

# Global histories

a student  
journal

volume vi  
issue 1  
2020





# Global histories: a student journal

Volume 6, Issue 1 (2020)  
ISSN: 2366-780X

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Founded in 2015 by students of the M.A. program Global History at Freie Universität Berlin and Humboldt-Universität zu Berlin, *Global Histories* is a Berlin based bi-annual journal published in association with the Freie Universität Berlin.

Freie Universität Berlin  
 Global Histories: A Student  
 Journal Friedrich-Meinecke-Institut  
 Koserstraße 20  
 14195 Berlin

## SPONSORS

This journal project is realized with generous support from Freie Universität Berlin, specifically from the Center for Global History of the Friedrich-Meinecke- Institut, the OJS e-publishing project at CeDiS, and the ZEDAT hostmaster team.

## PUBLICATION FREQUENCY

The journal is published twice yearly in spring and autumn. Please see the website for further details.

## SCOPE AND PURPOSE

In response to the increasing interest in the ‘global’ as a field of inquiry, a perspective, and an approach, *Global Histories: a Student Journal* aims to offer a platform for debate, discussion, and intellectual exchange for a new generation of scholars with diverse research interests. Global history can provide an opportunity to move beyond disciplinary boundaries and methodological centrisms, both in time and space. As students of global history at Freie Universität Berlin and Humboldt-Universität zu Berlin, our interest lies not in prescribing what global history is and what it is not, but to encourage collaboration, cooperation, and discourse among students seeking to explore new intellectual frontiers.

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## PEER REVIEW STATUS AND ETHICS

This journal provides immediate open access to its content on the principle that making research freely available to the public supports a greater global exchange of knowledge. All articles which appear in this issue, with the exception of editorial content, were subject to peer review.

## CONTACT INFORMATION

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Dear reader,

Although we usually work with articles and pieces that engage with the different approaches to global history, regardless of their regional or temporal focus, this issue of *Global histories* deals specifically with the connections between Latin America and Germany during the Global Cold War. Students from the Latin American Institute of the Freie Universität Berlin produced the five articles in this issue, and the *Global histories* editorial team is now glad to publish it and continue with this student-run initiative. We hope you enjoy it.

- Alina Rodríguez (on behalf of the *Global histories* editorial team)



## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

We would like to thank Prof. Dr. Markus-Michael Müller from the Lateinamerika Institut for approaching us and proposing this collaboration. We are especially grateful to the authors published in this edition with whom we have had an extensive and fruitful collaboration throughout the production of this journal: Markus Buderath, Vera Dickhoff, Carl Magnus Michel, Janaina Ferreira dos Santos, Marie Lena Holthaus, Anairis Díaz Maceo, Johanna Habel, David Kristen, Georg Sturm, Vincent Kammer and Carla Venneri.

We would also like to acknowledge the dedicated work of the editorial board, this journal could not be realized without their committed contributions: David A. Bell, Joseph Biggerstaff, Jack Clarke, Diego Dannemiller, Ruby Guyot, Natasha Klimenko, Sam Plumb, Kian J. Riedel, Billy Sawyers and Simone Steadman-Gantous.

Finally, we are grateful for the continued support and assistance for this project by the Freie Universität Berlin, particularly the Global History faculty, chaired by Prof. Dr. Sebastian Conrad, and the Online Journal Systems team at CeDiS.



## INTRODUCTION

Looking back half a century in history reveals a string of events considered decisive for the era commonly referred to as the Cold War. Developments such as the military coups in Chile and Argentina, the Nicaraguan Revolution or the Guatemalan Civil War are usually contextualized within this discussion, while simultaneously proving that this period of time was by no means a peaceful one.

Traditionally, historical and political academic research has focused on the dualism of the two superpowers, with Europe as the epicenter of conflict. This special edition, however, follows the more recent approach of categorizing the Cold War as a global phenomenon with a special focus on the “third world.” Crucial for this perspective is the work of Odd Arne Westad, especially his 2005 volume *The Global Cold War*.<sup>12</sup> By focusing on the dynamics in and between countries at the periphery of the traditional bipolar system and its arena, one can begin to appreciate the complexity of

this ideological, military and cultural conflict.

To this end, all five articles of this edition are taking a closer look at the relationships between state and non-state actors in the GDR (German Democratic Republic), the FRG (Federal Republic of Germany) and Latin American countries. Common ground for the studies is this relational approach, which draws attention to the complex dynamics between all actors involved. The starting point for the research was Berlin, a place of particular importance during these decades, and the Latin American Institute of the Free University of Berlin, which, having been founded in the context of the Cold War, celebrates its 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary this year. Furthermore, the articles of this issue all emphasize political and cultural forces with discussions of power relations and importance of ideological aspects.

The first article by Vera Dickhoff, Markus Buderath and Carl Magnus Michel makes the case for a novel analytical approach to understanding Cold War phenomena. On the basis of an actor-relationship analysis of project-based development aid financed by the West German organization Brot für die Welt in Colombia, they intend to illustrate arguments as to why applying conventional post-Cold-War theory to the Cold War era could deliver theoretical benefits. Specifically, the authors suggest that Saskia Sassen’s thesis on the potential globality of localized actors and struggles is not, as initially

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1 Odd A. Westad, *The Global Cold War* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005).

2 Further reassessment of the Cold War period based on new conceptual frameworks can be found in Richard H. Immerman and Petra Goedde, *The Oxford Handbook of the Cold War* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013).

suggested by Sassen, bound to the modern phase of globalization. Using the structural idea of global assemblages, the article endeavors to show how localized political interactions could be constitutive of a Global Cold War, thus linking Sassen's theoretical approach with that of Odd Arne Westad.

The subsequent article by Janaina Ferreira dos Santos and Marie Holthaus puts its focus on two state-level actors by analyzing the cultural dimension of the Global Cold War, taking as a starting point the cultural and scientific cooperation between the GDR and post-revolutionary Nicaragua in the 1980s. Since cultural and scientific knowledge were crucial categories of the East-West division, greatly influencing domestic as well as foreign policies, exchange in these areas was an important part of East Germany's diplomatic efforts. The authors focus on the complex and contradictory nature of cooperation in these fields, highlighting further how the export of "official culture" from the GDR to Nicaragua reflects a form of both practical cooperation and ideological propaganda.

Cooperation also plays a role when it comes to the third article by Johanna Habel and Anairis Díaz Maceo, which focuses on the continuity and change of ideological structures in the Global Cold War by taking a closer look at the solidarity communication between Cuba and the GDR before and after German reunification. In the first part of the article, the authors lay out the

communication of solidarity between the Cuban state and the GDR, and to citizens in both countries, in the period of 1974 to 1990. This constructed solidarity affected the relations between the two states after the events surrounding German reunification until 1995, the structure of relations shifting from a state level to solidarity and friendship groups.

The fourth article by Georg Sturm and David Kristen also deals with solidarity, analyzing the instrumentalization of Chilean exiles in the GDR and conducting a content analysis of media coverage. Realizing a quantitative as well as qualitative examination of the newspaper *Neues Deutschland* articles dealing with Chile and Chilean exiles in the GDR after the 1973 military coup, the article shows the extraordinary importance of Chile for the GDR. The authors argue that the solidarity with Chile and the admission of refugees was stylized in order to underline the moral superiority of the GDR's ideological framework in the context of the Cold War. In addition to that, the article suggests that the related media coverage can be understood as a tool for system stabilization throughout the legitimation of the GDR's political work, especially among its own population.

Finally, the fifth article by Vincent Kammer and Carla Venneri explores the bilateral relations of the Federal Republic of Germany with Paraguay during the Stroessner dictatorship (1954-1989), one of the longest and most repressive regimes in Latin America. It argues

that relations between the two states, shaped by anti-communist discourses and oriented towards economic goals, centered on development projects. The paper explores the technical and financial aid provided by the FRG to Paraguay in several economic sectors, relying on diplomatic communications between the two states as sources.

All articles, as well as the overall idea for this special issue, are the result of the seminar “Latin America’s Global Cold War,” given by Prof. Dr. Markus-Michael Müller at the Latin America Institute of the Free University of Berlin. The interdisciplinary profile of the seminar participants, including students of history, international relations, ethnology and political science, made this pluralistic approach possible. With this diverse background and the unifying focus on Latin America, the eleven authors aim to deliver a contribution to Cold War research, placing these events in a global perspective, both in the geographical and academic sense.

## I. COLOMBIA

# Mapping the Global Cold War: the unfolding of *Brot für die Welt* project no. 2746 in Colombia, 1977-1984

by

MARKUS BUDERATH, VERA DICKHOFF  
AND CARL MAGNUS MICHEL



## ABSTRACT

With this article, we set out to make a case for a novel analytical approach to understanding Cold War phenomena, through linking Odd Arne Westad's Global Cold War thesis with Saskia Sassen's understanding of assemblages. In 1976, the West German Christian aid organization Brot für die Welt received a request for funding for the Colombian organization Encuentro/Dimensión Educativa and its work in liberating evangelism and popular education. This article sets off from Brot für die Welt's project no. 2764 to pursue an analysis of the project's unfolding at the local level, attempting to map one aspect of the era increasingly known as the Global Cold War. The work is based on archived materials, related to project no. 2764 and located in Berlin, and treats the project as an assemblage as the basis of the analysis. Specifically, this article puts forward the idea that the Cold War at large can be seen as an assemblage from a macro-analytical viewpoint, and that the project no. 2764 is an example of a constituent assemblage that is partially global in both the terms of its transactions and in the character of its content. Local actors, global actors and the superstructure of the Cold War all influence, or interact with, both of these aspects and therefore warrant a structural analysis.

## ABOUT THE AUTHORS

Markus Buderath, Vera Dickhoff and Carl Magnus Michel are currently all in the process of obtaining their master's degree in Latin American studies at the Free University of Berlin.

Having a background in interdisciplinary political and social sciences and a degree from Sciences Po Paris, Carl has recently been focusing on diaspora and cultural studies in the British context. Vera previously studied politics and law and currently focuses on renewable energy development and environmental peacebuilding in Colombia. Markus, holding a master's degree in conflict studies, has prior experience in researching assemblages and actor-relationships surrounding police reform efforts in the context of the Mexican drug war.

## INTRODUCTION

This study proposes that the Cold War in Latin America, and elsewhere, was characterized by complex actor-relationships that challenge the core/periphery and local/global dichotomies in which Cold War politics are often framed. That is to say, rather than a “contest between two military superpowers over military power and strategic control,”<sup>1</sup> the Cold War was in fact a global entanglement of contestations, negotiations and assemblages of a large number of local, national, supranational, public, private and religious actors. Odd Arne Westad, who pioneered the term Global Cold War in his 2006 volume of the same title, claims that “the most important aspects of the Cold War were neither military nor strategic, nor Europe-centered, but connected to political and social *development* in the Third World,”<sup>2</sup> even going so far as to argue that the modern notion of the “Third World” was itself a product of the Global Cold War.<sup>3</sup> The so-called liberation theology, seen as one manifestation of this sociopolitical development, shall be the focal point of this study. Specifically, this article argues that the development efforts of the German protestant

organization Brot für die Welt (BfdW) in Bogotá, Colombia, from 1977 to 1984, which aimed to influence liberation theology movements in the region, were largely shaped by the *interactions* of local and global actors, thus forming an assemblage that fits within the parameters of the Global Cold War argument.

To this end, we are interested in the notion of project aid (*Projekthilfe*) as a specific form of development aid.<sup>4</sup> Social development rather than industrial advancement should facilitate the lens through which we analyze the unfolding process of BfdW project no. 2764. The project first set up in 1977 with the stated objective of providing Colombian youth with an informal education built around the notion of liberating evangelism (*befreiende Evangelisation*). Notably, the idea that “Christianity should accept a political commitment in favor of social change”<sup>5</sup> became increasingly popular among (Catholic) Latin American churches in the 1970s; meanwhile in Germany, BfdW, originally constituted as a one-time donor event on December 12<sup>th</sup>, 1959 in Berlin, increasingly saw itself subjected to the so-called Third World Movement (*Dritte Welt Bewegung*) and was debating what

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- 1 Odd Arne Westad, *The Global Cold War: Third World interventions and the making of our times* (Cambridge University Press, 2007), 396.
  - 2 Westad, *The Global Cold War*, 396. Emphasis added.
  - 3 Westad, *The Global Cold War*, 403.

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- 4 Dieter Nohlen, *Lexikon Dritte Welt* (Baden-Baden: Signal Verlag Frevert, 1980), 296.
  - 5 *Encyclopedia of Global Religion*, s.v. “Liberation Theology,” by Malik Tahar Chaouch, DOI: <http://dx.doi.org/10.4135/9781412997898.n413>

role the Church ought to play in the context of the Global Cold War.<sup>6</sup>

While the organization's name and its 1959 slogan "People are hungry for bread! Anyone who tries to ignore it, is sinning [*Menschen hungern nach Brot! Wer darüber hinwegzusehen versucht, versündigt sich*]"<sup>7</sup> suggest a primary focus on food security, from the mid-1960s BfdW established goals and other fields of action that went beyond that, including education, health, human rights and gender equality. They described their work as aspiring to support all poor and marginalized people, regardless of their religion and religious denomination.<sup>8</sup> With this new focus on project aid, and Latin America as one region on which the organization would focus, "contacts had now also been made with socially committed Christian groups and ecumenical movements that asked for help for another form of social work: the trend was 'away from the institutions—towards programs with a high degree of personal and shared responsibility of the target group.' No schools, but non-formal

educational programs (*educación popular*)."<sup>9</sup> This rather drastic change in the organization's strategy and ambitions sets the backdrop against which we decided to focus on project no. 2746. The fact that BfdW, as a protestant institution, was going to work with a Catholic organization and, by doing so, promote Paulo Freire's highly contested educational methods<sup>10</sup>, further made for an interesting case of inquiry.

To this end, this article intends to carefully examine the unfolding process of BfdW project no. 2746; specifically, this research is concerned with the interactions and possible contestations between the involved actors, as well as the goals, ambitions and justifications of the relevant project partners. By focusing on the relationships and means of engagement of the respective actors, we aim to illustrate and contextualize the ways in which BfdW's project efforts in 1970s Colombia meant that "localized actors and struggles [were] constitutive of new types of

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6 Nuscheler, 1993 in Claudia Olejniczak, *Die Dritte-Welt-Bewegung in Deutschland: konzeptionelle und organisatorische Strukturmerkmale einer neuen sozialen Bewegung*, (Wiesbaden: DUV, Dt. Univ.-Verlag, 1998), 76.

7 "Die Geschichte von Brot für die Welt," Brot für die Welt, accessed January 22, 2020 <https://www.brot-fuer-die-welt.de/ueber-uns/chronik/>

8 "Die Geschichte von Brot für die Welt," Brot für die Welt.

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9 Hahn, n. d. in Wilfried Veeseer. „Brot Für Die Welt“ - Quo Vadis?: Eine Kritische Untersuchung; Unterstützt das Evangelische Hilfswerk Revolutionäre Befreiungsideologien? (Wetzlar: Deutsche Evangelische Allianz, Informationsdienst Dokumentation 1985), 37, DS 5.

10 *Educación popular* is a critical pedagogical approach that links education to notions of class and social struggle. Brazilian educator Paulo Freire, with his 1968 publication *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, is often seen as one of the main pioneers of this concept.

global politics and subjectivities,”<sup>11</sup> to borrow from Saskia Sassen’s analysis of local-global actor relationships in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. By linking Westad’s Global Cold War thesis with Sassen’s thesis on local-global assemblages, this research further aims to show that the “globality” of the Cold War allowed for “cross-border institutional spaces [and] powerful imaginaries enabling aspirations to transboundary political practice even when the actors involved [were] basically localized.”<sup>12</sup> Despite these theoretical-conceptual efforts, we are not trying to make any claims as regards the universality of our argument, but merely intend to provide a micropolitical analysis of a local-global assemblage in 1970s Colombia and, therefore, to make a case as to why the Westad-Sassen conceptual approach might be useful in analyzing Cold War phenomena.

The focus on religious actors from a political rather than theological perspective is an especially interesting departure point for the mapping of local-global assemblages. Sassen’s idea of modernity, and therefore for this article the Third World as striving to attain modernity, is first and foremost linked to a disassembly of the nation state. The subnational, local and global assemblages therefore become the primary markers for the analysis of organizational

structures and processes. Talking about Oxfam, Amnesty International and Forest Watch as examples of global civil-society struggles, to which we could add BfdW, Sassen identifies the “linking together of multiple local (non-cosmopolitan) efforts and their global projection through a major organization with worldwide recognition”<sup>13</sup> as their key organizational feature. She claims that the “rise or global expansion of old and new organized religions also follows this pattern.”<sup>14</sup> In defining BfdW as constituent of an organized religion, combined with their self-conception as a global platform uniting “distant neighbors”<sup>15</sup> (localized actors) in a global “struggle,” we explore an approach to position religious actions in the Global Cold War context. The fight for popular education in Colombia can definitely be seen as a “civil-society struggle” that is global in its significance but local in its form taken on by BfdW project no. 2764. To this end, the idea of the distant neighbor (*der ferne Nächste*) is essential to what Sassen calls “powerful imaginaries”, as it provides a warrant for funding projects that includes a political undertone in supposedly apolitical organizations.

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11 Saskia Sassen, “Local Actors in Global Politics,” *Current Sociology* 52, no. 4 (July 2004): 650.

12 Sassen, “Local Actors,” 655.

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13 Saskia Sassen, “Organized Religions in Our Global Modernity (Critical Essay),” *PMLA* 126, no. 2 (2011): 456.

14 Sassen, „Organized Religions,” 456.

15 Konstanze Evangelia Kemnitzer, *Der ferne Nächste: Zum Selbstverständnis der Aktion “Brot für die Welt,”* (Stuttgart: Kohlhammer, 2008), 206-207.

## BROT FÜR DIE WELT PROJECT NO. 2764

This study is concerned with BfdW project no. 2764, which carries the official title “Liberating Evangelism and Education” (*Befreiende Evangelisation und Erziehung*) and was set up in response to a request for financial support<sup>16</sup> by the Bogotá-based Colombian organization Encuentro – Investigation Services and Action for Education (*Servicio de Investigación y Acción Educativa*). Encuentro later changed its name to Dimensión Educativa, the reasons for which will be discussed in the following chapter, which is why the information and citations used in this paper may not be consistent as regards the organization’s name. In a BfdW briefing note dated October 21<sup>st</sup>, 1976<sup>17</sup> Encuentro was described as a “charitable organization, which consists of a large team of committed Christians (priests and laypersons) who have come together to live with disadvantaged members of society, and to reflect upon and preach faith in Jesus Christ as a liberating activity.” Project no. 2764 in particular aimed to provide youth groups with “tangible solutions” to the systemic issues that they were facing, and as such largely relied on literacy

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16 The details of this request and the project financing at large will be discussed in section three.

17 ADE, BfdW-P2746: BfdW project description to be discussed at meeting, 21.10.1976.

conscientization<sup>18</sup> (*bewusstseinsbildene Alphabetisierung*) to live up to the new Christian responsibility (*neue christliche Verpflichtung*) that the organization saw itself as subjected to.<sup>19</sup>

To this effect, Encuentro initially requested financial aid for three individual projects, all of which aimed to provide youth groups with literacy conscientization programs. Specifically, the projects intended to support about 50 youth groups in setting up literacy and evangelization programs, as well as community centers and activities. Cultural activities were also meant to be part of the programs. In order to train and prepare the tutors for these activities, Encuentro planned to organize nine 1-week training seminars in different parts of Colombia, in which the participants

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18 Paulo Freire considered that education, and in that sense also literacy, cannot be taught without “a concept of man and the world” (Freire 1970 in Ryan 1974: 67). To this end, Freire believed that teaching adults to read and write must include a sort of historical-materialist teaching of what they are reading and writing for. In other words, Freire believed that, through becoming literate, one can also become class-conscious and aware of one’s sociopolitical standing. For further reading on the subject matter see: John W. Ryan, “Paulo Freire, Literacy Through Conscientization,” *Literacy Discussion* (1974): <https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/ED114790.pdf>

19 ADE, BfdW-P2746: BfdW project description to be discussed at meeting, 21.10.1976.

would be trained in such matters as group dynamics, youth psychology, faith and alphabetization. In parallel to these activities, Encuentro sought to use the project funds to launch a research and publication program, which included the publication of six magazines –entitled Encuentro– on evangelization and education efforts (*Erziehungsarbeit*).<sup>20</sup>

For all of the above, Encuentro requested a total of 72.000 Deutsche Mark, or \$US28.000.<sup>21</sup> The request was directed to BfdW through the World Council of Churches (WCC), which, as the following chapter will show, assumed an intermediary role in the negotiation process of the project financing. Prior to consulting the WCC, Encuentro had already asked the German-based Catholic organization MISEREOR, as well as the US-based Catholic Relief Service for financial aid.<sup>22</sup> By the time that the request reached the WCC and then later BfdW through the WCC, however, Encuentro had not yet received a reply from these organizations. In the initial letter that Encuentro sent the WCC on April 13<sup>th</sup>, 1976 (which was later redirected to BfdW), Encuentro laid out their reasoning as to why they, as a Roman Catholic organization, would be reaching out to the WCC, a product

of the ecumenical movement and a Christian organization that the Catholic Church is not a member of.<sup>23</sup> The letter was written by Mario Peresson who, apart from being the head of Encuentro, was also a well-known Colombian theologian.<sup>24</sup> Peresson said the following about Encuentro's ecumenical ambitions:

[... The] principle and the fundamental attitude of [Encuentro] has been that of the evangelical commitment to the liberation of the oppressed, which should lead us towards ecumenical work, with all Christians who want to live and understand our faith in Jesus Christ as a historical act of liberation (*acción histórica liberadora*).<sup>25</sup>

Shortly after this correspondence, i.e. before the WCC could react to Encuentro's request, *Adveniat*<sup>26</sup>, speaking on

20 ADE, BfdW-P2746: BfdW project description...

21 ADE, BfdW-P2746: BfdW project description...

22 ADE, BfdW-P2746: Letter Mario Peresson to the WCC, 31.08.1976, 2.

23 ADE, BfdW-P2746: Letter Encuentro to the WCC, 13.04.1976

24 See Juan Alberto Casas, ed., *A hombros de gigantes. Maestros de la Facultad de Teología de la Pontificia Universidad Javeriana* (Bogotá: Editorial Pontificia Universidad Javeriana, Facultad de Teología, 2017), 263-281, <https://kaired.org.co/archivo/3756>.

25 ADE, BfdW-P2746: Letter Mario Peresson to the WCC, 31.08.1976, 2.

26 *Adveniat*: "pastoral help for Latin America, est. 1961 in Essen, Germany; support of the (Catholic) Church in Latin America and its pastoral projects through financial aid[...]" in Nohlen,

behalf of *MISEREOR*<sup>27</sup>, responded to Encuentro's letter from August 31<sup>st</sup>, 1976 and explained that they would not be able to support the project in question due to its "orientation"<sup>28</sup>. Specifically, the letter states that Encuentro had requested help for a similar project in the past, which Adveniat had declined to support, and which was eventually shut down by the respective ecclesiastical authority in Colombia (*Jerarquía Eclesiástica Colombiana*). The letter goes on to state that this prior project did not have the support of either the Archbishop of Bogota, Cardinal Anibal Muñoz Duque, or the president of the Colombian Episcopal Conference (*Conferencia Episcopal de Colombia*), and since the current project that Encuentro were seeking support for had not changed much in character, Adveniat would not be able to support it either. These negotiation processes are illustrative of the complex relationships that were at play in the context of global aid assemblage P2746. Organizational conflicts and relationships, as well as personal ones, all influenced the unfolding process of BfdW project no. 2746 (see figure 1). As chapter four will show, the conflict with the

Catholic Church, albeit an expected consequence given the positioning of the Vatican in Cold War politics, was a particular burden to the project in question.

Given Adveniat's reaction, Encuentro convened with the consulting agency *Proyectos – Special Development Study Group* to revise Encuentro's financing plan. *Proyectos* then sent both the new financing plan and an evaluation of Encuentro to the WCC on April 1<sup>st</sup>, 1977. Importantly, the financing plan was designed in such a way as to make sure that "each project would be financed by a different donor agency" and, as specified in the letter accompanying the plan, that "[the WCC could] change projects to another donor agency and vice versa, but this [was now] laid into [the WCC's] hands." In the context of this arrangement, BfdW would contribute US\$37.040 of a total of US\$144.040, the remaining sum of which was divided among the following other organizations: Cebemo (US\$64.500); Entraide et Fraternité (US\$14.000); Adventsaktie (US\$9.500), HEKS (US\$9.000); Vastenaktie (US\$10.000).<sup>29</sup>

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"Lexikon Dritte Welt", 10.  
 27 MISEREOR: "Episcopal Aid organization, est. 1958 in Aachen, Germany; Christian development work in education and health; foreign and missionary programs through Adveniat;" in Nohlen, "Lexikon Dritte Welt", 247.  
 28 ADE, BfdW-P2746: Letter Adveniat to Mario Peresson, 07.05.1976.

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29 CEBEMO: Central agency for joint financing development programs; Dutch agency based in Den Haag, the Netherlands. See ADE, BfdW-P2746: Letter CEBEMO to BfdW, 07.06.1977; Entraide et Fraternité: Belgian Catholic development organization founded in 1961. Entraide et Fraternité, "Présentation," accessed 29 March 2020, <https://www.entraide.be/-Entraide-et->

In other words, BfdW was only responsible for about 26 percent of the overall project financing. While the money that they provided still went to the activities as discussed in the previous paragraphs, the fact that they formed part of a larger donor consortium is nonetheless important when considering the arguments advanced in this article, as it goes to show that our illustration of global aid assemblage P2764 is, in a sense, incomplete. That is to say, the negotiation processes and actor-relationships that we discuss in this article only account for a share of Encuentro's overall project efforts and, as such, only illustrate part of a larger endeavor. This, however, does not render our argument void, as our interest lies not so much in the particular weight of BfdW as a donor in relation to Encuentro's other donors, but rather in the

relationships and modes of engagement between BfdW and the other relevant actors that each played their part in the unfolding processes of the project activities that they had envisioned or were responsible for.

### A GLOBALIZED ASSEMBLAGE BETWEEN LOCAL AND TRANSNATIONAL ACTORS

With this in mind, let us turn to the question of why *Proyectos* assumed such a central role in assessing and helping redesign Encuentro's project and why BfdW put their trust in this organization from this point onwards. The key actor in relation to *Proyectos* was Helmut von Loebell, a German based in Bogotá. Von Loebell worked for the Colombian government, what he called Bogotá's "high society",<sup>30</sup> and various projects in the "slums" simultaneously. By setting up *Proyectos* as a committee to help foreign Christian aid organizations –such as BfdW– in assessing the applications made by Colombian organizations for project funds, von Loebell vowed to review both the applicants and their projects from sociological, psychological, sociopolitical and economic viewpoints.<sup>31</sup> Furthermore, *Proyectos*

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Fraternite-; Adventsactie: Dutch Catholic foundation, originally independent, later merged with Vastenactie. See Vastenactie, "Adventsactie, een campagne van Vastenactie," <https://www.vastenactie.nl/adventsactie>, accessed 28 March 2020; HEKS: Swiss Evangelical foundation founded in 1945. Historisches Lexikon der Schweiz, "Hilfswerk der Evangelischen Kirchen der Schweiz (HEKS)," accessed 28 March 2020, <https://hls-dhs-dss.ch/de/articles/043179/2006-11-10/>; Vastenactie: Dutch Catholic development organization founded in 1961. See Vastenactie, *Over Vastenactie*, accessed 28 March 2020, <https://www.vastenactie.nl/over-vastenactie>.

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30 Helmut von Loebell, *Der Stehaufmann: Berlin, Bogotá, Salzburg - im Unterwegs zu Hause* (Salzburg: Residenz Verlag, 2016), 107.

31 Loebell, *Der Stehaufmann*, 107.



aimed to only endorse projects that went beyond a purely caritative initiative, as well as to distance itself from the so-called theory of marginality.<sup>32</sup> The aim was to help projects that promoted a social conscience for such matters as inequality and exploitation. One of the main methods used to promote social conscience was *educación popular*, which was applied in the context of BfdW project 2764 too.

Whether or not the fact that von Loebell was himself German was a factor in the direct acceptance of his authority by BfdW and the WCC cannot be answered. Nevertheless, why a German middleman was used for the assessment is an interesting question within the complex web of actor-relationships at play in the unfolding of the BfdW project. To thus be able to analyze and map the local unfolding process of the BfdW project, it can be helpful to define the project in and of itself as an assemblage that involves a multitude of actors with differing levels and sometimes conflicting origins of agency in relation to the project.

Brot für die Welt, although a major point of focus for the analysis of the project and an important actor in many ways, had limited direct control over the project. Despite the decision-making power over the financing of the project (activities), BfdW was only one of multiple donors in the constellation and thus the project did not entirely depend

on the allocated funds. Furthermore, the participation and nature of the role BfdW took in Encuentro's work was largely facilitated and enabled by the intermediary actor WCC.

The WCC, although neither actively participating in the project unfolding in Colombia nor the decision-making processes in West Germany, assumed an important, albeit passive, role. As such, the assemblage only functions with the participation of the WCC. However, as opposed to most other actors in this assemblage, the WCC gains its agency exclusively through the structural position it inhabits. That is to say, it is not so much the human interactions within the organization, with all their potentially conflicting views and ambitions, but the structural importance of the organization itself (as a facilitator) that matters in the context of the global aid assemblage P2746. The structure of the assemblage and the interactions between its actors are illustrated in fig. 1

Helmut von Loebell and Proyectos occupy positions as transnational actors linking the global organizations based in Europe to the local actors in Colombia. They seemingly possess a bifold agency, through von Loebell himself, within the relationship surrounding BfdW project no. 2764 – on the one hand being local actors helping and working for the cause of Encuentro's struggle to continue their work and obtain funding, and on the other hand working as trustworthy international actors to legitimize the

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32 Loebell, *Der Stehaufmann*, 107.

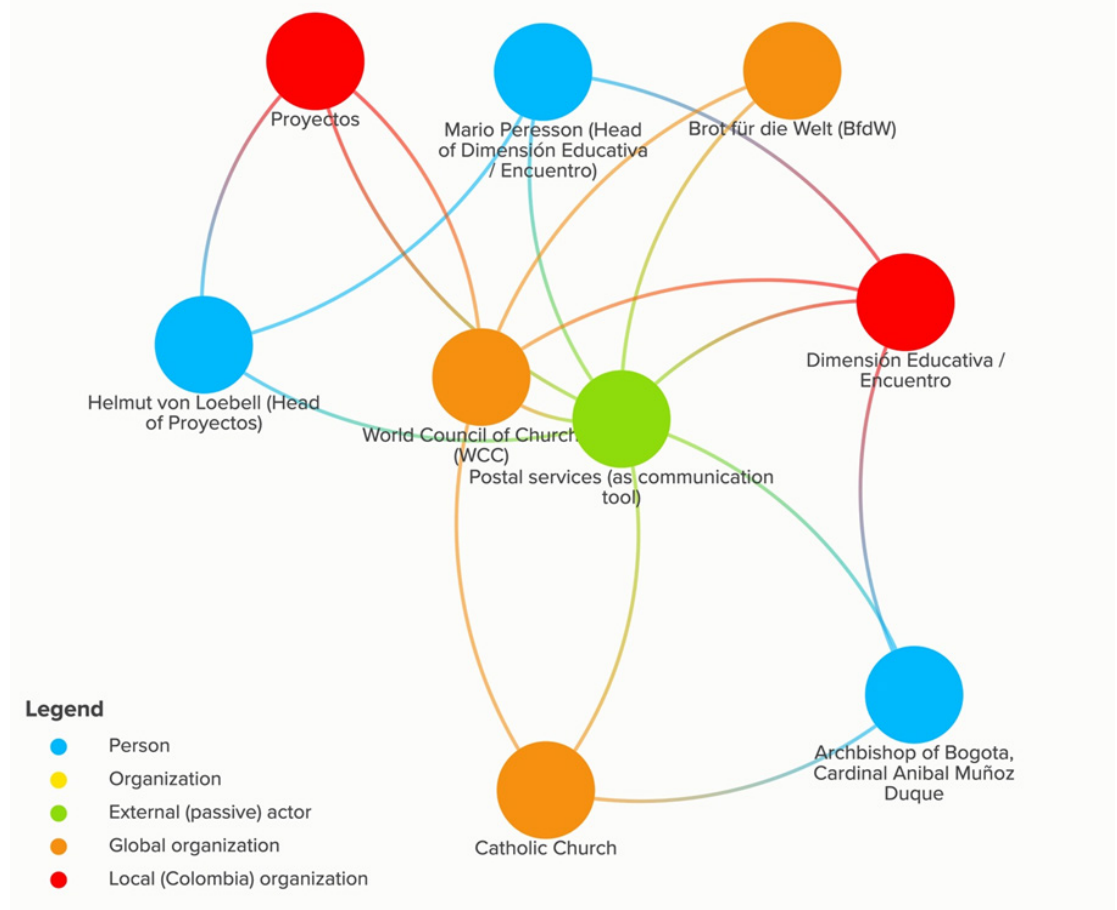


FIGURE 1 shows the relationships between the actors in the “global aid assemblage P2746.” We differentiate between organizations and persons as active actors, and have identified one passive actor, i.e. the postal services. Graphic created with Kumu relationship mapping software. (Kumu, Kumu relationship mapping software (Kumu, 2020), <https://kumu.io> (accessed April 3, 2020)).

organization before the possible donors. Important for understanding the relevance of the global aid assemblage at work in BfdW project no. 2764 is how the context of the Global Cold War introduces new actors to the construct, thus supporting the ontological assumption of assemblage theory, which is essentially one that holds that the world operates in assemblages, the number of which is potentially infinite, and the number of actors within each assemblage is potentially infinite as well. From a macro-analytical perspective then, the Global Cold War is an assemblage in itself, composed of micro-assemblages with a local-global character. The following chapters serve the purpose of illustrating and mapping one of these constituent assemblages.

## TENSIONS WITH THE CATHOLIC CHURCH

As to the evaluation of Encuentro by Proyectos, it is first necessary to highlight why and how Encuentro decided to change their name to *Dimensión Educativa*. Throughout the letter dated April 1<sup>st</sup>, 1977 Proyectos mentions “problems” with the Colombian Catholic hierarchy and diminished support by clerical groups.<sup>33</sup> These problems stemmed primarily from ecclesiastical

<sup>33</sup> ADE, BfdW-P2746: Letter Proyectos to project partners, 1 April 1977, 5-6

repression of various projects across Colombia through Archbishop Muñoz Duque of Bogotá who, having hosted Pope Paul VI on the first papal visit to Latin America, strategically aligned himself with the Second Vatican Council.<sup>34</sup> Liberation theology and the educational methods of Paulo Freire, which were to be employed in the projects developed by Encuentro, were deemed too radical and politicized by the Catholic authorities.<sup>35</sup> Seeing as some Catholic aid organizations had already refused support on the grounds of not being able to work without authorization from the country's highest Catholic authority, changing the group's name and its function (and leadership) from Christian to secular was deemed a necessary and useful step by Proyectos.<sup>36</sup>

In a document attached to the letter and marked "part of the report of utmost confidentiality",

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34 See "Paul VI," in *The Concise Oxford Dictionary of the Christian Church*, <https://www.oxfordreference.com/view/10.1093/acref/9780199659623.001.0001/acref-9780199659623-e-4393>; "Vatican Council, Second," in *The Concise Oxford Dictionary of the Christian Church*, <https://www.oxfordreference.com/view/10.1093/acref/9780199659623.001.0001/acref-9780199659623-e-6009>; and Casas, *A hombros de gigantes. Maestros de la Facultad de Teología de la Pontificia Universidad Javeriana*, 263-281.

35 Casas, *A hombros de gigantes*, 263-281.

36 ADE, BfdW-P2746: Letter Proyectos to project partners, 1 April 1977, 8-9

Proyectos mentions that the project had in fact already been shut down by Cardinal Muñoz Duque along with papal authorities in Rome and had to be continued as clandestine activity alongside regular clerical work.<sup>37</sup> Therefore the new registered name *Dimensión Educativa* and the installation of secular educators as responsible parties would serve the purpose of erasing all links with the religious congregations and evasion of control through the papal authorities. The report nonetheless ensures the clerical educators' paramount pledge to "Christ personified in the marginalized and exploited poor"<sup>38</sup> as proof of their religious commitment in the unfolding of the projects.

The traditionally local and politically informal nature of *Dimensión Educativa* and its projects lies in stark contrast to the global network of the Catholic church and its role as a Cold War actor. The Catholic Church had for a long time found itself in a "[pre-existing] competition with Marxist socialism over answers to the social question"<sup>39</sup>. The role that the Church and its bishops across the world occupied was not one of mere "anti-communism", but rather a "progressive pastoral

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37 ADE, BfdW-P2746: Letter Proyectos to project partners, 1 April 1977, 11.

38 ADE, BfdW-P2746: Letter Proyectos to project partners, 1 April 1977, 11.

39 Piotr H. Kosicki, "The Catholic Church and the Cold War," in *The Routledge Handbook of the Cold War*, ed. Craig Daigle, (London: Routledge, 2014), 260.

reorientation away from Europe and the United States and towards the decolonizing Third World.”<sup>40</sup> Through the three most important Cold War popes,<sup>41</sup> the Catholic Church defined “Catholicism’s international advocacy around three pillars: the dignity of the human person, nuclear disarmament, and international development.”<sup>42</sup>

One could assume that the “guerilla” work of *Dimensión Educativa* would lie outside the sphere of the papal authority’s interests. On the contrary however, the politicization of aid-work during the Global Cold War meant that even small, resource-poor and localized actors inhabited spaces that transcended the borders that they were traditionally confined to, thus enabling what Sassen calls a “set of processes that does not necessarily scale at the global level as such, yet [...] is part of globalization”<sup>43</sup> and involves “specific localized struggles with an explicit or implicit global agenda.”<sup>44</sup> The case at hand goes to show that these processes were underway even before new Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs) allowed for the

formation of transnational political groupings. In her article on local actors in global politics, Sassen puts forward the argument that localized citizen-driven political practices, arguably such as those planned and undertaken by *Dimensión Educativa*, “are constituting a specific type of global politics, one that runs through localities and is not predicated on the existence of global institutions.”<sup>45</sup> According to Sassen however, “the engagement can be with global institutions [...] or with local institutions”<sup>46</sup> – in the case of the global aid assemblage P2764 this could be the WCC, the papal authorities in Rome, BfdW or the archdiocese of Bogota or, as will be shown below, the Colombian government as global and local actors respectively.

Especially John Paul II, often seen as an “anti-communist warrior”<sup>47</sup> was more motivated to “strike a balance between pursuing dialogue on behalf of human rights and drawing lines in the sand to crack down on Latin American liberation theology.”<sup>48</sup> It is therefore not surprising that, through the agency of the local actor Cardinal Muñoz Duque and the archdiocese of Bogotá, the “global player” in Rome decided to intervene in Latin America through

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40 Kosicki, “The Catholic Church and the Cold War,” 260.

41 John XIII (1958-1963); Paul VI (1963-1978); John Paul II (1978-2005).

42 Kosicki “The Catholic Church and the Cold War,” 260.

43 Saskia Sassen, “Globalization or Denationalization?,” *Review of International Political Economy* 10, no. 1 (2003): 1.

44 Sassen, “Globalization or Denationalization?,” 2.

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45 Sassen, “Local Actors in Global Politics,” 655.

46 Sassen, “Local Actors in Global Politics,” 655.

47 Kosicki, “The Catholic Church and the Cold War,” 269.

48 Kosicki, “The Catholic Church and the Cold War,” 269.

this already established network. Here the one-directional interaction from a classically non-state actor working to control its subordinated structures is a counterexample to the traditional assumption that political repression during the Cold War era stemmed mostly from state actors. Despite rising doubt surrounding the political tenability of Dimensión Educativa's projects, BfdW decided in a meeting on May 25<sup>th</sup>, 1977 to finance Encuentro/Dimensión Educativa over the course of three years with a total of \$37.040, specifically for the formation of leaders for youth groups, printing and publication costs as outlined by Proyectos.<sup>49</sup> On July 6<sup>th</sup>, 1977 a contract was sent for signature to Dimensión Educativa which confirmed that the solicited sum would be paid out.<sup>50</sup>

## WORKING UNDER A REPRESSIVE STATE

On top of the difficulty of obtaining funding and the problems with the Catholic Church, Encuentro/Dimensión Educativa was increasingly facing political challenges at home. In a progress report from Dimensión Educativa dated May 31<sup>st</sup>, 1979 Peresson lists the successes of the project in 1978 and requests the second instalment

of BfdW's grant.<sup>51</sup> The remaining amount, viz. US\$17.360 of a total of US\$37.040, would be needed to complete the previously agreed upon project goals of BfdW's grant.<sup>52</sup> In his report, Peresson links a delay of the report to the current situation in Colombia:

I am a bit late in sending the report due to a delay in the realization of the projects, caused by some unforeseen events, especially due to certain repressive measures that are being mounted against all progressive forms of organization in our country. However, the work continues, although with a little more caution.<sup>53</sup>

A number of political events in Colombia serve to contextualize this extract from the 1979 report. Among them are the 1977 national civic strike during the presidency of President Alfonso López Michelsen, which resulted in 19 deaths and nearly 3,500 detainees,<sup>54</sup> as well as the so-called Security Statute in 1978,

49 ADE, BfdW-P2746: Meeting BfdW, 25/26.05.1977, 2.

50 ADE, BfdW-P2746: Letter BfdW to Encuentro with contract, 07.06.1977.

51 ADE, BfdW-P2746: Letter Mario Peresson to Mr. Pinto de Carvalho (Treasurer BfdW), 31.05.1979.

52 ADE, BfdW-P2746: Letter Mario Peresson to Mr. Pinto de Carvalho (Treasurer BfdW), 31.05.1979, 1.

53 ADE, BfdW-P2746: Letter Mario Peresson to Mr. Pinto de Carvalho (Treasurer BfdW), 31.05.1979, 1.

54 Mauricio Archila-Neira, "El Paro Cívico Nacional del 14 de septiembre de 1977. Un ejercicio de memoria colectiva," *Revista de Economía Institucional* 18, no. 35 (2016): 317.

introduced by President Julio Cesar Turbay Ayala only weeks after taking office.<sup>55</sup> Decree 1923, later known as the Security Statute, intended to stop rural and urban guerilla warfare and granted military and police forces extraordinary authority.<sup>56</sup> As summarized by Forrest Hylton, “by the late 1970s a broader urban Left was becoming visible [in Colombia], as worker, student, and guerrilla networks began to converge with new neighborhood movements on the hillsides. This coalition was met with severe repression by state forces—trade unionists, students, professors and left-wing community leaders were detained, beaten, or killed.”<sup>57</sup> As for the case at hand, this meant that Proyectos and its founder Helmut von Loebell were also subjected to the repressive measures of the Colombian state. Von Loebell and other members of the organization were detained by the Colombian military and remained in custody while being questioned on their political affiliation, the political motivation behind Proyectos and their links to various leaders

of the Colombian left.<sup>58</sup> This places the initial delay in the realization of the projects within the local political context and shows the possible dangers that arose from the organization’s approaches and partners.

A closer look at the project activities illustrates the exact destination of BfdW’s donor contributions, which were meant to cover both training seminars and a research and publication program. The training seminars included courses on literacy conscientization and popular education. The workshop locations indicate a nationwide approach to the project; specifically, seminars were held in Medellín, Bogotá, Armenia, Cali, Ibagué and Cartagena.<sup>59</sup> Participants include youths from both working-class and student backgrounds. So-called “profoundization reunions” in Bogotá attract between 14 and 54 participants, on topics such as “The capitalist state: militarism - national security” and “What are Christians for socialism?,” respectively.<sup>60</sup> The Marxist orientation of these activities was particularly problematic in the context of the Global Cold War, where even localized activities were heavily politicized out of fear that they could

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55 J. P. Osterling, *Democracy in Colombia: Clientelist Politics and Guerrilla Warfare* (New Jersey: Transaction Publishers, 1988), 105.

56 Osterling, *Democracy in Colombia*, 105.

57 Forrest Hylton, “The Cold War That Didn’t End Paramilitary Modernization in Medellín, Colombia,” in *A century of revolution: insurgent and counterinsurgent violence during Latin America’s long cold war*, ed. Greg Grandin and G. M. Joseph (Duke University Press, 2010), 346.

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58 von Loebell, “Der Stehaufmann: Berlin, Bogotá, Salzburg - im Unterwegs zu Hause,” 110-113.

59 ADE, BfdW-P2746: Letter Mario Peresson to Mr. Pinto de Carvalho (Treasurer BfdW), 31.05.1979, 4-5

60 ADE, BfdW-P2746: Letter Mario Peresson to Mr. Pinto de Carvalho (Treasurer BfdW), 31.05.1979, 7

have an impact on the politics of the wider region. As for the theorization of the events at hand, this aspect is of utmost importance, as it can be argued that it was the politics and project incentives of Dimensión Educativa that *enabled* the unfolding of the global aid assemblage P2746 in the first place. That is to say, the temporality of the events, i.e. that they took place in the context of the Global Cold War, meant an automatic widening of their spatiality, as more and more actors wanted to assert their influence on the project.

Dimensión Educativa concludes about the workshops of 1978 that the groups of workers and farmers had been more constant than those made up of students. It further calls for a removal of its youth exclusivity, even if it intends to continue as predominantly focused on youth in the future, in order to expand participation within the movement. It emphasizes the need for a stronger organization of the movement and calls for a more nuanced and intelligible theoretical approach within the groups, highlighting the importance of popular education.<sup>61</sup> Meanwhile, the organization's research and publication program numbered four publications in 1978. Besides its textbook *LUCHAREMOS: Method of liberation alphabetization*, these include titles such as *Education in Cuba: Part I and 2, Only militant*

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<sup>61</sup> ADE, BfdW-P2746: Letter Mario Peresson to Mr. Pinto de Carvalho (Treasurer BfdW), 31.05.1979, 7.

*Christians can be liberation theologians*, and *Marxism and Christianity: towards a common project*.<sup>62</sup> While the publications had thus far focused on Colombia, Peresson's report includes a section on the preparation of the second edition of the book *LUCHAREMOS*, stating that the first edition "was very successful" and that "the second [edition] will be 5000 copies and [distributed] at the Latin American level," suggesting an approach expanding beyond national borders.<sup>63</sup>

Peresson's idea to remodel or adapt the project in such a way as to be more inclusive of other groups (viz. non-youth), as well as to increase the reach of the organization's publications, could very well be interpreted as dangerous to the political system in Colombia at the time and thus explains the hostile response of the Colombian state. The increasingly global, or transnational, ambitions of Dimensión Educativa itself are further interesting in light of the fact that the highly politicized nature of their work did indeed, whether intentionally or not, enhance the globality of their activities, and therefore also of the assemblage at hand.

This orientation towards liberation theology then serves to, as Sassen's says, "illuminate the

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<sup>62</sup> ADE, BfdW-P2746: Letter Mario Peresson to Mr. Pinto de Carvalho (Treasurer BfdW), 31.05.1979, 8.

<sup>63</sup> ADE, BfdW-P2746: Letter Mario Peresson to Mr. Pinto de Carvalho (Treasurer BfdW), 31.05.1979, 2.

distinction between a global network and the actual transactions that constitute it: the global character of a network [in our case assemblage] does not necessarily imply that its transactions are equally global, or that it all has to happen at the global level.”<sup>64</sup> Global aid assemblage P2764 is thus partially global in both the terms of its transactions and in the character of its content—local actors, global actors and the superstructure of the Cold War context all influence or interact with both of these aspects.

### [THE LACK OF] COMMUNICATION DURING THE GLOBAL COLD WAR

While the previous chapter illustrates Dimensión Educativa’s far-reaching and optimistic ambitions, the subsequent unfolding of project no. 2746 was heavily influenced by the fact that Peresson’s 1979 progress report never arrived at the responsible department, as a letter from Ilse Landsberger from BfdW’s finance department to Peresson shows. In this letter, dated December 8<sup>th</sup>, 1981, Landsberger enquires about the status of the project and asks Peresson to send her a full “operational and financial status update.”<sup>65</sup> Rather importantly, she

was inquiring whether the remaining project funds, viz. US\$17.360, were still needed. Peresson responds quickly and expresses his surprise at the receipt of Landsberger’s letter:

Actually the letter has caused me astonishment since on May 31<sup>st</sup>, 1979 I sent Mr. Pinto de Carvalho both the operational report that specified the progress of the project and the financial report. [...] It seems strange that it didn’t arrive. The only reason could be the mail [service].<sup>66</sup>

In the following paragraphs of this letter, Peresson goes on to state that in the same year of 1979 he received a visit from both Daniel Leitner, BfdW’s head of operations at the time, and pastor Jesús Vieira from Proyectos, both of which he apparently informed about the progress of the project. Our examination of the archived files did not yield any results as to the precise events of this meeting, but what is obvious from the letter exchange is that there were considerable gaps or flaws in the communication between the respective actors. Even if it were true that Peresson’s initial project report from May 31<sup>st</sup>, 1979 was lost by the postal services, the question remains why Daniel Leitner

64 Sassen, “Local Actors in Global Politics,” 654.

65 ADE, BfdW-P2746: Letter Ilse Landsberger (Treasury department for Latin America, BfdW) to Mario

Peresson, 08.12.1981.

66 ADE, BfdW-P2746: Letter Mario Peresson to Ilse Landsberger (Treasury department for Latin America, BfdW), 24.01.1982, 1.



and/or pastor Jesús Vieira did not forward the information to their BfdW counterparts in Germany.

Unfortunately, the archival materials at hand do not allow us to draw any firm conclusions as regards this matter, but the incident illustrates the inherent and inevitable flaws of the communication tools of the period. This includes the fact that letters and other types of common exchanges of the time did not nearly allow for the type of record-keeping that we know today, thus making it difficult to understand an event, or a chain of events, *ex post*. This, in turn, sometimes makes it difficult to attribute wrongdoing to any given individual. In the context of the Global Cold War, technology therefore played an important role in and of itself, going so far as to assume agency. This is true for the case at hand as well, where all of the actors that formed part of the global aid assemblage P2746 were reliant upon and thus influenced by communication technology such as landline phone technology and postal services, with a particular emphasis on the latter. As for the operationalization of our research, we therefore attributed agency to the postal services and labeled it a passive agent in the global aid assemblage P2746 as illustrated in figure 1.

Returning to the case at hand, the loss of the information meant that BfdW cancelled the second part of the funding, as is shown in BfdW's final project report from January 12<sup>th</sup>, 1984. Perhaps surprisingly, the report

goes on to mention that BfdW “never responded to Peresson’s letter from January 24<sup>th</sup>, 1982, probably because they were embarrassed by the incident.”<sup>67</sup> It was not until April 7<sup>th</sup>, 1984 that Werner Rostan, the head of BfdW’s Latin America department, sent a personal letter of apology to Mario Peresson, explaining that the finance department had received and archived Peresson’s letter from January 12<sup>th</sup>, 1984 but apparently never forwarded it to the relevant departments.<sup>68</sup> This is particularly striking in light of the fact that the finance department was headed by Daniel Leitner, who had visited Mario Peresson in 1979 and—according to Peresson—had been personally informed about the project progress.<sup>69</sup>

By no means is it our intention here to make any assumptions as to Mr. Leitner’s objectives or possible mistakes. However, the fact that Peresson’s second letter never reached the necessary departments (after the first one was allegedly lost by the postal services) becomes interesting when taking into consideration that it was Daniel Leitner who, on November 23<sup>rd</sup>, 1981 suggested that part of the funding originally reserved for project no. 2746, namely US\$4.953,

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67 ADE, BfdW-P2746: Project closure report P2746, 12.01.1984.

68 ADE, BfdW-P2746: Letter Werner Rostan to Mario Peresson, 07.04.1984.

69 ADE, BfdW-P2746: Letter Mario Peresson to Ilse Landsberger (Treasury department for Latin America, BfdW), 24.01.1982, 1.

be redirected to an unrelated youth project in Colombia.<sup>70</sup> In a separate note<sup>71</sup> that carries the same date as the former, Mr. Leitner states that BfdW does neither have a project nor a financial report and that Dimensión Educativa should be asked to send over these documents. That is to say, Mr. Leitner had already suggested the reallocation of a faction of the funding to a different project *before* Mario Peresson had a chance to react to the request that was subsequently forwarded to him by Ilse Landsberger (letter dated December 8<sup>th</sup>, 1981).

It is beyond the scope of this article to examine this any further but suffice it to say that the project unfolding was shaped by (the lack of) communication processes and tools that, as such, influenced the global aid assemblage P2746 in oftentimes unpredictable ways. This is of theoretical importance in that it underlines the fact that although the global aid assemblage P2746 may have been intentionally constructed by (a number of) certain lead actor(s), it only functions in interplay with other (possibly non-human) actors and, therefore, its mechanisms rely on forces outside of the control of the lead actor(s), for which reason its precise effects are often uncontrollable.

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70 ADE, BfdW-P2746: Note Daniel Leitner Betr.: P2764/WCC 7702, 23.11.1981.

71 ADE, BfdW-P2746: Note Daniel Leitner to H. Kunz, 23.11.1981.

## CONCLUSIONS

With this paper, we set out to make a case for a novel analytical approach to understanding Cold War phenomena. By linking Odd Arne Westad's thesis on the Global Cold War with Saskia Sassen's thesis on local-global actor relationships in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, we intended to show that the *globality* of an assemblage does not necessarily depend on modern technologies such as information and communication technologies (ICTs), which, to Sassen, is a key *enabling factor* of local-global assemblages. Instead, such factors as ideology, which was obviously a driving force of action during the Cold War, also possess the capacity to generate "powerful imaginaries" that enable actors to enter "cross-border institutional spaces,"<sup>72</sup> allowing them to transcend the structural limits that they were previously confined to.

This is not to say that technology is not an important factor in the unfolding process of an assemblage, but rather that technology (or the lack thereof) does not so much limit the unfolding process of a given assemblage, but rather influence its outcome in important, but oftentimes unpredictable ways. Without a doubt, the global aid assemblage P2746 would have assumed an entirely different shape and character if the (human and organizational) actors had been able to communicate

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72 Sassen, "Local Actors in Global Politics," 655.

through such mediums as email or instant messaging. The fact that the respective actors did not have access to these possibilities, however, did not necessarily limit the unfolding of the assemblage, but perhaps even increased its politicization, thus facilitating its unfolding process in the sense that more actors wanted to become involved. In a sense, it seems, that the slow means of communication available to the actors at the time meant that they had limited access to up-to-date information and occasionally had to make assumptions about the actions or objectives of their counterparts. This “acting based on assumptions” is perhaps illustrative of the Global Cold War as a whole, and certainly in the case of global aid assemblage P2746.

It is for these reasons that we trust that the Westad/Sassen analytical approach is a useful point of departure for assessing and identifying local-global assemblages in the context of the Global Cold War. As for the assemblage that we have identified, however, we must concede that we have merely charted a fraction of it, for the scope limitations of this research meant that we only accessed one archive, namely that of Brot für die Welt. That is to say, to fully understand the interactions between the various actors, as well as the intentions of the actors themselves, one would have to consult a greater variety of sources. Even then, there is no guarantee that one would have sufficient material at hand to fully map the assemblage.

Nonetheless, it would probably be possible to paint a more accurate picture of what had happened here. Finally, therefore, we can only hope that we have inspired someone to do exactly that.

## II. NICARAGUA

# Comrades or pupils? The politico-cultural cooperation between GDR and post-revolutionary Nicaragua (1979 – 1989)

by

JANAINA FERREIRA DOS SANTOS  
AND MARIE LENA HOLTHAUS

## ABSTRACT

This article examines the cultural relations between East Germany and Nicaragua during the time period that ranges from 1979 to 1989. After Anastasio Somoza was overthrown in 1979, material resources as well as qualified personnel were scarce in Nicaragua. Amongst other aspects, education and culture were politically perceived by the new Sandinista government as one of the main pillars of social reconstruction. To overcome the deficiencies in this sector, the Nicaraguan government heavily relied on foreign aid. The German Democratic Republic, as eager for economic partners as it was for diplomatic recognition, supported the country not only with financial and material resources but also by sending specialists, experts, and political consultants. Taking the East German-Nicaraguan “Agreement on cultural and scientific cooperation” from 1980 as a starting point of the investigation, this article explores the transfer of personnel and knowledge in the three areas of culture, education, and politics, mainly from the GDR’s perspective; it thereby investigates GDR officials’ perception of themselves and of their Nicaraguan counterparts. We argue that this relationship, as well as the one fostered by both countries, were simultaneously perceived in part as an equal relationship between “comrades,” in part also as a student-teacher-relationship, exhibiting ideas of European superiority.

## ABOUT THE AUTHORS

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

The year 2019 marked the 40th anniversary of the Sandinista Revolution in Nicaragua. The end of Anastasio Somoza's authoritarian rule in June 1979 was the result of a multitude of ongoing riots, protests and strikes, especially from the mid-1970s onwards, which gave vent to a long-lasting dissatisfaction with the established system that cut off the vast majority of Nicaraguans from their most basic needs—material, political, and not the least educational needs. In their efforts to rebuild and reshape Nicaragua, the Sandinista Liberation Front (Frente Sandinista de Liberación Nacional-FSLN) faced determined resistance most prominently from US-backed paramilitary Contra-groups, making Nicaragua an arena of armed confrontation in the Cold War.<sup>1</sup> Yet, while this dimension of the conflict is the most prominent, especially due to the following Iran-Contra affair, the Global Cold War was not primarily characterized by violent struggle. Instead, scientific, technical and medical knowledge rapidly advanced to become major categories in the conflict and influenced domestic and foreign policies. When regarding

the global dimension of the conflict, the *transfer*<sup>2</sup> or export of knowledge during the Cold War Era can be seen as an instrument to spread a determined ideology and to forge political and economic alliances. In other words, knowledge and education became, amongst other aspects, the intellectual ammunition which kept this global conflict running for over 40 years.<sup>3</sup>

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1 For an overview on the events surrounding the Regime under the Somoza dynasty and the Sandinista Revolution see Héctor Perla Jr, *Sandinista Nicaragua's resistance to U.S coercion: Revolutionary deterrence in asymmetric conflict* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2016).

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2 There are a variety of studies on the concept of transfer of knowledge. The idea of a mere export of knowledge from the political "centre" in the "periphery" has gradually given place to a notion of an intertwined production of knowledge and the exchange of its results between various nations worldwide. For an overview on the different phases of the studies on the subject see: Veronika Lipphardt and David Ludwig, "Wissens- und Wissenstransfer," accessed on March 3, 2020, <http://www.ieg-ego.eu/lipphardtvludwigd-2011-de>.

3 On the relevance of knowledge and its transfer during the Cold War see Bernd Greiner, Tim B. Müller and Claudia Weber, eds., *Macht und Geist im Kalten Krieg* (Hamburg: Hamburger Edition, 2011). On the concept and research on "Cultural Cold War" see Nicholas J. Cull, "Reading, viewing and tuning in to the Cold War," in *The Cambridge History of the Cold War. Crisis and Détente*, vol. 2, eds. Melvyn P. Leffler and Odd Arne Westad (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 438-459; Jessica C. E. Gienow-Hecht, "Culture and the Cold War in Europe," in *The Cambridge History of the Cold War. Origins*, vol. 1, eds. Melvyn P. Leffler and Odd Arne Westad (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 398-419.

Following the examples of production and transfer of knowledge in and from both superpowers, the United States and the Soviet Union, the German Democratic Republic as well as the Federal Republic of Germany understood science, technology and education not only as instruments to highlight state legitimacy but also as strategic fields to build political bridges to other nations, according to their respective political filiations or position in this race of systems. The GDR's involvement and support in developing countries played a key role in the country's self-perception as an established socialist player in the power constellation of the Cold War.

Against the background of the "cultural Cold War", this article discusses the politico-cultural relations between Nicaragua and the GDR in the 1980s. As well as other documents collected from the Archive of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Agreement on Cultural and Scientific Cooperation ("Abkommen über die kulturelle und wissenschaftliche Zusammenarbeit"), ratified by both countries in 1980, will be used as a basis of our analysis. After a brief summary of the situation in Nicaragua following the downfall of Anastasio Somoza in 1979, we will describe the post-revolutionary relationships between the protagonists in Nicaragua and in the GDR, focusing particularly on the interaction and cooperation regarding the production and export of knowledge. Therefore, the third

section of this paper retraces the "Agreement on Cultural and Scientific Cooperation" from 1980 and its implications in Nicaragua. We will argue that the measures taken on the East German side could be perceived as both mechanisms of practical cooperation as well as an attempt to carry on its political calculation and ideological propaganda in the 'Third World.' Further, we will draw conclusions on East German engagement in Nicaragua, discussing the GDR government's perspective and investigating whether it saw the transfer of knowledge and the cooperation in the field of culture and sciences as a collaboration between two "equal" partners, as references to an internationalist solidarity between comrades would have suggested, or rather as an emblem for mere *development* support.

## 2. NICARAGUA, THE GDR AND THE EXCHANGE OF KNOWLEDGE IN THE CULTURAL COLD WAR

"We must develop scientific and technical knowledge in general, and political science in particular, without letting ourselves be pressured by prejudices and influences that come from the centers of imperialist domination. Through education we must promote revolutionary strength, hatred of man's exploitation by man, loyalty to the revolutionary principles that sustain our vanguard, the FSLN, and open

the floodgates of science so that man's beliefs and superstitions, accumulated over centuries, can be washed away."

*-Nicaraguan Home Secretary Tomás Borge on February 4<sup>th</sup>, 1983*<sup>4</sup>

When the *Frente Sandinista de Liberación Nacional* rose to power in Nicaragua in July 1979, the newly established government faced major socio-economic challenges. The last revolutionary insurrection in 1978 had led to many deaths, economic crisis and evidently dependency on foreign resources. Furthermore, the bad condition of the Nicaraguan education system - in the form of a high illiteracy rate and a system of higher education that was almost entirely exclusive to urban elites - was another challenge faced by the Sandinistas. From the very first months after Somoza's overthrow, promotion of the development of scientific and technical knowledge, alongside the reform of the popular education system, was perceived as the driving force for political and social prosperity for post-revolutionary Nicaragua.<sup>5</sup>

For better or worse, this had to be achieved while completely realigning the country's foreign policy. The United States had wielded strong influence over Nicaragua for more than a century and had supported the governments of Anastasio Somoza Debayle and his predecessors with state aid. After the revolution, Nicaragua gradually lost access to this kind of support, with Ronald Reagan's government instead assisting opposition militants. However, international cooperation was still much welcomed—and needed—by the Sandinistas in order to promote the renewal of the Nicaraguan society. The fostering of cultural and scientific exchange between the country and other states were essential components of the Nicaraguan plan for social reconstruction. While Nicaragua also maintained economic and diplomatic relations with various western European countries and its social democratic parties, relations between Nicaragua and Eastern Bloc countries in these fields saw a particular and gradual expansion after

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post-revolutionary Sandinista government was evidenced by the National Literacy Crusade promoted in Nicaragua 1980. On the subject see Robert F. Arnove and Anthony Dewees, "Education and Revolutionary Transformation in Nicaragua, 1979-1990," *Comparative Education Review* 35, no. 1, Special Issue on Education and Socialist Revolution (Spring 1991): 92-109, <https://doi.org/10.1086/446997>.

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- 4 Speech given by Tomás Borge on February 4<sup>th</sup>, 1983 in Managua at the congress of the National Association of Nicaraguan Educators (ANDEN). In: Bruce Marcus, ed., *Nicaragua: The People's Revolution. Speeches by Sandinista Leaders* (New York: Pathfinder Press, 1985), 70-72.
  - 5 The relevance of education and alphabetization for the



the Sandinistas assumed power.<sup>6</sup> In addition to material aid, Nicaragua welcomed advisors and experts from different sectors and sent many students to attend courses in allied socialist countries like Cuba or the GDR, to name only a few examples.<sup>7</sup> In an address from March 8<sup>th</sup> 1980, the Committee of Propaganda of the Nicaraguan *Centros Populares de Cultura*<sup>8</sup> requested revolutionary brother nations (“pueblos hermanos revolucionarios”) worldwide to support the process of reconstruction in Nicaragua.

With the GDR being “one of the true brothers of Nicaragua, alongside with Cuba and the USSR”<sup>9</sup> it is not surprising that the

country would be one of the first amongst these “pueblos hermanos,” providing its Nicaraguan comrades not only assistance in the politico-military sector, but also supporting them with the country’s social reconstruction. As early as October 1979, the Nicaraguan Ministry of Culture had consulted the GDR’s embassy in Managua regarding existing deals in the fields of culture and sciences and had explored the possibilities of intensifying cultural exchange between both countries.<sup>10</sup> Following the policy of “socialist internationalism”, the Ministerium für Auswärtige Angelegenheiten (MfAA), the East German Foreign Ministry, saw this as an opportunity to expand the GDR’s involvement in the ‘Third World’. Since at least the 1970s the GDR’s leadership had acknowledged the importance of a close cooperation with the political and intellectual elites of these countries in order to attract them to the “socialist project.”<sup>11</sup>

Aside from Nicaragua, the GDR was most heavily involved in Vietnam, Angola, Mozambique and

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6 A considerable part of the research on the connections between Nicaragua and the Soviet Union dates from the 1980s and, due to the actuality of the issue, there is little consensus regarding the intensity of those relations.

7 Johannes Wilm, “On Sandinista ideas of past connections to the Soviet Union and Nicaraguan exceptionalism,” in *A Nicaraguan Exceptionalism? Debating the Legacy of the Sandinista Revolution*, ed. Hilary Francis (London: University of London Press, 2020), 87-101.

8 The *Centros Populares de Cultura* were state institutions for the coordination and management of diverse cultural projects in different cities in Nicaragua. See Gema D. Palazón, *Memoria y escrituras de Nicaragua. Cultura y discurso testimonial en la Revolución Sandinista* (Editions Publibook, 2010).

9 Speech from July, 1981 by Carlos Nuñez Téllez, member of the FSLN directorate. Quoted from: Odd Arne

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Westad, *The Global Cold War: Third World interventions and the making of our times* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 343-44.

10 PA AA, Mf AA M 60, ZR 2891/81, Letter from Nicaraguan Ministry of Culture to the GDR embassy in Managua from October 10, 1979.

11 See Rayk Einax, “Im Dienste außenpolitischer Interessen. Ausländische Studierende in der DDR am Beispiel Jenas,” *Die Hochschule: Journal für Wissenschaft und Bildung* 17, no. 1 (2008): 165.

Cuba, having both political as well as economic ambitions. According to the East German advisors in Nicaragua, the support given would be very much appreciated by the Nicaraguan population and would contribute to the prestige and reputation of the GDR amongst Nicaraguans. In fact, even before the cooperation between the two countries was contractually regulated, the idea of the GDR being a role model for states following a socialist path (“sozialistische Wege”), seems to have vastly influenced the approach of East German advisors and specialists in Nicaragua. For instance, during a visit of an East German delegation in Managua at the end of October 1979, the posted advisors attested that the power and performance of the German Democratic Republic were well known in Nicaragua and that the Sandinista leading cadre would be willing to make use of the GDR’s expertise on various fields, describing the East German actuation as exemplary.<sup>12</sup> Furthermore, the advisors considered that aid offers from capitalist states were only accepted by the Sandinistas if and when not attached to political terms.

The expansion of the GDR’s cultural policies throughout the Global South was carried out

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12 PA AA, Mf AA, M 60, ZR 2891/81, “Report from 1979 from the GDR embassy in Managua on the possibilities regarding the development of the cultural and scientific relations to Nicaragua.”

primarily through agreements and treaties, which regulated the delegation and reception of qualified personnel and stimulated new cultural contacts through the exchange of technical and scientific specialists. The “Agreement on Cultural and Scientific Cooperation”, ratified by Nicaragua and the German Democratic Republic in April 1980, suitably exemplifies this practice.

The agreement’s foundation was the “firm solidary bond between the two nations and governments in the common anti-imperialist struggle.”

<sup>13</sup> By the mid-1980s the GDR had already sent 3.5 million schoolbooks to Nicaragua and built the educational centre “Ernst Thälmann” in Jinotepe, where around 300 apprentices graduated annually.<sup>14</sup> Moreover, the GDR received a yearly number of Nicaraguan exchange students and sent specialists and experts to the country for further qualification of the local teachers and university lecturers. Not least, the GDR sent consultants to Nicaragua to support the FSLN in matters of political education.

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13 PA AA, Mf AA, M 60, ZR 5378/13. “Agreement between the government of the German Democratic Republic and the government of the Nicaraguan Republic on cultural and scientific cooperation,”1.

14 Merlin Berge and Nikolaus Werz, “Auf Tschekisten der DDR ist Verlaß” Das Ministerium für Staatssicherheit und Nicaragua, *Zeitschrift des Forschungsverbundes SED-Staat* 27 (2010): 170.

More than a conflict of economic systems or a race for technological and military 'supremacy,' the Global Cold War can be viewed as a "clash between cultures and ideologies."<sup>15</sup> Therefore, the politico-cultural cooperation between the two states had ideological underpinnings. As pointed out in one of the many reports of the East German advisors in Nicaragua, the "aid" ("solidarische Hilfe") provided by the GDR would not only contribute to the consolidation of the new government and facilitate the continuance of the Sandinista revolution, but would also ensure the integration of Nicaragua into the community of socialist states ("sozialistische Staatsgemeinschaft"), pointed out as being one of the main goals of the GDR's foreign policy.<sup>16</sup>

### 3. THE EAST-GERMAN-NICARAGUAN AGREEMENT ON CULTURAL AND SCIENTIFIC COOPERATION

The politico-cultural relations between the GDR and Nicaragua in the 1980s were marked, amongst other aspects, by the urgency of a social reform in Nicaragua and the country's efforts to establish a broad network with various nations worldwide, in order to put its plan of national reconstruction into practice. From the East German perspective, these relations could be perceived as an instrument to self-legitimize, as well as a way of disseminating its ideology and permeating the Nicaraguan state machinery. Since these politico-cultural relations comprised various 'segments of knowledge' (schooling, sciences, political consultancy and education etc.), a glance at three major sectors of this cooperation can be useful to understand the complex and, in some ways, contradictory character of the East German-Nicaraguan relations in the 1980s. In the following sections we will discuss the measures taken in the specific fields of schooling and academic education, arts and popular culture,<sup>17</sup> as well as political consultancy and education.

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15 Giles Scott-Smith and Joes Segal, "Introduction" in *Divided dreamworlds? The Cultural Cold War in East and West*, eds. Peter Romijn, Giles Scott-Smith and Joes Segal (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2012), 1.

16 See e.g. the annual reports on the development of the cultural and scientific relations between Nicaragua and the GDR by the Embassy of the GDR in Nicaragua from December 12, 1981 and January 16, 1983. PA AA, Mf AA, M 60, ZR 580/86; PA AA, Mf AA, M 60, ZR 579/86.

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17 Encompassing various fields from theatre, fine arts and literature to sports.

### 3.1. SCHOOLING AND ACADEMIC EDUCATION

At the end of the 1970s, the Nicaraguan educational system reflected the dynastic rule of the Somoza clan. Public schooling was in disarray and illiteracy rates were extremely high, reaching over 76 percent in rural areas. Only 22 percent of the children enrolled in public schools had completed sixth grade. Meanwhile, the situation in the higher-education system was rather different: while the number of university enrollments were higher than the Latin American average, tertiary education in Nicaragua remained restricted to urban elites.<sup>18</sup> Correspondingly, the leaders of the FSLN declared their commitment to promoting cultural pluralism in Nicaragua, which could only be achieved by a broad reform of the educational system in the country.<sup>19</sup> Consequently, after their triumph in July 1979, the Sandinistas proclaimed education as one of the new government's pillars, as well as an integral component of the revolution. The Sandinistas listed the guidelines for their educational policy emphasizing the relevance of extinguishing illiteracy, creating proper educational institutions for

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18 Arnove and Dewees, "Education and Revolutionary Transformation in Nicaragua", 93-94.

19 Andrew J. Kirkendall, *Paulo Freire and the Cold War Politics of Literacy* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2010), 124-126.

adults, as well as promoting scientific and technical fields.<sup>20</sup> All these measures aimed to contribute to the transformation of the Nicaraguan educational system which would, in turn, operate as the political project's foundation for building a new and self-sustaining society.

While emphatically characterizing the educational system's reform as a matter of national concern, the Sandinistas simultaneously recognized that external support—be it via material donations or through the deployment of experts—was essential for the project's effective functioning. During the *Cruzada Nacional de Alfabetización* from 1980, a campaign against illiteracy which mobilized thousands of Nicaraguan students and teachers, Nicaragua received the support of 16 countries and welcomed "brigadistas" from different parts of the globe.<sup>21</sup> Amongst these countries, which were "setting an extraordinary example of solidarity and who have shared the illuminating energy of education"<sup>22</sup> to the Nicaraguan people, was also the GDR.

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20 See Kirkendall, *Paulo Freire and the Cold War Politics of Literacy*, 140-41; Arnove and Dewees, *Education and Revolutionary Transformation in Nicaragua*, 94-95.

21 Cuba was one of the most heavily involved countries during the campaign in Nicaragua. On the *Cruzada* and the role of Cuba see Kirkendall, *Paulo Freire and the Cold War Politics of Literacy*, 136-37.

22 Marcus, *Nicaragua: The People's Revolution*, 81.

The so-called international pedagogical work (“pädagogische Auslandsarbeit”) of the GDR<sup>23</sup> comprised the activities of educators in special schools and academic institutions as well as in the training of teachers. Further, it stipulated the assignment of guest lecturers and language instructors. As was the case in other Global South countries, the GDR’s involvement in the Nicaraguan educational system’s reform proceeded in accordance to this model. This pedagogical work could also be realized in the form of consultancy work on the administrative level of educational institutions and ministries. Officials in the GDR’s embassy in Nicaragua considered the deployment of experts and specialists, not only in educational institutions but also in the Department of Education in the Nicaraguan Ministry of Culture, as highly important. The know-how of such specialists in the area of socialist education planning (“sozialistische Bildungsplanung”) should have been passed on to the Nicaraguan comrades at all levels of the educational system.<sup>24</sup> Little is known about the prerequisites East German experts or specialists had to fulfil in order to exercise their function in the area of education. Interestingly, “basic knowledge of

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23 Arnove and Dewees, *Education and Revolutionary Transformation in Nicaragua*, 95.

24 PA AA, Mf AA, M 60, ZR 2891/81. “Situational report on the Nicaraguan educational system,” 3

Spanish” was considered to be “more than sufficient,” as mentioned in the work plan.<sup>25</sup> One can only speculate whether this was more an expression of the general East German conduct regarding the work of its functionaries in the ‘Third World,’ or a result of the relative lack of Spanish speaking experts in the GDR.

Regarding the area of education, the East German-Nicaraguan treaty on cultural and scientific cooperation stipulated joint work in the fields of popular education (for children and adults), vocational and technical training for young adults, and higher-education. The GDR’s main tasks in the field of popular education (“Volksbildung”) were the reconstruction of schools and educational institutions, many of which had been destroyed during the revolutionary insurrections as well as during the 1972 earthquake, and the building of new educational facilities. The GDR also declared to be very committed to the professional training of young adults, especially in technical fields.<sup>26</sup> Besides the deployment of

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25 Ibid., 3.

26 This was one of the main motivations for the construction of a centre for technical education in the Nicaraguan city of Jinotepe. The “Politecnico Ernesto Thälmann” was financed by solidarity funds (“Solidaritätsmitteln”) of the GDR and built with the help of East-German specialists, members of the Freundschaftsbrigade of the Free German Youth (FDJ), as well as Nicaraguan educators and training teachers. See Lothar Fratzke, “Heimat einer FDJ-Freundschaftsbrigade.

specialists and advisors in higher education areas, the GDR stipulated the delegation of professors and lecturers, emphasizing however, the importance of student exchanges between East German and Nicaraguan universities.

A careful look into the sources reveals that the number of Nicaraguan students going to the GDR was significantly higher than vice-versa. The number of examined sources is not sufficient to make a precise statement about the gender ratio in the exchange programs. Nonetheless, a list of candidates for exchange programs in the GDR, compiled by the Nicaraguan Ministry of Education, provides us with an interesting picture of the circumstances: there were 4 women among 27 candidates, one of whom was the daughter of a well-known late Guerrillero.<sup>27</sup> The

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Das Berufsausbildungszentrum in Jinotepe" in *Aufbruch nach Nicaragua: deutsch-deutsche Solidarität im Systemwettstreit*, eds. Erika Harzer and Willi Volks (Berlin: Ch. Links Verlag, 2008), 141-144.

27 2 PA AA, Mf AA M 60, ZR 2892/81. "List of candidates for scholarships in the German Democratic Republic". While during the literacy campaign in Nicaragua the Sandinistas emphasized the importance of women in the process of educational reconstruction of the country, this emphasis seems to fade when it came to exchange programs between Nicaragua and its "brother nations." On the role of women during the campaign against illiteracy see Kirkendall, *Paulo Freire and the Cold War*, 134.

selection of these "young emissaries" ("Junge Sendboten"<sup>28</sup>) should take place under the supervision and codetermination of the East German specialists. Since it would "bring socialist brother nations together," thus leading to a broader "socialist economic and social integration,"<sup>29</sup> exchange programs fulfilled an important function for the GDR's domestic and foreign policies. While the SED leadership attributed the foreign students also a certain "recruitment potential," which could be put to good use on the national territory, officials at the MfAA considered this exchange as a good opportunity to strengthen even further political and economic cooperation.<sup>30</sup>

### 3.2. CULTURE AND ARTS

If we understand the Cold War as a "struggle for cultural supremacy,"<sup>31</sup> in which the Soviet Union, the United States, and their allies found themselves in constant competition for the most prestigious artists, artworks and cultural

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28 Einax, *Im Dienste außenpolitischer Interessen*, 162.

29 PA AA, Mf AA, M 60, ZR 579/86, "Brief assessment of the development of cultural and scientific relations between the GDR and Nicaragua in 1982," 1-2.

30 Einax, *Im Dienste außenpolitischer Interessen*, 183.

31 For a broader study on the linkage of Cold War ideological warfare and culture see David Caute, *The Dancer Defects* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005).

productions in order to dominate on a politico-cultural level, the GDR-Nicaraguan cultural cooperation appears to be embedded in a constructed broader political identity. At that time, referring to the black-and-white ideological divide meant referring to one cultural and political concept by refusing the other. However, this framing is, at best, suitable to describe the relations between countries within the respective blocs, rather than their relationship with non-aligned states. An example of a contradictory or, at least, flexible and ambivalent attitude towards ideological alliance in terms of artistic exchange, is the cooperation between the aligned GDR and non-aligned Nicaragua. Both partners simultaneously referred to socialist values to underline the urgency of their culturally mutual interests, while only one of the two sides positioned itself “inside” the socialist cultural bloc system.<sup>32</sup> As a consequence, socialist ideology traversed cultural borders and formed a recurring reference element in official communication.

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32 Nevertheless, ideological affiliation was marked by inner differences as well. From 1986 onwards, GDR and Soviet Union were distancing, as Honecker refused Gorbatschow’s opening and reformist tendencies. Hermann Wentker, “Außenpolitik in engen Grenzen. Die DDR im internationalen System 1949 – 1989,” *Quellen und Darstellungen zur Zeitgeschichte* 72, Institut für Zeitgeschichte, 490-91.

Only two months after the FSLN junta had formed the government council in September 1979, East German foreign minister Oskar Fischer travelled to Nicaragua.<sup>33</sup> The newly formed Ministry of Culture in Managua had already contacted GDR officials in October 1979.<sup>34</sup> These events express an apparent mutual interest that was fundamental for the shaping of the Cultural Agreement, signed a few months later in April 1980. As for the official cultural interactions between the GDR and Nicaragua, theatre and music seemed to be dominant fields for cultural exchange right from the beginning.<sup>35</sup>

Nevertheless, cultural cooperation between the post-revolutionary country led by a former guerilla group and the bureaucratic German socialists did not always work the way it was planned. In accordance to the earlier cited

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33 PA AA, Mf AA, M 95, ZR 12079/93.

34 The Nicaraguan Ministry of Culture in October 1979 aimed to intensify the relationship to GDR in the area of Culture and sees the cultural exchange as an effective instrument for national reconstruction. PA AA, MfAA M 60, ZR 2891/ 81.

35 The Cultural Agreement from 1981 names theatre and music already in its first article, while sports appears in the 6th and film in the 8th article: PA AA, Mf AA, M 60, ZR 5378/13 “Abkommen zwischen der Regierung der Deutschen Demokratischen Republik und der Regierung der Nationalen Erneuerung der Republik Nikaragua über kulturelle und wissenschaftliche Zusammenarbeit,” 1-4.

“clash of cultures and ideologies,” Nicaraguans and Germans both had to adapt: the former to the fact, that many of their requests for donations, internships, and funding of cultural material were rejected; GDR officials in contrast were surprised that some of their planned “diverse and generous measures”<sup>36</sup> were met with little response. An assessment from 1982 on the development of the cultural and scientific relations suggests a confident behavior of the young Latin American republic, seeing itself not in the inferior role of a petitioner. Instead, Nicaraguans wanted to obtain advice and exchange on an equal level. By referring to concepts such as solidarity and brotherhood to gain support from socialist countries they seemed to “press the right buttons,” while they maintained cultural contacts to capitalist countries as well; this gave them access to both ideological ‘worlds.’

Later, Nicaragua proposed the exchange of goods and people in smaller disciplines apart from theatre and music, as for example juggling, or circus,<sup>37</sup> an idea that was taken up by the official “Work plan

of cultural cooperation between Nicaragua and the GDR for the years 1989 till 1991.”<sup>38</sup> The example illustrates a growing self-esteem and a stronger level of organization in the Nicaraguan Ministry of Culture, found in the official correspondence and arrangements from the end of the 1980s, whereas artists in Nicaragua still had to work under precarious circumstances.

During Cold War times, national cultural politics of both the East and the West were integrated in a greater project of (re)producing capitalist or communist “divided dreamworlds,”<sup>39</sup> and in doing so many times they ignored the individual artists’ political opinion by interpreting it only through a special, narrow framework. Producing artistic work and exchanging talented students and experts underlined the cultural strength and progress, whereas the artists themselves could have intended a different meaning or would even have preferred to stay ‘outside’ an imagined collective appropriation. One can only

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36 PA AA, Mf AA, M 60, ZR 579/86, “Brief assessment of the development of cultural and scientific relations between the GDR and Nicaragua in 1982” through GDR embassy in Managua, authored by Macht, II. Secretary, January 16, 1983, 1.

37 Nicaragua proposes the sending of an animal trainer and asks for internships for “maestros de circo.” PA AA, Mf AA, M 60, ZR 2895/94, 5.

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38 PA AA, Mf AA, M 60, ZR 5378/13, “Work plan between the Government of the GDR and the Government of the Republic of Nicaragua over Cultural and Scientific Cooperation in the years 1989-1991,” 12.

39 The authors define both capitalism and communism as “dreamworlds,” because they can be interpreted as “[...]collective dream projects, as thought systems or ideologies supported by ‘dream communities’ which share a common interpretation of the world,” Scott-Smith and Segal, “Introduction,” 1-2.



speculate what Hilda Vogl's<sup>40</sup> political position in detail might have been, as she was proposed to travel to the GDR by Nicaraguan Cultural Workers' Association, accompanying 40 of her pieces of art, but she was definitely representative for Nicaraguan muralism at the time. Donaldo Altamirano's<sup>41</sup> planned visit in East Germany provides another example for exchanging artistic expertise through people's participation in art fairs and meetings of arts criticism.<sup>42</sup>

The "Asociación Sandinista de Trabajadores de la Cultura" proposed the exchange of these two artists and listed further artists by name. Once again, the gender ratio disproportion in this sector is worth noticing: only one woman in comparison to three men were proposed for the short courses, as well for the two-year internships.<sup>43</sup> We cannot draw certain conclusions as to the degree of

female integration into the cultural sector through GDR-Nicaraguan cooperation, as all documents are only formulated in masculine form in terms of language, women are not mentioned at all as *Spezialistinnen*.

In addition to the fine arts, theatre was also an integral part of the cultural cooperation: apart from being a public event, it became a vehicle for political communication, particularly when the GDR and Nicaragua corresponded about the possible production of "Die Mutter" by Bertolt Brecht to celebrate the second Anniversary of Sandinist Revolution.<sup>44</sup> The playwright's communist political opinion made his work a well-suited reference within GDR-Nicaraguan cultural cooperation, in which Brecht served as an East German poster child. Far from being only a national wish for aggrandizement and self-legitimation, the GDR evidently wanted to strengthen progressive forces in the socialist bloc, considering the special role of Nicaragua in the US sphere of influence, and had an educational and ideological mission. The *Kulturarbeitsplan* (Cultural Work plan) from 1981 justified GDR engagement through the idea of rendering solidarity and support to ideologically related movements.<sup>45</sup>

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40 Hilda Vogl (also known as Hidalgo Vogl Montalegre) was a Nicaraguan muralist and painter, some of her pieces of art are in: David Kunzle, ed., *The Murals of Revolutionary Nicaragua 1979-1992*, (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1995), 16, 51, 196.

41 Donaldo Altamirano was a well-known Nicaraguan painter and writer. Arnulfo Agüero, "Muere el escritor y pintor Donaldo Altamirano," *La Prensa*, October 25, 2016, <https://www.laprensa.com.ni/2016/10/25/cultura/2123258-fallece-donaldo-altamirado-de-un-infarto>.

42 PA AA, Mf AA, M 60, ZR 2895/94, "Propuesta de Intercambio Cultural" of the "Asociación Sandinista de Trabajadores de la Cultura."

43 Ibid., 3.

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44 PA AA, Mf AA, M 60, 2892/81, Telegram "ihr 474:" from Gen. Moeckel (Managua) to Gen. Dr. Tautz, October 29, 1980.

45 PA AA, Mf AA, M 60, ZR 2891/81, "Sketch of Cultural Work Plan," 5.

Despite the important role of Cold War binaries in the sphere of foreign policy, implemented measures, adapted methods, and the important place of consultancy and transfer of knowledge in cultural fields were not always ideologically justified. The decision to send experts and educators to Nicaragua was, to some degree, rooted in pragmatic thinking and financial pressure. After having evaluated the cultural measures, planned by the Cultural Agreement and the Cultural Work plan, the GDR embassy, instead of qualifying cadres at home, recommended the cheaper version of sending educators to Latin America.<sup>46</sup> In that sense East Germany profited twice: by secretly saving costs on the one hand and appearing as a travelling teacher, or ‘illuminating savior’ in European colonial tradition on the other.

The economically weakened Nicaragua was eager to participate on the international stage as well. The country’s need for donations, as well as its reliance on the goodwill of further industrialized countries simultaneously bore the possibility to position itself as a post-revolutionary and multi-influenced country, threatened by the USA but still nonaligned, in order to be able to cooperate with a variety of communist and capitalist actors

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46 PA AA, Mf AA, M 60, ZR 579/86, “Brief assessment of the Development of Cultural and Scientific Relations between the GDR and Nicaragua in 1982,” 4.

at once. This position may have helped to make the GDR accept their requests, as East German cultural relations during the Cold War were always formed under the impression of being confronted with richer capitalist countries and their ability to offer broad cultural exchange.

Its own economically tense circumstances and the practical problems of cultural relationships became overt when the GDR was directly confronted by the constant threat of cultural and financial contest with capitalist actors. The example of Indiana Gonzalez’ posture towards her participation in the “5th International Summer Course for Culture” in the GDR illustrates how Nicaraguans made use of this fact—which they referred to as diplomatic strategy—that increased pressure on East German officials. Gonzalez was head of *Division IV* of the newly formed Ministry of Culture in Managua, and had understood that her attendance at the Summer Course included the pay of travel costs, which was not the case in the eyes of the responsible “Genosse Dr. Greiser”, who had neglected to explain it to her. After the East German embassy had clarified the situation, Gonzalez asked if the GDR was capable of paying the costs, as Nicaragua “would be keen to participate not only in cultural seminars in capitalist states, who would usually pay for the whole stay.”<sup>47</sup>

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47 PA AA, Mf AA, M 60, ZR 2892/81, “Letter from GDR Embassy in

### 3.3. POLITICAL CONSULTANCY AS POLITICAL EDUCATION

The educational mandate that underlay the exchange of specialists, experts, and expertise, codified in the Cultural Agreement from 1980, characterized not only East German operations in the fields of popular culture and education, it structured political relations between Nicaragua and GDR even stronger. The East German cultural sense of mission is to be found in the design and implementation of political consultancy and was to a certain degree rooted in the idea of belonging to the ‘culturally superior’ side in a divided Cold War world—a world of constant struggle. Adopted by the two superpowers and their official cultural positioning as hegemonic ideologic forces, this worldview influenced East German involvement in Nicaragua in a double sense. First, because consultants referred to the “collective dream world” of real existing socialism, but, secondly, because they perceived themselves as avant-gardist and superior to their FSLN “students.”

GDR policy in terms of FSLN consultancy ranged from benevolent behavior and a self-confident appearance to a rather arrogant attitude towards a possible socialist ally with less experience in terms of real socialist state organization

(“*Realsozialismus*”).<sup>48</sup> The relationship between the consultants and their socialist comrades conceived the Nicaraguans more as students, while both partners shared the common agenda to advance the process of reconstruction in Nicaragua.

The GDR’s service in the Central American country was one strategy to acquire influence in the international sphere and to spread a Marxist-Leninist agenda while gaining international respect. In the act of passing on a specific political culture, the East Germans were very aware of their integration into a bigger “framework.” They found themselves in concurrence, or at least in constant comparison to the Soviet Union’s political internationalist work. Efficiency was measured glancing to Moscow.<sup>49</sup>

Far from being only a consultant, the GDR liked to see itself as avant-gardist educator, with the final report by the political consultant’s group in 1988 mentioning the FSLN’s “political maturity”<sup>50</sup> as one criterion to

48 The term “Realsozialismus” was popularized from the 1970s onwards, as a designation for the political systems of countries like the GDR and alluded to a highly “developed” socialist system. See Klaus Ziemer, “Real existierender Sozialismus” in Dieter Nohlen, ed. *Lexikon der Politik*, vol. 7 (Berlin: Directmedia, 2004), 535 f.

49 PA AA, Mf AA, MAV Managua, ZR 2888/94, “Letter to Günter Sieber” that refers to a visit of members of FSLN in Germany, October 19, 1987, 1.

50 PA AA, Mf AA, MAV Managua,

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Managua to the Office for Cultural Foreign Relationships in the GDR from Gen. Dietrich, July 4, 1980”, 2.

measure the consultancy's success or failure. Nevertheless, this might be the characteristic style of the Marxist-Leninist GDR to express a sense of progress to reach a better world, it upgrades the act of consultancy while downgrading the people it was addressed to at the same time. The political consultants deployed in the Managua bureaucracy perceived themselves as envoys in the role of facilitators, whose state of knowledge was superior to those they intended to educate, form and illuminate, even if the agreements were established between formally equal partners.

Treating the Nicaraguan cadres as students was nourished by the existing age discrepancy between the East German consultants and the latter. According to Fischer in 1979, citing in turn members of the State Council of National Renovation in Nicaragua, the cadres were very young and militias were formed out of 13 to 16 year-old members.<sup>51</sup> The average age for a member of the cadres was under 20 years old and “unexperienced,” “without expertise”—though also capable of redeeming this inexperience through a “fighting spirit.”<sup>52</sup> Another two years later, the GDR embassy in Managua still stated

that there was little qualification amongst the cadres and described the young ones as full of “ignorance and inexperience” which would lead to a frequent change in office.<sup>53</sup> Schoolmasterly judging of their capacity of formation and evaluation of their skills to concentrate, the final report on consultancy for FSLN resembles a school certificate given to children in primary school, crediting them with a “thirst of knowledge, flexibility of mind” while simultaneously being “volatile, easily distractible and influenced,” as well as tending to a “sporadic work style [...]”<sup>54</sup> Rather than as a socialist European politician speaking about an allied Latin American partner, the author seems to speak as a “teacher” judging his “students,” evaluating their intellectual capacities and their will to properly behave.

Nevertheless, FSLN members had confidently demanded advice through consultants of the central committee of the SED, especially because they relied on cadres of the old Somoza state system, who often were of a different political affiliation. Embedded in an avant-gardist attitude towards FSLN—seeing them technically as equal but practically treating them as inferior,

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ZR 2888/94, “Final Report of ZK Consultants Group in Managua,” February 2, 1988, 4.

51 Here again we miss more details on the gender relations inside FSLN, there is no reference to women.

52 PA AA, Mf AA, M 95, ZR 12079/93, “Report after a visit of Oskar Fischer in Nicaragua in 1979”, 11.

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53 PA AA, Mf AA, M 60, ZR 580/86, “Report on the Development of Cultural and Scientific Relationships of GDR Embassy in Managua,” January 16, 1983, 3.

54 PA AA, Mf AA, MAV Managua, ZR 2888/94, “Final Report of ZK Consultants Group in Managua,” February 2, 1988, 5.

with a tendency to paternalism—the GDR though showed respect for their achievements, as the final report in 1988 documents.<sup>55</sup>

Recurring fundamental values structured and guided the cooperation between the two countries. Besides the mutual reference to internationalism, Nicaraguan officials emphasized the clarity, consistency, and respect towards work, as well as the good relationship of trust to the people in everyday life as remarkable characteristics of the Berlin SED.<sup>56</sup> The communication about such facts between both parties and inside GDR offices in Managua and Berlin influenced the political education, as insights circulated back to the consultants.

Therefore, the GDR “teachers” themselves learned from their activity in a new environment, where they had to face the new challenges of “clashing cultures and ideologies.”<sup>57</sup> A rather unintended side effect of consultancy for FSLN might have been the personal knowledge GDR officials brought home after having completed their mission. Dionisio Marengo wrote in a letter to former-consultant Gert Ulrich, expressing his regret that he had not obtained maximum profit from his stay in Nicaragua, but was sure that Ulrich would have learned something

about the difficult circumstances in Nicaragua and reassured him “[...] aquí tendra siempre un pequeño pedazo de Patria Libre.”<sup>58</sup>

## CONCLUSION

When the very “rigid” world of diplomatic codex clashed with the fluid subject of “culture(s),” and the infamously bureaucratic GDR met the rebel group turned government FSLN, the ensuing interactions contained various challenges and misunderstandings, highlighting the provisional or even experimental character of measures. Within the inter- and transcultural engagement especially the representatives of the East German state were acting with two conflicting understandings of their role: they saw themselves as partners in an internationalist fight against imperialism that emphasized equality and solidarity, but also presented deep-rooted ideas of European superiority—nourished by their self-perception as a socialist avant-garde—that reduced their Central American comrades to mere pupils.

The role of the East Germans as “educators” was even more prominent in the fields of political consultancy and education, less so in the mostly cooperative work in the field of schooling and academic

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55 Ibid., 4.

56 PA AA, Mf AA, MAV Managua, ZR 2888/94, “Letter to Günter Sieber”.

57 Scott-Smith and Segal, “Introduction,” 1.

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58 PA AA, Mf AA, MAV Managua, ZR 2888/94, “Letter from Dionisio Marengo to Gert Ulrich,” November 4, 1988.

education. Although the sources offer little insight into the numerical proportion of the participants, especially regarding the East German students, the exchange programs listed in the accessible documents point to a severe imbalance, since far more students from Nicaragua visited the GDR, while the relation was inverse with lecturers. It remains debatable to which degree this was a result of more limited capacities of the Nicaraguan universities, an expectation that there was less to learn there for German students, or the excessive caution the GDR-authorities showed when granting permissions to leave the country.

Ambivalence and simultaneity of ideologic and rather pragmatic decisions characterize the different areas of cultural cooperation. Taking place in the fields of culture - especially theatre, arts and music - education and political education, it was mainly driven by the idea that experience, knowledge and culture implemented through education were central principles for national and revolutionary liberation. Apart from the cultural sovereignty and freedom that should be obtained it was a practical way of influencing the other country and self-assert on a national level, thereby increasing the own international prestige in the global Cold War world.

Although the present paper provides an insight into the complexity of the cultural entanglement between the two countries, our analysis offers—due to the singular perspective

of the documents surveyed—little information in the ways differences in gender and race might have influenced the interactions between the German and Nicaraguan associates and further bolstered the conception of an unequal cooperation. Accessing different sources that provide better insight into the Nicaraguan perspective might help historical research to avoid involuntarily reproducing the power imbalance that was inherent in this cross-continental relationship.



### III. CUBA

# The Construction of Solidarity in Public Spaces Between Germany and Cuba Before and After German Reunification

by

ANAIRIS DÍAZ MACEO  
AND JOHANNA HABEL



## ABSTRACT

The concept of solidarity between the German Democratic Republic (GDR) and Cuba have been the focus of several works of academic research. This contribution, however, aims to understand how these relations could persist in a reunified Germany by analyzing the communication of solidarity between the GDR and Cuba before and after reunification. This article illustrates how the GDR and Cuba communicated solidarity towards their respective people and among each other, and argues that the GDR's type of solidarity communication was not transferred to the government of the Federal Republic of Germany after reunification, but rather to its non-governmental solidarity organizations. The German working group Cuba Sí of the Party of Democratic Socialism serves as an example to compare the communication styles of these two transnational partners. Focusing on this example, this article studies the evolution of power relations and cooperation structures before and after reunification. In order to further comprehend and classify solidary communication of the period, this analysis aims to understand the continuity of ideological structures present in the Cold War beyond the collapse of the state socialism.

## ABOUT THE AUTHORS

Anairis Díaz Maceo studied Social and Cultural Anthropology at the Goethe University in Frankfurt am Main, Germany, and continues her studies in the M.A. Interdisciplinary Latin American Studies at the Free University of Berlin. Her connection to intercultural communication stems from the bicultural background of her parents - her Cuban father and German mother, born and raised during the times of the GDR, are her historical links to the topic of this article.

Johanna Habel studied Political and Social Studies at the Julius-Maximilians University in Germany and the University of San Andrés in Bolivia, and developed a strong interest in communication. She is currently deepening her knowledge of international cooperation at the Institute for Latin American Studies at the Free University of Berlin.

## INTRODUCTION

International solidarity in the German Democratic Republic (GDR) as a symbolic show of the global bond between communist and socialist countries was a source of pride for government officials in the state, whereas it simultaneously suppressed independent solidarity groups domestically. As a type of “voluntary coercion,”<sup>1</sup> the concept of solidarity and solidarity communication took on many forms that require a closer look and a global perspective in order to properly understand their complex motivations, and their consequences within the GDR and throughout the socialist world. Due to the ideological intimidation exerted by the state, the full extent of the economic, political and social consequences of international solidarity became more apparent after the reunification.

The concept of solidarity is often used in political and social as well as academic discourses as a cross-cutting theme<sup>2</sup> and is mostly

considered a moral phenomenon<sup>3</sup> that is difficult to measure. According to Katrin Radtke, solidarity is defined as either a demeanor or a feeling.<sup>4</sup> The advantage of viewing it as a demeanor over a feeling is that demeanor can be better operationalized into concrete action. Radtke divides solidarity-based demeanor into three groups:

1. Material goods: such as currency or natural resources.
2. Communication, whether oral or written: in the form of petitions, speeches or articles.
3. Labor: physical or mental.

The concept of solidarity has been analyzed in various case studies with differing perspectives: The authors Jeannette Brosig-Koch et al., for example, consider German reunification<sup>5</sup> as “an excellent opportunity to study the influence

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1 “UMBRÜCHE-Diskussion: A Work in Progress - Ein Gespräch Zwischen Ost Und West,” *UMBRÜCHE*, 1993, 14.

2 Ulf Tranow, “Solidarität: Vorschlag Für Eine Solidarische Begriffsbestimmung,” *Analyse & Kritik*, 2013, 395-398; Katrin Radtke, “Transnationale Solidarität: Mehr Hilfe Für Entferntes Leid,” in *Solidarität Und Internationale Gemeinschaftsbildung: Beiträge Zur Soziologie Der Internationalen Beziehungen*, ed. Sebastian Harnisch, Hans Maull, Siegfried Schieder (Frankfurt am Main: Campus, 2009), 115-136.

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3 Herfried Münkler, “Enzyklopädie der Ideen der Zukunft: Solidarität”, in *Transnationale Solidarität: Chancen und Grenzen*, ed. Jens Beckert et al. (Frankfurt/New York: Campus, 2004), 15-30.

4 Radtke’s solidarity concept is more complex than presented here. The presented part is the most relevant concept for this article. The entire concept of solidarity according to Radtke can be found here: Katrin Radtke, *Transnationale Solidarität*, 118-123.

5 The term “German reunification” is part of many different debates. The article does not want to assume a position or an evaluation of the term itself but merely uses it to define a historical moment.

of the economic and political environment on social behavior. [...] So this historical moment allows the investigation of how] social norms adapt to economic and political change.”<sup>6</sup> Further authors to be considered are Petra Goedde and Richard H. Immerman, whose theory focuses on the aforementioned processes of change. According to their analysis, local, regional and global reactions to the danger of a nuclear war, the influence of decolonization, the rise of human rights, environmental politics as well as comparable transnational affairs deeply influence international interaction and cause social, political and economic transformations with a ripple effect of global affairs on domestic politics.<sup>7</sup>

This article will examine two separate time periods, from 1974 to 1990 and from 1990 to 1995, to demonstrate a completely different set of approaches to the concept of (international) solidarity in various parts of society and state institutions. Considering that solidarity is a complex construct, this article will be based on Radtke’s demeanor-based perspective, with a particular emphasis on communication. In the first part of the article, the

communication of solidarity between the GDR and Cuba will be presented. Again, a distinction is made between the type of communication between the two states and towards their respective people. Connected to this aspect of our analysis is the work of Jadwiga E. Pieper Mooney and Fabio Lanza, who pointed out that the discourse of the Cold War and thus the communications both between states and between the state and its population was centered around the state’s fear of revolutions and activism to maintain the structure of the political regime. In contrast to this, multiple social movements and solidary groups were formed as a result of transformations in global diplomacy and state politics, creating global alliances beyond the Cold War and its tensions.<sup>8</sup>

In addition, a short overview of the time of transition from the fall of the Berlin Wall to reunification is given. Here, primarily due to the negotiations between the two German states, there was a break in solidarity relations between Cuba and the GDR. Although communication remains a level of analysis in this area, there will also be a closer focus on solidarity in the domains of material and labor. It will be shown that changes at all levels were often the (main) reason for the foundation

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6 Jeannette Brosig-Koch, “Still Different after All These Years: Solidarity Behavior in East and West Germany,” *Journal of Public Economics* 95 (2011): 1373-1376.

7 Richard H. Immerman and Petra Goedde, *The Oxford Handbook of the Cold War* (Oxford: Oxford University, 2013), 3-4.

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8 Jadwiga E. Pieper Mooney and Fabio Lanza, *De-Centering Cold War History. Local and Global Change* (London: Routledge, 2013), 1-8.

of civil society engagement or other solidarity groups. These groups will then be analyzed in further detail in the third part using the aforementioned working group Cuba Sí as an example. Here, the analysis will be carried out on the level of communication as well, although this part will additionally display the interconnectedness of the three levels. This part will closely examine the communication of solidarity between Cuba Sí and Cuba in the period of 1991 to 1995. We will conclude with a summary and highlight the relevance of this analysis in the context of Cold War research.

This article thus serves to illustrate the continuity in solidarity communication that can be observed in solidarity and friendship groups after reunification.

## THE DISPARITY OF STATE IDEOLOGIES AND SOCIAL REALITY

The concept of international solidarity in the GDR not only thrived due to material benefits stemming from cooperation with solidary partner countries, but also political statements, diplomatic support and historical as well as cultural engagement. However, these solidarity measures often did not match the interests of all parts of the population and solely followed the GDR government's goal of "strengthening partners in an anti-Western, anti-imperialist

position" instead of "promoting an independent development path."<sup>9</sup> In this context, the Solidarity Committee was in possession of a power monopoly. As a direct link to the Socialist Union Party's (SUP, Sozialistische Einheitspartei Deutschland = SED) Central Committee, the Solidarity Committee was established as a social organization that had been tasked with the economic development of so-called "third world countries" and coordinated different development assistance activities in the GDR in the government's best interest. Citizens depended on cooperation with such institutions and had little capacity to realize independent aid projects outside the state- a strong deficit of domestic policies.<sup>10</sup>

This disparity of state ideologies and social reality became apparent during the establishment of solidary connections with other like-minded countries. Connected to a political, top-down solidarity, the SUP decided which nations should be supported.<sup>11</sup> This state of affairs, however, did not withstand the collapse of the Council for Mutual Economic Assistance (CMEA, Rat für

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9 Carl Ordnung, "Ein Teil des positiven Erbes: Die DDR-Solidarität hat die Partner erreicht und wirklich geholfen," *INKOTA-Brief* 146 (2008): 8.

10 Ordnung, "Ein Teil des positiven Erbes," 8.

11 Willi Volks, "Eigennützige Solidarität: Die Solidarität in der DDR war stark reglementiert und häufig an den eigenen ökonomischen Interessen orientiert," *INKOTA-Brief* 146 (2008), 9.

gegenseitige Wirtschaftshilfe), an international economic organization comprised of socialist states under the leadership of the Soviet Union. The CMEA operated from 1949 to before being dissolved in 1991 due to the radical decrease in trade concomitant with the decline and disintegration of the Soviet.<sup>12</sup> The fall of the CMEA revealed a fundamental problem of the GDR's understanding of their solidarity concept: solidarity only functioned on the basis of top-down executive regulations, as the state generally mistrusted the population and left a crippling lack of space for independent (political) thought and action. All direct, interpersonal relationships and interactions with solidary partners were prevented.<sup>13</sup>

## CONSTRUCTING A SOLIDARY WORKFORCE

To fully understand the extent of the differences between the communication styles of the GDR and Cuba to their citizens and to each other on a governmental level, the values and priorities communicated to each population deserve a closer look. Their relevance becomes especially apparent in speeches given to their communities and official government documents handed out to the population. For instance, an

excerpt of the GDR's official report of Erich Honecker's friendship visit (*Freundschaftsbesuch*<sup>14</sup>) to Cuba in 1974 shows quite clearly how much significance was placed on the communication of a "brotherly" closeness between the two nations' government and peoples:

With this friendly visit, relations between the two countries are entering a new stage in their development. They aim to serve the progress of their peoples and to contribute to the consolidation of the socialist community [...] The fraternal bond and close friendship between the Socialist Unity Party of Germany and the Communist Party of Cuba, between the peoples of the German Democratic Republic and the Republic of Cuba are indispensable prerequisites for the great common achievements in building socialism and in the struggle for peace, democracy and social progress.<sup>15</sup>

<sup>12</sup> *Encyclopaedia Britannica*, s.v. "Comecon," 2020, [britannica.com/topic/Comecon](https://www.britannica.com/topic/Comecon).

<sup>13</sup> Volks, *Eigennützige Solidarität*, 9.

<sup>14</sup> A *Freundschaftsbesuch* between two states can be defined as a less formal political visit of state officials as an expression of friendship and cooperation. *Duden*, s.v. "Freundschaftsbesuch," <https://www.duden.de/rechtschreibung/Freundschaftsbesuch>.

<sup>15</sup> Klaus Dieter Kröber and Wolfgang Meyer, *Compañeros Im Sozialistischen Amerika: Freundschaftsbesuch Der Partei- u. Regierungsdelegation Der DDR Unter Leitung Des Ersten Sekretärs Des ZK Der SED, Erich Honecker, in Der Republik Kuba* (Leipzig: Brockhaus,

The population of each nation, according to this speech, was to focus on contributing to social restructuring and to be an active part of the palpable progress in terms of cultural development as well as the fundamental changes in the lifestyles of Cuban citizens. This policy was to serve as an example and role model of “social progress and national liberation” for other or soon-to-be parts of the socialist state community.

This common goal of social progress and national liberation can be witnessed as a constant communication element, in speeches given during the friendly visit. For example, in the aforementioned official GDR report released after the visit, the authors Klaus Dieter Kröber and Wolfgang Meyer emphasized the pursuit of cooperation “rooted in mutual trust, solidarity and fraternity,” as well as the “goal of dynamically developing the productive forces of both countries, using science and technology more and more effectively, promoting socialist economic integration and increasing the standard of living of both peoples as planned.”<sup>16</sup>

Each side officially articulated to their population the goal of national and social liberation, and constantly communicated a steadfast mindset of solidarity with global liberation movements

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1974), 5; translated from German to English, as all of the citations of this article.

16 Kröber and Meyer, *Compañeros Im Sozialistischen Amerika*, 14.

against imperialism, colonialism, neocolonialism, and racism.<sup>17</sup> In working towards these goals, the GDR and Cuba emphasized the importance of their citizens’ skills, education, and their labor.

This aspect of labor as an essential element of solidarity communication was also analyzed by Che Guevara. As Hugo C. F. Mansilla explains in *Systembedürfnis und Anpassung*, Che Guevara juxtaposed the “blind motivation of the individual through interest and profit” under capitalism with the “conscious, societally oriented and selfless motivation” in socialism.<sup>18</sup> The foundation of this socialist motivation, according to Guevara, is a moral stance, the “revolutionary conscience,” which does not work on the basis of a material reward but on the basis of a sense of duty towards society as a whole. On this basis, the amount of the reward does not depend on the quality and intensity of the work performed. Thus, the “revolutionary conscience” receives the function of a productive force and contains an inherent moral attitude.<sup>19</sup>

Elements of Guevara’s theory can be seen in the solidarity concept of Cuban socialism at the time of the 1974 friendship visit;

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17 Kröber and Meyer, *Compañeros Im Sozialistischen Amerika*, 19.

18 Hugo C. F. Mansilla, *Systembedürfnis und Anpassung. Zur Kritik Sozialistischer Verhaltenssteuerung* (Frankfurt am Main: Athenäum, 1973), 215.

19 Mansilla, *Systembedürfnis und Anpassung*, 216.

however, it remains to be argued how much of his theory was actually accepted by Cuban society at large. The communication style the Cuban government and the GDR adopted to construct international solidarity during their representatives' speeches was based on this value of the "tireless, social and solidary workforce."<sup>20</sup> However, the GDR and Cuba did not approach this value in identical ways. Differences in their approaches become more apparent when analyzing Fidel Castro's and Erich Honecker's speeches during the friendship visit.

Castro, on the one hand, approached the subject in a more emotional, passionate manner, emphasizing the fact that "it is logical that [their] peoples march together, that they deepen their relationships[, ...] that the struggles, efforts and battles of the GDR are also [theirs]. Hence [their] solidarity, [their] sympathy, [their] cooperation."<sup>21</sup> The core of his communication style with Cuban citizens becomes visible in the following part of his speech:

Dear comrades of the delegation of the German Democratic Republic! These revolutionary people welcomed you with all their *warmth*, with all their *enthusiasm* and with all the *solidarity* they are capable of. This friendship will be a *firm and*

20 Mansilla, *Systembedürfnis und Anpassung*, 216.

21 Kröber and Meyer, *Compañeros Im Sozialistischen Amerika*, 102.

*eternal friendship* because it is based on the love of the people! This friendship has its *roots in the hearts of all Cubans*. Long live the friendship between Cuba and the German Democratic Republic!<sup>22</sup>

When analyzed, it can be seen that Castro's constant use of a rhetoric that appealed to the emotions and personal lives of the Cuban population served as a communication strategy to direct their attention to the priorities of him and government: an interpersonal, international long-term commitment between two societies that placed productivity and development first.

However, these sentiments of shared economic aspirations and interests were not wrapped up in an emotional and passionate package during Erich Honecker's speech, but rather approached straightforwardly:

Our economic relationships are increasingly developing towards a *mutual benefit*. The establishment of cement plants and other companies and training centers, joint research projects, student exchanges, cooperation between mass organizations, scientists and cultural workers *serve our socialist cause and the rapprochement of our peoples*, which are forever connected. [...] Long live the *indestructible friendship* between Cuba and the

22 Kröber and Meyer, *Compañeros Im Sozialistischen Amerika*, 105.

German Democratic Republic!<sup>23</sup>

Comparing these two speeches alone clearly shows that the two speakers focused their cooperation on different aspects and approaches. For the most part, Mansilla states that this led to a view of solidarity in Cuban society as part of a “truly socialist personality” that distinguished itself in terms of “selflessness, material lack of interest, doing work as a patriotic matter of honor [and] exemption from the obligation to perform.”<sup>24</sup>

Hard work, everyday heroism, complete fulfillment of the tasks decreed from above and above all a political-ideological transfiguration of fulfillment of duty and obedience as the highest and noblest revolutionary virtues, and the assumption that working constitutes the ontological ‘essence’ of people.<sup>25</sup>

In addition, Mansilla points out the paradox that the identification with above-average work performance, revolutionary spirit and human value, which appears in this type of socialist solidarity, represents a unique form of a precapitalist merit system: hard work and dedication to the job play the central role in this ethics.<sup>26</sup>

23 Kröber and Meyer, *Compañeros Im Sozialistischen Amerika*, 107.

24 Mansilla, *Systembedürfnis*, 220.

25 Mansilla, *Systembedürfnis*, 220.

26 Mansilla, *Systembedürfnis*, 230.

The communication of this common spirit and shared ethics from the government to its people becomes apparent in speeches such as the Central Committee’s secretary Julián Rizo Álvarez’s address in Matanzas on February 25, 1974, during a rally with the party and government delegation of the GDR. During this speech, Álvarez focused on the collaboration, “enthusiasm and hard work of [Cuban technicians and workers] and working people in the German Democratic Republic.” According to Álvarez, the success of and productivity in the chemical factory “Raúl Cepero Bonilla” in Matanzas was a result of fraternity and solidarity between the two nations.<sup>27</sup>

## THE TERMS AND CONDITIONS OF SOLIDARITY

The same orientation towards fraternity and solidarity, however, cannot be found as easily in the communication between the governments of the GDR and Cuba. In these official communications, there existed a continuous disparity in how these two states viewed each other. On the one hand, the GDR aimed to strengthen its position by using their solidarity with

27 Marita Bieß, *Dokumente Und Materialien Der Zusammenarbeit Zwischen Der Sozialistischen Einheitspartei Deutschlands Und Der Kommunistischen Partei Kubas 1971 Bis 1977* (Berlin: Dietz, 1979), 122-123.



“developing countries” as a tool in its battle for international recognition against the competing, West German state.<sup>28</sup> Furthermore, state solidarity was constantly connected to the Commercial Coordination (Kommerzielle Koordinierung) under Alexander Schalck-Golodkowski that shaped relations and changed the approach to developing countries based on the economic difficulties of the GDR—particularly in the 1980s. Economic relations with Cuba were based on the “economization of [Cuban] contract workers for their own benefit.” Towards the end of the 1980s, Cuban contract workers increasingly served the purpose of debt repayment and were “an integral part of social work capacity, although the GDR viewed relationships between contract workers and German citizens as highly undesirable, which led to numerous deportations of contract workers. Thus, expressions of solidarity mandated by the state did not include personal connections between citizens, and was bound by multiple conditions not directly conveyed to the population.<sup>29</sup> Cuba’s government, on the other hand, had already expressed their dissatisfaction with the insufficient solidarity of their GDR comrades after the meetings with Erich Honecker on February 21, 1974, and attributed the economic defects to a lack of internationalism and the narrow-minded thinking of the SUP and

its leaders. In the final hearing on February 26, Castro expressed this sentiment towards the GDR again.<sup>30</sup>

This stark contrast in terms of the communication of solidarity between the state and the population versus the practical application and communication of solidarity between the two states can be witnessed by taking a closer look at the cooperation between state institutions of the GDR and Cuba. For example, cooperation between the Ministry of State Security of the GDR (Ministerium für Staatssicherheit, in short: MfS) and the Ministry of the Interior of Cuba (MININT), was defined by the solidarity-based “development aid” for Cuba.<sup>31</sup> This “aid” included the transfer of repressive techniques and concepts, such as a very clearly defined image of a subversive internal<sup>32</sup> that served

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30 Dietrich Lemke, *Cuba, Castro y Comercio. 30 Jahre Im Dienst Des Aussenhandels DDR - Kuba* (Zeuthen: D. Lemke, 2004), 235.

31 Gerhard Ehlert, Jochen Staadt, and Tobias Voigt, *Die Zusammenarbeit zwischen dem Ministerium für Staatssicherheit der DDR (MfS) und dem Ministerium des Innern Kubas (MININT)* (Berlin: Freie Universität, 2002), 2.

32 The GDR’s enemy image started as seeing resistance as state treason and the connected suspicion of espionage as a valid reason for state intervention. This definition, however, was extended more and more so that minor criticism of the state system could result in arrests and other punishments. This enemy image was then transferred to Cuba. See Ehlert, Staadt, Voigt, *Die Zusammenarbeit*, 2.

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28 Volks, *Eigennützige Solidarität*, 9.

29 Volks, *Eigennützige Solidarität*, 9.

to criminalize and disenfranchise broader parts of the population. The solidarity between these two ministries was based on a mutual idea of who threatened their authority and who did not, as well as common ways to govern what or who they perceived as a threat.<sup>33</sup>

Cuba solicited assistance for its radical social transformations: it asked for assistance in the creation of a uniform prison system and two ministries similar to the GDR, well-trained cadres in the fight against “counter-revolutionary forces,” as well as an exchange of experience and advice from the working group of the Minister of the Interior of the GDR.<sup>34</sup> This ongoing list of demands directed at the GDR’s government was an extreme contrast to the more relaxed, emotional and friendly stance the Cuban government communicated to its citizens.

This close cooperation aimed at a mutual benefit was maintained until the end of the GDR and not only consisted of forms of concretely coordinated “political-operational measures” developed at the central level of the ministry leaders as well as between technically congruent service units,<sup>35</sup> but also included the “development of cooperation in the establishment and organization of the work of security officers in the

economy of the Republic of Cuba, in particular through the continuous, stable exchange of information and practical experience.”<sup>36</sup>

Despite this close bond between the states, the solidarity concept communicated between the governments was never formulated on an empathetic level, as might be suggested by the official communication and the relations of international solidarity they upheld. On the contrary, during the second half of the 1980s, Cuba suffered from a loss of confidence in SUP politics and governance.<sup>37</sup>

Due to this gap in their solidarity communication—combined with the diminishing resources of the GDR that led to a rising demand of profit—, this system of international solidarity<sup>38</sup> could not be supported any longer after the fall of the Berlin Wall. With German reunification, these relations ended abruptly and left the solidarity and friendship groups of the FRG with a solidarity concept that needed to be redefined and communicated anew.

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33 Ehlert, Stadt, Voight, *Die Zusammenarbeit*, 9-10.

34 Ehlert, Stadt, Voight, *Die Zusammenarbeit*, 10.

35 Ehlert, Stadt, Voight, *Die Zusammenarbeit*, 16.

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36 Ehlert, Stadt, Voight, *Die Zusammenarbeit*, 35.

37 Ehlert, Stadt, Voight, *Die Zusammenarbeit*, 64-65.

38 Susanne Ritschel, *Kubanische Studierende in Der DDR. Ambivalentes Erinnern Zwischen Zeitzeuge Und Archiv* (Hildesheim: Georg Olms, 2015), 47.

## NEGOTIATING SOLIDARITY DURING TRANSITIONS

### CUBA AND THE FRG

As explained in the previous sections, bilateral relations between Cuba and the GDR were extremely strong and well-connected through the discourse of international solidarity. Relations between the FRG and Cuba, however, were not as strongly developed. The author Ralf Breuer even described the FRG as a “Nordic hardliner”<sup>39</sup> among the Western European nations that traditionally supported the United States. The FRG, consistent with the US policy of embargo, rejected cooperation with Cuba following the Cuban Revolution in 1959. Breuer assumes that the FRG’s attitude was not only an exclusive expression of their allegiance to the US, but also reflected above all the concern that a development directed against the United States could lead to the loss of the FRG’s only credible security guarantor. As a result, the revolutionary events in Cuba were indirectly perceived as a threat in their own right. Up until the end of the Cold War, the FRG regarded the Cuban Revolution in simplified terms: either pro US and against the

Soviet Union, or pro Soviet Union and against the US. The individual character of the Cuban Revolution and the Cuban system, which surpassed this categorization, thus went unnoticed.<sup>40</sup>

Another point of conflict was the establishment of bilateral relations between Cuba and the GDR. For the FRG, this was a violation of the Hallstein Doctrine,<sup>41</sup> which led it to suspend bilateral relations with Cuba just two days later. With the improvement of relations between the two German countries in the 1970s, relations between the FRG and Cuba also relaxed, and bilateral relations were resumed. The situation changed in the 1980s, however, when Cuba negotiated retraining measures within the framework of the Paris Club. The FRG, together with the US, tried to make the negotiations more difficult by the joint acquisition of a majority stake in an English bank involved in the debt restructuring negotiations.<sup>42</sup> This example shows that the bilateral relationship

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39 Ralf Breuer, “Die deutsche Kuba-Politik nach der Wiedervereinigung,” in: *Kuba: Politik, Wirtschaft, Kultur heute*, (2001): 773-800, [https://publications.iai.spkberlin.de/servlets/MCRFileNodeServlet/Document\\_derivate\\_00001715/BIA\\_075\\_773\\_800.pdf](https://publications.iai.spkberlin.de/servlets/MCRFileNodeServlet/Document_derivate_00001715/BIA_075_773_800.pdf).

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40 Breuer, “Die deutsche Kuba-Politik,” 775.

41 The FRG claimed to be the only representative of Germany. Using the political instrument of the Hallstein Doctrine, it threatened all states which officially established bilateral relations with the GDR to break off relations. Cuba was the first Latin American country to officially establish relations with the GDR in 1963, thus challenging the exclusive representation of the FRG. Breuer, “Die deutsche Kuba-Politik,” 777.

42 Breuer, “Die deutsche Kuba-Politik,” 779.

between Cuba and the FRG remained cold in spite of some attempts to rebuild a relationship.

#### CUBA AND THE GDR IN TIMES OF TRANSITIONS

In the transition period, the relations between the FRG and Cuba did not change. However, relations between Cuba and the GDR got worse. With the progressive inner-German rapprochement, Cuba brought back about 8,000 of its GDR workers from 1990 to the beginning of 1991.<sup>43</sup> Furthermore, many Cuban students who studied in the GDR returned to Cuba in 1990/91. The main reason was the introduction of the DM (German Mark) in the GDR and the associated increase in the cost of living for Cubans in Germany.<sup>44</sup> But it was not only Cuba and Cubans who changed migration processes, as the GDR unilaterally terminated their visa-free agreement

with Cuba on 9 July 1990.<sup>45</sup>

During this period, about 100 intergovernmental agreements still existed between the GDR and Cuba, which regulated trade and economic relations between the two countries. Some of these agreements were maintained until the year 2000, and part of the intensive cooperation was the favorable granting of loans<sup>46</sup> from the GDR to Cuba. There was also an agreement that Cuba could pay off the loans in the form of trade supplies. As early as 1990, previously agreed upon deliveries from Cuba to companies in the GDR were then suspended, as the GDR no longer had any interest in purchasing from them. Furthermore, the demand for primary goods from Cuba such as sugar, fruit, or tobacco diminished, as these products were now increasingly being supplied to the GDR from the FRG. Still under the responsibility of the GDR's Ministry of Economics, a monetary reassessment of Cuba's repayment obligation, deliveries, and payments from both countries in DM was initiated.<sup>47</sup>

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43 This was officially agreed at government level between East Germany and Cuba. In itself, it was not a breach of contract, as these workers were originally supposed to leave the GDR earlier, but then stayed longer at the request of the GDR. Carola Hesse-Andres, "Innenpolitische Anspannungen in der Bevölkerung Kubas" *Cuba Sí - Zeitschrift der Freundschaftsgesellschaft Westberlin-Kuba e.V.* (May, 1992) 2-4: 3.

44 Carola Hesse-Andres, "Kurznachrichten zusammengestellt," *Cuba Sí - Zeitschrift der Freundschaftsgesellschaft Westberlin-Kuba e.V.* (September, 1990) 18-20: 18.

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45 Ralf Punkenburg, "Mit Kuba wird es keine staatliche Entwicklungszusammenarbeit geben," *Cuba Sí - Zeitschrift der Freundschaftsgesellschaft Westberlin-Kuba e.V.* (January, 1991) 6-12: 7.

46 The benefits included 2% interest, some grace years, and 15-20 years repayment period.

47 Punkenburg, "Mit Kuba wird es keine staatliche Entwicklungszusammenarbeit geben," 6f.

## THE CUBA WAVE

On 26 and 27 July 1990, representatives of the Ministry for Economic Cooperation and the Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation met in Constance. At this conference, the future of the bilateral trade agreements was to be decided. The FRG was declared as the future legal representative and was also willing to continue the binational relations of the GDR in the field of economic and development cooperation. The big exception, however, was cooperation with Cuba. The GDR declared itself unwilling to support Cuba in any form if they would not initiate political changes.<sup>48</sup> The GDR was only prepared to make an exception for milk powder delivery and to stop the cooperation after a transitional period of six months.<sup>49</sup>

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48 Punkenburg, "Mit Kuba," 9f.; Breuer, "Die deutsche Kuba-Politik", 773f., 780; cf. Michael Zeuske, *Insel der Extreme: Kuba im 20. Jahrhundert* (Zürich: Rotpunktverlag, 2000).

49 The GDR had concluded a skimmed milk powder agreement with Cuba in 1981. The agreements were valid until 1995, and during the negotiations, the representatives from the GDR particularly supported this agreement, justifying this for humanitarian reasons. They agreed to continue the supply of milk powder for six months, as stipulated in the agreement, and afterwards stop their cooperation on this project. This not only affected Cuba, but also farms in the GDR which produced milk powder almost exclusively for Cuba and lost their main customers. Ralf Punkenburg, "Mit Kuba," 8.

From a Cuban perspective, the international transformation during this period had an enormous impact on the country. Even though the Cuban Revolution claimed a certain independence from the East-West conflict, in a very short period of time, Cuba was internationally isolated at both an ideological and a foreign trade level. Cuba lost the Soviet Union and the GDR as trading partners in the short term and, in the case of the GDR, in the long term as well.<sup>50</sup> Despite the political and economic circumstances of Cuba, the German population became increasingly interested in the island, their people, culture, politics and current news. This phenomenon was called the "Kuba Welle" (the Cuba Wave).

## THE INFLUENCE OF REUNIFICATION IN THE EXISTING RELATIONS WITH CUBA

A part of society that accompanied the important transformation processes of German reunification and grew within it was organized in the solidarity groups of both states. The destruction of the real-socialist model of the GDR in particular created space for the quantitative and qualitative development of these movements.<sup>51</sup>

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50 To refer to this period historically Cubans use the term "special period". Carola Hesse-Andres, "Kurznachrichten zusammengestellt," 18; Breuer, "Die deutsche Kuba-Politik," 780.

51 Solidarity groups tried to take over or

Many people were looking for active forms of life, which they found in solidarity groups, among other things. As a result, the period of transition spurred on the growth of these solidarity groups. Their political work in particular was expanded and increasingly concentrated on preventing the collapse of GDR aid.<sup>52</sup>

The special situation in the case of Cuba was after the establishment of bilateral relations between the GDR and Cuba, when greater development policy and solidarity measures were organized almost exclusively at the state level.<sup>53</sup> During the period of transformation between 1989-1991, several solidarity projects with Cuba were founded in various regions of Germany. On the West German side of Berlin, there was the Freundschaftsgesellschaft (Friendship Society) West Berlin-Cuba e.V., which focused on the task of informing the (West) German population about political, economic, and cultural issues in Latin America

and Cuba.<sup>54</sup> In March 1990, the Friendship Committee GDR-Cuba was founded in the East of Berlin. This group of about 30 people emerged from the “Club de los Amigos de Cuba” (Friends of Cuba Club) which had already existed for several years in Königswusterhausen. The friendship committee consisted of people who had been working in official solidarity organizations in the GDR.<sup>55</sup> A short time later a Cuba initiative was founded in Gesundheitsladen-Berlin (a health shop), together with Pro Cuba, a committee for the support of Cuba. The initiative strived towards the goal of supporting the Cuban health system, especially by providing material aid.<sup>56</sup> On 23 July 1991, the Cuba Sí working group of the PDS (Partei des demokratischen Sozialismus<sup>57</sup>) was founded in Berlin. Their first major project was “Milch für Kubas Kinder” (Milk for Cuba’s Children), which came as a

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at least cushion the disappearance of national, state-organized solidarity from the GDR. This means that many new solidarity groups arose, or that the work of already existing solidarity groups intensified.

- 52 Malte Letz, “Im Osten nichts Neues?: Ostdeutsche Solidaritätsgruppen vor und nach der Wende,” *Forschungsjournal Neue Soziale Bewegungen: Solidaritätsbewegungen zwischen Hoffnung und Resignation* 3 (1994): 53f.
- 53 Achim Reichardt, *Nie Vergessen: Solidarität üben* (Berlin: Kai Homilius Verlag, 2006), 85.

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54 FBK, “Wofür wir stehen,” FBK, <https://www.fg-berlin-kuba.de/index.php/die-freundschaftsgesellschaft-berlin-kuba/ueber-die-freundschaftsgesellschaft-berlin-kuba>.

55 Freundschaftsgesellschaft Westberlin-Kuba e.V. (ed.), “Ankündigung der Aktivitäten der Redaktion,” *Cuba Sí – Zeitschrift der Freundschaftsgesellschaft Westberlin-Kuba e.V.*, 1992, May, 29.

56 Freundschaftsgesellschaft Westberlin-Kuba e.V. (ed.), “Neue Kuba Initiative in Berlin,” *Cuba Sí – Zeitschrift der Freundschaftsgesellschaft Westberlin-Kuba e.V.*, 1991, January, 24.

57 Party of Democratic Socialism, today: *DIE LINKE - The Left*.

result of the previously mentioned cancellation of the milk powder delivery from Germany to Cuba. A further aim of Cuba Sí was to carry solidarity with the Cuban population into the PDS and to inform Germans about the US blockade policies and their effects in Cuba. The solidarity communities in Berlin were additionally well-networked with other people or institutions which supported Cuba.<sup>58</sup>

### CUBA SÍ: SOLELY HUMANITARIAN?

The foundation of Cuba Sí was made up of a variety of individuals, including members from the Friends of Cuba and the PDS. As a result of their work, the party executive committee officially announced the association's foundation in July 1991.<sup>59</sup> Therefore, from the very beginning, their work carried a political dimension, and was not solely based on humanitarian reasons.

A Cuba Sí member explained that in the beginning they were a "Wilder Haufen" (wild bunch), but there was a constant development of work. There were many discussions

in the K.O. Council (Coordination Council), one of the two elements of Cuba Sí's organizational structure, where all essential decisions were made. The second element was the foundation and work of regional groups.<sup>60</sup> Up until 1995, a total of 17 regional groups of Cuba Sí were founded. In regional terms, these initially were concentrated strongly in the new federal states of the GDR.<sup>61</sup> Applying Radtke's definition, Cuba Sí communicated solidarity in four specific ways – through events, information, petitions and requests, and personal relationships – which will be elaborated on in more detail.

### EVENTS

One of the main activities of Cuba Sí was the organization of different types of events. For example, one of the first activities of Cuba Sí after its foundation was to participate in an official celebration of the Cuban National Day on 26 July. In 1992, the "Fiesta de Solidaridad" (Solidarity Party), on the same date, was organized for the first time by Cuba Sí itself.<sup>62</sup> "That had been our specialty from the very beginning. [Initially several] hundreds of people took part in the celebration, and later up to more than a thousand," said Lukas,<sup>63</sup> who celebrated the

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58 Not all but most of the solidarity groups still exist today. An overview of the solidarity groups with Cuba across Germany in 1993 can be found in: Reinhard Pohl (ed.), "Cuba," (Kiel: Magazin Verlag, 1993), 46.

59 Cuba Sí, "Cuba Sí: eine Chronik 1991 - 2011," (Berlin: private digital library Habel, 2011), 8.

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60 Cuba Sí Berlin, "Video: 20 Jahre Cuba Sí - Teil 1," Youtube, [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XVhC0fps\\_5A](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XVhC0fps_5A).

61 Cf. Cuba Sí, *Cuba Sí: eine Chronik 1991 - 2011*, 8-23.

62 Cuba Sí, *Cuba Sí: eine Chronik*, 8.

63 The name was changed by the

first Fiesta de Solidaridad of Cuba Sí and has been active in Cuba Sí for a long time. “We started to have a small celebration in the embassy in Pankow, there were a few stands [where] Cuba Libre was sold, [there was also] an information desk about our projects [and we sold] souvenirs and T-shirts. [...]here was always music”. Other solidarity groups like KarEn also had desks at the celebration.<sup>64</sup>

Aside from the Fiesta de Solidaridad, which was certainly informative but mainly meant for celebrating and spending time together, Cuba Sí also organized public informative events. The main focus was on the organization and participation in congresses or meetings between solidarity groups. On the one hand, the various regional groups of Cuba Sí met to coordinate their work and exchange information. Then there were three national congresses,<sup>65</sup> one of them organized by Cuba Sí itself in Berlin. At this solidarity congress, a total of 281 participants took part, including guests from Cuba and representatives of the Cuban government in Germany. The participants addressed a final declaration to the President of the

US and a solidarity message to the Cuban people.<sup>66</sup>

In addition to national meetings, international congresses<sup>67</sup> were also organized and attended, three of them in Europe. In May 1992, Cuba Sí participated in the Cuba Congress “‘Solidarity with Cuba’ - Ending the Blockade by the USA, EC [European Community] and FRG”<sup>68</sup> in Bonn. Cuba Sí did not merely assist at the congress, but they sponsored its creation as well. Ulrich Bojé, a member of Cuba Sí, was also a speaker at the conference. In his speech, he explained the policy of the FRG towards Cuba. Besides Bojé, numerous other people, mainly from Europe and Latin America, took part in the congress as speakers. This example shows that the communication was not one-sided, including a diverse variety of speakers and representatives. As with the national congresses, numerous representatives of Cuba also actively participated in the congress.

In addition, the President of the Republic of Cuba, Fidel Castro, sent a message of greeting to the Solidarity Congress in Bonn. His main focus was on presenting the current

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authors. Lukas has been an active member of Cuba Sí since the first year of its foundation.

64 Personal interview conducted in German and translated to English.

65 The National Congress consists of friends of Cuba and mainly participants from German-Cuban solidarity and friendship groups.

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66 Cuba Sí, *Cuba Sí: eine Chronik 1991 - 2011*, 16f.

67 International Congress is a category that includes congresses attended by solidarity and friendship groups and other interested parties and friends of Cuba. The participants originated from different countries (except Cuba and Germany).

68 Cuba Sí, *Cuba Sí*, 10.



blockade by the US from Cuba's perspective. He elaborated:

[They think] in Washington that we will not be able to resist, that the hour of the settlement with Cuba has come. To this purpose the USA intensifies its ideological war [...]. Several European governments and institutions have joined this policy by setting political conditions for the development of cooperation and bilateral relations [...]. [But] no one should feel pity to us. [...] You give much more. You offer us your full political and material solidarity at this decisive moment.<sup>69</sup>

Castro did not fully clarify what he understood by political and material solidarity, however, thus leaving room for interpretation. Three years later, the President of the Republic of Cuba himself participated in a conference in Copenhagen. This was the counter-summit to the UN World Social Summit, and a delegation of Cuba Sí also took part there.

Four further international congresses were held in Cuba from 1993-1995, with Cuba Sí participating in each of them. At these congresses, cooperation was coordinated, and agreements were reached about the implementation of projects in

various areas.<sup>70</sup> Notable about these various meetings is that most of the events organized by Cuba Sí were addressed mainly to people who were already involved with Cuba. However, other events appealed to a larger audience as a result of their visibility. For example, Cuba Sí organized vigils, such as the one in front of the US Embassy in Berlin in October 1993, in which they demanded an end to the US policy of blockade.<sup>71</sup> On top of that, Cuba Sí organized a large demonstration in protest against the US economic blockade of Cuba in Berlin in 1995 together with other Cuba solidarity groups. In addition to the types of events just mentioned, Cuba Sí also organized a *solí-skat* evening at the senior citizens' club Knaackstrasse in Berlin, where they offered to play the game skat to promote solidarity with Cuba.

#### INFORMATION

Other parts of the population were not reached through events, but through the production and distribution of materials. Cuba Sí took over editorial offices and produced various informative materials, which became available then to a wider audience. It participated in the distribution of information about Cuba with the editing and publication of two books. Together with the newspaper *Junge Welt* (Young World) they also participated

<sup>69</sup> Fidel Castro Ruz, "Gruß von Fidel an den Solidaritätskongreß [sic!] in Bonn," *Cuba Libre* 2 (1992): 21f. Own translation.

<sup>70</sup> Cuba Sí, *Cuba Sí*, 14 - 19.

<sup>71</sup> Cuba Sí, *Cuba Sí*, 15.

in the publication of “Granma” International.<sup>72</sup> Furthermore, in 1994, Cuba Sí produced and published a film documentary entitled “Milch für Kubas Kinder” (Milk for Cuba’s Children).

The people involved in Cuba Sí produced brochures, information materials, and articles for magazines themselves. One of the goals here was to draw interest to Cuba. Cuba Si member Lukas even had this experience himself:

I began to come into more contact with Cuba [...] when I [saw] with my girlfriend at an event of the Humboldt Society [...], a brochure about a trip to Cuba, organized by Cuba Sí. And it was there that I came to Cuba Sí for the first time, as a result [I] also became more involved with Cuba.<sup>73</sup>

The work of Cuba Sí or Cuba in general was not only communicated through brochures. Together with the chairman of the PDS Gregor Gysi, the working group also wrote articles which frequently were published in newspapers and magazines, mainly relating to leftist ideology. In a guest article from 1992, they called for donations for a milk

72 Granma is the official Central Committee of the Cuban Communist Party. At that time, party-related news was distributed via the platform in a printed newspaper, which now also appears monthly in a German edition.  
73 Interview with Cuba Sí member.

project which not only supplied milk powder to Cuba, but at the same time also aimed to promote national milk production. The authors Gregor Gysi and Ulrich Bojé expressed their gratitude for the solidarity shown up to that point and made

the request for increased and continuous solidarity with Cuba [... to the reader]. Be more solidary! Do not let this honest people out in the cold! Donate regularly for our own solidarity initiatives! Solidarity unites us and gives us hope! [... It is important to them that Cuba can gain or keep its] political and economic independence, which makes a socially just development possible. [The authors then call for donations and conclude with the words:] Let’s be realistic, let’s try the impossible!<sup>74</sup>

Here the authors equated solidarity primarily with financial donations. Only in the second step was the political solidarity and international friendship also mentioned.

#### PETITIONS AND REQUESTS

Besides events and the production of written and visual materials, petitions and formal requests represented a third way in

74 Ulrich Bojé and Gregor Gysi, “Solidarität mit Cuba!: Schluss mit der Blockade durch USA, EG und BRD,” *Cuba Libre* 3 (1992): 39.

which solidarity was communicated. Cuba Sí submitted a series of petitions and requests during its first years. These were primarily addressed to the PDS, which Cuba Sí also utilized to get petitions through to state parliaments.<sup>75</sup> For example, on October 28, 1992, a petition submitted by the “Linke Liste” (Left List, which is a union between different left-wing parties) for a single humanitarian aid project called “Milk for Cuba’s Children” was supported by the Brandenburg state government.<sup>76</sup> Earlier, PDS chairman Gregor Gysi had called on Chancellor Helmut Kohl to continue the agreed deliveries of milk powder between East Germany and Cuba. He was referring to the 14,000 signatures of persons organized by Cuba Sí who supported this demand. In April 1993, the PDS and Linke Liste then called on the German government to normalize German-Cuban economic relations. Both petitions, however, were not responded to by the German government.

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<sup>75</sup> These requests to the PDS were made at the respective party conferences. In the first year of Cuba Sí, 1991, the PDS already applied for solidarity with the Cuban people and demanded the immediate ending of the blockade. The motion was accepted by the Party Executive Committee. In addition, Cuba Sí submitted three further motions at party conferences. See Cuba Sí, *Cuba Sí*, 8-21.

<sup>76</sup> Cuba Sí, *Cuba Sí*, 11.

## PERSONAL RELATIONSHIPS

Finally, Cuba Sí communicated solidarity in areas where they brought together people from Germany and Cuba, including forms of organized travel. Lukas also took part in such a trip after seeing the brochure at an event:

My intention was then to go to Cuba to experience what Cuba is like. Because after the collapse [of] the whole Eastern Bloc [...] I thought, of course, that they would soon have the same situation as we had [...], only worse, they didn’t have a big brother to catch them. [...] And when I was there, the will to take part [in Cuba Sí] was even bigger because what I saw there, after the collapse of the *Periodo Especial* [special period] in Cuba in 1992, was a catastrophe.

The example of Lukas shows how deep the impressions and experiences of people who came into contact with Cuba through Cuba Sí could be. Of course, this was certainly not as intense for all travelers as it was for him. Nevertheless, Cuba Sí has continuously offered journeys to Cuba. In addition to these private trips, Cuba Sí also connected Germans and Cubans in other ways, like the congresses and information events analyzed above. There were also working visits of delegations of Cuba Sí to Cuba.

Another objective was to unite people in political positions.

Gregor Gysi, for example, met Fidel Castro in February 1992 for a discussion lasting several hours in Cuba. During this trip he also had contact with other Cuban party members.<sup>77</sup> Other than Gysi, additional political figures were connected with Cuban politicians, including the honorary chairman of the PDS Hans Mondrow, who had conversations with high-ranking representatives of the PCC (Partido Comunista de Cuba), and the National Assembly in 1993. In 1994, a delegation from Brandenburg also visited Cuba as guests at the Cuban National Assembly.

Yet it was not only Germans that visited Cuba, as Cubans also came to Germany. They were invited to congresses, information events, or work visits, to meet with representatives of the PDS and Linke Liste to discuss the current situation in Cuba.<sup>78</sup>

Cuba Sí generally communicated with the Cuban authorities. Lukas remembered the contact “in the beginning mainly went through the embassy [as Cuba Sí was] formed as a Solidary Group, they worked very closely with the Cuban embassy. [Later,] it all went through the [...Cuban] Ministry of Commerce.”<sup>79</sup> This meant that the work of Cuba Sí was also political from the beginning. Just as it had been between GDR and Cuba, the communication was handled via state

77 Cuba Sí, *Cuba Sí*, 10.

78 Cuba Sí, *Cuba Sí*, 9-23.

79 Interview.

organs.

Aside from embassies and direct contact, most contacts of solidarity groups with Cuba were organized through ICAP (Cuban Institute of Friendship with the Peoples). The former President of ICAP, Sergio Corrieri, said in 1993:

We are living through a time when solidarity with Cuba is at the highest level in its history. [...] Solidarity is more fundamental, even if the friends want to materialize their solidarity in concrete solidarity goods, the really important thing is that many have contributed to it and have been present at events. [...]. [Events and campaigns are] an important sign of solidarity.<sup>80</sup>

For Lukas, solidarity meant giving something to others. He also thought “if you’re a child from the GDR, then you [got to know] this system under socialism. Solidarity with other people and other countries who are not particularly well off, who were in the struggle for liberation and the like [...], you’ve always had a relationship with other countries [and] other people.”<sup>81</sup> Cuba Sí thus took over a function that the FRG could never have assumed in the

80 Isabel Morales, “Die Solidaritätsbewegung mit Cuba besteht aus vielen ehrlichen Menschen: Interview mit Sergio Corrieri, Präsident des ICAP,” *Cuba Libre* 1 (1993): 32f.

81 Interview.

same way. As a result, Cuba Sí came to represent the other Germany in Cuba.<sup>82</sup>

## AN OUTLOOK

There is a continuity to be observed in the communication of solidarity that began with the first steps towards an intercultural exchange in the GDR, which then persevered after the German reunification and the end of bilateral relations between the GDR and Cuba.

As our analysis indicates, solidarity in the GDR and Cuba was bound to the actors it was communicated and instilled by. From the government to its citizens, both states used the rhetorical means to appeal to hard work and productivity as international bonds that was considered the essence of their solidarity. The same emotional bond could not be found in the communication between their state institutions, as this type of solidarity was solely based on the expectation of a mutual benefit and economic-political profit. In addition, it was endangered by a rising lack of trust towards the end of the 1980s.

With the German

reunification, these relations ended abruptly and left the solidarity and friendship groups of the FRG with a solidarity concept that needed to be redefined and communicated anew. The transition period after the fall of the Berlin Wall and before Germany was officially reunited consisted of rising tensions and terminations of contracts, as well as the establishment of intercultural exchange networks between the former GDR—then FRG—and Cuba.

Soon after tensions subsided, solidarity groups in the FRG resumed their cooperation with Cuba and became increasingly political in their work. Besides the organization of events and coordination of development projects, these groups—such as Cuba Sí—focused on the distribution of information and intercultural (political) exchange as a means to continuously communicate solidarity.

Although the type of cooperation changed from a state to a community level, at its very core solidarity was communicated in a way that appealed to the social norms of citizens and thus to their demeanor, as Radtke stated in her aforementioned definition of solidarity, more than solely for humanitarian reasons such as the general feeling of helping others. The example of solidarity groups such as Cuba Sí quite clearly displays that solidarity was usually based on a mutual benefit such as cooperation and intercultural exchange. For Cuba Sí, this resulted in a main focus on material assistance with

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82 Cuba Sí Berlin, "Video: 20 Jahre Cuba Sí - Teil 3," Youtube, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dR8T2Os0awA>. Although this was said by members of Cuba Sí in the context of cultural representation at a book fair, it sums up most areas.

the byproduct of ideological support in their external communication and, in this manner, served as a replacement for the former dynamic between Cuban and GDR relations. The difference before and after the reunification, however, lies in the voluntary core of Cuba Si's work and its goal to strengthen Cuba's political and economic independence as opposed to the aforementioned "voluntary coercion."<sup>83</sup> Another continuity to be observed lies in the organization of cooperation, which proceeded to mainly take place on a state level in Cuba. In this context, the PDS enabled a much more profound political exchange than other solidarity groups at the time.

What this analysis aims for is the general understanding of solidarity communication during and following the Cold War and a closer look at the ideological structures it depended on. Nonetheless, questions of how these ideological structures offer a top-down mentality and whether the resulting hierarchies can still be found in solidarity groups via so-called "Third World" or development projects remain unanswered and suggest the need for further research.

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83 "UMBRÜCHE-Diskussion: A Work in Progress," 14.



## IV. CHILE

# Solidarity or System Stabilization? Chilean Exile in the German Democratic Republic (GDR) – An Analysis of the Media Coverage of *Neues Deutschland*

by

DAVID KRISTEN  
AND GEORG STURM



## ABSTRACT

This paper examines the instrumentalization by the SED (Socialist Unity Party of Germany) of granting asylum to Chileans in the GDR after the military coup in 1973. By conducting both quantitative and qualitative content analysis of *Neues Deutschland* media coverage, the outstanding importance of Chile to the GDR is shown. This study is based on the post-positivist understanding of frames as interpretation schemes that structure and create different social realities. Based on three main repetitive frames: *international class struggle*, *opposition to illegitimate state* and *antifascist myth*, this article argues that the displayed resistance against the dictatorship in Chile and the solidarity with Chilean opposition and exiles aimed to justify and stabilize the GDR state system. The solidarity with Chile and the admission of refugees was stylized in order to underline the moral superiority of the GDR's ideological framework in the context of Cold War. The high number of related articles and the multitude of analyzed articles support the theoretical assumptions and highlights the instrumentalization of Chilean Exile to the GDR. The findings indicate that the media coverage can be understood as a tool for system stabilization while the solidarity seemed to be existent in a variety of actions.

## ABOUT THE AUTHORS

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## INTRODUCTION

*The Chilean Cause is our Cause.*

Erich Honecker, 12.09.1974<sup>1,2</sup>

After the military coup against the democratically elected socialist government of Salvador Allende in 1973, up to one million Chileans fled the country. About 2000 Chileans sought refuge in Eastern Germany during Pinochet's 17 year rule.<sup>3</sup> Solidarity with the "antifascist resistance of the Chilean people"<sup>4</sup> against the internationally criticized authoritarian military dictatorship, and with the supporters of the Chilean Way to Socialism<sup>5</sup> played an important role for the German Democratic Republic (GDR), whose national identity was based on antifascism and international

class struggle. The Chilean case was of special importance to both supporters and opponents of the Socialist Unity Party of Germany (SED) regime, which led to an extraordinary presence in the GDR media. This article analyses the dominant discourses used to present the GDR's solidarity work with Chile by examining the media coverage of the official party newspaper of the SED. We demonstrate the reasons other than humanist solidarity that might have led to the GDR's admission of Chileans fleeing from the military junta. We argue that although the solidarity was real, the main purpose was to highlight the moral justification of the GDR's own system, and their usage of narratives such as antifascism, class struggle and opposition to unjust government. This instrumentalization had the objective of stabilizing the GDR regime by gaining legitimacy among their own population.

The case of Chile demonstrates the global dimension of the Cold War, and how domestic politics affected by international system conflict developed their own dynamics. By attempting to establish socialism via democratic elections as a "third way" between capitalism and communism, the political project of Salvador Allende was drawn into these dynamics and found its sudden end in the 1973 coup. This paper follows the conceptual frameworks in the field of international history, analyzing the Cold War as a global phenomenon transcending its simplistic characterization as a

1 Erich Honecker cited in "Brüderliche Begegnung mit Kämpfern der Unidad Popular," *Neues Deutschland*, September 12, 1974, 1-2.

2 All citations are translated from German to English.

3 Jost Maurin, "Flüchtlinge als politisches Instrument – Chilenische Emigranten in der DDR 1973–1989," *Totalitarismus und Demokratie*, no. 2 (2005): 346.

4 "Alle Völker der Erde sind an unserer Seite," *Neues Deutschland*, September 12, 1974, 5.

5 Salvador Allende coined the term "the Chilean Way to Socialism" (Also: The Chilean Road to Socialism) as a metaphor for the proper ideas and implementation of socialism in Chile. Sometimes it is also referred as "third way" between the two predominant ideologies capitalism and communism.

bipolar conflict of two superpowers.<sup>6</sup>

Referring to the military overthrow, the General Secretary of the SED, Erich Honecker highlighted the extraordinary importance of solidarity with Chile to his country in his speech during a meeting with leaders of the Popular Unity (UP) published by *Neues Deutschland* (ND). He emphasized that the “Chilean people are certainly not alone”, since “all progressive, democratic, humane, upright people all over the world” were supporting them. As citizens of the “first German workers’ and peasants’ state” Honecker considered their “internationalist class obligation [...] to do everything in order to help the Chilean people to free themselves from the scourge of fascism.”<sup>7</sup>

While the SED presented their support for the opposition in Chile as an act of humane and selfless solidarity, this was not self-evident, as the handling of the Argentine military dictatorship shows. Human rights violations of the military junta were not publicly rejected, as in the case of Pinochet’s dictatorship. This demonstrates how the GDR dealt with similar regimes selectively depending on different factors,

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6 For more information see: Richard H. Immerman and Petra Goedde, *The Oxford Handbook of the Cold War* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013).

7 Erich Honecker cited in “Brüderliche Begegnung mit Kämpfern der Unidad Popular,” *Neues Deutschland*, September 12, 1974, 1-2.

such as economic interests.<sup>8</sup>

This speech also illustrates the rather rationalist reasons of self-interest that might have driven the GDR to grant asylum to Chilean refugees: the military coup of Pinochet had been widely rejected by many countries all over the world. Since one of the main purposes of Eastern German foreign policy was to gain international appreciation, the SED-government tried to place itself at the head of the international solidarity movement with Chile.<sup>9</sup> Moreover, many East German citizens—including those in opposition to the SED-regime—supported the government of Salvador Allende, since it was taken as evidence that a socialist transformation via democratic elections was possible.<sup>10</sup> Therefore, the harsh criticism of Pinochet’s military coup and the following dictatorship, and the politics of solidarity with Chilean opposition served the purpose of gaining support among the

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8 Sebastian Koch, *Zufluchtsort DDR?: Chilenische Flüchtlinge und die Ausländerpolitik der SED* (Sammlung Schöningh zur Geschichte und Gegenwart, 2016), 111.

9 Patrice G. Poutrus, “Zuflucht im Nachkriegsdeutschland. Politik und Praxis der Flüchtlingsaufnahme in Bundesrepublik und DDR von den späten 1940er bis zu den 1970er Jahren,” *Geschichte und Gesellschaft. Zeitschrift für Historische Sozialwissenschaft*, no. 35 (2009): 135–175.

10 Koch, *Zufluchtsort DDR*, 113.

population by depicting a common enemy and referring to the antifascist founding myth of the GDR. As the term “solidarity” is of central importance for this paper, a brief theoretical embedding is reasonable. Considering the political dimensions and our argumentative approach, the most appropriate definition seems to be a “relation that unites a collective of individuals who are collectively responding to a situation of injustice, oppression, social vulnerability or tyranny.”<sup>11</sup> This definition displays clearly the two components relevant for the consideration of Chilean exile in the GDR: first, the “commitment to collective action”<sup>12</sup> resulting from the common perspective of the events in Chile, and second, the opposition to these “oppressive social structures.”<sup>13</sup>

## POLITICAL DIMENSION OF CHILEAN EXILE

The implementation of this solidarity was the acceptance of Chileans escaping after September 11<sup>th</sup>, 1973. The political elite of the SED had free leeway as paragraph 23 of the GDR constitution of 1968 sets a “can” regulation for the granting of

asylum: “The GDR can grant asylum to citizens of other states (...) if they have been persecuted for political (...) activities in defense of peace, democracy, the interests of the working people (...)”<sup>14</sup> Interpreting who fulfills these criteria and receives the opportunity of asylum was incumbent upon the political agenda. SED meeting minutes indicate that granting asylum should be limited to members and supporters of the UP.<sup>15</sup> Besides their designation as exiles and refugees, Chileans were mostly called political emigrants.

Research dealing with political emigrants in the GDR focuses on the right of asylum and the political dimension of the admission practice. By analyzing the protocols and reports of the SED and the Ministry for State Security (MfS) Patrice Poutrus argues that, even though presented differently in public, political emigrants “were not equal members of a transnational socialist collective but tolerated guests of a nationally defined German community.”<sup>16</sup> Poutrus also highlights the differences between the official presentation of political

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11 Sally J. Scholz, *Political Solidarity* (The Pennsylvania State University Press, 2008), 197-199.

12 Scholz, *Political Solidarity*, 480.

13 Scholz, *Political Solidarity*, 480.

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14 *Verfassung der Deutschen Demokratischen Republik vom 6. April 1968, in der Fassung vom 7. Oktober 1974*, (Berlin: 1974), Abschnitt II, Kapitel 1, Artikel 23 Absatz 3.

15 Maurin, “Flüchtlinge als politisches Instrument,” 347.

16 Poutrus, “Zuflucht im Nachkriegsdeutschland,” 160.

emigrants.<sup>17</sup> Although the total numbers of political emigrants were rather low, especially compared to other groups such as immigrant workers, in the official propaganda they played a highlighted role. The goal of their public description was to generate the picture of “good immigrants”, “freedom fighters” and “antifascists.”<sup>18</sup> According to Poutrus, these descriptions of the Chilean immigrants were used to reach skeptical citizens that might have rejected the ideas of the GDR, in order to prove the humanist mission of the socialist state and regain legitimization. Even though he highlights the propagandistic dimension of asylum and outlines how migrants suffered from the lack of legal guarantees, Poutrus concludes that the GDR sometimes granted asylum and economic support for migrants generously.<sup>19</sup>

Jost Maurin examines the political dimension of the admission of Chilean emigrants by depicting the admission process and the composition of the group of emigrants, the majority of who were active members of the Communist and the Socialist Party of Chile. Maurin describes the manifold problems of integration, such as the “proletarianization” of the Chilean emigrants, who, even though mostly academics, were forced to do manual labor.<sup>20</sup> Moreover, he analyses how SED officials tried to shape the political work of the Chilean opposition by financing their foreign office and work in the GDR, and by pushing the Socialist Party and the Communist Party of Chile to merge into a Communist Unity Party.<sup>21</sup>

The most extensive work on Chilean emigrants and the solidarity work of the GDR is by Sebastian Koch, who focuses on the tension between publicly represented claims on asylum policy and actual motives of the state by presenting in detail the situation of exiled Chileans amidst the reactions of the population and their interactions. Unlike Poutrus and Maurin, whose work is mainly based on GDR files, Koch also compares these insights with narratives of contemporary witnesses.

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17 Patrice G. Poutrus, “Mit strengem Blick. Die sogenannten Polit. Emigranten in den Berichten des MfS,” in *Fremde und Fremd-Sein in der DDR. Zu historischen Ursachen der Fremdenfeindlichkeit in Ostdeutschland*, ed. Jan C. Behrends, Thomas Lindenberger, Patrice G. Poutrus (Metropol Verlag Berlin, 2003), 231-250.

18 Olaf Groehler, “Antifaschismus - Vom Umgang mit einem Begriff,” in *Zweierlei Bewältigung. Vier Beiträge über den Umgang mit der NS-Vergangenheit in den beiden deutschen Staaten*, ed. Ulrich Herbert and Olaf Groehler (Hamburg, 1992), 29-40.

19 Poutrus, “Zuflucht im Nachkriegsdeutschland,” 161.

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20 Maurin, “Flüchtlinge als politisches Instrument,” 353.

21 Jost Maurin, “Flüchtlinge als politisches Instrument: chilenische Emigranten in der DDR 1973-1989,” *Totalitarismus und Demokratie*, 2 (2005): 356-358.

Except for the work of Poutrus<sup>22</sup> and Maurin,<sup>23</sup> who used media reports exclusively to accentuate the research results of the investigation of official files, there is little to no systematic research on how Chilean emigrants and the solidarity work of the GDR were presented by the state-owned media. Historical research on political emigrants in the GDR, even taking into account the propagandistic function of asylum and solidarity, disregards the importance of media and propaganda during the Cold War, which was mainly constituted by an ideological conflict and can also be understood as a “battle for the conquest of human minds.”<sup>24</sup>

By examining the reporting of *Neues Deutschland* this article aims to interpret how the media coverage of the official party newspaper reflects the intentions and functions of SED’s solidarity with Chile. This study addresses the tension between solidarity and system stabilization. Being the official party newspaper of the SED with a circulation of a million copies, and being regarded by foreign countries as the regime’s diplomatic voice, ND was the SED’s main way to communicate to citizens

and foreigners. Using interpretative qualitative content analysis we aim to deconstruct the media coverage to identify the dominant discourses used to present the GDR’s solidarity work with Chile. We argue that there were different frames (international class struggle, opposition to illegitimate state, antifascist myth) that were used to present the resistance against the dictatorship in Chile and the solidarity with Chilean opposition to gain legitimization among the GDR’s own population as well as international appreciation. In addition to our main method, the content analysis of ND, we conducted two interviews with contemporary witnesses in order to take the personal perception of Chilean exiles into account.

This article is structured into three sections. First, a brief quantitative overview of the media coverage of *Neues Deutschland* from 1969 to 1989 in order to display the representativeness of the findings of the qualitative content analysis, as well as to show the extraordinary importance for the SED. Second, a qualitative interpretation of the framing, answering the question of how the SED presented its solidarity work and the GDR’s role in the opposition to Pinochet’s dictatorship. Finally, a contextualization of our findings regarding the ideological dimensions of the Global Cold War and the propagandistic and system stabilizing function of solidarity.

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22 Poutrus, “Mit strengem Blick,” 231-250.

23 Maurin, “Flüchtlinge als politisches Instrument,” 345-374.

24 Benedetta Calandra and Marina Franco, *La guerra fría cultural en América Latina. Desafíos y límites para una nueva mirada de las relaciones interamericanas* (Buenos Aires: Editorial Biblos, 2012).

## THE CHILEAN WAY TO SOCIALISM

Placing the Chilean happenings into the framework of the Global Cold War is rather convincing. The signed copy of Che Guevara's book, *The Guerrilla War*, which reads "To Salvador Allende, who is trying to obtain the same result by other means. Affectionately, Che"<sup>25</sup> illustrates perfectly how the political project of Unidad Popular was seen as part of the communist camp, while being different in some ways. The main difference was the attempt at a peaceful system transition via democratic elections and later an office administration without repressive instruments. The election campaigns and political work of Allende and the UP represented the perfect international class struggle that the SED regime invoked constantly.

This struggle applies even more for Salvador Allende's three-year presidency, which was characterized by an incisive process of reforming the social and economic policy of Chile. The main fields of action were the nationalization of natural resources, especially of copper; and an agrarian reform at the expense of large landowners. The success of Allende and with it the related fear of a "second Cuba" provoked

the intervention of the United States. The Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) played an especially important role in destabilizing the Allende administration. Besides the boycott of the economy resulting in an economic depression, the CIA took measures to subsidize the Chilean Newspaper *El Mercurio* and infiltrate the Chilean military and political parties.<sup>26</sup> The final result was a military coup led by the general of the armed forces, Augusto Pinochet, which brought the attempt of establishing democratic socialism to a sudden end on the 11<sup>th</sup> of September, 1973. The military junta immediately started to arrest and in numerous cases torture and murder political activists and sympathizers of the UP.

Consequently, the GDR granted asylum to about 2000 Chileans fleeing persecution.<sup>27</sup> Compared to the estimated one million Chilean refugees<sup>28</sup> this number remains low, but played an important role in the public presentation of the extraordinary case of Chile for the GDR. The overwhelming majority were members or supporters of the socialist or communist party that were able to leave the country

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25 Regis Debray. *The Chilean Revolution: Conversations with Allende* (New York: Pantheon Books/Random House, 1971), 74.

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26 *The Church Committee - The Church Report* (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1975).

27 Maurin, "Flüchtlinge als politisches Instrument," 345-374.

28 Inga Emmerling, *Die DDR und Chile (1960-1989): Aussenpolitik, Aussenhandel und Solidarität* (Berlin: Ch. Links Verlag, 2013), 393.

in different ways and at varying moments of time, mostly supported by the “Actions of Solidarity” (Solidaritätsmaßnahmen) the Central Committee agreed on fourteen days after the coup.<sup>29</sup> According to reports by contemporary witnesses, the reception of the Chilean exiles proceeded mostly unbureaucratically, and the provision of housing, clothing and temporary financial support was given generously.<sup>30,31</sup>

### ABSOLUTE NUMBERS AND THE IMPORTANCE OF CHILE FOR THE GDR

Although the military coup in Chile was not unique and the total number of Chileans seeking asylum in the GDR remained low compared to other immigrant groups, Chile represented a case of exceptional importance for the public media coverage. Starting with the quantitative analysis of the media coverage of *Neues Deutschland* that is summed up in *Figure 1*, the outstanding importance of Chile is visualized. While Cuba as a country of importance for the Warsaw Pact was regularly represented in the media coverage, the number of articles regarding Chile exceeded

those of Cuba between 1973 and 1977, in some cases by almost 500. At its peak, the number of articles about Chile reached a total number of 1519 in 1974, one year after the military coup, which makes an average of nearly four articles per day. This was also the year that most Chileans arrived in the GDR and many solidarity events took place.

The cases of Greece and Argentina were selected due to comparable events, as both suffered a military overthrow of a democratically elected government and, consequently massive human rights violations.<sup>32</sup> Although both countries, especially Argentina, showed numerous parallels with the developments in Chile, this is not reflected in the media coverage as the numbers of related articles in *Neues Deutschland* remained almost always below those about Chile. This is also true for 1976 when the military overthrew president Isabel Perón in Argentina, and for 1967 when the same occurred to prime minister Georgios Papandreu of Greece<sup>33</sup>.

Additionally to the comparisons to other countries, *Figure 1* also shows the number of articles about Chile that are related

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29 Katrin Neubauer, “Exilchilenen: Leben in der DDR,” *Lateinamerika Nachrichten* 287, (1998).

30 See: Interviews conducted by Sebastian Koch, *Zufluchtsort DDR*, 111.

31 Self-conducted interviews with two Chilean exiles.

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32 Nicos Mouzelis, “On the Rise of Postwar Military Dictatorships: Argentina, Chile, Greece,” *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 28 (2009): 55-80.

33 The numbers for Greece remain on a low level with the only exception during 1968, the year of the military overthrow (1966: 140 articles, 1967: 604 articles, 1968: 278 articles).



to the keywords (anti)fascism, (anti-) imperialism and solidarity. These keywords are characteristic of the GDR's discourse, showing how the previously displayed frames can also be found quantitatively. The keywords are the linguistic expressions for these frames: solidarity to a nation that is struggling, and fascist overthrow supported by the American imperialists against the working class. The terms fascism and imperialism were often used to describe the military dictatorship in Chile, and antifascism and anti-imperialism were essential ideals of the GDR's socialist ideology. Besides the importance of (anti)fascism and (anti-)imperialism as narratives

for class struggle, opposition to illegitimate states, and the antifascist myth, solidarity played an even more important role in the official media coverage of the ND. Being a combination of all three frameworks, this keyword explains the frequency of the articles regarding Chile, almost half of which published between 1973 and 1978 dealt with solidarity. By 1973, the number of solidarity related articles about Chile already added up to the amount of 576, rising to 710 in 1974. References to (anti)fascism and (anti-)imperialism also remained high: 193 articles on Chile were related to (anti)fascism and 220 to (anti) imperialism. The concept of solidarity was even more important considering

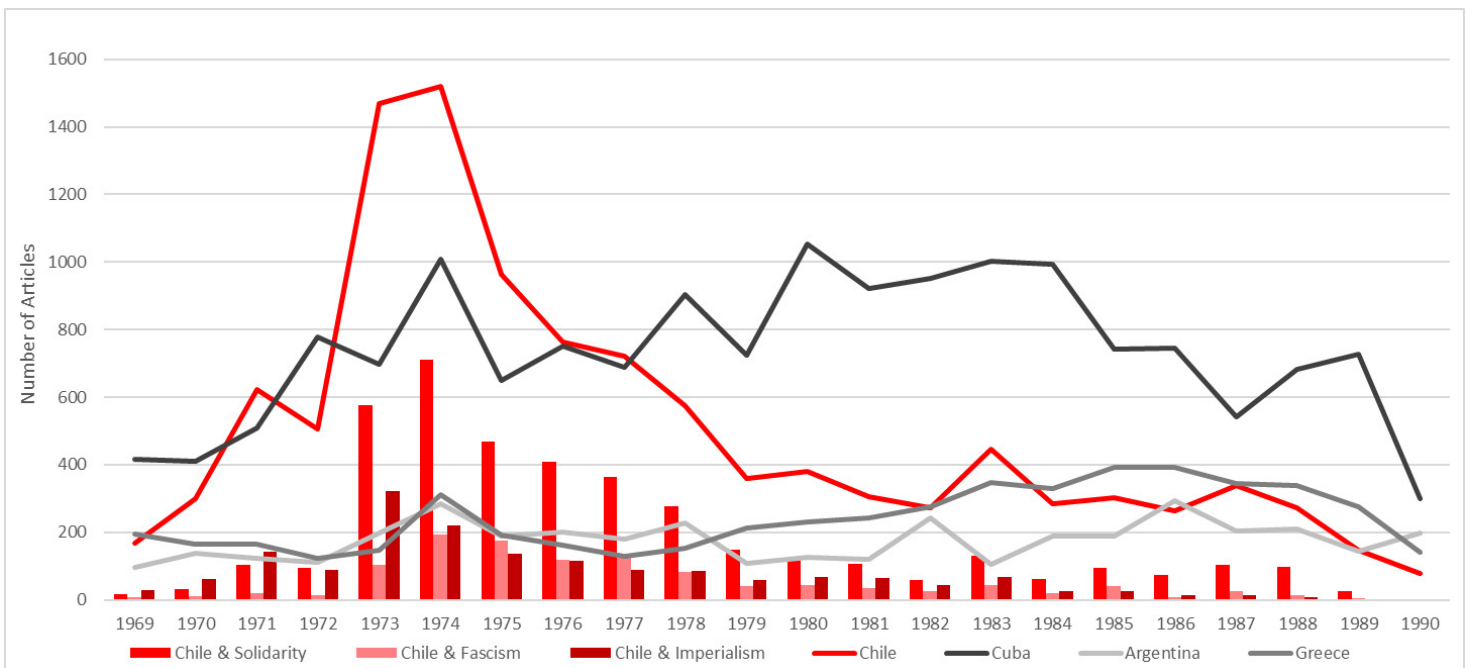


FIGURE 1: Frequency of selected keywords in the newspaper *Neues Deutschland*.

the total number of related articles in the media coverage dealing with Chile.

### CONTENT ANALYSIS: DISASSEMBLING SOLIDARITY

As the quantitative approach draws attention to solidarity, a closer look at this concept on a qualitative level is required. By applying a frame analysis, we aim to examine how the GDR used solidarity regarding the military dictatorship and Chilean exile. Political actors used frames to describe issues in a certain way and thus construct them in this manner. This analysis departs from the understanding of frames as “interpretation scheme that structures the meaning of reality.”<sup>34</sup> Frames influence social reality by creating different social realities and leading to different receptions of the world. They always rely on certain values, norms and ideas, which Geoffrey Vickers describes with the term “appreciative system.”<sup>35</sup> This study aims to identify way in which the discourse of *Neues Deutschland* regarding the solidarity work with Chile refers to these apparently obvious assumptions. Moreover, by contextualizing these findings we

analyze which reasons might have led the GDR to frame some issues in a certain manner. We therefore examined a total of 41 exemplary articles, which were published in 27 different editions between 1973 (the year of the coup) and 1988 (the beginning of democratic transition in Chile). Most of them were published on the anniversary of the military coup or the day after, since during these dates most solidarity events took place and Chile was the focus of reporting.

There can be identified three main frames used in the articles dealing with the GDR’s solidarity work with Chile. In dealing with Pinochet’s dictatorship, the authors of *Neues Deutschland* use and refer to the *antifascist myth* as a key element for eastern German identity and the *international class struggle* as a humanist duty of socialist countries. The resistance against the military dictatorship is framed as the *opposition to an illegitimate state* (“Unrechtsstaat”) in order to create a common enemy and strengthen the GDR’s identity as a community.

### ANTIFASCIST MYTH

In the reporting of *Neues Deutschland* the solidarity work with Chile is almost always framed as part of an antifascist fight against a fascist regime. Erich Honecker assures in a speech published in the newspaper that the GDR would do what it needed to get rid of “fascism, the spawn of

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34 Erving Goffman, *Frame analysis: An essay on the organization of experience* (Harvard: Harvard University Press., 1974).

35 Geoffrey Vickers, “Science and the Appreciative System,” *Human Relations* 21, no. 2, (1968): 99–119.

international finance capital, in Chile.”<sup>36</sup>

Various articles compare the dictatorship in Chile with National Socialism and Germany under Hitler. By referring to an interview with Carlos Contreras Labarca, General Secretary of the Communist Party of Chile and director of the “Office Antifascist Chile” in the GDR, the author of the article relates the solidarity work with Chile to the antifascist resistance of the Soviet Union against National Socialism. He argues that “thirty years ago, fascism was smashed, mainly thanks to the heroic struggle of the Soviet Union”. Comparing National Socialism with Chilean military dictatorship he states that fascism “should never be tolerated in any country in the world.”<sup>37</sup>

In a speech published in *Neues Deutschland*, Jorge Montes, member of the Communist Party of Chile, also explicitly draws parallels between the Chilean dictatorship and former fascist movements. Montes speaks of Chile as “a tragic example of the dangers that threaten humanity” and names Pinochet as “a somber symbol of the past that has tried in vain to resist the course of history.” He also thanks the GDR for their “antifascist solidarity,” which helped to free him after being

36 Erich Honecker cited in “Brüderliche Begegnung mit Kämpfern der Unidad Popular,” *Neues Deutschland*, September 12, 1974, 1-2.

37 Carlos Contreras Labarca cited in “Solidarität wird weiter wachsen,” *Neues Deutschland*, February 13, 1975, 7.

arrested in Chile for three years.<sup>38</sup>

In a report about a solidarity event in the Friedrichstadtpalast in Berlin one year after the military coup, the author refers to a speech of Orlando Millas, member of the political commission of the Communist Party of Chile and former minister in Allende’s government. “Orlando Millas combined the gratitude for solidarity with a congratulation on the 25th anniversary of the GDR, where—as he emphasized—fascism was exterminated.”<sup>39</sup> In 1977, *Neues Deutschland* published a speech by Erich Mückenberger, member of the Politburo of the SED, at a commemoration act of the antifascist resistance against National Socialism. In this speech Mückenberger also refers to the military coup that had happened four years before in Chile. He sees Chile as a proof that “fascism is still a real danger.” Mückenberger appeals to the public, saying that the GDR needs to “fulfil the legacy of the antifascist resistance fighters” and therefore should “strengthen and protect our socialist fatherland.”<sup>40</sup>

These speeches and articles

38 Jorge Montes cited in “Solidarität — wir werden siegen!,” *Neues Deutschland*, September 12, 1977, 3.

39 Orlando Millas cited in “DDR steht fester denn je an der Seite der Patrioten Chiles,” *Neues Deutschland*, September 12, 1974, 1-5.

40 Erich Mückenberger cited in “Alles für die Stärkung des sozialistischen Vaterlandes,” *Neues Deutschland*, September 12, 1977, 3.

each framed the military dictatorship of Pinochet as “fascist” and therefore the solidarity work of the GDR as “antifascist.” They highlighted the historical duty to resist a dictatorial regime, which they compared with German fascism under Hitler. By referring to this appreciative system, which consists of the commonly shared rejection of the barbaric crimes of the regime, these speeches emphasize the need to “restore freedom” in Chile. While highlighting the cruelty and the fascist character of the military dictatorship in Chile, the articles framed the GDR as a haven of freedom and the successful overcoming of fascism.

The statements of a contemporary witness, a Chilean political emigrant who we interviewed in addition to the frame analysis, illustrate these findings: After the fall of the Berlin Wall in 1989 she was worried about “neo-Nazis that might enter the GDR,” which can be seen as a sign that she internalized the antifascist narrative, which was predominant in the GDR.

## OPPOSITION TO ILLEGITIMATE STATE

This argumentative strategy of creating a common enemy is also reflected in how the GDR presented their own values in contrast to the Chilean dictatorship to strengthen its *raison d'être*. By describing the dictatorship in Chile as the epitome of an illegitimate state, the GDR framed their solidarity as proof of

their opposing humanist ideals. In a speech published in “*Neues Deutschland*” Paul Verner, member of the politburo of the SED, claimed that the “active solidarity of our party, the government and our people are expressions of the deeply humanist character of our socialist state.” Furthermore, he argued that the GDR’s “most immediate contribution to international solidarity” consisted of their high economic output. Thus, Verner claimed: “Let us therefore do everything we can to fulfil and deliberately exceed the 1974 economic plan being part of the socialist competition.”<sup>41</sup> In his speech Verner addressed the appreciative system of the people of the GDR by referring to the shared ideals of humanist values to transmit the appeal to the citizens to work harder.

Nadja and Erich Bunke, prized<sup>42</sup> GDR citizens, argued even more explicitly in a guest commentary published a few weeks after the military coup. Firstly, they expressed their empathy with Chile in an emotional way. “The support of the Chilean people is in our country not just a formal issue, but an affair of the heart.” Then, they asked everyone “whose heart beats for our brothers in Chile” to “now do even better in his work place to strengthen our

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41 Paul Verner cited in “Chile Antifascista kämpft und wird siegreich sein!” *Neues Deutschland*, September 12, 1974, 3.

42 Parents of Tamara Bunke who fought in Che Guevara’s guerrilla group in Bolivia; awarded with the GDR Patriotic Order of Merit.

homeland, the German Democratic Republic, and the socialist community.”<sup>43</sup> By appealing to the citizens’ support of Chile, they called on them to exert more effort and to act in a more patriotic way.

In a speech directed to Erich Honecker, Carlos Contreras Labarca expressed his gratitude with the GDR. He called solidarity an “immanent duty of a socialist worker and peasant state.”<sup>44</sup> At the same event the present worker representatives adopted a resolution that guarantees “our passionate political, moral and material solidarity, help and support.” “Together with millions of peace-loving people all over the world”<sup>45</sup> they demanded that the Chilean government guaranteed the fulfilment of democratic and human rights. Thereby, they created a community that stood on the right side of history forming part of an international solidarity movement.

## INTERNATIONAL CLASS STRUGGLE

By embedding the GDR’s solidarity with Chile into a global context, the authors of ND drew the focus towards an existing common ground, framing the opposition to the military regime as part of the international class struggle. Chilean opposition members were framed as “fighting class comrades”<sup>46</sup> and the solidarity with Chilean resistance as “manifestation of proletarian internationalism.”<sup>47</sup> The international dimension is also reflected in a speech of Hortensia Bussi de Allende, wife of Salvador Allende, who expressed her appreciation for the GDR’s “fraternal solidarity.” She praised the GDR as a “progressive nation that works successfully for the comprehensive construction of socialism, that fights for peace in the world and for the rapid development and growth and prosperity of all brother countries.”<sup>48</sup> This aspect is even more important since ND was considered the main diplomatic voice of the GDR in foreign

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43 Nadja and Erich Bunke cited in “Hilfe für Chiles Volk - eine Herzenssache,” *Neues Deutschland*, September 26, 1973, 2.

44 Carlos Contreras Labarca cited in “Brüderliche Begegnung mit Kämpfern der Unidad Popular,” *Neues Deutschland*, September 12, 1974, 2.

45 “Resolution der Teilnehmer an der Solidaritätsveranstaltung im Berliner Friedrichstadtpalast,” *Neues Deutschland*, September 12, 1974, 2.

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46 “An der Seite der Patrioten Chiles,” *Neues Deutschland*, September 11, 1974, 1.

47 “DDR steht fester denn je an der Seite der Patrioten Chiles,” *Neues Deutschland*, September 12, 1974, 1.

48 Hortensia Bussi de Allende cited in “Alle Völker der Erde sind an unserer Seite,” *Neues Deutschland*, September 12, 1974, 2-3.

countries. Thus, these articles not only addressed GDR's citizens, but also an international audience.

In an article about the matriculation of fifty Chilean students at the Karl-Marx-Universität in Leipzig, Minister Böhme highlighted the anti-imperialist character of the GDR's solidarity. He described the admission of the Chilean students as an "expression of the global anti-imperialist alliance and part of the comprehensive solidarity movement for the Chilean people". Also, Böhme highlighted the need to train revolutionaries as part of the international class struggle to overcome the Chilean military dictatorship: Böhme stated that "free Chile would need teachers, agronomists, doctors and many other university cadres who are also revolutionaries."<sup>49</sup>

Furthermore, in a resolution adopted during a solidarity event by workers representatives and published in *Neues Deutschland*, they assured both their "passionate political-moral and material solidarity" and their "fraternal support [...] under the banner of proletarian internationalism."<sup>50</sup> During a film screening Oswaldo Puccion, vice president of the "Bureau antifascist Chile", expressed his gratitude

for the GDR's "great international concept" and "revolutionary socialist solidarity."<sup>51</sup>

The categorization of solidarity with Chile as part of the international class struggle not only expressed the historic materialistic understanding of global developments but also framed the important role the GDR played within this process. This reflected the GDR's convictions and at the same time aimed to gain legitimacy for their political project.

The different frames of solidarity resembled one another through their emotional discourse and class-militant vocabulary. There is not a single negative article dealing with Chilean opposition members or political emigrants. Moreover, the speeches by and interviews with Chileans only focused on positive aspects of the GDR and its solidarity work. The GDR is described as "second homeland" by functionaries of the Chilean Communist and Socialist Parties.<sup>52</sup> Incidentally, one article mentions the language barriers between Chilean emigrants and the German population.<sup>53</sup> As one of the interviewed temporary witnesses confirms, many Chileans did not manage to learn German. This indicates that even though the

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49 Hans-Joachim Böhme cited in "Junge Chilenen nehmen Studium in der DDR auf," *Neues Deutschland*, September 11, 1974, 6-7.

50 "Resolution der Teilnehmer an der Solidaritätsveranstaltung im Berliner Friedrichstadtpalast," *Neues Deutschland*, September 12, 1974, 2.

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51 Oswaldo Puccion cited in "Solidarität mit Chiles Volk," *Neues Deutschland*, April 18, 1978, 2-4.

52 "Solidaritätsmeetings in vielen Betrieben," *Neues Deutschland*, February 13, 1975, 1.

53 "Lieder, die uns einen," *Neues Deutschland*, February 13, 1975, 1.

material solidarity was extensive, the political asylum was limited in time. The description of the GDR as “temporary refuge”<sup>54</sup> is an indicator that the Chileans were perceived as guests, who were tolerated for a limited time.

## CONCLUSION

The media coverage of Chilean political emigrants and the GDR’s solidarity work in *Neues Deutschland* had a clear propagandistic function. Firstly, the quantitative content analysis demonstrated the extraordinary presence of Chile in *Neues Deutschland* being the official party newspaper of the SED, even though the total number of Chileans seeking exile in the GDR remained low compared to other immigration groups. While (anti)fascism and (anti)imperialism were main keywords in the GDR’s discourse on Chile and the military dictatorship of Pinochet, solidarity plays an even more extraordinary role in the official media coverage of ND. Even though our main focus is on the qualitative analysis of exemplary articles, this quantitative approach allows us also to draw general conclusions on the role of Chile in the GDR’s media coverage on a macro level. This mixed method analysis is an unusual approach, since most research on the

Global Cold War is mainly qualitative. The quantitative analysis underlines the conclusions derived from the qualitative analysis and strengthens its representativity.

By applying a frame analysis on the GDR’s discourse regarding the military dictatorship and Chilean exile, we showed how by referring to socialist and humanist values the concept of solidarity was used to gain support among the Eastern German population. We identified three main frames that structured the GDR’s discourse on Chile: by framing their solidarity work as part of an antifascist fight against a fascist regime, SED referred to the *antifascist founding myth* of the GDR. Since Pinochet’s dictatorship served as a perfect example of a barbaric and antidemocratic regime, the GDR depicted the military dictatorship in Chile as a common enemy and tried to strengthen the Eastern German identity, based on antifascist and antiimperialist values.

Moreover, the GDR presented its solidarity with Chilean political emigrants as an *opposition to an illegitimate state* to prove their own humanist ideals. Many articles on the GDR’s solidarity with Chilean opposition aimed at putting the GDR on the right side of history by taking a leading role in the international solidarity movement with Chile.

The GDR’s opposition to the military regime was not only framed as the leading role of the international solidarity movement but also as part of the *international class struggle*. The official discourse

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<sup>54</sup> “An der Seite der Patrioten Chiles,” *Neues Deutschland*, September 11, 1974, 1-4.

was characterized by a historic materialistic understanding of global developments, in which the GDR's role was presented as crucial. By doing so the SED aimed to gain legitimacy for its political project.

The study shows how the GDR framed the situation in Chile and its solidarity with Chilean opposition in a certain way to call for more effort among the population, urging them to act in a more patriotic way. Thus, the framing of the GDR's solidarity work and Chilean exile not only aimed at legitimizing the Eastern German state, but also influencing the population in line with the SED's political goals.

Furthermore, this analysis demonstrates the important role of media and propaganda during the Cold War, being mainly constituted by an ideological conflict. The importance of Chile for the GDR and the extraordinary presence in the SED's party newspaper is an example of how global developments were entangled with political developments in other countries. One could say that the GDR's solidarity work and its representation in the state-owned media were part of the ideological "battle for the conquest of human minds" being constituent of the Global Cold War.





**V. PARAGUAY**

**Third World Intervention  
in the Global Cold War:  
The German Federal  
Republic in Paraguay**

by

**VINCENT KAMMER  
AND CARLA VENNERI**

## ABSTRACT

The following paper aims to contribute to the study of the Global Cold War and western interventionism in the so-called Third-World countries. Specifically, it explores the role of the Federal Republic of Germany, as a Western Bloc actor, in its bilateral relations with Paraguay under the Stroessner dictatorship (1954-1989), one of the longest and most repressive regimes in Latin America. Moreover, this study analyses the impact of the Global Cold War in the contemporary system of global governance and international order. The ideological and political dimensions of the Cold War, compounded with its military, economic and cultural confrontations, opened a window onto the rise of West-Germany as a prominent actor in international relations. An exploration of the case of its relations with Paraguay helps to achieve a broader understanding of how Third-World actors increased the spectrum of the conflict to a global level. By engaging in the study of this case within a historical perspective, this article aspires to stimulate a new analysis of the Federal Republic (FRG) interventions within the binarism of the Global Cold War. This study focuses on how bilateral relations between the FRG and Paraguay, inserted into the arena of a global iron curtain, were shaped by anti-communist discourses and oriented towards economic goals. The latter were pursued through development projects and strategies to achieve industrialization in Third-World countries. In this context, this paper explores the technical and financial aid provided to support development and modernization in several economic sectors.

## 1. INTRODUCTION

The following article explores the role of the Federal Republic of Germany (FRG) in the Global Cold War and its bilateral relation with Paraguay. It focuses on the time frame encompassing the big coalition CDU/CSU-SPD (1966-1969), during which Willy Brandt was simultaneously Minister for Foreign Affairs and Vice-Chancellor in the cabinet, and his subsequent chancellery (1969-1974). In a speech given by Willy Brandt on June 26, 1963, in the occasion of the US president John F. Kennedy visit to Berlin, the mayor of the divided city renewed the German's gratitude to Americans for their commitment against national socialism and fascism in Europe, while also underlining the commonality of interests, ideals, and objectives linking West-Germany and the USA.<sup>1</sup> In the forthcoming years, Brandt became one of the most prominent and accredited German politicians at the international level due to his *Ostpolitik* and his presidency of the Socialist International. The engagement demonstrated by Brandt as a president in the North-South-Commission led him to receive the

Nobel Peace Prize and the investiture as the main spokesman of the so-called "third way" between capitalism and communism. However, the focus of this study will neither be on the head of the CDU/CSU-SPD coalition Kurt Georg Kiesinger, nor Brandt, but on the elements of their governments that tightened the bilateral relationship between the FRG and Paraguay.

The main goal of this study is to achieve a deeper understanding of the political and economic components that were shaping the bilateral relation between Paraguay and the FRG. Simultaneously, it attempts to highlight the points of rupture and continuity in the foreign policy related to Paraguay implemented by the Kiesinger coalition and subsequently by the Social Democratic Party (SPD) led by Brandt. By analyzing the ideological and political dimensions from this period, this research also explores the economic patterns that shaped the "third-way" in-between the two hegemonic superpowers.

This analysis acknowledges the events and development of the Third World as a central concern during the Cold War and considers this conflict a continuum of the European colonial project, although driven by the paradigm of "control and improvement," rather than "exploitation or subjection."<sup>2</sup>

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1 "Rede Willy Brandts am Rathaus Schöneberg zum Berlin-Besuch von US-Präsident John F. Kennedy, 26. Juni, 1963," (Deutschlandfunk) *Willy Brandt Online Biografie: Bundeskanzler Willy Brandt Stiftung*, audio, 3:22, <https://www.willy-brandt-biografie.de/quellen/audios/kennedy-1963/>.

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2 Odd Arne Westad, *The Global Cold War. Third World Intervention and the Making of Our Times* (Cambridge University Press, 2005), 1-10.

According to some scholars, the origins and global evolution of the conflict are deeply embedded in western conceptions of development and progress, modernization, and Americanism.<sup>3</sup> Historian Odd Arne Westad underlines that these ideas were expressed in the full acceptance of free-market economies as the “logical extension of the virtues of capitalism and universal liberty.”<sup>4</sup> The FRG’s foreign policies related to Latin America and in particular to Paraguay should be understood within this framework. This should not be solely conceived as a result of the so-called “Americanization of Europe,” but also as the continuation of the European colonialist project.<sup>5</sup> The relationship built by the FRG and Paraguay during the expansion phase of the Stroessner regime<sup>6</sup> shows

the operating principles of what Patrick Iber calls “anti-communist entrepreneurs.”<sup>7</sup> Furthermore, it suggests an affinity to a mentality that preferred “developmental dictatorship, rather than vulnerable democracies.”<sup>8</sup>

Some scholars of that time enshrined progress and modernity as the most desirable objective for every state. Within this context, undemocratic behavior was justified and legitimated.<sup>9</sup> The case of Paraguay and the overthrow in Guatemala (1954) represent the emblematic beginning of a series of military dictatorships in Latin America directly supported through soft or hard intervention; orchestrated with the collaboration of

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also described as the “Paraguayan Miracle” will be analyzed in this article. The third phase (1982-1989) represents the crisis and the end of Stroessner’s regime; Kevin Chambers, “Paraguay” in *The South America Handbook. Regional Handbooks of Economic Development*, eds. Monique Lamontagne and Patrick Heenan (London: Routledge, 2002): 135-38; Andrew R. Nickson, *El regimen de Stroessner (1954-1989)* (University of Birmingham, 2010).

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3 Nils Gilman, *Mandarin of the Future. Modernization Theory in Cold War America* (Baltimore and London: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1972), 1-9.

4 Westad, *The Global Cold War*, 12.

5 See Alexander Stephan, *The Americanization of Europe: Culture, Diplomacy, and Antiamericanism after 1945* (Berghahn Book, 2008).

6 Some scholars like Nickson and Chambers recognized 3 phases of Stroessner’s Dictatorship. The first phase, the “consolidation” decade (1955-1967), is characterized by the suppression of political opponents, the centralization of power in Stroessner’s figure, and the successive adoption of the first International Monetary Fund (IMF) program for economic stabilization. The expansion Phase (1968-1981)

7 Patrick Iber, “Anti-communist entrepreneurs and the origins of the cultural Cold War in Latin America,” in *De-centering Cold War History Local and Global Change*, ed. Jadwiga Pieper Mooney and Fabio Lanza (New York: Routledge, 2013), 167.

8 Gilman, *Mandarin of the Future*, 11.

9 Edward Shils, “Political Development in the New States,” *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 2, no.3 (April 1960): 265.

the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA), they converted the region into one of the most unequal and insecure areas of the globe.<sup>10</sup>

To reach a wider understanding of the economic and political relationship between the FRG and Paraguay in the Global Cold War, it might be useful to place the two countries in the orbit of American hegemony, while also considering the colonial era history and the period of German immigration and colonization. This analysis is mainly based on a qualitative approach compounded by historical, sociological, and political reviews. The core of its data is composed by the diplomatic correspondence between the FRG Embassy in Asuncion and the Paraguayan Embassy in Bonn, but also between other FRG ministries and Paraguayan institutions ranging from 1964 to 1974.

The first part of this work addresses the history of European settlers who arrived in Paraguay before the First World War (WWI), as well as the spread of German National Socialism in Paraguay during the Second World War (WWII). The second section examines the beginning of the Cold War, the strengthening of relations between the FRG and Paraguay under the anti-communist flag, and their affiliation to the Western Bloc. Here a review of the role played by the USA is essential. Finally, the article moves from the ideological links between

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10 Joseph S. Nye, "Soft Power," *Foreign Policy* no.8 (Autumn, 1990): 166.

both nations, to the economic aspect of the bilateral relationship. The FRG's financial and technical aid to Paraguay was directed to several sectors of production to support development, industrialization, and modernization, which was considered necessary to acquire a more prominent position in the global stage.

## 2. NEW FORMS OF COLONIZATION

The political and economic affairs between the Kingdom of Prussia and the Independent Republic of Paraguay officially began in 1860 with an agreement on trade and navigation that ended a long period of economic isolation.<sup>11</sup> The main purpose of the agreement was the sale of weapons to the Paraguayan market. The agreement also paved the way for a future German market of Yerba mate. The export of this herb remained under the monopolized administration of the state and was a primary source of profit for the economy.<sup>12</sup> The end of the Paraguayan War (1864-1870) and

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11 Heinz Schnepfen "Deutschland und Paraguay von der ersten bis zur letzten Diktatur, 1816-1989" *Jahrbuch für Geschichte Lateinamerika* 37, no. 1 (December 2000): 296.

12 Barbara Potthast, „Die historische Entwicklung Paraguay's," *Bundeszentrale für Politische Bildung*, January 8, 2008, <https://www.bpb.de/internationales/amerika/lateinamerika/44844/geschichte>.

the catastrophic consequences for the population led the government to approve a law aimed at encouraging foreign immigration through land concession and financial aid, a step toward officially legitimating a new phase of colonization.<sup>13</sup>

The first legitimate colony for German migrants was founded in 1881 by the Swiss immigrant Jakob Schärer under the name San Bernardino, in the Cordillera department. In 1887, Bernhardt Förster, Richard Wagner, and other anti-Semitic fanatics celebrated the foundation of New Germany in the department of San Pedro. At the turn of the century, German migrants founded yet another successful settlement, currently known as Hohenau, and established an agriculture-based economy. The most conspicuous project was held by Mennonites, who established numerous settlements in the Chaco region based on the agricultural sector too. The German historian and diplomat Heinz Schnepfen highlighted how the Mennonites sympathized with Hitler's politics without identifying themselves within the national socialist ideology.<sup>14</sup> Other

scholars, like Benjamin W. Redekop and Frank Henry Epp, underlined the cultural, racial, and political ties of Mennonites to Germanism.<sup>15</sup>

With Law 514 from July 26, 1926, the Paraguayan government entitled rights and ensured privileges to the new colonies. For instance, Mennonites obtained the autonomy to establish their own institutions and create an education system where pupils were taught in their own language. Moreover, they were exempted from paying importation duties and national/municipal taxes for a decade.<sup>16</sup> As Kleinpenning shows, the land assigned for Mennonite settlements was purchased through the direct financial aid of an intercontinental company, *La Corporación Paraguaya*, which was officially recognized by the government as a colonization company.<sup>17</sup>

Mennonite colonies established in the Chaco area were a successful form of legitimized colonization based on cooperatives devoted to agriculture and breeding.

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13 Rudolf Plett, *El protestantismo en el Paraguay: su aporte cultural, económico y espiritual* (Asunción: Fac. Latinoamericana de Estudios Teológico, 1988): 48; Ralph Rotte, "Paraguays 'Großer Krieg' gegen die Tripel-Allianz, 1864-187" *ÖMZ Österreichische Militärische Zeitschrift* (February 2011): 6.

14 Schnepfen "Deutschland und Paraguay," 305.

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15 Frank H. Epp. "An analysis of Germanism and National Socialism in the immigrant newspaper of a Canadian minority," (PhD diss., University of Minnesota, 1965), 19-74; Benjamin W. Redekop, "German Identity of Mennonite Brethren Immigrant in Canada, 1930-1960." (PhD diss., University of British Columbia, 1985), 61- 101.

16 Jan M.G. Kleinpenning, *The Mennonite Colonies in Paraguay. Origin and Development*, (Berlin: Ibero-Amerikanisches Institut, 2009), 5.

17 Kleinpenning, *The Mennonite Colonies in Paraguay*, 5.

With the support of the Paraguayan government and incentives (technological and economic) from La Corporación Paraguaya, the colonization of Chaco became an achieved goal. By the end of the 1950s, the activity of the colonies was extended to the production of cotton, the extraction of Palo Santo oil, and other activities related to seeds and new strains of plants.<sup>18</sup> The case of Chaco is crucial for the present analysis, due to the strategic importance acquired by the area in the forthcoming years. The war between Bolivia and Paraguay (1932-1935) for the control over the Gran Chaco region was marked by a strong presence of Germans in the ranks of the Paraguayan military. Amongst them was Alfredo Stroessner, who would later rule Paraguay during the years of the Cold War. At the end of the 1920s German immigration to Latin America was conspicuous and, as Schneppen underlines, Paraguay was for them “das Land der Verheißung,” the Promised Land.<sup>19</sup>

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18 Kleinpenning, *The Mennonite Colonies in Paraguay*, 8-10.

19 Schneppen “Deutschland und Paraguay,” 303. All citations have been translated from German or Spanish to English by the authors.

## 2.2. US INTERFERENCE IN THE POLITICAL INTERNAL AFFAIRS OF PARAGUAY

Despite the German-Paraguayan history of colonization, Paraguay did not play any relevant role in the USA foreign policy towards Latin America until the beginning of WWII. As the Paraguayan historian Alfredo Seiferheld underlines, in 1929 Paraguay faced the foundation of the first Nazi party recognized and directly supported by Germany.<sup>20</sup> The penetration of German National Socialism in Latin America and the constant growth of trade between Germany and Paraguay alarmed the US, which then regarded National Socialism as a global threat to the idea of a free market economy and thus, deemed necessary an American intervention in the Southern Cone.<sup>21</sup>

The American interest in expanding their sphere of influence to Paraguay was not just moved by the fear of Nazism, but mainly by economic interests. At the dawn of WWII, two conspicuous rounds of financial aid amounting to 3.5 and 11 million USD were allocated to Paraguay in military equipment, in

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20 Alfredo M. Seiferheld, *Nazismo y fascismo en el Paraguay. Víspera de la II guerra mundial. Gobierno de Rafael Franco y Felix Paiva (1936/1939)* (Asunción: Editorial Histórica, 1985), 70.

21 Frank O.Mora, “The Forgotten Relationship: United States-Paraguay Relations, 1937-89,” *Journal of Contemporary History*, no. 33 (July 1998): 452-454.



exchange for the concession over the port of Asunción in 1940 to an American corporation, which officially formalized the start of the era of American financial aid to Paraguay.<sup>22</sup> From this time until 1980, the US financial aid provided by the USA to Paraguay increased continuously. Through this strategy, the Americans foreign policy toward Paraguay was able to reach two significant results: first, these commercial, financial and diplomatic ties led Paraguay to become economically dependent on foreign assistance, opening new perspectives of profit for the US investment market and, more generally, for the private sector. Second, the dependency—enhanced through soft intervention—enabled the USA to exercise influence and control, forcing Paraguay to break its alliance with German National Socialists. During WWII and in the forthcoming decades, foreign capital aid became essential for Paraguay. According to statistics, the end of 1939 was characterized by the presence of 93 million USD in foreign capital, 20 percent of which was provided by the United States, and 15 percent by Germany.<sup>23</sup>

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22 Michael Grow, *The Good Neighbor Policy and Authoritarianism in Paraguay: U.S. Economic Expansion and the Great-Power Rivalry in Latin America during World War II* (Lawrence: Regents Press of Kansas, 1981), 50.

23 Naciones Unidas: Comisión Económica Para América Latina y el Caribe, “Las empresas transnacional en la economía del Paraguay,” in *Estudios e informe de la Cepal*, no. 61

### 3. FRG, THE USA, AND PARAGUAY AFTER WWII

The USA imperialist strategy of intervention in Third-World countries had begun before and during WWII, as a reaction to the military confrontation with Bolsheviks during WWI and a “response to the Great Depression.”<sup>24</sup> At the beginning of the 1950s, the Cold War was already global and Third-World interventions became one of its important characteristics. According to Nicolas Guilhot, at the end of WWII, development aid to the Third World provided by the USA concealed the intention to enlarge the international circuits of capital and the appropriation of new territories to be exploited.<sup>25</sup> The US strategy of backing the rise of nationalism in Third-World countries, as Guilhot continues to explain, was aimed at preventing these countries from ending up under Soviet influence and jeopardizing the American dream of world leadership.<sup>26</sup> In that sense, Stroessner’s dictatorship was part of the US strategy for political stability in the Southern Cone.

In 1954, the year of the Paraguayan military coup, the Cold War had reached its peak. The small

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(1987): 13.

24 Westad, *The Global Cold War*, 19, 20, 24.

25 Nicolas Guilhot, *The Democracy Makers: Human Rights and International Order* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2005), 104.

26 Guilhot, *The Democracy Makers*, 104.

country in the southern cone was strategically located. By the end of the 1950s, the FRG completed the integration process in the Western Bloc through its official entrance in the North Atlantic Pact (NATO) and the unification of West Berlin. These events signaled the return of the FRG as a power actor on the international stage. According to historian William Gray, the FRG's concerns at that time were directed towards affirming its monopoly on the international scenario as the only legally recognized German State.<sup>27</sup> In the first half of the Global Cold War, the foreign policy towards Latin America complied with the Hellerstein Doctrine, an effort to undermine the international legitimacy of East-Germany.<sup>28</sup>

The first trade agreement between the FRG and Paraguay after WWII is reported by the weekly magazine *Die Zeit* on March 2, 1950. With a trade exchange of 5.2 million USD, the deal aimed to provide new machinery and metals, but also equipment for industrial and domestic use. At the top of the list of the most exported goods from Paraguay to the FRG were

cotton, hides, and lumber.<sup>29</sup> From September 15 to 20, 1964, Berlin hosted the first post-war Industry Forum under Brandt's leadership titled "Foreign Trade and Private Investment." The forum involved Latin American countries that were part of the Alliance for Progress, an organization engaged in avoiding the spread of the Cuban Revolution. The central theme of this forum focused on exports enhancement through economic planning and new cooperation between public and private companies. Another topic of the forum concerned the World Bank's project in Latin America. In this context, the presence of the Paraguayan Minister of Industry and Trade José Moreno Gonzales, as well as the participation of prominent members of new regional institutions such as the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (CEPAL), the Latin American Free Trade Association (LAFTA), the Secretary of Economic Integration of Central America (SIECA) signaled the beginning of a new globalized era.<sup>30</sup>

### 3.2. GLOBAL COLD WAR IN TIMES OF THE 1968 UPRISING

The beginning of the Kiesinger-Brandt era in the FRG coincides with the collapse of the

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27 William G. Gray, "Cold War Hinterland: West Germany and the Establishment of the Brazilian Dictatorship," in *German Yearbook of Contemporary History* (Berlin/Boston: De Gruyter, 2017), 120.

28 Cornelia Navari, *Internationalism and the State in the Twenty Century* (New York: Routledge Taylor & Francis Groups, 2000), 172.

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29 "Paraguay-Baumwolle" *Die Zeit*, Nr.09/1950, March 2, 1950.

30 "Latin American Countries at the Industry Forum, Berlin 1964 in LAB, B Rep. 002, Nr. 5479.

Hallerstein doctrine. The German Democratic Republic (GDR) had obtained its legitimacy as an independent state in other Third World countries. This period remains characterized by a strong anti-communism agenda, which was, as Thomas Banchoff points out, an overlapping priority for Kiesinger and Brandt's foreign policies.<sup>31</sup>

In 1967 the Stroessner regime started a period of economic growth that some scholars defined as "the Paraguayan Miracle."<sup>32</sup> In the political report of the same year, the German Embassy in Asunción reported a situation of "Innenpolitischer Stabilität" (internal political stability) in contrast to the revolutionary movements active throughout the Southern Cone. This was a crucial year for Paraguay, due to the introduction of a new constitution which increased the president's political power. The ambassador Hubert Krier considered the constitution as a "milestone" for the beginnings of a democratic process.<sup>33</sup> The declared state of

exception in the provinces of Itapúa and Alto Paraná was enforced under the excuse of the increasing activities of the Organización Latinoamericana de Solidaridad.<sup>34</sup> This report displays the German diplomat's distorted view of the situation in the area. Such a perspective seems to be driven by the classic fear of a possible revolutionary influence in the region, rather than an objective observation of the events.

Stroessner positioned himself as a bitter anti-communist enemy. He supported "Unser Wunsch," the FRG's desire to recognize the exclusion of the GDR from the United Nations.<sup>35</sup> The loyalty to the Western Bloc was functional to legitimize his power and to justify the corrupted system of bureaucratic clientelism he created. The third re-election of Stroessner in 1968—carried out under conditions imposed by the new constitution, approved despite the massive protests of the three opposition parties and the Paraguayan episcopate—plunged the country into a spiral of violence and repression.<sup>36</sup> This was recognized by the Comisión de Verdad y Justicia as the "consolidación de la dictadura con rostro democrático,"<sup>37</sup>

31 Thomas Banchoff, *The German Problem Transformed: Institution, politics, and Foreign Policy 1945-1955* (Ann Arbor: The University of Michigan Press, 1999), 76.

32 Kevin Chambers, "Paraguay," in *Regional Handbook of Economic Development. The South America Handbook*, ed. by Rory Miller and David Roch (New York: Routledge Taylor&Francis Group, 2013), 136.

33 "Annual Political Report Paraguay 1967," from German Embassy in Asunción to Federal Foreign Office Bonn 12.02.1968, PA AA, B 33, Bd.

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34 "Annual Political Report Paraguay 1967, PA AA B.33, Bd. 520; 3, 4.

35 "Annual Political Report Paraguay 1970", from German Embassy in Asunción to Federal Foreign Office Bonn, 1.04.1971, PA AA, B 33, Bd. 559.

36 "Annual Political Report Paraguay 1967," PA AA, B 33, Bd. 520.

37 Mario Melanio Medina, "Informe

as the consolidation of a dictatorship disguised as democracy. It was also the year Paraguay obtained membership at the United Nations as a non-permanent member. The alleged conspiracy to kidnap the Paraguayan Foreign minister Raúl Sapena Pastor to Cuba functioned as an excuse to increase the repression against any kind of dissent.<sup>38</sup> The opponents of the Colorado Party, Stroessner's party, had to seek exile in Uruguay and could not take part in the internal political life of the country. Any attempt at communist propaganda failed in the face of the effectiveness of the repressive apparatus put in place by the regime.<sup>39</sup> For David Rockefeller's visit to Paraguay on June 19, 1969, Stroessner prohibited all forms of propaganda and opposition through the so-called "Decreto N.5904."

The loyalty of Stroessner to anti-communism was used domestically to pursue the economic and political interest of its corporative apparatus, and to justify the spread of state violence. Externally, the FRG

took advantage of the dictatorship's position to enlarge its imperialistic influence over Latin America.

### 3.3. FRG AS AN EXPERT OF GLOBAL DEVELOPMENT

According to Fernando Pedrosa, the FRG's politics towards Latin America were not a projection of the US policy in the continent, but the affirmation of its own interests.<sup>40</sup> The global 1968 uprising overlap with the formalization of the FRG's interests in Latin America and the official new strategy of "elastic cooperation" pursued by the German Social Democracy Party.<sup>41</sup> While Brandt was visiting Chile, Uruguay, Argentina, and Brazil, the two state secretaries Rolf Lahr and George Ferdinand Duckwitz were sent to Mexico, Colombia, Peru, and Paraguay. The report of the visits makes the main purpose of the mission clear: it was time to increase the economic and political interventionism in Latin America.

A central point of the Global Cold War from the American perspective—and consequently for its allies—was "to ensure that developing countries (...) reach modernity and statehood without triggering more social upheavals,"

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Comisión Verdad y Justicia Paraguay Conclusiones y Recomendaciones" 2008, accessed November 18, 2019, [http://www.derechoshumanos.net/lesahumanidad/informes/paraguay/Informe\\_Comision\\_Verdad\\_y\\_Justicia\\_Paraguay\\_Conclusiones\\_y\\_Recomendaciones.pdf](http://www.derechoshumanos.net/lesahumanidad/informes/paraguay/Informe_Comision_Verdad_y_Justicia_Paraguay_Conclusiones_y_Recomendaciones.pdf)

38 "Conspiracy about the abduction of the foreign Paraguayan Minister to Cuba", from German Embassy in Asuncion to Federal Foreign Office Bonn, 28.11.1968, PA AA, B33, Bd.520.

39 "Annual Political Report Paraguay 1967", PA AA, B 33, Bd. 520; 4, 5.

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40 Fernando Pedrosa, "Elastic Cooperation" in *Willy Brandt and International Relations: Europe, the USA, and Latin America, 1974 – 1992* eds. Bernd Rother and Klaus Larres (Bloomsbury, 2019), 176.

41 Pedrosa, "Elastic Cooperation" 163, 164.

which had the potential to destroy the geopolitical balance of the Global Cold War. From this perspective, argues Guilhot, modernity could be achieved through a rigorous path of scientific knowledge, conceived in the civilized Global North, and exported to developing Third World countries.<sup>42</sup> Therefore, the mission of the industrialized nations was to provide both capital aid and specialists. On the strict basis of their scientific knowledge, they were supposed to support development, preparing Third World countries to independently pursue their way to progress. In the context of the FGR, the term “modern” had already become a central political concept by 1967.

The period between 1967 and 1974 saw the proliferation of trade agreements that triggered development aid in the form of capital and technical support. The development and implementation of new private projects reflected the commitment of the FRG to expand its already considerable technical assistance to Paraguay. The amount of capital aid in the 1960s was conspicuous and directed to small and middle industries, divided into two tranches, each one amounted to 12 million DM.<sup>43</sup> Capital aid was mainly directed to specific companies in the timber processing industry, aiming to contribute to the

diversification of the Paraguayan production with an export-oriented vision.<sup>44</sup>

The capital aid that the FRG provided in those years (1966-1974) for development in Paraguay coincided with the capital provided by other international organizations such as the World Bank or the Inter-American Development Bank (IDB). The numerous and meticulous exchanges of information between the German embassy in Asunción and the foreign relations office in Bonn seems to indicate a synchronized developmental policy:

For the construction of the hydroelectric power plant Acaray (Alto Paraná), the 58% of the financial capital is provided by the IDB, the 21% comes from the state electricity authority ANDE [...]. The second major infrastructure project, regarding an asphalt road from Encarnación to Asunción, is held by the German company Hochtief.<sup>45</sup>

In a similar gesture of cooperation, Brandt’s report as chairman of the Nord-Süd-Kommission in 1980 recommended the use of the World Bank guarantee authority to improve access of developing countries to the capital market, and a common international presence in the global project of

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42 Nicolas Guilhot, *The Democracy Makers*, 105, 111, 113.

43 “Annual Political Report 1967,” 13, 14, PA AA, B 33, Bd. 520.

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44 “Paraguay Economic Development Report 1967,” from German mbassy in Asuncion to Foreign Office Bonn 31.5.1968, PA AA, B 58, Bd. 1020; 21, 22.

45 “Paraguay Economic Development 1967”, 22,23.

development.

While the public funding by the FGR to the industrial progress in Paraguay was significant, the private interests of certain German industry giants were not an exception. Thyssen Krupp company began to build a cement factory in Valley with a capacity of 100,000 tons of cement<sup>46</sup>. Siemens was responsible for building the telephone infrastructure in Paraguay. The city network of Asunción was extended to six central offices.<sup>47</sup> The technical support for development that was not sent through capital aid entailed the dispatch of qualified advisers. The involvement of German scientists covered almost every segment of production identified by Bonn as strategic for future profits. From agriculture to animal breeding, including the chemical and metallurgical industries, the interference of the FGR extended into key institutions for the future planning of Paraguayan development. One of the crucial Paraguayan institutions responsible for the planning of development programs, Banco del Fomento, employed a German industrial expert in 1967.<sup>48</sup> By the end of 1969, an expert was sent to Paraguay

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46 "Paraguay Economic Development Report 1968" from German Embassy in Asunción to Foreign Office Bonn 24.4.1969, 23,24 PA AA, Bd.1095.

47 "Paraguay Economic Development 1967" 24, 25; PA AA B 58, Bd. 1020.

48 "Capital Aid for Paraguay; Second Tranche of 12 Million DM" PA AA, B 58, Bd. 1257.

for a two-year mission to advise the Secretary for Development, Economy, and Social Order to set up regional and macroeconomic development programs, and to train the local professionals in these fields. 187,000 DM were provided just to begin. The project completed the goal in a meaningful way, sending another industrial-engineering advisor, who had been employed at the Paraguayan Development Bank under German Technical Assistance.<sup>49</sup>

FRG's development aid to Paraguay went hand in hand with the regime's rise in the international arena. In 1968, during his visit to the United State, Stroessner made a short speech to the members of the council of the Organization of American States (OAS). Paraguay's foreign policy focused on efforts to promote regional alliances within the Latin American Free Trade Area (ALALC). The dictator considered the implementation of a selective, duty-free regime, to be an improper measure for the Paraguayan economy. In contrast, he promoted a tight regional integration policy within the ALALC, which was crucial for building a common development policy.<sup>50</sup>

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49 "Expert for the Secretary for Development, Economy, and Social Order" IRA Technical Aid 2.9.1969, PA AA, B 58, Bd.1257. "Presentation to the Interministerial Committee for Technical Aid" from the Federal Minister for Economic Cooperation Bonn 31.07.1969, PA AA, B 58, Bd. 1257.

50 "Annual Political Report Paraguay 1968", from Germany Embassy in

In the era of Social Democracy, the transfer of aid in the form of capital or through technical experts continued. On April 12, 1972, the FRG granted Paraguay another capital aid of 7.5 million DM to complete its telecommunications network, an amount further increased by 4.6 million in May 1973.<sup>51</sup> These loans were accompanied by the deployment of five German telecommunications experts and by the granting of scholarships for Paraguayan telecommunications technicians. The financial and technical aid provided by the FRG and the participation of private giants in the modernization of the country underlines how ambitious and competitive this development-imperialist project was.

### 3.4. DEVELOPMENT PLANS FOR THE CHACO REGION

The example of the Gran Chaco region, and the interest displayed for the other colonies distributed all over the Paraguayan territory, illustrate the way European colonialism and imperialism have never waned. The 14,000 German Mennonites who moved to Paraguay after WWII gained considerable recognition from the Paraguayan government and were subsidized by the Federal Government.<sup>52</sup>

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Asunción 28.2.1969, PA AA , B. 58, Bd. 559. (zwischenarkiv)

51 "Foreign Economy Circular No. 21, 1972," in PA AA, B 58, Bd. 1257.

52 Deutsche Kolonie

For the Chaco region, the FRG's plans were ambitious. In 1968, in response to a request submitted by some colonies of this region (Menno Neuland and Fernheim), the FRG undertook a significant development project designed to be a guide for improving the selective breeding of cattle, sheep, pigs, and poultry. The project set up a study about the market possibilities, the preparation, preservation and construction of slaughterhouses, cold stores, and cooperatives.<sup>53</sup> German support of the great plan to tame the "green hell,"<sup>54</sup> wanted by Stroessner

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Gesprächsinformation in PA AA, B 58, Bd. 1257.

53 "Support for the Technical Aid to Menno, Fernheim and Neuland," From German Mennonites Council to German Embassy, Asuncion 10.10.1967, PA AA, B58, Bd. 1257. "Technical Aid for Paraguay; support for the Mennonites Colonies in Gran Chaco; Resolution of the water's issued", from German Embassy in Asuncion to Foreign Office Bonn 23.9.1970, PA AA, B.58 Bd.1257. "Slaughterhouse for Mennonites Colonies in Chaco, Church Aid, Capital Aid for the improvement of cattle industry", from German Embassy in Asuncion 15.7.1970, PA AA B.58, Bd. 1257.

54 Green Hell is used by different scholars, writers, and also by the Mennonites to describe the harsh climate conditions in the Chaco region, rendering human settlements and life difficult. Temperature is daily reaching 45°C and arid zones are covering the entire territory. Adrian G. English, "The Green Hell: A Concise History of the Chaco War between Bolivia and Paraguay 1932- 1935" (Stroud, Gloucestershire: Spellmount,

himself, continued in the Brandt era. The project was made possible only through the agrarian reform of 1962. The reform's intention was to create a property-owning class of farmers able to be part of the national economy and enable Paraguay to join the international competition on an equal level with Argentina and Brazil. Through public financial support, the dictatorship assigned lands to colonists and eliminated the old peasant's practice of spontaneously occupy vacant lands.<sup>55</sup> The capital aid to produce crops was provided by the Banco Nacional de Fomento and the Crédito Agricultura de Habilidadación. The technical and financial aid aimed at boosting the industrialization in Chaco continued to increase in the Brandt era.

After a long history which included Mennonite efforts and the support of the FRG and other foreign capital aid, Chaco has been transformed into the sixth largest exporter of beef worldwide.<sup>56</sup> Despite this "success," since the colonists started to settle in Chaco, the indigenous peoples have been dispossessed from their land, excluded, and exploited as cheap worker force.<sup>57</sup>

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2007).

55 Michael Albertus, "Political Regimes and distribution" (PhD diss., Stanford University, 2011), 147.

56 Joel Correia "Mennonites helped turn Paraguay into a mega beef producer-indigenous people maybe pay the price," *Center for Latin America Studies University of Florida*, March 10, 2020.

57 Paola Canova, "Los Ayoreos en las

### 3.5. POWER TO THE MILITARY AND TECHNOLOGY

In 1955 the FRG became a member of NATO, restarting its military production. According to the historian Dimitrios Gounaris, every Latin American country was a customer of the FRG military industry.<sup>58</sup> Diplomats ensured that military aid or sell reached the governments that maintained the "political stability" of the Southern Cone. In 1972 the FRG Office for Foreign Affairs, in cooperation with the FRG Ministry for Economic Development, supplied the Paraguayan police with radio transmitters. They included training in how to use the technology. The equipment was offered to the Paraguayan forces at no cost and the German side was even willing to organize shipping and distribution.<sup>59</sup> In 1968 the FRG Office for Foreign Affairs allowed the company Rheinmetall to export

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colonias Mennonitas. Análisi de un enclave agro-industrial en el Chaco paraguayo," in *Capitalismo en la selvas. Enclave industrial en el Chaco y Amazonia*, ed. Cordoba, Bossert, and Richard (San Pedro de Atacama: Ediciones del desierto, 2015), 271-279.

58 Dimitrios Gounaris, *Die Geschichte des Sozialliberalen Rüstungsexportpolitik: Ein Instrument der deutschen Außenpolitik 1969–1982* (Nürnberg, 2019).

59 "Response by German Minister of Defense to Paraguayan Ministry of Defense", Juli 21<sup>st</sup> 1966, PA AA, B 57, Bd. 173.



10,000 rifles and 200 automatic rifles to Paraguay.<sup>60</sup> The approval regulating the export of war weapons was accompanied by the note about the importance of the military for the Paraguayan state. As per usual in a military dictatorship, the Paraguayan forces oversaw many tasks that were technically the realm of civil society. This situation led the FRG administration to promote the support of the Paraguayan armed forces as a supposedly civil and peacefully operating actor. For example, the military organized most of the civil air traffic in Paraguay. The airline Transporte Aéreo Militar (TAM) was responsible also for most of the civil air traffic. The FRG state was willing to go to unusual lengths when the possible sale of planes to the Paraguayan air force was being negotiated in 1970. Even though the volume of the transaction was much higher than the officially estimated recommendation for business with Paraguay, and there were disagreements about the condition of the Dornier company, the FRG government approved a federal guarantee for the trade.<sup>61</sup> The considerations enabling these aid and trade agreements were

accompanied by discourses about civil society and development aid as a road to democracy. However, it was the stable modernization of Paraguay and thereby the strengthening of an economic partner of the FRG, with whom they also shared a long history, that was the decisive argument in the negotiations.

Correspondence between the ministries of defense of Paraguay (General Leodegar Cabello) and the FRG (Kai-Uwe von Hassel) appears in 1966 documents of the successful negotiations for the sale of military equipment from the FRG army (trucks and radios) to the Paraguayan state. The trade was approved even though it remains unclear if Paraguay was at that time involved in an armed conflict with Argentina. The crucial role that the military played in Stroessner's presidency, argued the Ministry of Defense, implied that the FRG's support should increase in the military sector, especially with regard to the increasing activity of communist guerrilla.<sup>62</sup> This last example further shows that the FRG repeatedly used the threat of a potential rise of communism to legitimize dangerous transactions to Paraguay that did not contribute at all to peace and democracy. This is also closely linked to the long history of German settlements in Paraguay. The companies Dornier, Krupp, and Rheinmetall for example were already

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60 Response by German Minister of Defense to the German Ministry of Economy, January 11<sup>th</sup> 1968, PA AA, B 57, Bd. 117.

61 "Sell of military aircrafts by Dornier AG," Letter from German Embassy in Asuncion to the German Foreign Ministry in Bonn, 13.10.1970 PA AA, B 57, Bd. 173.

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62 "Response by German Minister of Defence to the German Ministry of Economy, 1.11.1968 PA AA, B 57, Bd. 117.

making business in the region for a long time.<sup>63</sup> However, despite this trade, Paraguay received less military equipment from the FRG than other Latin American countries.<sup>64</sup>

#### 4. CONCLUSION

The analysis of the diplomatic correspondence and the historical literatures revisited by this paper have provided insights into the global geopolitical setup that framed the political decisions of those times. It also sheds light on the ideologic and economic interests that motivated officials in their respective national administrations when negotiating international affairs.

Since the end of the WWII, the FRG's ties to Latin American countries have been shaped by its close alliance with and dependence on the USA. The FRG foreign policy towards Paraguay combined the intention to re-establish the FRG as global power into the global free-market economy with a strong anti-communist stance. This encouraged

the FRG to approve developmental dictatorships rather than real democracies. The implementation in the Third World of an interventionist-developmental approach was fuelled by a concept of modernity that originated in the colonial history of German/European expansion and was heavily influenced by American imperialism.

The analysis of the bilateral relations between Paraguay and the FRG contributes to a re-evaluation of the Cold War as a global conflict, underlining its ideological origins and its long effects on Third World countries. This era began much earlier and extended its effect lasted longer than thought. For this reason, we hope to stimulate new research about the context of a Global Cold War as a preparatory historical, political, and economic frame for the current globalization.

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63 Christian Leitzbach, "Stories from 125 years of Rheinmetall," *Rhein etall AG*, accessed March 24, 2020, [https://www.rheinmetall.com/de/rheinmetall\\_ag/group/corporate\\_history/index.php](https://www.rheinmetall.com/de/rheinmetall_ag/group/corporate_history/index.php). Hans Michael Kloth, "Als die Wale fliegen lernten," *Der Spiegel*, 2009, accessed March 24, 2020, <https://www.spiegel.de/geschichte/luftfahrt-legende-a-948446.html>.

64 Gounaris, *Die Geschichte des Sozialliberalen Rüstungsexportpolitik*, 446.



