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'Make life for communists as difficult as possible' State-run anticommunism and 'psychological warfare' in the early years of the Federal Republic of Germany

Stefan Creuzberger

Correspondence:
stefan.creuzberger@uni-rostock.de
Rostock University, 18051 Rostock,
Germany

Abstract

The Ministry for All-German Affairs held a special place among the government departments with a right to define public anticommunist counter-intelligence. At the height of the Cold War it concentrated on advancing the activities of private bodies, and as such had a significant influence on their anticommunist thinking.

Historical context and questions

'I believe the time has come for the Federal Republic to tackle the communists vigorously. The trial in Karlsruhe[1] may have got bogged down, but I'm sure that there are still lawful ways and means to proceed against both open and hidden communists. They're just not being used. Everything ought to be done to make life for communists as difficult as possible, on an individual or organisational basis; as long as it is done in line with the constitution. ... I believe it is both right and necessary for the Federal Republic to proceed ostentatiously against communists, for these reasons: first, because it would demonstrate to our Allies that we may talk to the Russians about trade, but that we want nothing to do with Bolshevism. ... [And second, it would show] Germans in the Soviet zone ... that we're not fraternising with their oppressors. It would encourage them, and it would make quite clear to the masters of the Zone that there would not be any privileges from us in the case of unification.'[2]

This commentary on the domestic and foreign challenges faced by the young Federal Republic of Germany was penned by Peter von Zahn, the well-known correspondent in the United States of Nordwestdeutscher Rundfunk, a West German public television and radio station, on 10. October 1955. Federal Chancellor Konrad Adenauer had just successfully concluded a visit to Moscow where both sides had agreed to establish diplomatic relations. On the domestic front the news was dominated by ongoing attempts to have the Communist Party of Germany (KPD) banned in the Federal Constitutional Court (*Bundesverfassungsgericht*). Peter von Zahn's decidedly anticommunist stance perfectly reflects the *zeitgeist* of those years.

He had also chosen his words with deliberation. He wanted them to have a political impact. They were not intended for the public, but for the eyes of his brother Friedrich

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only. Friedrich von Zahn had been the head of a department in the Federal Ministry for All-German Affairs (*Bundesministerium für gesamtdeutsche Fragen*, BMG) since 1949. As such, he was a part of that section of Bonn's government apparatus that would develop into a powerful political force in the fight against communism in the intensifying Cold War. This state-run anticommunism practised by the men and women at the BMG was directed, on the one hand, against the SED-regime (*Sozialistische Einheitspartei Deutschlands*, 'Socialist Unity Party of Germany'). With the aid of so-called 'psychological warfare' they initiated an ideological counter-campaign that targeted propagandist education measures and undercover desinformation with the aim of destabilising the GDR. But on the other hand they also hoped to 'fight the enemy within': i.e. in the thinking of the time, which was dominated by the U.S. American strategy of containment and liberation, to push back against the KPD's political attempts to infiltrate or undermine the West. Behind the KPD and other West German communist-friendly groupings was seen the hand of Moscow and of East Berlin. In this sense, state-run anticommunism was an integral part of the political culture of the young West German republic. It also had great integrating potential in a number of ways, both in domestic and foreign terms, as I will discuss in more detail below. Another of its aims was to support with alternative measures the great struggle of high politics for reunification and national unity.

It comes as no surprise, then, that Friedrich von Zahn gratefully took up his brother's suggestion. A mere two weeks later, on 24 October 1955, he wrote back to 'dear Peter':

'Very many thanks for your last and your suggestions about German domestic policy. They are in complete agreement with my own views. I have translated your colourful journalistic words into dry bureaucrat speech, garnished it with some mustard from my own kitchen and … sent it off in the shape of a memorandum to the Secretary of State. He will be surprised that I have suddenly developed some thoughts.'[3]

This is the backdrop against which I shall discuss the following aspects: in order to understand West German anticommunism as an aspect of Cold War political culture, we will have to clarify not only its role, but its origins as well. We need to determine the degree of interdependence between communism and anticommunism. Only then can we begin to explore the question – and even then only by way of individual examples – which state-run and private apparatuses of the Cold War employed which anticommunist methods. Finally, I shall look at how anticommunism evolved and what impact it had on everyday political life against the backdrop of the conflict between East and West. To what extent were certain events turning points – such as the People's Revolt in East Germany on 17 June 1953, construction of the Berlin Wall on 13 August 1961 or indeed the grand coalition in Bonn, where between 1966 and 1969 the conservative CDU/CSU parties and the Social Democrat SPD formed a coalition government in Bonn? What stimuli did these important political events generate for state-run anticommunism, and in consequence for West German political culture? As we ask these questions, we must not forget West Germany's 'New *Ostpolitik*' (policy towards the East). This was a new approach based on a different, more nuanced image of communism: as such it represented a departure from previous decades. The general assumption is that this new *Ostpolitik* began in 1969 with the first Social-Democrat/Liberal coalition government under Willy Brandt and Walter Scheel. In fact, state-run

anticommunism is a particularly useful example to show that the roots of Bonn's new *Ostpolitik* go back much further.

Anticommunism – genesis and purpose

It is a characteristic of West German anticommunism that, unlike its counterparts in many other Western European countries, or even in the United States, it originated from a number of disparate sources. There can be no doubt that for many Germans, events during the aftermath of the First World War, the Bolshevist October Revolution in Russia and the politically unstable phases of the Weimar Republic with its Leninist-Stalinist type of communism, encouraged already existing, latent forms of widespread anticommunism. After 1918, this evolved into a form of anti-Bolshevism with increasingly anti-Semitic traits. Even the Marxist wing of Germany's Social Democrats at that time experienced the formation of an empirical form of anticommunism in reaction to the confrontation with Soviet communism. This particular Social Democrat Anti-Bolshevism had its own identity-forming capability. It would survive beyond 1933 and return after the Second World War under the impact of the Cold War.

The Nazi regime profited from this basic consensus. When Hitler took power on 30 January 1933, anticommunism became a reason of state in National Socialist thinking, serving as a 'functional ideology of integration'. It also legitimated the new rulers' persecution of political dissidents, the enforced conformity of public life (*Gleichschaltung*), the elimination of parliamentary democracy, and general anti-Semitic measures. The Nazis exploited the fact that anticommunism was by now firmly rooted in broad swathes of the German population. Anticommunist measures were welcomed not only by national-conservatives or bourgeois-liberals, but even by the Protestant and Catholic churches (Cf. Creuzberger and Hoffmann 2014: p. 4; Wirsching, 2014: p. 24). German anticommunism took on a very particular shape from the moment when, on 22 June 1941, the National Socialist regime decided to wage an ideologically and racially motivated anti-Bolshevist war against the USSR. The declared aim was 'living space (*Lebensraum*) in the East', which would of course have to be 'Germanised'. Fought as an anti-Slav 'crusade', the war was waged with unprecedented cruelty and harshness. Its end, and the entry of the Red Army into 'the lair of the fascist monster' (Löwenthal, 1974: p. 7), the flight and expulsion of refugees from the East and brutal assaults on the German civilian population (doubtless a form of revenge for the extreme severity of National Socialist warfare and occupation in the East) further fuelled the anticommunist sentiments of many Germans.

The beginning of the Cold War after 1947 and the resulting sovietisation of the eastern portion of Germany resulted in the division of the country in 1949. In this context, the first Berlin crisis, provoked by Stalin, was of particular significance for German anticommunism. Moscow's calculation – that the West German population could be alienated from the U.S. by means of a blockade – did not succeed. In fact, the crisis went some way to help bridge the emotional chasm between the Western Allies and the Germans living in their respective areas of occupation. Conviction grew on both sides that they depended on each other. This in turn helped stabilise the western camp and confirmed its anticommunist stance. The Korean War from 1950 further consolidated this development (Creuzberger 2014a: p. 187).

What, then, was the purpose of government-promoted anticommunism in post-war West Germany? It terms of foreign politics it advanced the young republic's Western integration; enabling Bonn to show itself as a reliable partner, to the United States in particular, during the intense phases of the Cold War. The Federal Ministry of All-German Affairs, set up in 1949, represented a dedicated instrument to combat Soviet communism – the author of the country's division – in a whole range of ways. This in turn added a further, purely domestic, dimension to anticommunism, which aimed at reunification (Creuzberger, 2008: p. 60).

As an ideology with integrative and bridging functions, anticommunism was important for the domestic development of West Germany in the first decade and a half after the war. It helped to shape the identity of the young nation and its anti-totalitarian alignment. The founders of the Federal Republic, for whom domestic consolidation was of especial importance, regarded anticommunism as a cross-party social glue capable of appealing across class divides to everyone from workers to directors, from Social Democrats to the extreme right wing. It proved to be 'political cement for the still unstable democracy' (Wentker, 2014: p. 356; Kössler, 2014: p. 229). Last but by no means least, its overarching anticommunist consensus also gave West German post-war society more leeway for dealing with its Nazi legacy. Anti-totalitarianism – directed specifically against communism – became a part of the new West German reason of state and a way of demonstrating that the new republic belonged to the western community of shared values. It also helped West Germany to make a clean break with the National Socialist Regime and to shake off, at least in part, its Nazi past for a time (Creuzberger; Hoffmann, 2014: pp. 2 f.). Anticommunism was also of central importance for the political integration (literally: *Bundesrepublikanisierung*, 'federal-republicanisation') of former Nazi élites (Conze, 2009: p. 154).

Communism und anticommunism: interdependencies

There were times in the 1950s when West German state-run anticommunism could appear like a cold *civil* war. Dissidents, not only communists, but also pacifists or 'neutralists' who were not unequivocal enough in their stance towards the other Germany, were not always treated with kid gloves (Creuzberger, 2009: pp. 28, 30). One reason for this was the mutual interdependency between Eastern communism and Western defensiveness. Large-scale mobilisation campaigns against West German democracy by the SED and its cover organisations in the Federal Republic worried members of the Bonn government camp. This was particularly true of the so-called Grotewohl letter initiative of 1950/51. With this dubious offer – ostensibly to aid reunification – East Berlin attempted to polarise West German society and to unify West Germany's working class under communist leadership, in order to accelerate the fall of the Adenauer 'regime', which it loathed. But the attempt was counterproductive: it initiated an anticommunist cross-party consensus among democratic parliamentarians in Bonn. All of this eventually also contributed to the marginalisation of the KPD (Hoffmann, 2014: pp. 69 ff.; Amos, 2014: pp. 53, 55 f.; Wentker, 2014: pp. 359 f. For a more detailed discussion see Dierk Hoffmann's article in this volume), which would no longer be present in the West German parliament (*Deutscher Bundestag*) from 1953 until its ban in 1956.

Neither this fact nor West German anticommunism in general were without consequences for the internal development of the SED dictatorship. West German

propagandist and educational activities against the GDR put increasing political pressure on the East German regime, causing something of an 'anti-imperialist class struggle psychosis'. But the rulers in East Berlin knew to turn this to their own political advantage: by shifting attention to their struggle against West German anticommunism, and, temporarily at least, away from their own problems and shortcomings, they gave extra legitimacy to their political system (Lemke, 2014: p. 81; Wentker, 2014: p. 361). The perception of West German *Ostarbeit* as threatening also had a stabilising effect on the regime, supplying the SED with good ideological reasons to label the accelerated development of its national security and repression apparatus as anti-anticommunist measures (Stöver, 2014: p. 228; Wentker, 2014: p. 366).

Anticommunist institutions: points of contact and cooperation

The core operative activity of West German anticommunism, especially in its official form, very quickly turned into a fight against communist machinations within the Federal Republic under the slogan 'positive security' (*positiver Verfassungsschutz*). As a way of combating the Eastern threat, this was much more effective than destabilising measures inside the GDR would have been. It had the added advantage of putting the East German population at virtually no risk. One of the most successful institutions was the already mentioned Ministry of All-German Affairs, which saw itself as the central co-ordination centre and powerhouse for the struggle against communism. The BMG worked very closely with the Federal Authority for Internal Security (*Bundesamt für Verfassungsschutz*, BfV) and the Ministry of the Interior (*Bundesinnenministerium*, BMI), but also with the Federal Intelligence Service (*Bundesnachrichtendienst*) and with the CIA.

Clear lines of responsibility between the various anticommunist agencies were formally drawn in March 1951: propagandist counter-intelligence was to be the primary task of the Ministry of All-German Affairs. Threats against the constitutional order were assigned to the Interior Ministry, whose brief also included protective police measures and cooperation with the governments of the individual *Länder*. The BfV alone was to undertake intelligence-related activities.[4] That was the theory. In practice, the lines of demarcation were not taken too seriously while the intelligence service was still in its infancy in the early years of the Federal Republic. Top priority was the anticommunist consensus. It determined the measures and methods chosen, and ultimately justified a lot of the means taken to contain 'communist agitation' within West Germany (Creuzberger, 2008: pp. 155 f.). The fact that, as I will discuss below, the BMG (and others) resorted to measures that were not very compatible with West Germany's free and democratic basic order did not usually bother the political operators. Their bottom line was success. The All-German Department began early on to take its lead from U.S. American models that aimed to tackle communism through centrally and government-controlled 'psychological warfare'. It was against this background that from 1953 onwards anticommunist hard-liners within the Ministry of All-German Affairs urged that similar organisational structures be established for the struggle against communism. Among the most vocal was Ewert von Dellingshausen (For more biographical detail see Creuzberger, 2016). It was his task, as head of the BMG's Unit I 1, to develop such strategies. His close collaboration with the relevant U.S. American secret service departments in the spirit of the political and propagandist roll-back began as early as

1952 (Thedieck, 1980: pp. 145 ff.).[5] For Dellingshausen there was no question that the Federal government needed to set up a body for effective defence against communist infiltration attempts. It was all the more urgent as there was a chance that the KPD, which was expected not to receive enough votes in the 1953 national elections to get into parliament, would concentrate its efforts on undercover communist agitation and destabilisation attempts.[6] Dellingshausen warned emphatically against communist agitation by the 'Working Class Action Committee' (*Aktionseinheit der Arbeiterklasse*), an organisation planning to target the left wing of the Social Democrat party specifically. Since he was also in possession of reliable intelligence that the Communist Party and its cover organisations in the Federal Republic would concentrate increasingly on disrupting the West German economy and its workforce, he took this as further confirmation of his opinion.[7] Dellingshausen expected that after the establishment of diplomatic relations with the USSR in 1955, the Soviet embassy in Bonn would produce vast amounts of communist propaganda. It was therefore essential to establish an anticommunist centre of coordination as part of the government apparatus to deal with this propaganda.[8]

In view of such threatening scenarios, the Ministry of All-German Affairs became the engine that would drive the detail-ridden inter-ministerial coordination processes. As a result, the 'Coordinating Committee for Mental and Political Confrontation with International Communism' (*Koordinierungsausschusses für die geistig-politische Auseinandersetzung mit dem internationalen Kommunismus*) was eventually established in the early 1960s. It was based in the Federal Chancellery and hosted the fortnightly meetings of all relevant heads of department from the government and the public security organs (For a more detailed discussion see Creuzberger, 2008: pp. 160 f.). Von Dellingshausen gave decisive impulses for the organisational structuring of this body. In order to guarantee the highest level of efficiency, the anticommunist planning and coordinating department was to create guidelines and ensure that

a) 'available information is not given out on request to users arbitrarily and on sole responsibility by subordinate officials,
b) analyses are to be compiled on individual questions that the departments feel have priority …,
c) the planning and coordinating committee will meet regularly in order to discuss individual issues. If no agreement can be reached, a decision will be made by the Secretary of State's committee or, if necessary, the Cabinet committee.'[9]

But until this body came into existence, there was a large number of cases where the BMG used its own initiative to ensure that the communist threat from the East was tackled effectively. It made intensive use of its many contacts, not least to the Authority for Internal Security (BfV) in Cologne and the Federal Intelligence Service in Pullach. It also took advantage of its connections with the American secret service CIA. A cooperation with the CIA had been established in 1952/53, although this was not initially an equal partnership. The U.S. authorities acted with marked reserve and were purely receptive to start with, giving the BMG only subordinate tasks. They did however regard it as a welcome source of funding for anticommunist and operative measures for America's liberation policy. That relationship would only change later in the 1950s, not

least as part of the continuing Western integration of the young Federal Republic. The CIA now accepted – ostensibly at least – the BMG's opinion that the struggle against communism and the destabilising of the GDR should not be carried out by force, but only in accordance with the principles of 'political-psychological warfare'. This position was based largely on lessons learnt from the failed uprising in Hungary in 1956. Events had made clear the extent both of the options and the limits of U.S. American liberation policy vis-à-vis communism (Creuzberger, 2008: pp. 197–223, 553).

By themselves, the Ministry of All-German Affairs and other government agencies and subordinate authorities would hardly have been able to carry on an efficient battle against communism. They needed private anticommunist organisations and agencies to serve the government as natural allies. One of those considered by the BMG was the 'People's League for Freedom and Liberty' (*Volksbund für Frieden und Freiheit*, VFF. On the VFF in general see Friedel, 2001). Not only was it one of West Germany's most influential anticommunist propaganda organisations, it also had excellent connections to the CIA and within the wider national and international anticommunist environment. The VFF was practically ideal to be instrumentalised by the BMG for anticommunist roll-back politics (Creuzberger, 2008: pp. 144 f., 235 f.; Stöver, 2002: p. 365). Its political leadership was a collection of highly dubious characters who had learnt their anticommunist ABC during the 'Third Reich' in the 'Reich Propaganda Ministry' (*Reichspropagandaministerium*) or in counter-espionage; but if the fight against communism was to be won, the end would sanctify the means. The BGM – the *Volksbund*'s primary source of funding – preferred to overlook such flaws (Creuzberger, 2008: pp. 144 f.). The Ministry's secret pot of gold was to be a reliable source of generous funding. The VFF received monthly payments of 28,000 DM in the mid-1950s; four years later that sum had risen to 55,000 DM.[10] This gave the *Volksbund* an exceptionally solid financial basis for the time, enabling it to concentrate on the political business of anticommunist counter-intelligence in the Federal Republic during the height of the Cold War.

Other private institutions that engaged in state-run West German anticommunist activities during the Cold War – and few were more active than the All-German Ministry – included the Eastern Offices (*Ostbüros*) of the political parties SPD, CDU and FDP. The West German parties had set up their Eastern Offices in reaction to the political bringing into line in the Soviet-occupied zone, the future GDR. Operating from West Germany or West Berlin, they initially functioned as contact points for political refugees. This alone made them suitable for anticommunist education and defence activities. They had extensive contact networks behind the 'Iron Curtain' which in some cases extended into opposition circles of East Germany's political establishment. This fact could be exploited twofold: For years, the *Ostbüros* – with substantial financial support from the BMG – smuggled propaganda and campaign material onto the GDR (they used balloons), both as a way of destabilising its political system and of giving political and moral support to sections of the population that sympathised with the West. Undercover *Ostbüro* informers managed repeatedly to collect important information about living conditions and the bleak reality of life under the East German Stalinist dictatorship, especially in the early 1950s. This information was used by the Ministry of All-German Affairs as well as by secret services active within West Germany in their fight against internal, communist enemies (For a

more detailed discussion see Buschfort, 1991; Buschfort, 2001; Creuzberger, 2008: pp. 143 f., 254–257).

Anticommunist cooperation between the authorities and the 'Fact-finding Committee of liberal Lawyers' (*Untersuchungsausschuss freiheitlicher Juristen*, UfJ) worked on similar lines. Again, contact was established very quickly after the founding of the Federal Republic and continued until 1969. The BMG rated the organisation highly and especially valued the fact that the 'Fact-finding Committee' did not employ sabotage or destructive measures in its anticommunist activities. The UfJ's aim was to intimidate East German political leaders and discourage further political offences by openly and meticulously documenting political wrongdoing behind the 'Iron Curtain'. They also hoped to lay down the groundwork for juridical prosecution of the East German unjust regime in the case of reunification. The hoped for anticommunist purpose and effect are obvious (Hagemann, 1994; Hagemann, 1996: pp. 33–45).

The activities of the 'Task Force against Inhumanity' (*Kampfgruppe gegen Unmenschlichkeit*, KgU) were of a very different nature. The KgU, which mostly acted from its base in West Berlin against the East, was one of the country's most militant organisations in this period. It was strongly influenced by several U.S. secret services and attempted by both nonviolent and violent means to overthrow the political system in the GDR. The 'Task Force' frequently used controversial methods and more than once recklessly risked lives, so that the *Gesamtdeutsches Ministerium*, which had initially considered a collaboration, swiftly distanced itself (Stöver, 2014: pp. 215–228; see also Heitzer, 2008; März, 1987).

Anticommunism and political culture – everyday practices during the height of the Cold War

We have now established the background for the 1950s and early 1960s. The height of the Cold War was a particularly intense period for everyday anticommunism in Germany. But how did it develop? For the authorities one thing became clear immediately after the founding of the Federal Republic: they wanted to counter communism and its attempts to infiltrate West Germany's young democracy primarily by legal and administrative means.

On 19 September 1950, the Cabinet passed a resolution to 'purge' the public sector of all employees who were members of the KPD or its subordinate cover organisations. The Ministry of All-German Affairs and the Ministry of the Interior had significantly influenced the decision. During the interdepartmental voting process, the BMG managed to secure acceptance that a statement be required from public sector employees. All civil servants and other workers in the public sector were to declare that they had not been members of the KPD or any affiliated organisations after 8 May 1945. Members of the Federal Postal Ministry (*Bundespostministerium*) now indicated concerns with this approach. They were unwilling to dismiss anyone for political reasons without comprehensive prior checks. Anticommunist experts in the BMG immediately pounced on this cautious attitude. They appealed to the officials' morale and to their ethical courage: as 'superiors within the Federal government', the reasoning went, the waverers ought to be 'first-line combatants for democracy'. This carried the day, overruling the not unjustified qualms of the Postal Ministry's negotiators.[11]

Publication of the resolution on 'Activity of Public Sector Employees against the Democratic Basic Order' (*Tätigkeit von Angehörigen des öffentlichen Dienstes gegen die demokratische Grundordnung*) immediately triggered a public debate. But no matter how contentious the legal implications, they made very little impression on the labour courts where the actual rulings happened. It should not surprise us, then, that the courts often accepted a mere suspicion of communist activity as sufficient grounds for dismissal (Creuzberger, 2009: p. 29).

Over the following years laws against communist activities on West German territory were further tightened. BMG and BMI frequently played a leading role. The amendments to the national security laws are a case in point. Since August 1951, it had been possible to proceed against the import and distribution of so-called 'anti-constitutional' (literally *verfassungsverräterisch*, 'treasonable to the constitution') publications. The measure was brought in at a time when SED and KPD were swamping the young Federal Republic with communist propaganda material. Representatives of the All-German Department had reacted immediately, while the law was still being debated, with a radical and unorthodox measure: they demanded postal censorship and a strict ban on the printing of communist propaganda within the Federal Republic.

Coming as it did only just more than half a decade after the end of the National Socialist dictatorship, even the mere attempt must have been extremely disconcerting. It was dropped no sooner than it had been drafted. But the change of mind was caused less by the antidemocratic character of the proposed printing ban, and rather more by worries that East Germany might exploit the measure for its own propaganda purposes (Ibid. On the problem of postal censorship in West Germany see Foschepoth, 2012).

The first national security ordinances in 1951 made the sending of Eastern propaganda into West German territory and any other form of political engagement sympathetic to SED and KPD a criminal offence. The rulers in East Berlin were quick to react. They illegally transferred currency into the Federal Republic and simply had their agitation materials printed and distributed there. Just over two years later the BMG, the Ministry of the Interior and the Federal Postal Ministry were again able to counter such activities (On national security see e.g. Schiffers, 1989; Gosewinkel, 1991).[12] They did this by means of the third amendment to the national security laws of 4 August 1953, which made possible further containment of East German attempts at destabilisation (On this and the rewording of the law § 93 STGB in 3. *Strafänderungsgesetz* of 3 August 1953 see Brünneck, 1978: pp. 392 f.). In May 1961 the legal parameters were tightened once more. The so-called 'Transfer Law' (*Verbringungsgesetz*) allowed postal and customs officials to seize Eastern material thought to be subversive on the spot, at the demarcation line between the two German states (Tiepmar, 1997: p. 64).

But state-run anticommunist measures did not just use legal and administrative means in their attempts to counter Eastern infiltration attempts in the West. Strategies and practices that look highly dubious from a democratic or constitutional viewpoint were common, especially at the height of the Cold War. Ewert von Dellingshausen was particularly active in this field. He was the BMG's man for 'psychological warfare' – the internal name for political-operational counter-intelligence against communist infiltration. As late as 1958 he energetically backed the concept that '[we should] ourselves harness the means used by our adversaries' in the fight against communism.[13]

It was not merely a theoretical stance. The Ministry of All-German Affairs in particular, which had a great store of experience from the last few years, sometimes displayed a very ambivalent understanding of democracy. The BMG's comprehensive secret card index, which had been started in 1951, was not under any form of public control and had been legally dubious from the start. It listed over 23,000 allegedly politically unsound individuals and organisations. Its recording and collecting mania (often enough on based purely arbitrary grounds) took the BMG on very thin ice, and certainly outside the area of constitutional safeguards, despite its close cooperation with the Federal Authority for Internal Security and other, private, organisations in the Cold War. Unexamined information, frequently based on mere denunciation, was at times not only passed on to the secret services, but even to non-governmental anticommunist agencies to use as they saw fit (Creuzberger, 2009: pp. 28, 30 f.; Creuzberger, 2014a, 2014b: pp. 96 f.).

Among such efforts in their struggle for minds in order to 'immunise' West Germans 'against communism', the BMG's anticommunist experts again and again misjudged the boundaries, and strayed well beyond what was just about tolerable under democratic and constitutional principles. In 1953, they secretly interfered with the election campaign for the West German parliament. As part of Federal anticommunist roll-back politics – practicable at much lower risk than operations behind the 'Iron Curtain' would have been – the All-German People's Party' (*Gesamtdeutsche Volkspartei*) and some of its members, including politicians like Gustav Heinemann or Helene Wessel, became a target of the ministry's counter-intelligence activities. This election featured for the first time a five per cent clause, so that there was a good chance of – ideally – stopping unwanted smaller opposition parties from getting into parliament. But the BMG could not be seen to be directly involved. Instead, the tried and tested anticommunist VFF stepped into the breach. They openly defamed Heinemann and Wessel, who in terms of intra-German politics were in the neutral camp and as such in favour of a dialogue with the GDR, as antidemocratic and as supporters of communism (Creuzberger, 2009: p. 32). The accusations remained unchallenged. Joseph Wirth, the former Reich Chancellor and head of the 'League of Germans' (*Bund der Deutschen*, BdD), fared no better. On 18 September 1953 the All-German Ministry admitted in confidence to the Chancellery (*Kanzleramt*) that it had actively intervened in the election campaign and 'effected ... enlightenment of the Protestant part of the population with regard to the electoral alliance Wirth-Heinemann.'[14]

These were no isolated cases, undertaken perhaps in the aftermath of the violent suppression of the People's Revolt in the GDR on 17 June 1953, or in the face of a growing communist threat. The BMG can be shown to have employed similar operative measures as early as 1951 in connection with regional parliamentary elections (*Landtagswahlen*) in Lower Saxony (Friedel, 2001: pp. 130–140; Gereke, 1970: p. 383; Körner, 2003: pp. 45 f.). As late as 1961, the All-German Ministry indirectly interfered in election campaigns in the city of Hamburg. The actual dirty work was done by private anticommunist organisations. The target this time was the leftist 'German Peace Union' (*Deutsche Friedens-Union*, DFU). Activists in the services of the BMG exerted themselves to destabilise – in unconstitutional ways – a political organisation which at that time had not been banned. They used pre-emptive provocation to engineer police access to the *Union*, which would not have been possible even by semi-legal means

(Creuzberger, 2008: pp. 456 ff.). It is thus not altogether surprising to find the BMG confronted, as early as 1955, with accusations from the Ministry of the Interior to the effect that in its 'fight against communism [it employed] methods whose mental uniformity of combat conforms to the totalitarian ideology.' This was all the more true since the perceived and the actual communist threat bore no relation whatever to one another (Creuzberger, 2014a, 2014b b: pp. 96 f.; Creuzberger, 2009: pp. 28, 30 f.).

Government efforts to implant anticommunism deeply and solidly into the West German population did not rest solely with bodies like the All-German Ministry. Just as significant was the Federal Bureau for Homeland Service (*Bundeszentrale für Heimatdienst*, BfH). Like the BMG, to which it stood in a subordinate relation, it chose to meet communism on the battleground of journalism. Its jurisdiction included political education; it also trained disseminators whose job it was to raise awareness among the West German public of the dangers of communist infiltration from the East (For a more detailed discussion see Thomas, 2014; Hoffmann, 2017).

Public administrative measures to contain communism went to excessive lengths in the socio-political field as well. The so-called 'communist clause' provided an unambiguous basis for courts ruling on restitution for victims of Nazi persecution at both Federal and *Land* levels: communists, even those who could prove that they had suffered under National Socialism, were disqualified from official restitution (For a more detailed discussion see Spernol, 2014; Hoffmann, 2017). The intent behind this highly questionable measure was to prevent Federal welfare payments from benefiting the KPD or its sympathisers.

There can be little doubt that at this time Bonn's political apparatus counted the Catholic Church among its natural allies. The Church's decidedly negative stance vis-à-vis the materialist ideologies of socialism and communism went back to the nineteenth century; it had been hardened by the anti-clerical policies the Church had experienced in the Leninist-socialist Soviet Union since the 1920s. So it was only consistent for the Holy Office, the Catholic Church's highest dogmatic authority in the Vatican, to threaten excommunication – exclusion from the sacraments – to such of the faithful as had demonstrably supported communism, whether actively or passively (Brechenmacher, 2014: p. 177).

The Church complemented the state's fight against anticommunism on the media side. In West Germany and in West Berlin, Catholic clerics joined the struggle unreservedly. Walter Adolph, responsible for press relations in the Bishopric of Berlin, made systematic use of clerical media to attack communism in the eastern part of the city and the GDR as a whole, especially at the time of the construction of the Berlin Wall. Where education campaigns targeted readers in the western sectors, pastoral instructions were not to the forefront; they tended instead to concentrate on strengthening the spirit of the parliamentary-democratic basic order in the hearts of West Berlin's Catholics.[15]

But however determined it might be, there was always an element of pragmatism in the anticommunist conduct of the Catholic Church. No matter how strongly they were opposed to the communist ideology, the bishops in the eastern half of Berlin and in the GDR could not afford to lose sight of everyday pastoral structures. They could not – and so they did not want to – provoke endless conflict with the East German authorities. Berlin's bishops, Wilhelm Weskamm, Julius Döpfner and Alfred Bengsch, chose

different ways to tackle this fundamental dilemma. Under Alfred Bengsch, the 'Church's political abstinence and official neutrality … were traded for respect for the pastoral right to exist of the Church in the GDR and acceptance of the legal status quo in a sort of ecological niche.'[16]

Anticommunism had played an important social and political integrative role in the Federal Republic from the start. As such, refugees and expellees, as well as the associations into which they organised themselves, soon attracted the interest of the state. They played an important role in anticommunist activities, above all in the 1950s; but it would not be correct to describe them as the primary movers of unofficial anticommunism on the basis of their experiences alone (As done by Wehler, 2008: pp. 405 f.). If anything, this would be more true of people who had been expelled from their homes in East and Southeast Europe, not those who were 'resettled' in the 1950s. It should also be remembered that the anticommunist opinions of many expellees went back to the interwar period. They did not automatically blame just the Stalinist Soviet Union for their fate; initially at last they criticised all the Western Allies too. The gradual development of one-sided accusations against only the communist USSR 'was essentially a political product of the Adenauer government, one increasingly accepted by obliging expellee functionaries' (Schwartz, 2014: p. 169).

But expellee representatives were not necessarily undifferentiated in supporting anticommunism. Many made a clear distinction between anticommunism and anti-Slavic nationalism. In the early 1950s Rudolf Lodgman von Aue, spokesman of the association (*Landsmannschaft*) of Sudeten Germans, saw a chance for expellee Germans and for Slavs under Soviet rule to form an anticommunist alliance against Russian overlordship. His efforts culminated in the August 1950 with the signing of the 'Wiesbaden Agreement', in which he and General Lev Prchala, the exiled politician and president of the London-based 'Czech National Committee', agreed on 'peaceful compensation' for Sudeten Germans and Czechs after the liberation of the joint homeland from communist rule. Lodgman referred to the Agreement at the 'Conference of Sudeten Germans' in Stuttgart in 1952 and declared, addressing the Czech people, that the Sudeten Germans had 'not given up the belief in our return', and that they wanted to 'return as free people to a free land'. They did not want 'to come as those who bring retribution, but as those who want to bury a century of strife and hatred' (Schwartz, 2014: p. 172). So there clearly were refugee and expellee representatives who would not let themselves be harnessed to a crude anticommunism; who were able to differentiate between the communist governments of the states that had expelled them, and the peoples living under communist oppression.

Effects and changes – turning points in the political culture of anticommunism

We now come to the question of the effects of, and the changes to, anticommunism as it was practiced in political day-to-day life during the East–west conflict. In the years immediately after the founding of the Federal Republic, the targets of official anticommunist measures were West German communists who were controlled from East Berlin. These measures were not wholly unsuccessful. Even before the official KPD ban of 1956 there had been a noticeable reduction in the party's political significance. In Bonn, the Federal capital, it lost its parliamentary platform in the autumn of 1953 at the latest. Even in the *Land* of North Rhine-Westphalia (NRW), whose industrial belt

made it a communist stronghold, the KPD increasingly lost support. Between 1947 and 1954 voter approval for the party fell from 14 to 3.8% (A more detailed discussion on this and the following in: Kössler, 2014: pp. 230 ff.).

But, again, we need to differentiate. Against all expectations and despite intense government counter-intelligence activity, the Communist Party in NRW held its own into the mid-1950s, managing for example to triumph over Social Democrat competitors in local works councils. Initially at least official as well as societal anticommunism was not enough to achieve a consistent 'purging' of communists from the trades unions. Bonn could not necessarily rely on *Land* authorities to do its bidding in cases where it needed their cooperation to put anticommunist measures into practice. The 'communist clause' was not always applied in decisions over compensation payments for persecutees of National Socialism. While both the Bonn government and the individual *Land* Interior Ministries repeatedly called for restrictions to be applied to freedoms of assembly and of expression for communists, this was not necessarily always followed on the ground. In the city of Wuppertal the local KPD could use municipal facilities for its political work as late as 1956, despite an existing resolution to the contrary passed, no less, by the Interior Minister of NRW.

Both the impact and the scope of political and societal anticommunist engagement in West Germany need to be viewed in context. The media are yet another example. While the print media had a significant impact on the sensitisation of West Germans for anticommunism, the same is not true of film and television. People had been subjected to intense political propaganda during the 'Third Reich' and suffered deprivations in the post-war and the early years of the 'economic miracle'. What audiences wanted was light entertainment and distraction. Anticommunist topics were not popular (For more detail see Classen, 2014; Hoffmann, 2017).

This is a first indicator that anticommunism in the Federal Republic underwent a change from the early 1960s onwards. But a search for turning points in intra-German post-war history shows that the People's Revolt in the GDR on 17 June 1953 (the date would be the West's national commemorative holiday until reunification) had a significant impact on anticommunist culture in West Germany and a decisive effect on official anticommunist counter-intelligence activities. The politics of the Federal Ministry of All-German Affairs are of especial importance. For the BMG at that time, anticommunist roll-back politics always necessarily included intensive anti-SED activity.

In the early years, just after 1949, some of these could be quite naive. Opposition circles in the GDR were supplied with large amounts of propaganda material. BMG workers simply ignored the orders of the Federal Chancellery and sought direct contact with opposition circles, or provided support for western action groups that directed desinformation campaigns at the East from West Berlin. There was a real hope that reunification could be achieved very soon. In order for this to happen, BMG employees firmly believed, resistance inside the GDR had to be, as it were, brought to the boil. This opinion prevailed until 17 June 1953, when the East German authorities brutally clamped down on the opposition. Then it began to fade.

The All-German Ministry now experienced a slow change of mind. The more distant the longed-for day that would bring unity to the fatherland, the less trust did political Bonn put in anticommunist destabilising activities within the GDR. It became vital to avoid anything that might needlessly endanger the lives of the East German population.

This explains, for example, why at this time the BMG began to distance itself from the militant anticommunist actions of the CIA-backed 'Task Force against Inhumanity' (KgU). The Ministry preferred to continue its political-operational *Ostarbeit* under different premises by actively developing it from the West. This might involve increased radio propaganda and education, or balloon actions where propaganda leaflets could be taken across the border without risk as long as the wind was right (Creuzberger, 2008: pp. 142 f., 256–259, 264–273, 275–293, 543). But pursuing *Ostarbeit* from the West also meant a shift in focus towards combating the 'internal enemy' at home. The idea was that pushing back communist infiltration attempts within the Federal Republic would affect the SED regime, and weaken it in the long term (For further details see Creuzberger, 2008: pp. 431–458).

The building of the Berlin Wall on 13 August 1961 changed Bonn's anticommunist counter-intelligence, and lead to closer scrutiny. It also gave initial substantial impulses for the Federal government's policies for Germany (*Deutschlandpolitik*). New *Ostpolitik*, which was characterised by a much more differentiated view of communism, began under the Social-Democrat/Liberal coalition government under Willy Brandt from 1969 onwards, but the resulting significant shifts in political relations between the Federal Republic and its Eastern European neighbours are virtually unimaginable without the 1961 turning point.

The building of the Wall was a great disillusionment for West German society and politics. It spelled out that German reunification was off the political agenda, for the foreseeable future at least. There were inevitable repercussions for anticommunist political culture as it then was. This was particularly true for *Ostarbeit*, but also for anticommunist public relations and educational work. The *Gesamtdeutsches Ministerium* (BMG) lost the advantages of its erstwhile bolthole Berlin. Its undercover support for newspapers based in West Berlin was particularly hard hit. While comparatively risk-free contact across sector boundaries had been possible, West Berlin's free and democratic press had been an effective alternative to the government-controlled SED newspapers in the East (Creuzberger, 2008: p. 535).

But events in Berlin also forced the BMG to engage in self-critical reflexion about the results achieved so far. Suddenly, it had to take a long hard look at the things it had been telling the public on a daily basis in countless brochures, educational events and seminars about communism and the German question. The unvarnished analysis of an associated *Rednerdienst*, (a body subordinated to the BMG that organised lectures and other forms of political education for the general public) was frank in its conclusions: everything indicated that militant anticommunism would have to be abandoned, slowly but surely. An internal working paper counselled:

'… Supporting mere anticommunism was not enough. In the long run no nation would be able to create constructive political thoughts and actions based solely on an "anti-attitude". Rather, the rejection of communism needed to be the result of the affirmation of western values, the free and democratic basic order and the state called "Federal Republic of Germany". The German question could not be reduced to generating anticommunist feelings among the public, just as the task of the Ministry of All-German Affairs could not be reduced to merely advancing such feelings among the public, and to providing information about life in the Soviet-occupied zone. As an approach it was much too narrow. A broadening of the ministry's conception was long overdue…'[17]

As the 1960s unfolded, this was not to remain mere lip service. Bonn could not remain immune to the slow thaw in the international political situation between the two superpowers that began after 1961, certainly no later than 1963 after the end of the Cuban Missile Crisis. Even the BMG, which until then had been the guardian of classical anticommunism, felt the sign of the times. This development was also helped by its political leader. In October 1963, the liberal politician Erich Mende (FDP) took over as director of the All-German Department. After years of political intra-German stalemate, he hoped to achieve a success that would raise his party's political profile. This in turn would have repercussion on the political culture and the anticommunism of West Germany at the time (Creuzberger, 2008: pp. 347–358).

It was precisely this period that saw the first beginnings of a 'new *Ostpolitik*'. In 1963, there was the first of the Berlin agreements on the issue of passes (*Passierscheinabkommen*) – a measure which the Governing Mayor of Berlin, Willy Brandt (SPD), would never have managed to realise in this form without both the agreement of the Federal Cabinet and the firm support of Erich Mende, at that time Minister for All-German Affairs (For more detail see Creuzberger, 2008: pp. 359–367). The change was most visible on the ground: For the first time in over two years, West Berliners could now see family members and friends in the eastern part of the city during the Christmas period. But it was also the beginning of a gradual change in the attitude of the Federal government towards the GDR, and as such also towards communism.

Further important impulses were following, for the change in peoples' heads as well as to the political culture of anticommunism. In 1966 anticommunist clichés and resentments were still very widespread in West Germany. This made the public stance of Erich Mende, the All-German Minister whose Department was widely seen as the propagandistic spearhead of communist counter-intelligence, all the more unexpected. He shocked orthodox sections within the CDU/CSU with his opinions not only about the GDR, but about communism itself. In an interview with the Cologne-based newspaper *Kölner Stadt-Anzeiger* he candidly declared that 'much [has] happened … in Central Germany that demands our respect.' There was more. He clearly stated his distaste for the anticommunist machinations of the 1950s. His frankness broke political taboos.

'Under the protection of the free and democratic order of our country the maximum of discussion with communists and about communism must be possible. Precipitate police-state style meddling undermines belief in the rule of law, and not only that; it will give excuses to Ulbricht for cutting off Central Germany and its people from the Federal Republic.'[18]

It was not Mende's intention to voice fundamental doubts about the free western order. But his words reflected the *zeitgeist* of West Germany's changing political culture. Left-wing liberal journalistic and intellectual circles in particular increasingly urged that the country move on from obsolete, clichéd positions and seek new ways to engage the GDR. Then again, Erich Mende's media foray was quite an accurate reflection of what he had been attempting to achieve in his post in recent years. This included his work on the first Berlin agreement on the issue of passes (*Erstes Passierscheinabkommen*) in 1963, his endeavours for the ransom of prisoners (*Häftlingsfreikauf*), and his initiative to reanimate intra-German administrative contacts, which he initiated in the face of resistance from the Federal Ministry of the Interior. Many of his attempted changes to intra-German relations never advanced beyond the

early stages – they clashed with current circumstances, or with political constellations within the CDU/CSU-FDP coalition government – but even so his legacy was large. He changed the way people thought. Mende dared to think and to say many things that his Social Democrat successor in office would later be able take up and continue. Of course, by then the political conditions were very different (For more detail on Mende's work as All-German minister see Creuzberger, 2008: pp. 347–381. Source material on ransoming of prisoners has recently appeared in a new edition: Dokumente zur Deutschlandpolitik, 2012).

The decisive turning point in the evolution of anticommunist political culture in the Bonn republic was marked by Herbert Wehner (SPD). During his time at the head of the All-German Ministry, under the Grand Coalition government between December 1966 and September 1969, he began a fundamental reorientation in the approach to both communism and the GDR. What he could not implement himself would eventually be done by Willy Brandt's 'New Ostpolitik' after 1969 (A more detailed discussion on this and the following in: Creuzberger, 2008: pp. 382–429.).

To start with, Wehner took advantage of the fact that his assumption of office coincided with extensive personnel changes as a new generation of staff came into his Ministry. The result was a noticeable drop in the type of militant anticommunism that had profoundly marked the Ministry. The tide had turned: the secret anticommunist card index of allegedly suspect persons and organisations, based on denunciatory details and systematically put together since 1951, was summarily destroyed. When Wehner heard about the database, he had been livid. His displeasure grew immeasurably when he learned that he himself had been a victim of the BMG's collecting mania.

A new man at the top meant that the Ministry's funding policy was also up for re-negotiation. Outmoded projects like the 'propagandistic balloon actions' against the GDR, which had been carried out by the Ostbüros of SPD and CDU, were discontinued. Wehner pushed through the dissolution of a large number of private anticommunist apparatuses and agencies; those he thought worth retaining were integrated into his Ministry's periphery where they would be under close scrutiny. Among the latter were formerly highly influential organisations like the 'People's League for Freedom and Liberty' (VFF) and the 'Fact-finding Committee of liberal Lawyers' (UfJ), both of which were merged into the new 'Federal Institute for All-German Tasks' (Bundesanstalt für gesamtdeutsche Aufgaben, BfgA), as of 1 July 1969. The BfgA was subordinated to the BMG, and tasked with seeing to it that in future, there would be more objectivity and less polemics in intra-German politics. An almost absurd amount of political correctness was demanded in the early years. Staff had to take great pains to make sure that nothing whatever was published about the GDR that contained even a whiff of Cold War mentality.

Much the same was true of the BMG's desired reorientation in the support of research. Traditional anticommunist tendencies were removed, and there was a new emphasis on public relations work. The Ministry applied gentle pressure – not least through the medium of funding – to encourage West German scholars to drop the concept of totalitarianism that had dominated not only GDR and German, but also Eastern Studies (Ostforschung). It was to be replaced by a questionable systemic approach. This meant that the GDR and the other Eastern Bloc states were from now on to be measured only against their own standards (For more detail on the reorientation

under Herbert Wehner see Creuzberger, 2008: pp. 481–528). On 28 February 1969 Secretary of State in the BMG, Günter Wetzel (SPD), told research establishments that had received funding from the government:

'Scholars within the Federal Republic who are engaged in Eastern Studies need to know about the government's Eastern policies (*Ostpolitik*) [emphasis in original – S.C.] – not to facilitate opportunistic adjustment to government policies, but to find out factual information about the political situation and foreseeable trends for future developments. In a free state, the executive does not seek to control science; but in the interests of contemporary relevance alone, scientific research work has to relate to political constellations.'[19]

He left the decision to what extent they wanted to yield to these guidelines, if they wanted to continue enjoying generous funding from the BMG, to each institute's director.

In the late 1960s there were also other indicators to show that the BMG and the government apparatus in Bonn were ready to open up and renounce forms of political culture that went back to the height of the Cold War (For the following discussion see Creuzberger, 2008: pp. 406–429, 539 f.). In 1968, Minister Wehner demonstrated clear willingness to distance himself from the sort of anticommunism that had been practised for many years. In the Cabinet of the Grand Coalition he sounded out the possibility of trying for a constitutional readmission of a communist party in the Federal Republic. At the same time Wehner and his Ministry were the driving force behind a national security reform which would result in the decriminalisation of newspaper exchanges with the GDR and the distribution of East German press products on West German territory.

BMG Minister Wehner even caught the interest of Chancellor Kurt Georg Kiesinger (CDU) on the field of grand German politics with his unorthodox behaviour. Wehner was helped by the fact that he was generally seen as the Social Democrat's guarantor within the coalition government, and as such had a close relationship with the Federal Chancellor. In 1967 he managed to convince the head of government not simply to ignore the so-called Stoph letters. This was a radical new departure in the history of German-German relations, and as such in Bonn's attitude towards communist East Germany. Willi Stoph, the GDR's Minister President, hoped that his initiative might result in direct talks between East and West Germany in order to normalise relations, as well as to agree recognition of existing borders and non-proliferation of nuclear arms, or alternatively the halving of the armament budgets of both German states. Wehner and his Ministry would supply the political expert knowledge to help find answers to these delicate questions. But the hoped-for German-German dialogue never came about. Both sides' legal positions differed too widely where these issues were concerned. But for Wehner something positive still came out of the Stoph initiative: it had at least shown an increased willingness on the part of the Bonn government to engage in constructive contact with the communist GDR, even at higher political levels.

With this in mind, Herbert Wehner would spend the remaining 18 months of the Grand Coalition's time in government by concentrating his and his Ministry's efforts on issues that were lower down the pecking order of practical politics. Shortly before the national elections in the autumn of 1969 he achieved a momentous breakthrough. In secret talks with East Berlin the BMG had managed to negotiate a limited, low-level

transport agreement that did not require official recognition of the GDR under international law. A stretch of railway in the area of Gerstungen, on East German territory, would be re-activated to be used for West German potash transports. At first glance, it is not a spectacular agreement. Its special value lay in the fact that it was part of a package deal. Two contentious German-German cases were to be taken up and settled at the same time. One of them was the stalled case of the so-called 'Postal Talks' (*Postberatungen*): for a while now East Berlin had demanded compensation payments for the additional cost of West German mail to the GDR. At the same time was hoped that German-German passenger travel might be rendered easier. Despite continuing reservations about official recognition, the two states had by now developed a working relationship that was close enough for official talks to happen at government level where humanitarian issues were discussed. Apart from the changing international parameters, this process was greatly eased by a gradually evolving willingness on the part of the Federal government and the All-German Ministry to scrutinise and question traditional anticommunist defensiveness.

During the last phase of the Grand Coalition government the impulses for new domestic and German-German measures primarily originated from within the BMG. But was not the Grand Coalition which would breathe new and concrete life into them. 'New *Ostpolitik*' under the Social-Democrat/Liberal coalition government of Federal Chancellor Willy Brandt (SPD) and Foreign Secretary Walter Scheel (FDP) would pick up the baton and continue the race. They took up the ideas, developed them further and transformed them into solid agreements. The BMG – now renamed 'Ministry for German-German Relations' (*Ministerium für innerdeutsche Beziehungen*) under the new administration – now played a more subordinate role. From now on, *Ostpolitik* and intra-German policies would be a matter for the Chancellery and the Foreign Office.

Concluding remarks

State-controlled anticommunism as it had been practised since 1949 increasingly became a phenomenon of history, one that reflected in a very specific way a particular time in the early years of the Federal Republic and its political culture. There can be little doubt that it was primarily a reaction to the division of Germany, to the circumstances of the Cold War and the uncertainty of Bonn's political leaders in the face of the political and ideological susceptibility of its own population. But there were also elements in it that went back to the period before the war.

The Ministry for All-German Affairs held a special place among the government departments with a right to define public anticommunist counter-intelligence. At the height of the Cold War during the 1950s it concentrated on advancing – both politically and financially – the activities of private bodies, and as such had a significant influence on their anticommunist thinking. Until 17 June 1953 the Ministry's anticommunist measures primarily concentrated on antagonising opposition circles within the GDR against the SED regime. This policy was successively faded out because the BMG did not want carelessly to risk lives. The Ministry and its associated private agencies then shifted their activities to the – much less risky – struggle against internal communist enemies within the Federal Republic. This struggle at times involved practices that appear highly ambivalent when viewed through a democratic or constitutional lens.

There were substantial shifts from the late 1960s onwards. They can be ascribed – apart from the disposition of the political decision-makers – to another contingent factor: with the increasing political and economic consolidation of West Germany came a correspondingly smaller need to use 'psychological warfare' to 'immunise' the ever more saturated population against the 'mental danger' of communism. This was all the more true from the early 1970s onwards, when in a parallel development the global political situation swung round from confrontation to détente between East and West, also impacting the GDR's *Westarbeit*, which until then had served to legitimise West German anticommunism. And so, a paradigm shift took place in East Berlin as well: from then on the primary goal would now no longer be political system change in the Federal Republic, but instead official recognition of the GDR under international law by the government in Bonn (For a more detailed discussion on the problem of East German policies towards West Germany in the late 1960s and early 1970s see Wentker, 2007: pp. 233–248, 319–345).

Endnotes

[1]The trial at the Federal Constitutional Court (*Bundesverfassungsgericht*), which ended with the ban of the German Communist Party (KPD) in West Germany on 17 August 1956.

[2]Peter von Zahn to Friedrich von Zahn, 10 October 1955, in: Bundesarchiv Koblenz (BAK), N 1524, Peter von Zahn Korrespondenzakten.

[3]Friedrich von Zahn to Peter von Zahn, Bonn, 24 October 1955, in: BAK, N 1524 Peter von Zahn, Korrespondenzakten.

[4]Cf. Abschrift (Anlage zum Schreiben des BMI vom 12.3.1951 – Gesch.Z.1306C, unterzeichnet vom BM Dr. Lehr), Abgrenzung der Zuständigkeit auf dem Gebiet des Verfassungsschutzes zwischen dem Bundesministerium für gesamtdeutsche Fragen, dem Bundesminister des Innern und dem Bundesamt für Verfassungsschutz, in: BAK, B 137, Akte 16428.

[5]Cf. 'Im Bogen der Zeit. Erinnerungen des Dr. Ewert Freiherr von Dellingshausen. Teil II. Aufgaben im Bundesministerium für gesamtdeutsche Fragen. Bonn 1984/85', 'VS – Vertraulich, amtlich geheimhalten', p. 25, 31, 90–93, 132, 137, in: BAK, N 1515, Akte 2.

[6]Ibid.

[7]I A 1, Bonn, 14.9.1953, geheim, Vermerk, Betr.: Psychologische Kriegsführung in Deutschland nach den Bundestagswahlen am 6.9.1953, pp. 1 f., in: BAK, B 137, Akte 16428.

[8]Cf. Appendix: Denkschrift über Probleme der 'Psychologischen Kriegführung' nach der Aufnahme der diplomatischen Beziehungen zwischen der Bundesrepublik und der Sowjetunion, pp. 1–4, in: Ibid. The document mentions fears about a possible increase of propagandistic activities by the USSR in the foreseeable future with the aim of destabilising the Federal Republic of Germany. Recent work by scholars about Soviet policies towards Germany has shown that such misgivings were well founded, see Wettig, 2005: p. 199).

[9]I 1, Bonn, 31.3.1960, geheim, Vermerk, Betr.: Geistige Auseinandersetzung mit dem Kommunismus und psychologische Verteidigung; document quoted: Koordinierungsversuche innerhalb der Bundesressorts und Vorschläge aus Sicht des BMG-Referats I 1, pp. 15–18, quote at p. 17, in: BAK, B 137, Akte 16430.

[10]Cf. 'Im Bogen der Zeit. Erinnerungen des Dr. Ewert Freiherr von Dellingshausen. Teil II. Aufgaben im Bundesministerium für gesamtdeutsche Fragen. Bonn 1984/85', VS – Vertraulich, amtlich geheimhalten, p. 52, in: BAK, N 1515, Akte 2.

[11]I 2, Bonn, 25.10.1950, Vermerk, pp. 2–5, in: BAK, B 137, Akte 1549.

[12]Cf. Vermerk über die Ressortbesprechung im Bundesministerium des Innern am 11.6.1952, Gegenstand: Maßnahmen gegen die Einfuhr kommunistischen Propagandamaterials aus der SBZ und gegen die Herstellung kommunistischen Materials im Inlande, p. 5, in: BAK, B 137, Akte 1378.

[13]Tagung der Länderreferenten für gesamtdeutsche Fragen im Bundeshaus Berlin am 12.2.1958, Ref. MR Dr. Freiherr von Dellingshausen, Bonn, Thema: Die kommunistische Infiltration – Fragen ihrer Bekämpfung, p. 4, in: BAK, B 137, Akte 1232.

[14]Z 1 K an den Staatssekretär des Bundeskanzleramtes, z. Hd. Von Ministerialdirigent Gumbel o.V.i.A, Bonn, 18.9.1953, Betr.: Gesetzgeberische Vorhaben sowie Vorgänge von allgemein-politischer Bedeutung, p. 2, in: BAK, B 137, Akte 4912.

[15]Ibid. pp. 183 f., 186–196.

[16]Ibid., p. 186.

[17]Büro Bonner Berichte, Rednerdienst, Bonn, 18.9.1961, Vermerk, pp. 13 f., in: BAK, B 137, Akte 16207.

[18]Erich Mende. Keine Angst vor den Kommunisten. Interview des Kölner Stadt-Anzeiger mit dem Vizekanzler. In: Kölner Stadt-Anzeiger on 4 February 1966.

[19]Ansprache des Herrn Staatssekretärs Dr. Wetzel anläßlich der Begegnung mit den leitenden Persönlichkeiten der vom Referat I 10 betreuten wissenschaftlichen Einrichtungen am 28.2.1969 in Bonn, p. 2, in: BAK, B 137, Akte 7374.

Competing interests

Cold War Studies, Devided Germany, Anticommunism

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