Office (*Ostbüro*). It also shows that there was an attempt to safeguard the cross-party anticommunist consensus for the long term. ApuZ editors also began to publish annotated excerpts from minutes of the SED's central committee meetings[17] in order to provide information about political developments in the GDR.

It is of course well known that the Cold War was a clash between systems that could, and occasionally did, cause divides across nationally constituted societies. Analysis of this complex process would be impossible without including the mass media, which were a prime locus of the dispute between East and West. Radio, film and television were not only 'political weapons', but also manufacturers of 'social and cultural realities' (Lindenberger, 2006: p. 11). Put differently, the mass media are an important source for investigating this conflict, but they must also be seen as active agents in it. Modern mass media had been exerting a significant influence on social and cultural developments in Germany as far back as the Weimar Republic. Politics took a hand very early on: the film industry was already being centralised in the First World War. However, it was not until the NS dictatorship that political instrumentalisation of the media reached a temporary high point. At the time of the East-West conflict, political decision-makers in the divided Germany hoped to be able to influence the mass media. A case in point is the propaganda battle during the first Berlin Crisis of 1948/49, when both sides were keen to dominate public opinion across Germany and to blame the other side for the divide that split Europe. A pivotal medium in the era of the 'Iron

Curtain' was the radio, whose ability to transcend (i.e. broadcast across) national borders made it particularly important.

The visual media, film and television, were only seemingly untouched by the anti-communist zeitgeist. There was almost no overt engagement with communism in West German films of the 1950s and 1960s, largely because during the Adenauer era political topics carried a business risk for the film industry (Classen, 2014). The general avoidance of politics was a reaction of West German society to the privations of the war and the immediate post-war period. There was a knock-on effect on the development of the film genre in the early years of the Federal Republic of Germany, which was characterised by a marked risk aversion. The fact that West German films largely failed to engage with the GDR and with communist ideology was due less to any official anticommunist measures, and much more to the West German film industry's general tendency to avoid such topics. Anticommunist films simply did not promise commercial returns. There were a few exceptions, mostly films about attempts to flee across the inner-German border. Many were low-budget affairs produced by outsiders. While the West German film industry tended to be guided by commercial criteria, state intervention did occur. The West German Ministry of the Interior occasionally got involved in tendering procedures of the German Auditing and Trust Corporation (*Deutsche Revisions- and Treuhand AG*) and succeeded in rejecting applications for financial support in cases where a film's director or producer had alleged ties to communism. Acting through the Interministry Committee for East-Western Film Issues (*Interministerieller Ausschuss für Ost/West-Filmfragen*), the federal government could also at times influence the import of films from the Eastern bloc. Between 1953 and 1966, the Interministry Committee vetted some 3200 films, of which 130 were refused an import license (Ibid., p. 285).

According to film historians, the majority of West German films that deal with the topics of communism or the GDR share the same main thrust: they present East Germany as a prison and escape from it as the necessary consequence. A more differentiated look yields the result that, following the building of the Berlin Wall in 1961, TV dramas addressed the division between the two Germanies much more frequently than did feature films. There can be little doubt that this development was due to the loss of importance of anticommunist positions and the related political paradigm shift of the 1960s - the beginnings of détente. Given that TV drama is made for entertainment and that its dramaturgical features are its most important elements, political ambitions simply increasingly lost ground. The genre proved to be largely immune to unsubtle anticommunist messages. It developed an 'autonomous media logic' (Ibid., p. 294) as early as the 1960s, according to which the needs of large numbers of viewers were paramount for the success or failure of a film or a TV drama. While government institutions kept very much in the background over the production of feature films and TV dramas, the Federal Ministry for intra-German Issues (BMG) for a long time openly commissioned documentaries.

Consumer politics was another arena for the competition between systems. Given that virtually all the occupied zones suffered a food and supply crisis in the late 1940s, food, alcohol and tobacco became 'media of political propaganda' (Gries, 2014: p. 336). U.S. experts for product communications had already begun to hatch plans for post-Nazi Germany before the Second World War was even over. Based on the idea that the

U.S. had missed the chance to 'include "democratic thinking"' (Ibid.) in its care packages for hungry Europeans after 1918, they now intended to supply future consumer products with added 'political ideas' for the future. It was an idea that would achieve great importance in the clash between the systems during the Cold War. This example also shows that the Americanisation of West German society after 1945 was a process of mutual exchange in which care packages played an important role. Representatives of the U.S. advertising industry saw it as their job to provide support for the programme of mental transformation in Europe, and particularly in Germany. The strategy not only supported the creation of a transatlantic partnership, it was also a useful response to the Soviet challenge. Consumer products could transport positive advertising messages just as easily as concepts of the enemy. This made food, alcohol and tobacco useful 'weapons of anticommunist propaganda' (Ibid., p. 337). Parcels and packages sent across the border between the two Germanies served as a 'significant platform of social exchange across system boundaries' (Ibid.); as such they evoked a reaction from the GDR.

Shortly after the People's Revolt of 17 June 1953, U.S. President Dwight D. Eisenhower offered extensive consignments of food to the East German government. This offer, which was accompanied by a large-scale propaganda offensive, had been consciously chosen by Washington, well aware that insufficient food supplies in the GDR had caused popular protests and destabilised the SED regime. Within a fortnight some 2.9 million parcels containing a total of 7193 tons of food and worth just under 10 million deutschmarks arrived in East Germany (Ibid., p. 339). The GDR readily took up the challenge posed by the 'parcels from the West' (*Westpaket*). In the ensuing so-called 'Parcel War' (*Päckchenkrieg*) of the 1950s and 1960s, 1.5 packages from the East were sent for every two *Westpakete*, regardless of the supply problems suffered by the 'worker and peasant state' in the first post-war decade. 1965 alone saw 22 million parcels (Ibid., p. 346) travel from East to West – a remarkable feat given the GDR's total population of just 17 million, and one which even the West German press acknowledged. Many of the senders from the East were keen to 'preserve their dignity'; they wanted to be perceived not just as 'recipients, but also [as] donors' (Ibid., p. 347). Even though West Germany gained the upper hand at the 'food front' (Ibid., p. 345), this had by no means been a foregone conclusion at the time the two German states were founded in 1949. The cross-border parcels remained as an 'asymmetrical relationship pattern' (Ibid., p. 352) in the intra-German communication space; a relevant factor still in the present.

Conclusions

West German anticommunism and the SED's *Westarbeit* were to some extent interrelated. From the beginning, each German state had attempted to stabilise its own social system while trying to discredit its political opponent. The claim to sole representation (*Alleinvertretungsanspruch*) and the refusal to acknowledge each other delineated governmental action on both sides. Anticommunism in West Germany re-developed under the conditions of the Cold War, which allowed it to become virtually the reason of state and to serve as a tool for the exclusion of KPD supporters. In its turn, the SED branded the West German state as 'revanchist' and instrumentalised its anticommunism to persecute and eliminate opponents within the GDR. Both phenomena had an

integrative and a exclusionary element. Anticommunism and *Westarbeit* also made a lasting impact on political culture in the divided Germany, especially in the 1950s and 1960s. Everyday social practices also showed up the limits and the contradictions of West German anticommunism. Different states within the Federal Republic found different answers to the question which communist cover organisation they ought to ban. The Constitutional Court set limits to anticommunist measures; its decisions overrode rulings that had broached the freedoms of opinion and of assembly. Municipal administrations as well as companies found it difficult consistently to impose hard-line anticommunist measures. Attempts to prevent reparation payments to communists did not completely succeed. Unlike in the print media, anticommunism in films and television played a marginal role. The influence of anticommunism on West German political culture was not significantly reduced until the building of the Berlin Wall and the end of Adenauer's chancellorship in 1963, and it never disappeared completely. In the wake of détente between the two superpowers the difficult relationship between the two Germanies slowly began to normalise.

[Translation by: Imogen Rhia Herrad].

Endnotes

[1]Landesarchiv Berlin (LAB), E Rep. 200–23, Nr. 29–31, Bericht über die Reise Grotewohls und Dahrendorfs (17.-26.11.1945), pp. 9 f.

[2]Archiv der sozialen Demokratie (AdsD), Bestand Kurt Schumacher, Mappe 1234, Wilhelm Knothe am 7.5.1946 an die SPD Hannover.

[3]Stiftung Archiv der Parteien und Massenorganisationen der DDR im Bundesarchiv (SAPMO-BA), NY 4090/126, Bl. 302–352, in particular Bl. 325. Redemanuskript für die Auftritte Grotewohls in Essen (20.7.), Cologne (21.7.), Düsseldorf (22.7.) und Braunschweig (23.7.). For a more detailed discussion see Hoffmann, 2009: p. 281.

[4]SAPMO-BA, NY 4036/752, Bl. 56–60, Reisebericht Stahlmanns vom Januar 1962.

[5]SAPMO-BA, NY 4090/633, Bl. 26–48, Stenografische Niederschrift über die Pressekonferenz am 18.3.1947.

[6]SAPMO-BA, NY 4090/129, Bl. 3–9, Rundfunkansprache Grotewohls vom 16.4.1947.

[7]Cf. SAPMO-BA, DY 30/IV 2/1/20, Bl. 7, Stenografische Niederschrift über die 11. Tagung des SED-Parteivorstandes (21./22.5.1947).

[8]*Der Spiegel* on 14 June 1947, p. 1.

[9]*Die Zeit* on 5 June 1947, p. 2.

[10]SAPMO-BA, NY 4090/129, Bl. 116–124, quote Bl. 116, Rundfunkansprache Grotewohls (7./8.6.1947).

[11]*Neues Deutschland* on 29 June 1947, p. 1.

[12]AdsD, Bestand Kurt Schumacher, Mappe 53, Broschüre 'Einheit in Freiheit. Dr. Kurt Schumacher gibt Grotewohl die Antwort' des SPD-Parteivorstands (no date).

[13]Vermerk für den DDR-Ministerpräsidenten vom 16.12.1950. In: Dokumente zur Deutschlandpolitijk (DzD), 1997: pp. 1177 f.

[14]Dieckmann on 30 December 1950 to Ehlers. In: Ibid., pp. 482 f.

[15]I base the following section on recent research findings that were presented at a joint conference of the Institut für Zeitgeschichte Munich - Berlin, Potsdam University

and the Federal Agency for Civic Education, Bonn, in late 2011. Cf. Creuzberger; Hoffmann, 2014.

[16]Cf. Aus Politik und Zeitgeschichte, H. B 6/56, pp. 77–95.

[17]Cf. Aus Politik und Zeitgeschichte, H. B 49/57, pp. 837–851.

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Cold War Studies, Devided Germany, Anticommunism.

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