

THE PROJECT OF RECONCILIATION:  
JOURNALISTS AND RELIGIOUS ACTIVISTS IN POLISH-GERMAN RELATIONS,  
1956-1972

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## **ABSTRACT**

ANNIKA FRIEBERG: The Project of Reconciliation: Journalists and Religious Activists in Polish-German Relations, 1956-1972  
(under the direction of Konrad Jarausch)

My dissertation, “The Project of Reconciliation,” analyzes the impact of a transnational network of journalists, intellectuals, and publishers on the postwar process of reconciliation between Germans and Poles. In their foreign relations work, these non-state actors preceded the Polish-West German political relations that were established in 1970. The dissertation has a twofold focus on private contacts between these activists, and on public discourse through radio, television and print media, primarily its effects on political and social change between the peoples. My sources include the activists’ private correspondences, interviews, and memoirs as well as radio and television manuscripts, articles and business correspondences.

Earlier research on Polish-German relations is generally situated firmly in a nation-state framework in which the West German, East German or Polish context takes precedent. My work utilizes international relations theory and comparative reconciliation research to explore the long-term and short-term consequences of the discourse and the concrete measures which were taken during the 1960s to end official deadlock and nationalist antagonisms and to overcome the destructive memories of the Second World War dividing Poles and Germans. Analyzing early Polish-German relations within the conceptual framework of reconciliation after violent conflict, I distinguish between those developments that fitted within reconciliation models and the political narrative which the actors developed and disseminated to explain and justify their

position on Polish-German relations. The positive aspects included the cross-border contacts established and the challenge to national stereotypes and myths. On the other hand, a statist focus on improving the relations with the communist government in Poland rather than the people, and a limitation of the dialogue to intellectual and media elites and political circles meant that in 1970, and in 1990, when reconciliation was declared accomplished, many layers of society remained excluded and isolated from this master narrative of success. My research strives to emphasize the silences, and give voice to the marginalized minorities and to emphasize that media, intellectuals and politicians continually face the task of integrating these forgotten aspects into any grand narratives of reconciliation.

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I also want to mention my family in these acknowledgements; my parents, Hans and Christina Frieberg, who gave me the independence of mind to pursue my own interests and had complete faith in my ability to complete whatever project I took on; my Mother in Law, Joyce Seegel, who also offered her full faith and support in our academic pursuits, and my dog, who herded me outside on a daily basis throughout the writing process and helped preserve my health and sanity during the writing stages.

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## INTRODUCTION

On a train to Berlin in 1956, two men, Ludwig Zimmerer and Hansjakob Stehle, met each other for the first time. Both West German citizens, they were headed for the Polish Military Mission Headquarters to receive entry visas into Poland. Zimmerer was a 34-year-old translator and writer, self-employed with contacts in the Polish Catholic movement “Pax.” Stehle, 29, held a doctorate in political history and international relations, and was employed by the *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*.<sup>1</sup> These two became the earliest and most prominent West German correspondents to Poland. They profoundly influenced an emerging postwar generation of West German liberal journalists engaged in the improvement of Polish-German relations. Connected to elite media circles and liberal Catholic groups in West Germany, and over time extending their networks to the Catholic and Protestant Churches, Catholic intellectuals and communist leadership in Poland and Eastern Europe, they were at the heart of the project of Polish-German reconciliation in the coming years.

Was there, in fact, a Polish-German reconciliation and if so, how did it work? This is the central focus of the present investigation. In simplest possible terms: in 1945, the Polish and German people were divided by the national myths of an ancient enmity, the memory of the Prussian role in the partitions of Poland in the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> century, and more recently, by the German occupation of Poland between 1939 and 1945, in which the Nazi State killed six million Polish citizens, sent countless others into slave labor and concentration camps,

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<sup>1</sup> Hansjakob Stehle, interview by Annika Frieberg, Vienna, 17 June 2005.

and destroyed large parts of the Polish intelligentsia, clergy and elites. In addition, the relationship between the two peoples was damaged by the ongoing territorial conflict over the Polish-German borderlands from which the Polish state, in cooperation with the Allies, had expelled millions of ethnic Germans under often brutal circumstances between 1944 and 1948. The ideological conflict between the two superpowers also complicated the relationship; the division of Germany, the West German refusal to recognize the German Democratic Republic as a country, and Poland's recognition of the GDR in 1950, decided by the Soviet Union.

Although the psychological, emotional and political divisions ran deep, in 1970, the Federal Republic of Germany and the Polish People's Republic opened diplomatic relations through the efforts of Chancellor Willy Brandt and First Secretary Władysław Gomułka. They signed an agreement in which the border on the rivers Oder and Neisse was accepted though not formally recognized. In 1990 and 1991, after the reunification of Germany and the democratization of Poland, the two countries concluded a Friendship Treaty and a Border Treaty with each other. How did this relationship developed from 1945 to 1970, 1990 and beyond?

By the early 1990s, many of the key actors came together with Polish and German historians, and they offered a coherent master narrative of reconciliation. The narrative was based in part on the activists' memories, in part on research and in part on state-sponsored efforts by both countries to support a positive historical dialogue which recognized the darker sides of the mutual past, but also celebrated the accomplishments and positive historical memories beginning to emerge in the 1950s and 1960s.<sup>2</sup> Often, these anthologies appeared in

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<sup>2</sup> Particular examples were *Bonn-Warschau 1945-1990. Analyse und Dokumentation*, eds. Mieczysław Tomala and Hans-Adolf Jacobsen (Cologne: Verlag Wissenschaft und Politik, 1992); *Feinde werden Freunde*.

both languages and were edited by one German and one Polish researcher. What they had in common was a progressive slant for the authors of such narratives linked the gradual improvement of Polish-German relations closely with European integration. They also combined cultural research with political activism. Many of these studies particularly referred to the involvement of non-state actors, such as intellectuals, media elites and the churches in the integration process.<sup>3</sup>

The gradual improvement of Polish-German relations up to the establishment of official diplomatic relations was generally widely referred to as a reconciliation (*Aussöhnung, Pojednanie*) around 1965. The West German media used this term primarily in connection with the publication of the Protestant Church memorandum “The Situation for the Expellees and the Relations of the German People with its Eastern Neighbors.”<sup>4</sup> Polish-

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*Von den Schwierigkeiten der deutsch-polnischen Nachbarschaft*, eds. Friedbert Pflüger and Winfried Lipscher (Bonn: Bouvier, 1993); Wolfgang Pailer, *Stanislaw Stomma. Nestor der polnisch-deutschen Aussöhnung* (Bonn: Bouvier, 1995); Mieczysław Tomala, *Patrzac na Niemcy. Od wrogości do porozumienia* (Warsaw: Polska Fundacja Spraw Międzynarodowych, 1997); *Deutsche und Polen. Annäherungen – Zbliżenia*, ed. Eva Rommerskirchen (Düsseldorf: Droste, 1996), *Polacy i Niemcy pół wieku później – księga pamiątkowa dla Mieczysława Pszona*, ed. Wojciech Pięciak (Krakow: Wydawnictwo Znak, 1996); *Polska i Niemcy. Geografia sąsiedztwa w nowej Europy*, eds Ekkehard Buchhofer and Bronisław Kortuś (Krakow: Universitas, 1995), Dieter Bingen, *Polen-Politik der Bonner Republik von Adenauer bis Kohl, 1945-1991* (Baden-Baden: Nomos Verlagsgesellschaft, 1998); *Polacy wobec Niemców z dziejów kultury politycznej Polski 1945-1989*, ed. Anna Wolff-Powęska (Poznań: Instytut Zachodni, 1993). As for the state-sponsored efforts, the Polish-German schoolbook commission was also part of this state effort to write Polish-German history.

<sup>3</sup> Piotr Madajczyk, *Na drodze do pojednania. Wokół orędzia biskupów polskich do biskupów niemieckich z 1965 r.* (Warsaw: Wydawnictwo Naukowe PPN, 1994); Edith Heller, *Macht, Kirche, Politik. Der Briefwechsel zwischen den polnischen und den deutschen Bischöfen in Jahre 1965* (Cologne: Treff-punkt, 1992), Anna Wolff-Powęska, “Poszukiwanie dróg dialogu. Świeckie elity katolickie wobec Niemiec,” *Polacy wobec Niemców. Z dziejów kultury politycznej Polski 1945-1989*, ed. Anna Wolff-Powęska (Poznań: Instytut Zachodni, 1993), 365-396; Wolfgang Pailer, *Stanislaw Stomma. Nestor der polnisch-deutschen Aussöhnung* (Bonn: Bouvier, 1995); several essays in *Feinde werden Freunde*, eds. Friedbert Pflüger and Winfried Lipscher (Bonn: Bouvier, 1993); and Stanislaw Stomma’s own memoirs *Pościg za nadzieją* (Paris: editions du dialogue, 1991). The role of the societal groups were also mentioned in Dieter Bingen, *Polen-Politik der Bonner Republik*, 95-98, 106-107; Mieczysław Tomala, “Die Beziehungen zwischen Polen und der Bundesrepublik Deutschland,” *Bonn-Warschau*, 13; Hans-Adolf Jacobsen, “Bundesrepublik Deutschland-Polen. Aspekte ihrer Beziehungen,” *Bonn-Warschau*, 36.

<sup>4</sup> Arnold Sywottek, “Nationale Politik als Symbolpolitik. Die westdeutsche Deutschland- und Aussenpolitik in gesellschaftsgeschichtlicher Perspektive,” *Dynamische Zeiten. Die 60er Jahren in den beiden*

German reconciliation gained considerable international recognition due to the awarding of the Nobel Peace Prize to Willy Brandt in 1971. In the Nobel Prize presentation speech, Aase Lionnaes called Brandt “the great Peace and Reconciliation Chancellor of Germany.”<sup>5</sup>

From the late 1950s, a relatively small circle of media personalities and journalists had been responsible for creating publicity and drawing attention to Polish-German relations. They also actively crafted a narrative of reconciliation which linked the initial efforts in the beginning in 1956 with the political successes in 1970 and treaties in the 1990s. Activists such as Marion Countess Dönhoff, Hansjakob Stehle, Stanisław Stomma, Władysław Bartoszewski, Mieczysław Pszon, Carlo Schmidt as well as members of the Bensberger Circle contributed to the creation of a reconciliation narrative.<sup>6</sup> In addition, their chroniclers and others continued to build on their firsthand narratives of the early beginning of Polish-German *rapprochement*. In this way, the actors used the concept of reconciliation interchangeably with normalization, and by this they referred to all activities necessary to accomplish the establishment of political relations, most prominently the West German recognition of the Oder-Neisse Line. This work is concerned with the context in which the reconciliation narrative emerged and the groups that invested in the narrative in both societies.

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*deutschen Gesellschaften*, eds. Axel Schildt, Detlef Siegfried and KarlChristian Lammers (Hamburg: Hans Christians Verlag, 2000), 354.

<sup>5</sup> Aase Lionnaes, Presentation Speech in honor of Willy Brandt at the Award Ceremony, 10 December 1971, [http://nobelprize.org/nobel\\_prizes/peace/laureates/1971/press.html](http://nobelprize.org/nobel_prizes/peace/laureates/1971/press.html).

<sup>6</sup> Stanisław Stomma, *Pościg za nadzieją*; Władysław Bartoszewski, *Und reiss uns der Hass aus der Seele. Die schwierige Aussöhnung von Polen und Deutschen* (Warsaw: Deutsch-polnischer Verlag, 2005); Marion Countess Dönhoff, *Polen und Deutsche. Die schwierige Aussöhnung* (Frankfurt am Main: Lichterfeld Verlag, 1991); *Polacy i Niemcy pół wieku później – księga pamiątkowa dla Mieczysława Pszona*, ed. Wojciech Pięciak; Gottfried Erb, “Das Signal, das die deutsche Bischöfe nach Polen gesendet habe reichte uns nicht. Gespräch mit Gottfried Erb,” *Wir vergeben und bitten um Vergebung. Der Briefwechsel der polnischen und deutschen Bischöfe von 1965 und seine Wirkung*, eds. Basil Kerski, Thomas Kycia and Robert Żurek (Osnabrück: Fibre, 2006), 173-182.

The memory of reconciliation as it developed in the texts produced after 1990 emphasized the participation of religious activists, both Catholic and Protestant, of a number of West German journalists, media personalities and intellectuals and of the Polish Catholic Church and intellectuals. The narrative began in 1956 and reached a first highpoint in 1970.<sup>7</sup> Three important aspects characterized the description. First, the reconciliation narrative came to focus exclusively on Polish-speaking Catholic Poles and their relations to nationally homogeneous German-speaking Germans, with few references to the ethnically and religiously mixed populations in the borderlands, such as the German minorities remaining in Poland or the disappearing Jewish minorities.<sup>8</sup> Second, the reconciliation narrative came to focus closely on religious initiatives such as those of the German Protestant Church, the German Catholic groups, and the Polish Catholic intellectuals and Church, thus having a firm foundation in the idea of a Christian community. This fact had larger repercussions for European integration in the sense that if Polish-German reconciliation was remembered as a Christian community across borders, integrated Europe must also be centered on Christian cultural principles. Third, the reconciliation narrative was lifted out of its Cold War context

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<sup>7</sup> The Znak circle emphasized the beginning point in 1956, connecting these early initiatives with the memoranda and later efforts. See for example Stanisław Stomma, *Pościg za nadzieją*, 179; Anna Wolff-Powęska, "Poszukiwanie drog dialogu," 365; Pailer, *Stanisław Stomma*. 201. Most historians and memoir writers agreed that 1970 was a highpoint. An exception was Władysław Bartoszewski who felt that the relationship developed fully only in the 1980s under Helmut Kohl. Bartoszewski, *Und reiss uns den Hass aus der Seele*, 110.

<sup>8</sup> In the references to reconciliation, the German occupation stood for abuses of the Polish population, Auschwitz was a reference to the Polish nation's suffering under the Nazis, 1968 was the year when the Bensberger Circle published their memorandum and not the year when the remaining Jewish minority left Poland and Willy Brandt's genuflection was interpreted as a sign of German penitence for crimes against the Polish people. See for example Hans-Adolf Jacobsen, "Bundesrepublik Deutschland-Polen," *Bonn-Warschau*, 36, Gregory Baum, "The Role of the Churches in Polish-German Reconciliation," *The Reconciliation of the Peoples. Challenge to the Churches* (New York: Orbis Books, 1997), 139-140; and the papers by the Bensberger Circle at the Friedrich Eberth Stiftung. Finally, William J. Long and Peter Brecke, *War and Reconciliation. Reason and Emotion in Conflict Resolution* (Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press, 2003), 77, using Poland and West Germany as a case study of reconciliation, considered Brandt's genuflection exclusively within a Polish-German, rather than Jewish-German, context even though the Poles clearly recognized the difference at the time (see Bartoszewski, *Und reiss uns den Hass aus der Seele*, 108).

after the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991.<sup>9</sup> The roles of the Soviet Union and the United States were marginalized or entirely omitted by the activists involved in, and subsequent authors shaping, the narrative. Polish-German chroniclers in the post-communist 1990s, when Poland became a candidate for European integration, downplayed the fact that the communist leadership, intellectuals and media had taken an active part of the early reconciliation efforts.<sup>10</sup> In short, the celebratory writings after 1990 remembered a dual relationship, troubled but steadily improving, between Polish-speaking Poles (i.e. “ethnic” Poles) and German-speaking Germans (i.e. “ethnic” Germans), learning to share a dialogue based on Christian-inspired principles and initiatives. Reconciliation involved much selective remembering and forgetting, as it was treated in postcommunist European space as a matter between the Polish nation and the West German state, with little outside pressure or influence of either the Soviet Union or the United States.

### **Framing the Question**

In the 1990s, particularly as healing of societies after genocidal events became a global concern, conflict resolution also emerged as an independent field of study. This approach is grounded in cultural international relations but has a more activist slant, involving very concrete studies of recent and ongoing conflicts. Some studies mention Polish-German reconciliation as an early example of conflict resolution, but the relationship

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<sup>9</sup> Most narrators of non-political reconciliation efforts omitted mentioning the pressure towards détente coming from West Germany’s western allies, particularly the United States in the early 1960s. See Tomala, “Die Beziehungen,” 13 and Hans-Adolf Jacobsen, “Bundesrepublik Deutschland,” 33-35, and particularly Stomma, who rarely invoked the Soviet pressure or influences on the Polish-German situation in his memoirs, *Pościg za nadzieją*.

<sup>10</sup> The West German journalists who were active in the non-state relations, such as Klaus von Bismarck and Marion Countess Dönhoff, cooperated with communist media personalities and Znak also cooperated closely with certain moderate communists in their early efforts in Polish-German relations. Mieczysław Rakowski pointed to the central role of the Gomułka regime in the early relations in his political diaries.

is often insufficiently researched, as is the case when multiple case studies are used in order to test one applicable model.<sup>11</sup> Nevertheless, the theoretical framework of reconciliation studies offer a bird's-eye perspective and analytical distance to Polish-German relations which are often difficult to achieve in such a politicized and recent field. Thus the definitions and the models of reconciliation can serve as a measure against which the accomplishments and shortcomings of the Polish-German reconciliation process can be measured.

Reconciliation has been defined both as an end-point of having accomplished healing through the “restoration of a state of peace to the relationship where the entities are at least not harming each other and can begin to be trusted not to do so in the future, which means that revenge is foregone as an option,” and as a process through which such a relationship is accomplished.<sup>12</sup> Most scholars prefer to view reconciliation as a process. In addition, some studies consider “reconciliation events” moments of interaction through which a peaceful relationship can be established. Definitions of reconciliation divide into two models, a signaling model and a forgiveness model.<sup>13</sup> The more commonly used model is the forgiveness model on which the work of the so-called Truth Commissions, for example in post-apartheid South Africa, the most well-known recent form of reconciliation activity, are based.

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<sup>11</sup> See William J. Long and Peter Brecke, *War and Reconciliation. Reason and Emotion in Conflict Resolution*, 96-100; Gregory Baum, “The Role of the Churches in Polish-German Reconciliation,” *The Reconciliation of Peoples. Challenge to the Churches*, eds. Harold Wells and Gregory Baum (New York: Orbis, 1997), 129-142.

<sup>12</sup> Joanna Santa-Barbara, “Reconciliation,” *Handbook of Peace and Conflict Studies*, eds. Charles Webel and Johan Galtung (London and New York: Routledge, 2007), 174.

<sup>13</sup> Long and Brecke, *War and Reconciliation*, 3.



The forgiveness model, most commonly used for cases of civil, or intrastate, conflict such as that in Northern Ireland, Sierra Leone, South Africa or Rwanda is centered on a process of truth-telling.<sup>14</sup> Beginning with truth-telling about a violent past involving genocide, ethnic cleansing, terrorism, etc., the model includes elements of forgiveness, partial justice, redefinition of identity and call for a new relationship. In the case of an intrastate conflict, the goal of the forgiveness model is the building, or restoring of an “imagined” national community.<sup>15</sup>

In applying a forgiveness model to inter-state conflicts, there is a tension between the need for remembrance and truce, in contrast to the seeming necessity for amnesia.<sup>16</sup> Remembering past conflicts and violence can present a real danger to peaceful relations, as in the case of Yugoslavia in the 1990s. Politicized memories of injuries against one’s own group, people or nation can also lead to renewed outbreaks of violence. On the other hand, amnesia is an unstable ground on which to build reconciliation. Since the narrated historical

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<sup>14</sup> Siri Gloppen, “Roads to Reconciliation: A Conceptual Framework,” *Roads to Reconciliation*, eds. Elin Skaar, Siri Gloppen and Astri Suhrke (Lanham, Boulder, New York, Toronto, Oxford: Lexington Books, 2005), 27-37; Mark Freeman and Priscilla B. Hayner, “Truth-Telling,” *Reconciliation After Violent Conflict. A Handbook*, eds. David Bloomfield, Teresa Barnes and Luc Haynes (Halmstad: Bulls Tryckeri AB, 2003), 122-139; Ananda Breed, “Performing Reconciliation in Rwanda,” *Peace Studies* Oct-Dec 2006:18:4, 507-513; *Truth and Reconciliation in South Africa. Did the TRC Deliver?* eds. Audrey R. Chapman and Hugo van der Merwe (Philadelphia: University of Philadelphia Press, 2008).

<sup>15</sup> For the concept of the imagined national community see Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities. Reflection on the Origins and Spread of Nationalism*, rev.ed. (London, New York: Verso, 2006), for imagined communities in reconciliation Elin Skaar, Siri Gloppen and Astri Suhrke, “Introduction,” *Roads to Reconciliation*, eds. Elin Skaar, Siri Gloppen and Astri Suhrke (Lanham, Boulder, New York, Toronto, Oxford: Lexington Books, 2005), 4. It is important to notice that the reconciliation theorists primarily use the concept of the imagined national community with reference to restoring a national community which has been torn apart by civil conflict. It would be difficult to apply it to interstate conflicts.

<sup>16</sup> For this point, particularly with reference to Poland, see Iwona Irwin-Zarecka, *Neutralizing Memory. The Jew in Contemporary Poland* (New Brunswick: Transaction, 1989); Tina Rosenberg, *The Haunted Lands. Facing Europe’s Ghosts after Communism* (New York: Random House, 1995), Ilana R. Bet-El, “Unimagined Communities: The Power of Memory and the Conflict in Yugoslavia,” *Memory and Power in Post-War Europe*, ed. Jan-Werner Müller (Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 2002).

identities of both victims and perpetrators remain unchanged, the justifications for the antagonism continue to exist and can be transmitted to the following generations.<sup>17</sup>

Meanwhile, the signaling model is a minimalist, or thin, variety of reconciliation which intends to prevent the outbreak of renewed violence. It is applicable to a majority of inter-state conflicts and proposes that stability occurs when leading representatives of the antagonistic groups partake in a reconciliation event which is part of a “costly, novel, voluntary and irrevocable concession in a negotiated bargain.”<sup>18</sup> Some examples of thin reconciliations would be the ones taking place between West Germany and the Soviet Union in 1970, the United States and Japan in 1952 or Egypt and Israel in 1978.<sup>19</sup>

Another central question in conflict resolution research concerns the necessity of democracy for a successful reconciliation.<sup>20</sup> Researchers consider democratic state systems central to the forgiveness model, whereas the signaling model can be applied also when one or both states are not democratic. Still, also in the case of a signaling model, the reconciliation weakens if the senior actor involved in the exchange is not a true

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<sup>17</sup> Particularly, postmemory has been studied with reference to the Holocaust, for example in Debra Renee Kaufmann, “Post-Memory and Post-Holocaust,” *Sociology confronts the Holocaust. Memories and Identities in Jewish Diasporas*, eds. Judith M. Gerson and Diane L. Wolf (Durham: Duke University Press, 2007), or from the German perspective Leslie Morris, “The Sound of Memory,” *The German Quarterly*, 74:4, 368-378, *Visual Culture and the Holocaust*, ed. Barbie Zelizer (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 2001). The connection between memory and media also emerges particularly clearly in the case of postmemory. In the spring of 2007, the Polish Studies Center at the University of Indiana, Bloomington, organized a conference on Polish-German post-memory. Two volumes are planned as a consequence of the conference.

<sup>18</sup> Long and Brecke, *War and Reconciliation*, 3. As examples of successful instances in which partially successful reconciliation events have occurred, the authors use Poland-West Germany, West Germany-USSR, India and China in 1988, and others.

<sup>19</sup> *Ibid.*, 9.

<sup>20</sup> David Bloomfield, “Reconciliation: An Introduction,” *Reconciliation after Violent Conflict. A Handbook*, eds. David Bloomfield, Teresa Barnes and Luc Huyse (Halmstad: Bull Tryckeri AB, 2005), Mikkel Vedby Rasmussen, *The West, Civil Society and the Construction of Peace* (New York: Palgrave McMillan, 2003); Gloppen, “Roads to Reconciliation,” 21-22.

representative of a larger population, such as was the case with communist East European states. Though negotiating with the communist state in Polish-German relations may have been the only path to establish cross-border contacts, the West German political and cultural elites compromised their project of *longue durée* peace preservation by investing almost exclusively in a partner which did not truly represent its own population and, in addition, turned out to be shortlived. Gomułka was replaced only a few days after signing the peace agreement, and nineteen years later, the Polish People's Republic toppled.

In Polish-German relations, it makes sense to consider reconciliation as a signaling model, a process of restoring trust and peaceful relations based on costly gestures in political negotiation as Long and Brecke did. However, I will draw heavily on the philosophy of the forgiveness model here since the religious and media actors themselves ambitiously aimed for truth telling, renegotiation of national identities and partial justice in order to establish a cross-border community between Germans and Poles. The success of reconciliation must to some extent be measured against their hopes and expectations. To apply the forgiveness model whole-sale would be a certain way to declare the Polish-German case a failed reconciliation, and this is neither helpful nor strictly true. Instead, the forgiveness model allows this study first to focus on the cultural, psychological and emotional aspects of reconciliation and secondly to take into consideration the activists' focus on challenging national memories and crafting new Polish-German memories. Secondly, without losing sight of the political aspects of the early relations, the model widens the perspective on contacts and relations beyond political results. Thirdly, the activists succeeded through networking in creating communities of non-state actors which, while limited in societal scope, stretched across the borders and were highly important to the creation and

maintenance of peaceful relations. Assuming that the national myths and memories in both states constituted continuities preceding and lasting beyond the communist state and divided Germany, the focus on a culturally founded reconciliation model also allows one to consider the lingering tensions between Poles and Germans today.

As a consequence the importance of national identities, myths and narratives to the reconciliation process, research on European memory, nationalism and cultural international relations also becomes a prominent aspect of this project. The study of memory in international relations reached its highpoint in the mid-1990s but has had a recent revival, particularly in the already mentioned field of the construction and interpretations of the Holocaust, and in studies on postmemory.<sup>21</sup> The research on media, intellectuals and other interpretive elites, is closely connected to the construction, use and development of individual and collective memory.<sup>22</sup> The role of memory in European relations has become the focus of more extensive work since the year 2000.

Also the study of nationalism, national identity and national narratives continues to play a central role in recent studies on Central European history.<sup>23</sup> The relevance of

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<sup>21</sup> On postmemory, the indirect memory through media and retelling of memories, see Christopher Bigsby, *Remembering and Imagining the Holocaust. The Chain of Memory* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006); as well as Marianne Hirsch, *Family Frames: Photography, Narrative and Postmemory* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1997). Also the already mentioned conference at Bloomington, Indiana on Polish-German postmemory. On revival of memory theory, see *The Politics of Memory in Postwar Europe*, eds. Richard Ned Lebow, Wulf Kansteiner and Claudio Fogu (Durham: Duke University Press, 2006); *Memory and Power in Postwar Europe*, ed. Jan-Werner Müller (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002); *Conflicted Memories. Europeanizing Contemporary Histories*, eds. Konrad Jarausch and Thomas Lindenberger (New York: Berghahn Books, 2007).

<sup>22</sup> For the connection between national collective memory and media, see Wulf Kansteiner, *In Pursuit of German Memory. History, Television and Politics After Auschwitz* (Athens, OH: Ohio University Press, 2006). For interpretive elites, politics and media, see for example Jan-Werner Müller, *Another Country. German Intellectuals, Unification and National Identity* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2000).

<sup>23</sup> See for example work by Rogers Brubaker, *Nationalism Reframed. Nationhood and the National Question in the New Europe* (Cambridge, New York: Cambridge University Press, 1996), and more recently *Accidental Diasporas and external "Homelands" in Central and Eastern Europe: past and present* (Vienna:

nationalism in understanding European history became even more prominent after the fall of communism and the Balkan wars in the early 1990s. In addition, scholars have begun to investigate national boundaries, identities and movements in new and interesting ways. The field of borderlands studies, central to recent Polish-German research, considers local constructions and deconstructions of national identities and national units.<sup>24</sup> Finally emerging research points to the very fragile, fluid and impermanent quality of modern nation-states and post-war national identities in both Germany and Poland.<sup>25</sup> Polish-German post-war relations are well-suited to illustrate the intertwined nature of the renegotiations of national memories in the wake of the Second World War, as well as the fragile ground on which the European nation-states, their borders and relationships were reconstructed.<sup>26</sup>

Unlike most memory studies that tend to be situated in one national context, this study indicates the interconnectivity of Polish and German national memories as well as their

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Institute for Advanced Studies, 2000); Brian Porter, *When Nationalism Began to Hate. Imagining Modern Politics in Nineteenth Century Poland* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2000).

<sup>24</sup> Philipp Ther, "Democracy and Multinationality in East Central Europe: The External Factor," *Political democracy and ethnic diversity in modern European history*, eds. André W. M. Gerrits and Dirk Jan Wolfram (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2005); *Regionale Bewegungen und Regionalismen in europäischen Zwischenräumen seit der Mitte des 19. Jahrhunderts*, eds. Philipp Ther and Holm Sundhaussen (Marburg: Herder Institut, 2003); *Regionalismus und Regionalisierungen in Diktaturen und Demokratien des 20. Jahrhunderts*, ed. Petra Behrens (Leipzig: Leipziger Universitätsverlag, 2003).

<sup>25</sup> Konrad Jarausch and Michael Geyer, *Shattered Past. Reconstructing German Histories* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 2003); Fritz Stern, *Five Germanys I have Known* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2006). Stern's autobiography does not address the question of national identity directly but both through its title and treatment of personal history in relationship to a country, emphasizes the changes which the German nation-state(s) has undergone since the beginning of the century. Timothy Snyder, *The Reconstruction of the Nations. Poland, Ukraine, Lithuania and Belarus 1569-1999* (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 2003) argues the very recent establishment and negotiations of nation-states and their boundaries in Eastern Europe, including Poland.

<sup>26</sup> Bruni Adler, *Geteilte Erinnerung. Polen, Deutsche und der Krieg* (Tübingen: Klöpfer und Meyer, 2006); see also the articles in the volume *Memory and Power in Post-War Europe. Studies in the Presence of the Past*, ed. Jan-Werner Müller (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), in particular Tony Judt, "The Past is Another Country: Myth and Memory in Post-War Europe," 157-184; Birgit Glorius, *Transnationale Perspektiven. Eine Studie zur Migration zwischen Polen und Deutschland* (Bielefeld: Transcript, 2007).

implications for reconciliation, non-state and state relations. Moreover, by including biography and the personal histories of the media personalities, the study takes into consideration the role of cultural mediators, bilingual and bicultural intellectuals, with loosened or alternative national identities in renegotiating acceptable national memories. These mediators and their understanding of cross-border relations can also be situated within transnational or non-state networking theory which is part of international relations studies.<sup>27</sup>

In the 2000s, Polish-German relations research has continued to develop in two larger directions. On the one hand, Polish-German scholars attempt to “build” the relations through studies emphasizing the positive aspects and memories of Polish-German relations in the post-war era.<sup>28</sup> On the other hand, researchers are trying to come to terms with recent less positive developments, such as the renewed outbreak of controversies centering on the expellee restitution question, the establishment of an expellee center and emergence of anti-German and anti-European tendencies in Polish politics and public discourse.<sup>29</sup> Within the

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<sup>27</sup> For the importance of non-state actors in international relations, see *Bringing transnational relations back in. Non-state actors, domestic structures and international institutions*, ed. Thomas Risse-Kappen (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995); *Non-state Actors in International Relations. The Case of Germany*, ed. Anne Marie Le Gloanec (Manchester, New York: Manchester University Press, 2007); Margaret E. Keck and Kathryn Sikkink, *Activists Beyond Borders: Advocacy Networks in International Politics*, (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 1998, Akira Iriye, *Global Community: The Role of International Organizations in the Making of the Contemporary World* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2002).

<sup>28</sup> See for example *Mein Polen: deutsche Polenfreunde in Porträts*, eds. Krzysztof Ruchniewicz und Marek Zybura (Dresden : Thelem, 2005); Arkadiusz Stempin, *Das Maximilian-Kolbe-Werk : Wegbereiter der deutsch-polnischen Aussöhnung 1960-1989* (Paderborn: Schöningh, 2006); *Wir vergeben und bitten um Vergebung’: Der Briefwechsel der polnischen und deutschen Bischöfe von 1965 und seine Wirkung* (Osnabrück: Fibre, 2006); Andrzej Ranke, *Stosunki polsko-niemieckie w polskiej publicystyce katolickiej w latach 1945-1989* (Toruń: Europejskie Centrum Edykacyjne, 2004).

<sup>29</sup> This tendency started in 2000 and 2001 with the volumes such as *Die deutsch-polnischen Beziehungen 1949-2000: eine Werte- und Interessengemeinschaft?* eds. Wolf-Dieter Eberwein and Basil Kerski (Opladen: Leske+Budrich, 2001). However, also other volumes, such as *Nachbarn auf Distanz. Polen und Deutsche 1998-2004*, eds. Anna Wolff-Powęska and Dieter Bingen (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 2005) are attempting to come to terms with the recent tensions in the relations. Some writings, such as Władysław Bartoszewski, *Und reiss uns der Hass aus der Seele...*, are not so much troubled by the tensions as writing from a new, more distant and less politically integrated, national perspective. New academic research has also been done on the position on the German expellees in the post-war era. Examples of this is Pertti Ahonen, *After the*

German historiographical context, a more optimistic research trend relevant to this phase of Polish-German relations considers post-war democratization of West German civil society during the 1960s within a European context.<sup>30</sup> While wishing to preserve the positive memories of postwar relations improvements, this study raises questions about the boundaries and challenges of reconciliation, and about the effects which German democratization, civil society changes and *Vergangenheitsbewältigung* really had on Polish-German relations and on the German media's perspective on the East European "other" between 1956 and 1972. It is a perspective on the European East-West integration, its accomplishments and failures, which follows neither the German nor the Polish trajectory and established models for explaining the relations from a historical-political perspective.

### **Methodological Approach**

In this study, I am using the 1990s memories and narratives to trace a central network of key activists responsible for the construction of reconciliation. By studying them in terms of their primary sources and within their contemporary context, I investigate the importance of media, publicity and journalists. Even in the church and religious memoranda, media and religious activism overlapped. Many prominent religious actors were also journalists and consciously used media strategies and publicity to accomplish their reconciliatory goals.

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*Expulsion. West Germany and Eastern Europe 1945-1990* (Oxford, New York: Oxford University Press, 2003); Christian Lotz, *Die Deutung des Verlustes. Erinnerungspolitische Kontroverse im geteilten Deutschland um Flucht, Vertreibung und die Ostgebiete* (Cologne, Weimar, Vienna: Böhlau Verlag, 2007).

<sup>30</sup> *Dynamische Zeiten. Die 60er Jahren in den beiden deutschen Gesellschaften*, eds. Axel Schildt, Detlef Siegfried and Karl Christian Lammers (Hamburg: Christians, 2000); *Wandlungsprozesse in Westdeutschland. Belastung, Integration, Liberalisierung 1945-1980* (Göttingen: Wallstein Verlag, 2002); Also important for a larger postwar perspective is Konrad Jarausch, *After Hitler: Recivilizing Germans, 1945-1995* (Oxford, New York: Oxford University Press, 2006); Tony Judt, *Postwar. A History of Europe Since 1945* (New York: Penguin Press, 2005); and particularly for the changes in the media Christina von Hodenberg, *Konsens und Krise. Eine Geschichte der westdeutschen Medienöffentlichkeit, 1945-1973* (Göttingen: Wallstein, 2006), and *Demokratie und Medialisierung im 20. Jahrhundert*, eds. Norbert Frei and Frank Bösch (Göttingen: Wallstein, 2006).

Media and journalists, their international outlook but also their structural limitations both shaped and limited efforts toward Polish-German relations.

I consider the reconciliation project on three levels. The first concerns the intentions and expectations of the activists. The second deals with the activists' strategies in creating dialogues, challenging divisive national memories and gaining a greater presence in public space. The third focuses on how the activists, starting in the 1960s and continuing into the 1990s, crafted a unifying memory of reconciliation. I apply an external body of knowledge about reconciliation processes to give Polish-German reconciliation a larger international context, and to move it away from too close a focus on political relations up until 1990. The reconciliation studies context also allows me to consider not only the content of the dialogue, but the actions and interactions of the activists as important to the emerging relations.

To this purpose, I have used both private and public writings by the key activists, including their memoirs, private, public and professional correspondences and interviews to access their personal opinions on Polish-German relations in the 1950s and 1960s, at the time and in hindsight. For the public, political and publicity aspects, I have looked at the media, newspapers articles, manuscripts from radio broadcasts and also a few manuscripts from television documentaries. Accessing television material was challenging since many TV archives are private, rather than public, the licensing rights of the documentaries may belong to several parties and the use of such materials often comes with hefty fees. Given the scope and intent of this dissertation, I did not have the resources and ability to use films. I did, however, include a number of audio-visual sources, namely broadcasts featuring Polish and German journalists from the late 1960s and early 1970s from the Norddeutscher Rundfunk. The archives in which I traced the contacts and interactions between key activists included



Archiwum Jerzego Turowicza in Krakow, the Friedrich Eberth Stiftung in Bonn and the Historisches Archiv des Westdeutscher Rundfunks in Cologne. In addition, I did limited research also in the Evangelisches Zentralarchiv in Berlin, the Karl Dedecius Archiv in Frankfurt-Oder, the Bundesarchiv in Koblenz and the Staatsarchiv in Hamburg. My interviews were conducted in person in Bonn, Krakow, Warsaw, Vienna, Berlin, and also by phone.

Against the structural, institutional and political background of media in Poland and the Federal Republic, which opportunities to establish dialogue emerged with the political opening in 1956? To answer this question, the first section of the dissertation explores the intentions, opportunities and ambitions of the early media and religious activists, both on a personal, and on a public, rhetorical level. The following chapters specify how their efforts and ambitions translated into media strategies and also consider the question of their agendas' broader reception in press, radio and television. The media activists' were enabled by their privileged positions in the 1960s media and their extensive networks consisting of intellectuals and journalists domestically and in the other country. They were, however, also limited by the demands of their audiences, their own priorities, the structures of media institutions and political considerations. The dissonance between their ambitions and actual possibilities to accomplish a change emerges particularly clearly in chapters 5 and 6, as does the media publicity work surrounding the relations. Chapter 7 considers the role of media in promoting and publicizing the religious memoranda, and how the religious initiatives were used for both political and strategic purposes in the journalists' efforts. Finally, chapter 8 considers the media's stance on the bilateral agreements and the political developments in the years before, during and immediately after the Polish-German agreement.

Because this study envisions Polish-German relations in part outside the main conceits and political and historiographical agendas of Polish, German and modern Central and Eastern European history, it is also concerned with the silences and absences which have emerged, and are currently emerging, in Polish-German relations. These included the East Germans, who were prevented from participating in most state-, civil society- or media based interactions.<sup>31</sup> In the early time period, the late 1950s and late 1960s, the West German activists assumed that they represented both parts of Germany and made not distinctions in their dialogue with the Poles. Toward the later part of the 1960s, by contrast, the Polish activists were the most hesitant to involve East Germans in the reconciliation dialogue. In this way, though they largely lacked agency and a voice, the GDR was a constant silent presence in Polish-German relations, the elephant in the room, which everyone is aware of but no one wants to acknowledge openly. Still, in understanding Polish-German relations one must recognize that the GDR was always the main target for the West German Ostpolitik and for the West German media interest in Eastern Europe.

The great exception to this omission of the GDR was Aktion Sühnezeichen, which was closely associated with Catholic intellectuals on the Polish side. Aktion Sühnezeichen has not been included because of the studies which already exist on their role in Polish-German relations.<sup>32</sup> Other silences in the Polish-German dialogue were the Jewish victims of the Second World War, whose absence from the dialogue was particularly noticeable in 1968 and Polish exile circles, such as the journalists in the Polish-based *Kultura*. This analysis

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<sup>31</sup> *Grenzen der Freundschaft. Zur Kooperation der Sicherheitsorgane der DDR und der Volksrepublik Polen zwischen 1956 und 1989*, eds. Włodzimierz Borodziej, Jerzy Kochanowski and Bernd Schäfer (Dresden: Hanna Arendt Institut für Totalitarismusforschung e. V. an der Technischen Universität Dresden, 2000).

<sup>32</sup> See for example Konrad Weiss, *Lothar Kreyssig. Prophet der Versöhnung* (Gerlingen: Bleicher Verlag, 1998).

also explores the gradual marginalization of the German expellee voices from the Polish-German relations dialogue during the 1960s.<sup>33</sup>

Ludwig Zimmerer and Hansjakob Stehle, the two men who met on the train to Berlin in 1956, were both representatives of, and central connecting figures in the early Polish-German relations through liberal media- and church- networks stretching between Poland and West Germany. They will appear repeatedly throughout my dissertation. As a case study of media coverage on the relations and reconciliation narrative through their actions and dialogues, this research project clarifies the foreign relations agendas of liberal intellectual elites in West Germany after 1956. Less widespread in Poland during the 1960s, these agendas also had a revival through the Catholic intellectual elite belonging to the early opposition in Poland who reached central positions in the first democratic Polish government in 1989. Both German and Polish visions of Polish-German reconciliation came of age between 1956 and 1970 and continue to influence the relations in their positive as well as limiting aspects, to this day.

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<sup>33</sup> See Pertti Ahonen, *After the Expulsion*; Christian Lotz, *Die deutung des Verlustes*.

## **PART 1**

### **THE PREMISES OF RECONCILIATION**

#### **CHAPTER 1**

##### **AFTER THE DUST SETTLED: STATE, CHURCHES AND MEDIA IN POLISH-GERMAN RELATIONS BEFORE 1956**

When the war ended and the dust began to settle over the battlefields of Central Europe, neither Poland nor Germany belonged to the winners. A state once more, Poland was firmly under the control of the Soviet Union. It had gained a large contested land area and a new border on the rivers Oder (Odra) and Neisse (Nysa), but had lost other territories in the east. Six million citizens, three million of them Jewish, had died during the war and the German occupation. Germany was also in ruins, divided into four occupation zones. It had lost a third of its territory from 1937. In addition, its standing as a civilized European nation was in shreds, tainted by black and white images of emaciated bodies in mass graves from places such as Auschwitz, Majdanek and Treblinka. The victors of the war were charged with the enormous task of preserving the stability of Central Europe, the rebuilding of cities, infrastructures and industry and the unmixing of multiethnic populations, which they believed could no longer coexist peacefully in the same areas. A crucial aspect of the rebuilding of Europe was the restoration of peaceful relations between neighboring states and peoples.

Why were West German journalists and Polish Catholic intellectuals in particular among the first to address the existing problems between the two countries at a time when the

states were unwilling or unable to do so? Poles and Germans begun to reconstruct the media even before the war ended. The reconstruction of the media and arguments about its role in modern states would continue into the 1960s and leave important legacies on the debates about Polish-German relations. In order to understand the premises of Polish-German reconciliation, one must understand something about the state and media in both countries in the years leading up to 1956. The way in which antagonistic images of the other country were generated through the media and used in public space became important in shaping the reconciliation activism.

#### POLISH-GERMAN RELATIONS IN THE POLISH STATE, CHURCH AND MEDIA

At the end of the war, after the brutal occupation, a majority of Polish society deeply resented not only the Nazis, but the Germans as a people. Countless others had been deported for slave labor and large parts of the Polish intelligentsia had been wiped out. The Nazi occupation had thoroughly confirmed older Polish stereotypes about German aggression and militarism. The Polish people widely agreed on the topic of German collective guilt with regard to the atrocities that had taken place in Poland. Joanna Olczak-Ronikier stated in an interview that still in the 1950s antagonisms from the war were alive to such an extent that someone speaking German on the streets in Poland risked assaults, insults or attacks.<sup>1</sup> Other reports confirmed these sentiments.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Joanna Olczak-Ronikier, Interview by Annika Frieberg, Krakow, 29 October 2004.

<sup>2</sup> Tomala, *Deutschland – von Polen gesehen: Zu den deutsch-polnischen Beziehungen 1945-1990* (Marburg: Schüren, 2000), 25-26.

The Polish anger was also directed at the remaining ethnic German populations in Poland, first in the so-called wild expulsions in 1944 and 1945.<sup>3</sup> Given the chaos of the post-war period and conditions in the western territories, it is difficult to know exactly how many Germans were expelled, or how many died as a consequence of the expulsions. The estimates for the number of Germans who died as a result of the expulsions have been set at a half million, and the total number of expellees from the new Polish territories at between three and four millions.<sup>4</sup> Władysław Gomułka, the minister for the returned territories and party leader for the returned Polish communist party, notoriously declared that “we must expel all the Germans because countries are built on national lines and not on multinational ones.”<sup>5</sup> This sentiment was shared by the Allied leaders, including Roosevelt, Churchill and Stalin. However, the border moves and expulsions created the unsettled territorial and cultural conflict at the heart of Polish-German relations that would remain a problematic legacy well after the collapse of communism.

Meanwhile, 2.1 million Poles from the east were deported from the eastern borderlands, which had now become Russian, into Poland and particularly the western territories. 480,000 Ukrainians had left southeastern Poland, but only after the Polish army had launched a military operation to forcibly remove them in 1947.<sup>6</sup> During the communist era, the Soviet removal of Polish populations from the eastern borderlands was a taboo topic

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<sup>3</sup> Thomas Urban, *Der Verlust. Die Vertreibung der Deutschen und Polen im 20. Jahrhundert* (Munich: Verlag C.H. Beck, 2004), 117. See also Norman N. Naimark, *Fires of Hatred. Ethnic Cleansing in the Twentieth Century Europe* (Cambridge, MA; London: Harvard University Press, 2001), 130-131.

<sup>4</sup> Naimark, *Fires of Hatred*, 126. Urban, *Der Verlust*, 125.

<sup>5</sup> Naimark, *Fires of Hatred*, 124.

<sup>6</sup> Timothy Snyder, *The Reconstruction of Nations*, 179-201; Naimark, *Fires of Hatred*, 132.

in the media. Polish-Ukrainian relations would also require their own reconciliation process, but this took place long after Polish-German efforts at reconciliation were initiated.

In the initial aftermath of the war, Poland had two governments: the one in exile in London and, from June 1944, the Provisional Government of National Unity which the Soviet Union instituted in Poland. In 1947, fixed elections were held in Poland under Soviet auspices, and the Polish People's Party (PPR) assumed power in Poland. At this point, Stanisław Gomułka had assumed a leading role as the leader of a dominant group of Polish "national" communists and as a minister. However, since Stalin felt uncomfortable with Gomułka's ideological and national position, in the summer of 1948 Gomułka was demoted and placed under house arrest.<sup>7</sup> The year 1948 was the beginning of hard line Stalinist communism in Poland. During the Stalinist era, no deviation from the party line was tolerated, and the public sphere was essentially liquidated by the state.

Poland was unique in the eastern bloc because of its strong and independent Catholic Church and the existence of a semi-independent Catholic press. In 1946 and 1947, the Polish Cardinal August Hlond and Archbishop Stefan Sapieha in Kraków negotiated a deal of co-existence with the communist leadership. Following the population moves, the disappearance of Poland's Jewish population and the expulsion of the Germans, over ninety per cent of the Polish population was Catholic by 1946. The church had functioned as the center of resistance to the Nazi occupation and this legacy as protector of the nation strengthened its position even further. Now the party leadership needed its help in rebuilding the country and integrating the displaced populations into new home areas. They also felt the necessity to ensure that the church did not destabilize the new state even further by opposing

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<sup>7</sup> Norman Davies, *God's Playground*, 575.

the communist rule. The deal allowed the church's continued existence, its right to have an independent press, and its right to religious education in the schools.<sup>8</sup> In return, the church agreed not to oppose the communist state and Poland's *raison d'état*. The Catholic journals *Tygodnik Powszechny* (the Universal Weekly), *Więź* (Thus) and *Znak* (The Sign) were founded as a result of this compromise.

Although the state had guaranteed certain rights to the church, by 1948 it was attempting to reverse them again. Stalinism in Poland was characterized by a state-church struggle in which the state tried to replace the Catholic Church with a Polish national church, disconnected from the Vatican and founded on state-loyal groups such as "Pax," under Bolesław Piasecki. The state-church struggle culminated in 1953, the year of Stalin's death, when Cardinal Wyszyński was placed under house arrest and the Catholic press was confiscated and given over to Pax. Still, even during this low point the Church retained its strong position in society. It had the means to communicate with, and organize, a large number of the Polish population parallel to communist structures. The Polish Catholic Church was thus basically the only form of de facto civil society existing in Poland, a civil society often in conflict with its state structure. This gave its members, particularly the new Cardinal Stefan Wyszyński, appointed in 1953, and the Catholic press a great deal of attention, both domestically and internationally.

All Polish media was under the control of the Department of Propaganda and Agitation of the Polish Communist Party's Central Committee (Wydział Propagandy i

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<sup>8</sup> Antoni Dudek and Ryszard Gryz, *Komuniści i Kościół w Polsce (1945-1989)* (Krakow: Wydawnictwo Znak, 2003), 24-27.



Agitacji Komitetu Centralnego PZPR).<sup>9</sup> The party mainly controlled the communist press through personnel management in which correspondents, editors and journalists were selected based on their political profile and loyalty to the communist party. In addition, the press was also subjected to censorship and the freedom of expression was further limited through the effects of self-censorship, in which the journalists themselves avoided topics and statements which they knew would not pass the official censors.<sup>10</sup> During the Stalinist years between the late 1940s and 1954, the control was particularly strict. Journalists were closely monitored and prevented from searching out topics to write on or uttering anything critical and in the newspapers. At the same time, they were expected to be politically active in the communist party organizations. This left them with little ability to carry out their professional obligations with any sense of integrity or satisfaction.<sup>11</sup>

After the death of Stalin in 1953, despite the intensifying state-church conflict, the communist media climate very slowly began to relax. The real change of the Polish climate came with the ascent of Gomułka in 1956, which brought a new era in which the rules for what could be written or not became more flexible. The decisions often rested with individual censors and if the journalists had an ally in the party leadership, they could get the censor's decision overruled.<sup>12</sup> This form of censorship was particularly advantageous to the

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<sup>9</sup> Waław Miziniak, "Polityka Informacyjna," *Polacy wobec Niemców. Z dziejów politycznej Polski 1945-1989*, Anna Wolff-Powęska, ed. (Poznań: Instytut Zachodni, 1993), 142-160. Stefan Garsztecki, *Das Deutschlandbild in der offiziellen, der katholischen un der oppositionellen Publizistik Polens 1970-1989*, 15-18.

<sup>10</sup> Miziniak, "Polityka Informacyjna," 145.

<sup>11</sup> Jane Leftwich Curry, "Introduction," *The Black Book of Polish Censorship*, Trans. Jane Leftwich Curry (New York: Random House, 1984), 15.

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*, 17.

Polish Catholic intellectuals who in the late 1950s and early 1960s had good connections in the party leadership.

In the first post-war years, the communist press writings on German topics focused on the tragedy of the German fascist invasion and the Polish people's antagonism towards Germany. The Polish press also used nationalist rhetorical language to describe "the return" of Poland to the eternally Polish western territories and the successful integration of these territories into the post-war state. In the 1950s, reacting to the quick West German recovery and economic progress, the conjuring of the German threat against Poland intensified. The communist media also emphasized and protested the plans for a remilitarization of the Federal Republic and the risks involved in a possible future reunification of Germany.<sup>13</sup>

A particularly complicated and sensitive topic to the communist media was the treatment of the communist versus capitalist Germans and German states. The Department of Propaganda and Agitation issued particular guidelines for the media discussions of the new German Democratic Republic. The writings on GDR should focus on the traditions of mutual revolutionary battle shared by Poles and Germans, the roles of antifascist or Marxist Germans in the concentration camps and descriptions of present day cultural and economic cooperation between the Polish People's Republic and GDR.<sup>14</sup> The use of anti-German stereotypes were thus contrasted, and complicated, by the need to present a positive image of the East Germans. Other tacit guidelines involved never referring to Germany or the Germans as one state or one people and using "Berlin" only with reference to the German Democratic Republic. "East Berlin" was not appropriate. The border should be referred to as

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<sup>13</sup> Miziniak, "Polityka Informacyjna," 146.

<sup>14</sup> Ibid., 147.

“the border on the Oder and the Neisse” or “the border between Poland and the GDR” but never “the Polish-German border.” East Germany should only be described in positive terms whereas the West German state, at least before 1956, should be described negatively with reference to its fascist past.<sup>15</sup>

In the post-war Polish communist propaganda, older anti-German Polish national images and narratives were also utilized to distance the population from West Germany. In the national mythology of ancient enmity between Poles and Germans, a few concepts assumed greater importance. The concept of *Drang nach Osten* (Drive to the East) was developed by 19<sup>th</sup> century German nationalists rationalizing the German need to acquire land in the east, and justifying the role of Prussia in the Polish partitions (1772, 1793 and 1795) when Polish lands were divided up between Prussia, Russia and the Habsburg Empire. *Drang nach Osten* was later also used in Nazi propaganda at the time of the 1939 German occupation of Poland. Poles thus had “historical” reasons to fear German expansionism in the east, and Polish communist newspapers routinely conjured the specter of German aggression against Poland to keep that fear alive. This strategy also suited the Soviet Union which, in this way, became the sole protector of the Polish people against the German threat.

Importantly, the communists were manipulating but by no means inventing the nationalist perspectives on Poland and Germany. After the partitions in 1772, 1793 and 1795 and the resistance against them in the 1830s, Polish intellectuals developed a national self-definition of Poland as the “Christ of Nations,” a morally superior nation which was ordained by God to suffer for the salvation of all other nations.<sup>16</sup> Extending the metaphor of

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<sup>15</sup> Curry, *The Black Book of Polish Censorship*, 125-128.

<sup>16</sup> See Andrzej Walicki, “The Three Traditions in Polish Patriotism,” *Polish Paradoxes*, eds. Stanisław Gomułka and Antony Polonsky (London and New York: Routledge, 1990), 35; Brian Porter, *When Nationalism*

Messianism, Romantic Polish nationalists also referred to the crucifixion of Poland. In the late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> century, Polish ethnonationalists drawing on Spencerian ideals of a struggle for survival had set up Germans together with Russians and Jews as enemies of the Polish nation.<sup>17</sup> These arguments were also taken up by Roman Dmowski and the National Party, the *Endecja*, at the turn of the century.<sup>18</sup> Thus, both the communist press and, as will become clear, the Polish Catholic Church, drew on traditional nationalist narratives of Poland as morally superior to all other nations, a fundamental national concept of victimology and finally the notions of Germans as eternal national enemies and oppressors. Less well known to West German observers, these national myths were partially overshadowed by the postwar concentration on the more immediate Second World War and communist frameworks. However, they were central to all parties in the Polish media scene to understanding and conceiving of Polish-German relations.

The Polish press attempted to create a diverse press appealing to different readers but all media was centrally controlled. The largest and most important national newspapers were *Życie Warszawy* (Life in Warsaw), the largest Warsaw daily, and *Trybuna Ludu* (the People's Tribune), the party newspaper. In the late 1950s, the weekly *Polityka*, under the editor, Mieczysław Rakowski, who also became Poland's last communist minister president, took a more German-friendly stance in his journal but especially in his private interactions with Germans. *Polityka* replaced the more liberal *Po Prostu* (Quite Simply), a political weekly founded in the wake of the Polish October in 1956 and quickly abolished again as too

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*Began to Hate*, 29. Poland was partitioned by Prussia, the Habsburg and the Russian Empire. The uprisings were accompanied by a number of uprisings which became an integral part of the national history of Poland.

<sup>17</sup> Brian Porter, *When Nationalism Began to Hate*, 167.

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*, 215.

outspoken. In addition, Poland had an official radio and TV broadcasting agency, *Polskie radio i telewizja*. The communist state had a complete monopoly on all forms of audio-visual media and any cooperation in this field had to take place with communist partners.

As for the Catholic press, the most important Catholic weekly in post-war Poland, *Tygodnik Powszechny*, was founded in 1946 in Krakow under the Archbishop Adam Sapieha and the editorship of Jerzy Turowicz. Overall, around ten Catholic newspapers existed in the first post-war years but their number decreased drastically during the Stalinist era. Also, parts of the Catholic press were party loyal, particularly the press (prominently *Słowo Powszechne* – the Universal Word) belonging to the movement PAX under its leader Bolesław Piasecki and the weekly *Dziś i jutro* (Today and Tomorrow) edited by Jan Frankowski. These publications and their publishers were part of the “national Catholic movement,” encouraged by the party, to attempt to undermine the power of the Catholic Church in Polish society.

Apart from undercutting the church-loyal Catholic press through party-loyal alternatives, the state controlled the Catholic press through censorship and paper restrictions, in which its displeasure with contents led to reductions of the paper volume assigned for the publication in question (paper resources were limited and state-controlled in communist Poland). Between 1953 and 1956, during the high-point of the state’s persecution of the church, the state also confiscated the most important Catholic publications, *Znak* and *Tygodnik Powszechny*, and placed them in the hands of Pax. Nevertheless, between 1946 and 1953, and after 1956, the Catholic press did manage to retain some autonomy, select its own staff and develop an alternative political line on Polish-German relations.<sup>19</sup> The

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<sup>19</sup> Robert Jarocki, *Czterdzieści pięć lat w opozycji*.

Catholic publishers were able to begin networking with West German colleagues and journalists because of their relative independence from the state in 1956.

Outside of Poland, the exile press, particularly *Kultura* in Paris under the editorship of Jerzy Giedroyc played an important role in public opinion. Unlike the Polish emigration in London and the official press, *Kultura* wished for improved relations with the Federal Republic of Germany. It opposed Polish nationalist propaganda and the Polish Catholic hierarchy's image of the western borderlands as "eternally Polish," but it supported Polish rights to the territories based on necessity for postwar survival and as compensation for the Second World War invasion.<sup>20</sup> On a larger geopolitical scale, its editor Jerzy Giedroyc envisioned a future Central European federation of democratic states including both Eastern and Western Europe. Giedroyc included Ukraine, Belarus and even Russia in this vision. He "thought further east" than the Polish as well as West German intellectuals and journalists.<sup>21</sup>

In discussing communism, *Kultura* took a moderate position between the Polish domestic opposition and the more fervently anti-communist London émigrés. On the one hand, Giedroyc believed in a dialogue with the communist leadership as a societal and global force and as a new psychological element of Polish culture. On the other hand, operating from Paris, *Kultura* had no need for a closer cooperation with communists, did not cultivate the idea of changing the system from within and retained a belief in the possibility of a Europe consisting of free democracies. As an exile publication, ultimately, *Kultura* in the 1950s and 1960s had different concerns, operating in a free society at a distance from postwar Poland. In this, it differed from the Polish Catholic press which was forced to

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<sup>20</sup> A.S. Kowalczyk, *Giedroyc i „Kultura”* (Wrocław: Wydawnictwo Dolnośląskie, 2000), 162-164.

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid.*, 135.

function within communist society. However, some of the Catholic intellectuals in Poland, particularly Stefan Kisielewski, published articles in *Kultura* and cooperated closely with Giedroyc.<sup>22</sup>

#### POLISH-GERMAN RELATIONS IN STATE, MEDIA AND CHURCHES IN THE FEDERAL REPUBLIC

From its very beginning in 1950, the Federal Republic refused to recognize the Oder-Neisse Line, thus greatly increasing the Polish suspicions of the new West German state. Konrad Adenauer's primary political aim in the early 1950s was to reinstate the Federal Republic as equal to other West European states and form close associations both with Western Europe and the United States. He wanted West German membership in NATO, and also promoted the idea of German rearmament. As for the eastern policy, he unofficially recognized early on that the territories beyond Oder and Neisse were indefinitely lost and reunification a very distant vision. He certainly took the Soviet Union seriously, but given the Cold War alliance system, as the head of the West German state he never developed an active or public diplomatic policy toward Eastern Europe. On several occasions, he stated unofficially to associates that he considered reconciliation with Poland of utmost importance, together with reconciliation with France and reparations for the Jewish people.<sup>23</sup> With regard to Poland, this moral standpoint did not translate into a practical or active policy program however. Following the state's lead, mainstream politicians throughout the 1950s displayed little interest in Polish topics publicly.

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<sup>22</sup> Mariusz Urbanek, *Kisiel (A to Polska właśnie)* (Wrocław: Wydawnictwo Dółnośląskie, 1997), 86.

<sup>23</sup> Dieter Bingen, *Die Polenpolitik der Bonner Republik*, 23-24.

Adenauer was greatly concerned with integrating the expellee groups, retaining their loyalty in election times and soothing general public opinion in the Federal Republic. Partially in order to satisfy the expellees and public opinion, he continually stated that the Federal Republic would not recognize the Oder-Neisse border.<sup>24</sup> He also frequently demanded the reunification of Germany but added that East Germany must first be removed from Soviet control and allowed free elections. This maximum demand secured his close association with the United States, and prevented all considerations of an eventual reunification under Soviet aegis. Rearmament, the border issue and the German Democratic Republic were the recurring topics in rhetorical statements between Adenauer and communist Poland in the 1950s, which were generally not exchanged directly but indirectly in speeches and notes.<sup>25</sup>

The expellee press and representatives paid closer attention to Poland because of their interest in developments in their former home areas. By 1950, about eight million expellees from Poland, Czechoslovakia and other East European countries were living in the Federal Republic.<sup>26</sup> Four million were living in the GDR and about 500,000 in Austria and other countries. They were uprooted, resentful, plagued by the loss of their homes, memories of expulsions and of sometimes brutal treatment in the hands of revengeful Poles, Czechs or the Red Army. Now the new governments faced the task of integrating them into the post-war German states. Both the Protestant and Catholic Churches played important roles in aiding and supporting the expellee populations. The expellees also organized themselves into local

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<sup>24</sup> For a discussion of Adenauer's foreign policy with respect to Poland, see Pertti Ahonen, *After the Expulsions*, 81-115, Robert Żurek, *Zwischen Nationalismus und Versöhnung*, 50.

<sup>25</sup> For some of these early rhetorical exchanges, see Jacobsen and Tomala, *Bonn-Warschau*.

<sup>26</sup> Ahonen, *After the Expulsion*, 20-26.



and national organizations. At first, they were prevented from organizing politically but between 1950 and 1957, the expellee party All-German Alliance/Alliance for the Homeland Expelled and Disenfranchised (GB/BHE) and the Homeland Societies became a presence in West German politics.

The various expellee Homeland Societies (*Landsmannschaften*) played a role in shaping Polish-German relations, particularly as they generally published their own newspapers, collectively referred to as the expellee press. About twenty Homeland Societies existed in the West German realm, the most significant of which were the Homeland Society of Silesia, of Upper Silesia and the Sudeten-German Homeland Society.<sup>27</sup> The Homeland Societies also maintained lobby groups and networked with the political parties. Whereas the expellee press had limited circulation, it reached larger numbers through representing the public voices of all West German expellees in mainstream media. At the same time, the expellee organizations' constant disagreements with each other and the hesitation of the political establishment to allow the expellee representatives into key positions, limited their actual influence in politics and the public sphere.

The most important concept guiding expellee politics with regard to Poland was the concept of "the Right to a Homeland" which, based on human rights ideas, claimed that the removal of any population from its home area was against international law. A second key concept was "the Right to Self-Determination," which excluded the possibility of the expellees' return to their home areas under the rule of an East European government.<sup>28</sup> Whereas expellee leaders had renounced any violence or force in connection with a return to

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<sup>27</sup> Ibid., 29-31.

<sup>28</sup> Ahonen, *After the Expulsion*, 42.

their home areas in the 1950 “Charter of the Expellees,” the rhetoric of certain expellee groups and organizations with regard to the territorial conflict signaled revisionist sentiments and aggressive nationalist stances toward Poland.<sup>29</sup> These statements were also exploited by the Polish communist press for the purpose of “proving” the revanchist and territorially revisionist tendencies of post-war West Germans.

In the expellee press descriptions of the expulsions and the territory, which was once German, anti-communism merged easily with the older stereotypes about Polish inability to self-rule. The German older negative stereotypes of Poland involved a feeling of superiority based on notions of civilization (*Kultur*) in Germany and lack thereof in Poland. Concepts such as that of *Polnische Wirtschaft*, the notion that Poles were incapable of self-rule and administration and in general less civilized and capable than the Germans, proved resistant to change.<sup>30</sup> Such stereotypes were enhanced by the territorial conflicts between Poland and Germany emerging in 1918 after the reinstatement of Poland as an independent state. These stereotypes also functioned as an argument against Polish possession of the culturally mixed border areas. It resurfaced in the expellee press’s descriptions of Polish mismanagement of former German property in the 1950s and 1960s.

Brief counterpoints to these negative German attitudes had occurred in the 1830s and 1840s, when the German liberals sympathized with the Polish independence movement and its slogan “For Your Freedom and Ours,” as well as the images of the noble and freedom-

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<sup>29</sup> Ibid., 44.

<sup>30</sup> For more extensive discussions about Polish and German stereotypes, see Hubert Orłowski, “*Polnische Wirtschaft.*” *Zum deutschen Polendiskurs im Neuzeit* (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 1996), and Hasso von Zitzewitz, *Das deutsche Polenbild in der Geschichte. Entstehung – Einflüsse Auswirkungen* (Cologne, Weimar, Vienna: Böhlau Verlag, 1991) or Jarochna Dąbrowska, *Stereotype und ihr sprachlicher Ausdruck im Polenbild der deutschen Presse* (Tübingen: Gunter Narr Verlag, 1999). For Polish images of Germany Mieczysław Tomala, *Patrząc na Niemcy: od wrogości do porozumienia 1945-1991* (Warsaw: Polska Fundacja Spraw Międzynarodowych, 1997).

loving Polish szlachta and the beauty of Polish women.<sup>31</sup> However, while positive, these stereotypes combined well with the ones about Polish inability to self-rule. An unconscious sense of superiority continued to exist in the German press also after the Second World War. However, in the post-war era and early 1950s, the expellees often constituted the only interested parties and expert opinion on Poland and the Polish situation.

Overall, the West German media landscape was more complex than the Polish one given its plurality, federal organization and the legacies which the occupation era and early postwar years imparted. After the war, the victors attempted to fully disassemble and reinvent the West German media scene in a new mold. The rise of Nazi Germany had brought propaganda to the forefront as a political force. In the minds of the occupation authorities, media was the primary vehicle for any dangerous political ideas. On East German territory, the Soviet Union quickly centralized the media and placed it under state control. In the western zones, the occupation authorities wished to establish media institutions and structures which they considered fitting for a democratic state. First, they had to break the legacies and continuities from the Nazi state in the German media, however. In the first postwar years, they instituted a media license, whereby no press could appear without preapproval through the granting of a publishing license by the occupation powers. This time has been called the license era.

A great problem for the occupation authorities was the shortage of physical resources and competent journalists. During the Nazi era, the left-wing press had been eliminated while the center- and rightwing media for the most part had been incorporated into the Nazi

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<sup>31</sup> Hubert Orłowski, *“Polnische Wirtschaft.” Zum deutschen Polendiskurs in der Neuzeit.*

propaganda efforts.<sup>32</sup> The journalists employed by the banned press had the choice of leaving the profession, writing for the underground press or going to work for the Nazi press, such as the *Völkischer Beobachter* (People's Watchman) or *Der Stürmer* (the Storm Trooper). After 1945, many of the competent journalists from the interwar era were compromised by cooperation with the Nazi government and denied publishing licenses by the occupation powers. Others had died in the war or emigrated. As a consequence, experienced journalists and publishers were few and far between in the early post-war years. The lack of experienced professionals led to the fast rise of a new young generation of journalists, many of whom would become instrumental in rethinking Polish-German relations.<sup>33</sup>

The license era left a significant legacy on the West German media landscape in that American and British institutions influenced and trained a younger German generation of journalists and gave structure to the postwar audio-visual media institutes. Nordwestdeutscher Rundfunk (NWDR), which became Nord- and Westdeutscher Rundfunk, was modeled on BBC in Great Britain.<sup>34</sup> Many prominent newspapers and weeklies in the Federal Republic were also linked to the American and British press officers since they had roots in the license press, including for example *Süddeutsche Zeitung*, *Frankfurter*

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<sup>32</sup> Already in early 1933, the Nazis forbade the entire Social Democratic and communist press. Other party-affiliated press was outlawed in mid-1933. Between 1934 and 1939, a second wave of closings eliminated about 600 newspapers. Some of the newspapers also merged with the Nazi press. A third wave beginning in 1941 also included the center- or rightwing press which had so far been left alone.

<sup>33</sup> Christina von Hodenberg, *Konsens und Krise: eine Geschichte der westdeutschen Medienöffentlichkeit 1945-1973* (Göttingen: Wallstein, 2006).

<sup>34</sup> Klaus von Bismarck, *Aufbruch aus Pommern. Erinnerungen und Perspektiven* (Munich: Piper GmbH&Co, 1996) 151, Franz Wördemann, the WDR leader of Hauptabteilung Zeitgeschehen was also schooled by BBC and had several educational stipends to the United States.

*Rundschau, Die Zeit, Der Spiegel* and *Die Welt*.<sup>35</sup> Leading journalists, prominently Marion Countess Dönhoff and Klaus von Bismarck, with little to no previous journalistic experience, were schooled by American and British media personalities early in their careers.

Postwar journalists operated between traditional German professional conventions and Anglo-American influences. Their attitudes and level of adjustment to new media models depended on whether they belonged to pre- or post-war professional generations. In general, the conventions in the Anglo-American tradition required an independent and objective reporting style.<sup>36</sup> This objectivity was on a practical level ensured not only through the separation of news and editorials but also through the clear separation of the role of the journalist as reporter from the role as political commentator. Meanwhile, pre-war German journalists had a fundamentally statist perspective on their work, in which a journalist should mold public opinion and interpret and transmit, but not necessarily criticize, the political leadership.<sup>37</sup> The post-war generations of reporters, media personalities and journalists (such as Jürgen Neven du-Mont, Gert von Paczensky, Marion Countess Dönhoff, Henri Nannen) functioned in the traditional style as political commentators but also cultivated an independence from the state, which they defended by referring to journalistic objectivity and neutrality.

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<sup>35</sup> Heinz Pürer and Johannes Raabe, *Medien in Deutschland. Band I. Presse* (Konstanz: UVK Medien, 1996), 104.

<sup>36</sup> Simone Christine Ehmig, *Generationswechsel im deutschen Journalismus. Zum Einfluss historischer Ereignisse auf das journalistische Selbstverständnis* (Munich: Verlag Karl Alber Freiburg, 2000), 52-53.

<sup>37</sup> Ibid.

Nevertheless, the pre-war networks and structures proved difficult to dispel entirely.<sup>38</sup> Even though journalists who had been affiliated with the Nazi press were denied licenses between 1945 and 1950, they remained influential among their professional colleagues and were in many cases reinstated at the end of the license era.<sup>39</sup> The lack of qualified professionals also contributed to early reinstatement of “compromised” journalists and publishers, particularly in the French zone. This older generation of journalists preserved traditional national perspectives on Germany and its role in Europe, and on media as an extension and support of the state.

After 1949, the license press and the returning publishers (*Altverleger*) merged fairly quickly into a unified media landscape. The early 1950s saw a great increase of newspaper publications which coincided with rapid economic growth in West Germany as well as the removal of earlier restrictions. Eventually, the growth rate leveled out, the press was divided into city, regional and supranational press, which was still generally localized to a particular city such as *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung* to Frankfurt am Main. In the late 1950s, much of the press was concentrated in a few powerful publishing houses, most notably the Springer Press.<sup>40</sup>

On a public level, the relationship between state and media was rarely contested in the Federal Republic during the early and mid-1950s. The West German government

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<sup>38</sup> The British military government gave the first license in their zone to *Aachener Nachrichten* on July 27, 1945. The second license was given in the American zone to the *Frankfurter Rundschau* on August 1, 1945. By this time, the Soviet Union had already licensed two newspapers in its zone, to the *Deutsche Volkszeitung* (June 12, 1945) and *das Volk* (July 7, 1945) which became *das Neue Deutschland*, the most important East German newspaper.

<sup>39</sup> For discussions about continuity in the media profession see *Die Herren Journalisten. Die Elite der deutschen Presse nach 1945*, eds. Lutz Hachmeister and Friedemann Siering (Munich: Verlag C.H.Beck, 2002).

<sup>40</sup> For a contextualization of the Springer imperium in emerging German post-war media, see Gudrun Kruij, *Das „Welt“-Bild des Axel Springer Verlags. Journalismus zwischen westlichen Werten und deutschen Denk-traditionen* (Munich: Oldenbourg, 1999).

expected the press to conform to its stance on Poland in the name of political stability and because of outside pressure from the Soviet Union and the Western powers and the press generally complied.<sup>41</sup> The daily press kept to a minimum the criticism of the government's uncompromising attitude to East Germany and insistence on the 1937 border until a peace treaty with a reunited Germany. In the illustrated magazines, where mostly "safe" non-political topics were covered, Poland was scarcely a topic during the 1950s.<sup>42</sup> As a touchy national and international subject, Poland was simultaneously too foreign and too political to be an attractive topic.<sup>43</sup>

While the Allies had wanted to create a politically independent press that would function as a critical voice contributing to the democratization of society, the West German pre-war establishment saw things differently. West German elites looked to the Empire and Weimar Republic for models of greater statecontrol over media. Their approach was not only based on a wish for a more traditional authoritarian state form. They were concerned about the potential instability of the young Federal Republic and drew parallels to the instability of the late Weimar Republic. Unless closely monitored, radio and media might contribute to the rise of new extremist factions of communists or fascists. In this way, the democratic model of the allies emphasizing a free and independent media did not harmonize with the experiences of the German elites, who had seen media manipulated by the National Socialists to destabilize and undermine the Weimar state.

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<sup>41</sup> Mathias Weiss, "Öffentlichkeit als Therapie. Die Medien und Informationspolitik der Regierung Adenauer zwischen Propaganda und kritischer Aufklärung," *Medialisierung und Demokratie im 20. Jahrhundert*, eds. Frank Bösch and Norbert Frei (Göttingen: Wallstein Verlag, 2006), 73-120; Christina von Hodenberg, "Die Journalisten und der Aufbruch zur kritischen Öffentlichkeit," *Wandlungsprozesse in Westdeutschland*, ed. Ulrich Herbert (Göttingen: Wallstein Verlag, 2002), 278-314.

<sup>42</sup> Hodenberg, *Konsens und Krise*, 186.

<sup>43</sup> *Ibid.*, 177.

Konrad Adenauer attempted to control the press in various ways. He reprimanded those journalists who were too critical of the state and its foreign policy, and he supported government-loyal journalists, both financially and by making political information available to them exclusively.<sup>44</sup> He shunned public press conferences where questions could not be controlled and instead favored interviews with select journalists and also the famous “Tea Talks,” in which he met and spoke informally with especially invited journalists. The audio-visual media institutes disagreed with and resisted Adenauer’s even more authoritarian model of the media structure. The state-media disagreements concerned for example the introduction of a national media law, the centralization of radio and television and the introduction of government-loyal radio and television stations.<sup>45</sup> These disagreements took longer to reach foreign policy in public space.

The federal government was less successful in gaining control over the radio stations than the press although it certainly attempted to cultivate the general directors as well as the journalists. Because of the complete restructuring of the audio-visual media into a federal structure, the radio and media institutes had less continuity from the pre-war era than the press. In 1950, in response to political pressure, the regional radio and television stations formed an umbrella organization named “Arbeitsgemeinschaft der öffentlich-rechtlichen Rundfunkanstalten der Bundesrepublik Deutschland” (ARD).<sup>46</sup> The general directors of the different radio and television institutes circulated the chairmanship of ARD between

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<sup>44</sup> Hodenberg, *Konsens und Krise*, 155-158, 164-166, 169.

<sup>45</sup> *Ibid.*, 148.

<sup>46</sup> *Ibid.*, 94.



themselves. The federal structure of the radio and television institutes and resistance in legal instances prevented the government from gaining decisive influence over the institutes.

Despite their success in resisting intervention from the “Chancellor’s Democracy,” the radio and television institutes were not able to remain independent from the regional state governments. In 1955, *Nordwestdeutscher Rundfunk* (NWDR) was divided into *Westdeutscher* and *Norddeutscher Rundfunk* (WDR and NDR). Compared to NWDR’s British-initiated structure, the new stations became more closely controlled by the local ruling political parties who had proportional representation in the stations’ administrative councils.<sup>47</sup> However, this structure still allowed individual general-directors a comparatively large independence. WDR general-director Klaus von Bismarck was responsible for the programming decisions and most of the household finance decisions on a day to day basis. Larger decisions as well as personnel changes had to be presented and approved by the Administrative Council. The general-director was responsible to the Radio Council in the Landtag through an annual report. Also, the general-director and the Administrative Council had to agree on a fundamental level. Hans Hartmann, the general-director of WDR between 1947 and 1961, was forced to resign because of a conflict with the CDU-affiliated chairman of the Administrative Council. Klaus von Bismarck’s following appointment to the position was the result of a political compromise; he was the one candidate that was acceptable to both CDU and SPD political factions although he considered himself an independent.<sup>48</sup>

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<sup>47</sup> Ansgar Diller, “Öffentlich-rechtlicher Rundfunk,” *Am Puls der Zeit. Der Sender: Weltweit Nah Draan 1956-1985. 50 Jahre WDR, Bd. 2*, eds. Klaus Katz et.al (Cologne: Verlag Kiepenhauer & Witsch, 2006), 151, Hodenberg, *Konsens und Krise*, 151.

<sup>48</sup> Bismarck, *Aufbruch aus Pommern*, 256.

In the 1950s, West German radio was characterized by innovation and an overturn of personnel and journalists. As the primary medium in the 1950s and 1960s before it was superseded by television and as a political interest, the radio stations had significant resources for program development and employed some of the most talented journalists of the post-war generation.<sup>49</sup> These journalists rose to leading positions in the late 1950s. In addition, while it was in the center of political power struggles, compared to the privately owned press, radio depended less on market approval and could push agendas and programming initiatives that were uncomfortable to a larger general audience.

The West German radio's interest in Eastern Europe emerged because radio at the time was the most efficient means of communicating with the East German population. In the late 1940s, the European radio broadcasting scene developed into something of a "Cold War of the ether," in which western and Soviet radio competed for audiences. The conflict initially centered on broadcasting in Berlin, and Soviet attempts at dominance of the ether led to the foundation of RIAS (*Rundfunk im amerikanischen Sektor*) in 1946.<sup>50</sup> Later on, West German radio, concerned with potential East German audiences and the preservation of German national unity, allocated funding for radio about and for "the Soviet Zone" and out of this effort grew a number of initiatives and broadcasts on the rest of Eastern Europe as well. For example, the radio stations were concerned with the maintenance of foreign correspondents the Soviet Union and its satellites. In addition, special program series were designed around East German topics, such as WDR's "Gruss an der Zone," "Wir sprechen

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<sup>49</sup> Koch, *Ganz Ohr*.

<sup>50</sup> Arch Puddington, *Broadcasting Freedom. The Cold War Triumph of Radio Free Europe and Radio Liberty* (Lexington, KY: The University Press of Kentucky, 2000), 13-14.

zur Zone” and “Unteilbares Deutschland.”<sup>51</sup> These programs were sent on medium wave to reach into the Soviet German occupation zone.

Because of language questions, suspicions about the post-war Germans and location questions, West German radio never had a Polish audience, however. Polish radio listeners received most of their information from Radio Free Europe and BBC while Polish and Soviet official information ministries attempted to block these stations’ frequencies. BBC began to broadcast into the eastern zone in 1946. In 1950, Radio Free Europe, which became the most important western source of information for Polish radio listeners, was founded by the National Committee for a Free Europe under John Foster Dulles with the support of the American congress. The Polish Catholic intellectuals discussed in this dissertation were involved with, listened to and sometimes reported for the American -sponsored Radio Free Europe and its Polish section leader from 1952 to 1976, Jan Nowak-Jeziorański.<sup>52</sup> Thus, despite its potential to broadcast across the borders, West German radio remained a largely national enterprise.

West Germany never had its own Berlin radio, but RIAS eventually became a joint American-West German venture. In 1953, the Radio Free Berlin (SFB) was founded by the city government of West Berlin along similar organizational lines as the major West German radio stations, joined the ARD and cooperated closely with the Norddeutscher- and Westdeutscher Rundfunk.<sup>53</sup> At about the same time, the Bundestag began to discuss the establishment of a long wave radio station (called the Reunification Radio), which East

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<sup>51</sup> *Am Puls der Zeit. Bd 2*, 82.

<sup>52</sup> Jan Nowak-Jeziorański, *Polska z bliska* (Krakow: Społeczny Instytut Wydawniczy ZNAK, 2005).

<sup>53</sup> Heinz-Werner Stuibler, *Medien in Deutschland, Band II. Rundfunk*, 203.

German listeners could easily tune in to.<sup>54</sup> Due to extended political conflicts, it was not until 1958 that NDR, commissioned by ARD, launched this transmitter.<sup>55</sup>

In the 1950s and 1960s, radio and television reporting was not a separate field from traditional journalism. Many of the key activists in this dissertation, such as Hansjakob Stehle, Jürgen Neven-du Mont, Eugen Kogon and Walter Dirks, worked both for print- and audio-visual media. These men and women were elite journalists, highly educated, well connected and, at least initially, writing for a select group of West German elites. Importantly, the journalists' familiarity with all three media forms increased their ability to reach large audiences and to dominate the media space with their opinions about Polish-German relations.

Given its central role in Polish-German dialogues, elite journalism merits a separate discussion as a particular field with a specific professional ethic and outlook. Institutions of elite journalism attempted to counteract the populist reputation of journalism by creating media which was more closely related to an academic, and supposedly objective, milieu. This type of journalism existed – and exists – on a cross European level. Examples of newspapers and journals of elite journalism are for example *Neue Zürcher Zeitung*, *New York Times*, *Washington Post*, *Le Monde*, *Figaro*, *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*, *Süddeutsche Zeitung* and *Spiegel*.<sup>56</sup>

Elite journalists such as Marion Dönhoff or Hansjakob Stehle often published their work in press organs directed at a highly educated and engaged audience. Elite media did not

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<sup>54</sup> The existing short- and middle wave broadcasting was difficult for the East Germans to receive.

<sup>55</sup> Diller, "Öffentlich-rechtlicher Rundfunk," 150.

<sup>56</sup> Lutz Hachmeister, "Das Problem des Elite-Journalismus," *Die Herren Journalisten. Die Elite der deutschen Presse nach 1945* (Munich: Verlag C.H.Beck, 2002), 14-15.

necessarily dominate public space though it was used by West Germany's political, cultural and intellectual elites to develop particular themes and agendas. Of greater importance to public opinion was the so-called leading media which also included TV, radio and low-brow tabloid press, for example Axel Springer's flagship *Bild-Zeitung*. Leading media could play a central role in public space through "framing" or "agenda setting."<sup>57</sup> In a media outlet such as the Springer Press during the 1950s, "framing" consisted of adhering to the consensus-based treatment of the German Question and past, and foreign policy. As we will see, a challenge for the elite journalists was to introduce Poland as a topic to leading media as well.<sup>58</sup>

The impact of elite journalists emerged partially through their audiences and partially through their contacts and networks. A social science networking study from 1984 argued that the leading societal elites in West Germany could be reduced to a group of about 550 people.<sup>59</sup> A prominent journalist and political expert such as Stehle involved with these leading elites would naturally exert a considerable political and cultural influence. However, the elite press organs were also "institutions where elites are produced and preserved."<sup>60</sup> Networking can potentially be a dangerous mechanism which causes elite journalism to be produced by political insiders. The West German elite journalistic institutions strove to be

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<sup>57</sup> "Agenda setting" is the identification and introduction of a topic to a larger public while "framing" is the creation of reference frames for an existing topic. Jürgen Wilke, "Leitmedien und Zielgruppenorgane," *Mediengeschichte der Bundesrepublik Deutschland*, ed. Jürgen Wilke (Cologne, Weimar, Vienna: Böhlau Verlag, 1999), 302-329.

<sup>58</sup> As will become clear in chapter 4, Hansjakob Stehle utilized television, which in the 1960s was a leading media with a powerful societal impact, for his arguments as well. In his television broadcasts, he addressed a much broader and more diverse audience.

<sup>59</sup> Franz Urban Pappi, "Boundary Specification and Structural Models of Elite Systems: Social Circles Revisited," *Social Networks* 6(1984), 79-95.

<sup>60</sup> Hachmeister, "Das Problem des Elite-Journalismus," 16.

objective, thorough and independent but their insider positions and activism did not always coexist easily with this ambition. Overall, the elite media's preferences, its emphasis on insider contacts and state policy had important consequences for the character of Polish-German reconciliation.

A final important societal group in Polish-German relations was the West German Christians, the primary contacts for the Polish Catholic intellectuals. The German Churches were significant voices in the post-war public space but unlike the Polish Catholic Church they were not seen as the guarantees for national survival and neither church held a dominant position in society such as that of the Polish Catholic Church. The demographic changes through the expulsions did contribute to an increase of Catholics, previously a minority, in the Federal Republic.<sup>61</sup> The German Catholic establishment and media in the 1950s considered the atrocities in Poland during the Second World War the deed of an isolated group of National Socialists who had also victimized the German Catholics as a group. As this group was no longer in power, the Catholic Church rarely discussed the war crimes in the east in the first post-war years with regards to the German responsibility. However, they often condemned the expulsions of Germans from the east as a great injustice. With regard to the border question, the German Catholics criticized the 1945 decision of Polish Cardinal August Hlond to institute temporary administrators in the Oder-Neisse areas as an abuse of his office, and from a Christian perspective as an unethical decision.<sup>62</sup> In the Catholic realm, the will to reconciliation was very limited.

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<sup>61</sup> Klaus Ziemer, "Kirche," *Deutsche und Polen*, eds. Andreas Lawaty and Hubert Orłowski (Munch: Verlag C.H. Beck, 2003), 418-425

<sup>62</sup> Kerski, Kycia and Żurek, "Einführung," *'Wir Vergeben und Bitten um Vergebung,'* 12.

The German Protestant Church was more committed to internal change than the Catholic Church. Some of its leadership was also quicker to consider the collective German responsibility for the war crimes in Poland. Through the debates on rearmament within the Protestant Church in the 1950s, Protestant groups and factions formed closer ties to the political opposition, SPD, and the church as a whole came to accept greater plurality in religious as well as political opinions.<sup>63</sup> The increasing pluralism eventually translated into discussions on foreign policy as well. However, until 1954, the Protestant Expellee Boards were allowed to dictate the stance of the church toward Poland and the eastern policy entirely. In 1955, individual cases appeared of Protestant leaders developing relations with Eastern Europe, for example with the Protestant Church in Czechoslovakia, above the heads of the expellee representatives.<sup>64</sup> In this way, the Protestant Expellee Boards lost their monopoly on East European questions within the church. 1954 was also the year in which one of the Protestant Church's most prominent lay members, Klaus von Bismarck declared in a presentation at the national convention (*Kirchentag*) that he was prepared to give up his previous home area in Silesia since he could not expect to return to it with less than the outbreak of a new war and new expulsions.<sup>65</sup>

The Christian press followed general media patterns before 1956. They rarely reported on Poland, with the exception of occasional discussions of the German minorities, expulsions and the border move. On an abstract level, the Christian press and both Catholic and Protestant voices urged for reconciliation from the late 1940s or early 1950s. By

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<sup>63</sup> Benjamin Pearson, *Faith and Democracy. Political Transformations at the German Protestant Kirchentag, 1949-1969* (Dissertation University of North Carolina-Chapel Hill, 2007).

<sup>64</sup> Żurek, *Zwischen Nationalismus und Versöhnung*, 328.

<sup>65</sup> *Ibid.*, 213. Klaus von Bismarck's biography and relationship with Poland is discussed in chapter 5 of this dissertation.

reconciliation, they meant forgiveness of one's enemies and love of one's neighbors. The Protestant *Stimme der Gemeinde* (Voice of the Parish) wrote in 1949 that Christians must know that reconciliation could only take place "where there is a readiness for penitence, and that true penitence does not wait until everyone else has atoned."<sup>66</sup> However, in these discussions the Christian press primarily referred to reconciliation with West European opponents in the Second World War, such as France. Even in the cases where Eastern Europe was considered, the call for reconciliation was rarely translated into concrete measures.

Further into the 1950s, articles appeared in the Christian press describing the communist persecution of the Catholic Church in Poland and Eastern Europe. These articles passionately described the plight of the Polish Catholic Church under attack from the communists. The articles in the West German Catholic press were sometimes detailed and informative, sometimes more anti-communist and pro-Catholic than informed. Over time, this coverage created an interest in and sympathy for the Polish Catholic Church in West German Catholic circles and contributed to an increased media presence for the imprisoned Cardinal Wyszyński.<sup>67</sup>

## CONCLUSION

Immediately at the time of its establishment in 1950, the West German government refused to recognize the border at least until a peace treaty had been concluded between a reunited Germany and Poland. No such reunification or treaty would take place until

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<sup>66</sup> "Versöhnung der Nationen," *Stimme der Gemeinde* 9: 1949 from Żurek, *Zwischen Nationalismus und Versöhnung*, 289.

<sup>67</sup> Żurek, *Zwischen Versöhnung und Nationalismus*, 304.



communism had fallen in Eastern Europe. The West German government under Adenauer and CDU also did not recognize the existence of a second German state. GDR was referred to as “the Zone” or “the Soviet Zone.” Meanwhile, at the request of the Soviet Union, Poland concluded a Friendship Treaty with the GDR in 1950 in which East Germany officially recognized the border. Given Polish and East German positions, it was not possible for the West German government to carry out a discussion about state relations with Poland or the border without recognizing the existence of the German Democratic Republic.

The Polish communists, on the other hand, used anti-German nationalist rhetoric to attempt to unify their own society behind their foreign political program: close associations with the Soviet Union and distance to Western Europe. This program was complicated by their friendship with the GDR as they had to distinguish between the revanchist Germans in the Federal Republic and reformed Germans in the German Democratic Republic. In short, official relations between Poland and the Federal Republic were on hold indefinitely.

Yet the states were not the only actors in Polish-German relations. During the late 1950s, particularly the West German media and Polish Catholic intellectuals became important in challenging the negative status quo between the two states. Anglo-American legacies, federal structures and political independence particularly contributed to the West German media’s ability to influence the relations. The same was true for the demographic strength and national significance of the Polish Church. During the early post-war years and Cold War the state control over media was a fact of life in Poland, and regarded as desirable by a large part of the West German establishment. In the Federal Republic, the state control was built on a consensus between the state and the media. Whereas plurality of media, the federal system and private ownership significantly undercut state control, the media

instances, journalists and journalistic networks themselves contributed to attempting to establish stability and continuity with the pre-war era. In this way, the political establishment's view of Polish-German relations, the Oder-Neisse Line and the division of Germany was not publically challenged before the late 1950s.

The tight control of media in both societies meant that those early instances of challenges to the consensus, such as the elite journalists in radio and television in West Germany and the Catholic Church and semi-independent Catholic press in Poland, became particularly visible and influential domestically and internationally. West German radio and television were on the one hand state-owned and had to adjust to the political establishment to a certain extent. On the other hand, the structural legacies from the media institutes' Allied origins and the cultural legacies which Anglo-American journalism left on a younger generation of German journalists and reporters ensured a certain independence of the audio-visual media vis-à-vis the state.

On the Polish side, the alternative line on Polish-German relations among Catholic intellectuals was made possible by the compromise between state and church which took place immediately after the war, and which guaranteed the Polish Catholic Church a continued right to existence, independence and a certain influence in the public sphere. As the only independent non-state structure, the Catholic Church, despite being severely attacked during the Stalinist era, retained a state-wide organizational network and maintained parts of its press. On the German side, the West German churches were free to have their own press, meetings, and public presence but were closely tied to state agendas and policies. They were also committed to the cause of the German expellees and closely affiliated with the conservative parties CSU and CDU. Consequently, German Catholics carefully followed

and supported the state's line on Polish-German relations during the 1950s. Only smaller Catholic intellectual groups deviated from these largely nationalist and antagonistic positions. In this way, the stage was set in the media and certain parts of the churches for a dialogue to begin in the mid- to late 1950s when the political opening known as the Polish October took place.

## CHAPTER 2

### CULTURAL DIPLOMATS AND NON-STATE ACTIVISTS AFTER THE POLISH OCTOBER IN 1956

In 1953, Joseph Stalin's death and the end of the Korean War signaled a political realignment in Europe. Nikita Khrushchev's secret speech at the twentieth Party Congress in 1956 sent shock waves throughout the communist world, and evoked cautious curiosity and optimism in Western Europe. In Poland, the strikes in Poznań during the summer of 1956 contributed to the sense of upheaval. In August 1956, reports reached the world that Gomułka was reinstated in the Polish Communist Party, and in October, he emerged as its leader once more.<sup>1</sup> The media in the West considered the 1956 developments as something completely new: not the end of communism but a breaking up of the Soviet bloc into nationally distinct units. The western media compared Poland to Yugoslavia and Gomułka to Yugoslav leader Josip Tito.<sup>2</sup> Under the headline, "This is Władysław Gomułka: A Will of Steel and Fanatical Courage," the West Berlin newspaper *Der Tag* in October 1956 expressed the hopes and expectations connected with the reforms taking place in Poland during the summer and fall of 1956. The article described the new Polish leader as "this Gomułka, bald with an angular, energetic face, [who] must become even more of a populist

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<sup>1</sup> Hermann Pörzgen, "Die Rückkehr von Wladislaw Gomułka. Versuch in Polen die Freiheit zu verkünden und zu begrenzen," *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*, 7 August 1956; Alexander Korab, "Triumph der Weiss-Roten. Polens Nationalkommunisten siegten über die Moskowiter," *Rheinischer Merkur*, 26 October 1956.

<sup>2</sup> For example Hermann Pörzgen, "Kühner als die andern. Polen reagiert auf Moskaus neue Thesen," *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*, 11 June 1956.

than Tito, a man with whom he incidentally shares a lot not just politically but on a human level. A ‘great man’ at a time characterized by a shortage of greatness? Finally somebody whom one can admire?”<sup>3</sup> What was the importance of the Polish October to the activists in the reconciliation process, and how did its political opening, albeit limited and short-lived, influence long-term Polish-German relations?

The West German correspondents and Polish Catholic intellectuals all had in common that their early networking opportunities were enabled by the Polish October in 1956. Overall, their increased status, career opportunities and key roles in Polish-German relations followed the Polish October which was for them a personal *Stunde Null*. Their strategies for bridging the ideological, intellectual and national battle lines between Catholicism and communism, compromise and violent resistance, and Polish and German perspectives within the larger world political developments influenced the Polish-German relations in several important ways. Since the Polish reforms ultimately did not live up to the expectations of the West German media, in hindsight the activists constructed 1956 as the moment of initiation of Polish-German contacts rather than as a moment of political reform.<sup>4</sup> In Poland, the *Znak* circle set out to reformulate longstanding Polish national myths and Polish positions on the relationship with neighboring countries. These activities led them to become active in reconceiving relations with the Germans. However, it is important to distinguish these intellectuals’ initial intentions in 1956, and how actual encounters with West Germans and changing politics forced them to adjust their agendas. Similarly, the West German

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<sup>3</sup> “Das is Wladyslaw Gomulka. Eiserne Wille und fanatischer Mut,” *Der Tag*, 8 October 1956.

<sup>4</sup> See Stanisław Stomma, *Pościg za nadzieją*.

correspondents who first arrived and became accredited in Poland had certain expectations in the late 1950s that changed in the encounter with the actual Polish state and society.

Domestically, after 1956, the Poles were more optimistic about the future than during Stalinism. Gomułka's rule initially created greater freedom for the press, limited democratic measures and political transparency. Gomułka was counted a national communist, loyal to Poland rather than Moscow, and had spent a few years in prison during Stalin's reign. These circumstances increased his credibility in the eyes of the Polish population. Another hopeful sign was that on October 28, 1956, Cardinal Wyszyński was also released from a three-year internment and returned to his palace on Miodowa Street in Warsaw. A large crowd, singing religious patriotic songs, greeted him as he stepped out on the balcony that evening. The Cardinal's release and return also became international news, particularly in the Catholic press that had closely covered his internment and the Church's difficulties since 1953.<sup>5</sup> Gomułka and Wyszyński would dominate the Polish political scene in the foreign media for most of the next ten or fifteen years. The relationship between the church and state, as embodied by these two men, was closely followed in the correspondents' press reports until Gomułka was finally replaced in 1970.

The reforms of the 1956 "Thaw" quickly fizzled in the following years; the temporary opening described above had longterm consequences for the Polish and West German reconciliation activists. First, the Znak group regained their press, and obtained access to the Parliament, the Sejm. Through their special position as mediators between the communist government and the Catholic Church, the group created a higher political profile domestically and abroad. Secondly, the new leadership opened the borders, and allowed

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<sup>5</sup> Andrzej Micewski, *Cardinal Wyszyński. A Biography*, trans. William R. Brand and Katarzyna Mroczkowska-Brand (Orlando, FL: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich Publishers, 1984), 162.

West Germans to travel into Poland, drawing a number of curious visitors. Thirdly, West German journalists were able to work as accredited correspondents in Warsaw. A new generation of West German correspondents to Warsaw and experts set out to answer the questions concerning the unique developments in the Polish state and society and to build permanent personal and professional networks in Poland.

#### KOŁO POSŁÓW ZNAK AND POLAND'S SITUATION IN POSTWAR EUROPE

In 1953, the Catholic intellectual publishers of the journals and newspapers *Znak* and *Tygodnik Powszechny* had lost their publishing houses after refusing to publish an obituary for Stalin. Their press was taken over by the Catholic group Pax, which was more loyal to the communist state. The leader of Pax, Bolesław Piasecki, former founder of a Polish fascist party (Falanga), had been imprisoned during the war and converted to communism only to found Pax with Soviet support in 1947. At that time, he had come to believe that his only option was to work within the communist system, not against it.<sup>6</sup> When Gomułka came to power, the original publishers once more regained their newspapers and journals. Cardinal Wyszyński negotiated their place and rights as publishers in the reformulated agreement with the government. As part of his administrative overhaul in 1956, Gomułka also allowed a group of Catholic representatives to become members of the Sejm.<sup>7</sup> The group prominently featured Stanisław Stomma, Tadeusz Mazowiecki, Jerzy Turowicz, Stefan Kisielewski, Tadeusz Mazowiecki, Wanda Pieniężna and Jerzy Zawieyski. It originally consisted of ten

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<sup>6</sup> Andrzej Jaszczuk, *Ewolucja ideowa Bolesława Piaseckiego, 1932-1956* (Warsaw: Wydawnictwo "DIG", 2005); Antoni Dudek, *Bolesław Piasecki: Próba biografii politycznej* (London: Aneks, 1990).

<sup>7</sup> Robert Jarocki, *Czterdzieści pięć lat w opozycji: O ludziach "Tygodnika Powszechnego"* (Kraków: Wydawnictwo Literackie, 1990), Andrzej Friszke, *Koło posłów Znak w Sejmie, 1957-1976* (Warsaw: Wydawnictwo Sejmowe, 2002).

members but was later reduced again. Because of the small size of the Znak circle, its political presence in the Sejm was almost purely symbolic.

The Polish Catholic intellectuals in the group Znak were connected to larger Catholic groups gathered around *Tygodnik Powszechny*, the journals *Znak* and *Więź* and the Catholic Intellectual Clubs (KIK) existing in five or six Polish cities. The connection between Gomułka and the Znak group was established by Jerzy Zawieyski, an author and poet, who was personally acquainted with both Wyszyński and the communist elite. Zawieyski was given a chair in the powerful State Council, the higher executive body in the communist regime. From this position, he could function personally as a mediator between the Catholics and Gomułka but his political profile had to remain low. Before the elections in 1957, he justified his political participation in the article “Why Do I Run for the Parliament?”<sup>8</sup> First of all, he asserted that the Polish October had created a new era, and the new leadership summoned all people of good will, despite their ideology, to contribute in rebuilding the state in terms of society, economy and foreign relations.

Based on a Christian sense of responsibility for the nation, Zawieyski aspired to provide a “voice of freedom” in the Parliament. He stated that his participation came from a deep religious conviction. “My politics spring from a moral source, deeply anchored in the gospels, in contemplation, in life in the wilderness, in solitude.”<sup>9</sup> By assuring his readers that his political involvement was justified by the need for religious people in Polish politics, Zawieyski placed himself above political realism. In this way, he positioned himself differently from the more pragmatic self-descriptions and profiles of Stanisław Stomma and

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<sup>8</sup> Jerzy Zawieyski, “Dlaczego kandyduję do Sejmu?” *Tygodnik Powszechny*, 20 January 1957.

<sup>9</sup> Ibid.



Stefan Kisielewski described below. Nevertheless, his statements showed the careful way in which Polish Catholic intellectuals had to make their case if they wished to cooperate with the communist governing body and also to preserve their good reputation and personal integrity.

While Zawieyski was the most highly ranked within the communist state, Stanisław Stomma and Stefan Kisielewski played the most important roles in shaping the circle's political profile. Kisielewski justified his 1957 participation in the elections with three reasons. First, the party leaders were people of good intentions and proven patriotism. Secondly, these 1957 elections were decidedly closer to societal opinions than the previous ones and finally, he believed like Zawieyski that Znak had a role to play in representing non-Marxists in the parliament despite their limited ability to influence the state system.<sup>10</sup>

The Znak members' belief in compromise and the importance of a strong and stable Polish state were formed in a very Polish environment, at the intersection between the public and the personal in the members' experiences of the inter-war era, the war and the post-war communist times. This becomes particularly clear in a closer look at Stanisław Stomma, who was born in 1908 and was the oldest member of the circle. Born in a Polish-speaking family of *szlachta* in the Russian empire, he had spent his youth in multicultural Wilno. He experienced the struggles of the Polish state emerging from the Treaty of Versailles in 1919 and later the Treaty of Riga in 1921, and disappearing again in 1939, followed by yet another foreign occupation and finally, by the communist state. Traditionally, Poland was multicultural, multiethnic and multireligious but towards the end of the 1940s, as a consequence of war, border changes, ethnic cleansing and emigration, this Polish People's

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<sup>10</sup> Stefan Kisielewski, "Dlaczego kandyduję do Sejmu?" *Tygodnik Powszechny*, 20 January 1957.

Republic had suddenly begun to fit quite well within the previously farfetched idea of a homogeneous modern nation-state based on language, culture and religion.<sup>11</sup> Though not a supporter of ethnic cleansing or violence against other ethnic groups, Stomma had high hopes that this new homogeneous Poland would prove stronger and more durable than its predecessors. He was acutely aware of the fragility of the new East European states, and he believed in the necessity to stabilize and secure the postwar Polish state and borders.

Of the members in the Znak circle, Stanisław Stomma had the longest and closest history of affiliation with Germany and the Germans. His contacts dated back to the First World War when his family, which had a small estate north of Kowno/Kaunas (today Lithuania), befriended soldiers belonging to the occupying German Imperial Army. As a widow, his mother had appreciated the protection granted by the imperial soldiers' presence. They had taken a particular liking to the family's children. Stomma explained that they looked after him, spoiled him and functioned as his mentors; he in turn learned to speak the German language fluently and developed a lifelong interest in Germany, its people and culture.<sup>12</sup> His language skills in particular would allow him to play a central role in future Polish-German relations.

Many of Stomma's most important Polish networks and closest friendships were formed during his youth in Wilno. He attended the Sigismund August Gymnasium and later the Stefan Batory University together with other young men, including many future members of the post-war intellectual elite, such as Czesław Miłosz, Antoni Gołubiew, Czesław

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<sup>11</sup> For a discussion of this late and ongoing negotiation of state and nation boundaries in Eastern Europe, see Timothy Snyder, *The Reconstruction of the Nations*. For a visual depiction of the demographic, geopolitical and territorial changes, see also Paul Robert Magosci, *Historical Atlas of Eastern Europe* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1995).

<sup>12</sup> Wolfgang Pailer, *Stanisław Stomma*, 26.

Zgorzelski, Andrzej Świącicki and Aleksander Rymkiewicz. He and Gołubiew were also engaged in the Catholic youth movement “Rebirth” (*Odrodzenie*), through which they met Jerzy Turowicz, future editor of *Tygodnik Powszechny*. Turowicz’s mother-in-law lived in Wilno and was one of the sponsors of the movement’s journal, *Pax*.<sup>13</sup> In 1938, he also spent a year in Paris on a state scholarship, studying French and becoming more closely acquainted with the writings of the French Catholic philosophers Emmanuel Mounier and Jacques Maritain. French liberal Catholicism and French Catholic journals remained important to the Znak members personally and to the post-war writings of *Tygodnik Powszechny*. Turowicz, who had also spent extended time periods in France, and was more familiar with French than German, often spoke French with the West German Catholic intellectuals. The French affiliation of Stomma and Jerzy Turowicz strengthened their sense of affiliation with European, as opposed to Slavic, culture. This sense of belonging to an all-European but still intensely national cultural elite was typical of most Polish intellectuals.

By the time Nazi Germany invaded Poland, Stomma had returned from Paris to Wilno. Although he was personally predisposed to deviate from frequent historically based Polish fears and suspicions of Germany before 1939, the events of the Second World War eventually disabused him of his Germanophilia. In his memoirs written in 1991, he mentioned especially an action in 1941 when SS-soldiers in Wilno escorted several thousands of Jewish women, old people and children away to be shot, as a personal turning point. He wrote that at that time, he understood for the first time the full extent of the Nazi occupation’s brutality. This insight only struck him in the late parts of the war. In his part of Lithuania, the Red Army was the first occupier and the German counter-invasion was at least

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<sup>13</sup> Jarocki, *Czterdzieści pięć lat*, 48. The journal *Pax* was not connected to the movement “Pax” mentioned earlier.

temporarily considered a rescue from the Russians.<sup>14</sup> The German occupation for a long time was also more benevolent toward non-Jews in Wilno than in Warsaw or Krakow. These circumstances contributed to preserve Stomma's positive associations with the Germans. After the war, the contradictions between the German *Kultur* and language which he knew and appreciated and the terror of the Nazi apparatus increased rather than decreased his curiosity about the Germans. On a personal level as well as in his articles in *Tygodnik Powszechny* and *Więź*, he attempted to reconcile his conflicting images of the Germans.

Another leading figure in *Znak* was Stefan Kisielewski (1911-1991). He was born in Warsaw in 1911 as the son of a teacher, and a publisher and radio personality at the Warsaw radio. Stefan Kisielewski studied music at the conservatory in Warsaw and Polish literature at the university. In the interwar years, he wrote in center-right Polish journals and, between 1938 and 1939, spent a year in Paris studying French. In early 1939, his father arranged a position for him at the Polish radio as a music critic and he returned to Poland. When the war broke out, he was working in Warsaw. Since the German occupiers had closed the Warsaw radio, he survived by playing the piano in cafés and giving music lessons. He also wrote pamphlets for the Home Army (*Armia Krajowa*). During these years, he moved in the same circles as important artists, authors and intellectuals, such as Czesław Miłosz, Anna Świerszczyńska and Jerzy Andrzejewski.<sup>15</sup> Thus, the members of the *Znak* circle were multilingual, highly educated, well traveled and well connected. Their privileged position, which they kept after the war, facilitated their networking abroad and separated them from the large majority of the Polish post-war population.

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<sup>14</sup> Ibid, 42-44; See also Stanisława Lewandowska, *Losy wilnian: zapis rzeczywistości okupacyjnej: ludzie, fakty, wydarzenia 1939-1945* (Warsaw: Wydawnictwo Neriton, 2004).

<sup>15</sup> Jarocki, *Czerdzieści pięć lat*, 76.

Kisielewski was present in Warsaw during the Warsaw Uprising in August 1944, an event which had an enormous effect on the Polish postwar imagination and political thought. Organized by the Home Army, it broke out on August 1. It was an effort to defeat the remainders of the German army before the Red Army arrived, and in this way ensure Polish, not Russian, control over the capital. The uprising was brutally defeated and Warsaw practically leveled to the ground by the German forces. Most of the participants and leaders of the Home Army were killed.<sup>16</sup> Kisielewski, however, was injured on the third day of the uprising and managed to escape Warsaw as a civilian. Meanwhile, his wife and son, with whom he had lost contact during the last chaotic days of the uprising, were rounded up and sent to Germany. They were liberated by the Americans in a labor camp near Passau in 1945. Kisielewski's engagement in the Home Army, participation in the Uprising and his family's suffering functioned as a guarantee for his moral integrity in Poland during the 1950s.

After the war, distrusted by the state, Kisielewski became a professor at the Higher School for Music (*Wyższa Szkoła Muzyczna*) in Krakow and editor of the journal *Ruch Muzyczny* (Musical Movement). In addition, he published several novels. However, he wished to take a more concrete part in postwar politics and in Krakow he encountered the group around *Tygodnik Powszechny*, began to write for the weekly and also had a regular column on its last page. Like his colleagues in *Znak*, Kisielewski was silenced between 1953 and 1956. When the Catholic intellectuals received their journals back, Kisielewski became one of the representatives on the ballot for the Catholic group in the Sejm, where he became

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<sup>16</sup> Many historiographical debates surround the narrative of the Warsaw Uprising. For a detailed description, which very much takes the Polish perspective, see Norman Davies, *Rising '44. The Battle for Warsaw* (London: Pan Books, 1944).

one of its most outspoken and colorful members. Hansjakob Stehle wrote in 1964 that Kisielewski's presence in the Sejm was "not unpopular" among the communists, "since he counteracts the monotony in the parliament with pointed speeches."<sup>17</sup> In these years, he became known as the "Court Jester of the People's Republic." He had a unique status in Polish media of the late 1950s and early 1960s in that he successfully evaded much of the censorship and many restrictions that applied to other public figures. He was also a well known figure in Warsaw night life.

Stomma and Kisielewski initially developed the intellectual position of "neopositivism" to explain their engagement in communist politics despite their opposition to its ideology. Careful not to challenge the forceful Polish patriotism but rather reformulate it to fit their practical political stance, they drew from a long-standing dispute about Polish patriotism, that between the romantics and the positivists. In a defining statement, Stomma connected himself to the positivist tradition and explained that he wished for the new government to "count with the will of the nation, to take into consideration the nation such as it really is and not some abstract hypothetical representation of it."<sup>18</sup> He defined neopositivism as the acceptance of the existing *raison d'état* and alliance with the Soviet Union, the opposition to ideology, political method in contrast to political romanticism, compromise and the rejection of risks, violence and prestige politics. He argued that such a program was morally more justifiable than a romantic program of open resistance to the communists which would include the possible loss of both valuable lives as well as the

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<sup>17</sup> Hansjakob Stehle, "Vorwort," *An dieser Stelle Europas*, 12.

<sup>18</sup> Stanisław Stomma, "Dlaczego kandyduję do Sejmu," 20 January 1957

limited rights which had been acquired in the 1956 October Revolution.<sup>19</sup> The Znak circle's belief in the necessity of cooperation with the communist regime in the interest of the survival of the Polish state also became important in Znak's discussions and interactions with later West German conversation partners.

Neopositivism was a spin-off of positivism, one of two conflicting traditions which have been described extensively in Polish historiography. Within the romantic or insurrectionary tradition, true patriotism involved absolute opposition to one's oppressor and the readiness to give one's life for the nation, also when such a sacrifice was futile. National existence was conceived as keeping the lofty idea of the Polish nation alive by the power of the spirit, manifesting itself in heroic deeds, without reference to their practical results.<sup>20</sup> In terms of the relationship with Europe, the romantics saw Poland as a chosen nation, suffering for the rest of Europe. They also championed the idea of Poland as the *antemurale christianitatis*, the bastion protecting a civilized Christian Europe from the barbarian hordes in the east.

Positivist or conciliatory, Polish patriotism developed between 1863 and the early 1890s as a rhetorical device against the romantic tradition. The positivists, as represented by for example, the writer Bolesław Prus and the Krakow conservatives and by the late 19<sup>th</sup> century, Warsaw liberal intellectuals like Aleksander Świętochowski, argued forcefully for partial cooperation with the oppressors. They hoped that willingness to cooperate would give them certain freedoms. For them, patriotism meant organic work from within to improve the

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<sup>19</sup> Stanisław Stomma, "Pozytywizm od strony moralnej", *Tygodnik Powszechny*, 14 April 1957.

<sup>20</sup> Norman Davies, *God's Playground: A History of Poland, Vol. II* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1982), 3-80; Andrzej Walicki, "The three traditions in Polish Patriotism," 31. The third tradition in Davies' discussion is loyalism to the partitioning powers whereas in Walicki, it is the heritage of a federal multicultural state and the traditions of the noble democracy.

nation, its economy, education and civil society. The positivist tradition lost ground during the Second World War due to the uncompromising nature of Nazi occupation, but was revived again during communism by the Catholic Church, which nevertheless drew heavily on romantic tropes in its rhetorical stance, particularly in pitching itself as the representative of the nation, against the oppressive communist state.<sup>21</sup>

Znak drew on the positivist tradition in order to encourage the post-war development of civil society, to oppose passivity in the larger population, and decisively discourage open violent opposition, particularly since compromise in 1956 seemed to offer distinct advantages. Attaching his argument to historical national mythology belonging to the romantic tradition, Stanisław Stomma firmly opposed the actions of reckless heroes such as Tadeusz Kościuszko, and those responsible for the uprisings against the Russians in 1830 and 1863.<sup>22</sup> Stomma stated that these men were but a small, heroic group whose actions could only result in “disaster, and only disaster.” He modified his statement by adding that “being ‘heroic’ is good for a soldier but bad for a politician.”<sup>23</sup> The position of compromise and cooperation in Polish Catholicism was not always appreciated in international Catholic circles, which were sharply anti-communist. In a 1959 article named “In the Shadow of

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<sup>21</sup> The true accomplishment of Wyszyński, which both Hansjakob Stehle and Ludwig Zimmerer perceived, was to rhetorically and strategically invoke the romantic national spirit and cast the communist state as the eternal enemy and a foreign body, while at the same time, drawing heavily on positivism, discourage open revolt against the state. The church maintained this position until the mid-1970s.

<sup>22</sup> Tadeusz Kościuszko led a national uprising in 1794 in Warsaw against Russia and Prussia. After some months of fighting in the summer and fall, it was ultimately defeated, the leaders imprisoned or killed, the Polish king deported and the Polish kingdom ceased to exist. The rising in November 1830 began on a small scale but broadened when the Russian tsar demanded unconditional surrender of the Polish nation. As a reaction a greater number of Poles decided to join the uprising. The conflict lasted for almost a year and resulted in the loss of any autonomy. The 1863 uprising lasted sixteen months and the insurrectionaries were punished by executions and deportations. Russian authorities went to extremes to erase any traces of the Polish state and launched a program of Russification of the Poles.

<sup>23</sup> Stanisław Stomma, “Pozytywizm od strony moralnej”, *Tygodnik Powszechny*, 14 January 1957.



Winkelried,” a response to accusations in the Vatican newspaper *Osservatore Romano*, Stomma complained about the pressure on Polish Catholics to openly refuse cooperation with the communist regime.<sup>24</sup> There are people, he wrote, “who do not understand us and – in our opinion – evaluate Polish matters unjustly.” These people should remember “that in the last 200 years Poland had lived through three insane uprisings undertaken without any visible achievement and without any objective chances of success: 1830, 1863 and 1944.”<sup>25</sup> In answer to criticism of the Polish church’s cooperation with the communist state from the West and from Poles in emigration, he used history to justify his arguments. He mentioned Western betrayals in the Polish struggle against the partitioning powers and Nazi Germany, and reminded his readers of failed violent resistance in Poland. The decision to cooperate with the communists thus emerged both from historical national myths and his personal understanding of lived Polish history.

Practically, organic work to strengthen Poland and gradual change from within proved to be a challenge for the Znak circle. By functioning within the communist system, the group constantly had to weigh the advantages of cooperation against compromising their integrity. In the Sejm, the circle’s members attempted to gain a certain practical influence through various sub-committees in which they were active but their actual influence remained limited.<sup>26</sup> The members of Znak also had to weigh the considerations toward

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<sup>24</sup> Winkelried was a Swiss hero who saved an army when he stopped a spear by letting it pierce his own chest.

<sup>25</sup> Stanisław Stomma, “Cień Winkelrieda”, *Tygodnik Powszechny*, 21 June 1959. In 1944, the Warsaw uprising was an attempt of the inhabitants of Warsaw to take their fate in their own hand and defeat the German occupation before the Russian Red Army entered the city. Most of the Polish resistance movement in Warsaw disappeared in its devastating defeat as leaders of the Home Army and underground died in the fighting or were executed. The city was left in ruins.

<sup>26</sup> Andrzej Friszke, *Koło posłów “Znak” w Sejmie*.

Wyszyński, their protector, against the pressure to conform from the communist rulers. Their political and foreign political philosophy was developed in part to explain and protect their position in the Polish state. In addition, as their domestic position weakened, they compensated by emphasizing their importance to foreign relations. They received disproportionate media coverage by foreign press because of their unusual position, and developed excellent contacts in foreign media. Beginning in 1956 and 1957, *Znak* extended its contacts to include West German journalists and correspondents as well as Catholic media in Western Europe. Utilizing this media profile, they began lobbying through West German media for improved Polish-German relations and the acceptance of the Oder-Neisse Line.

The initial and most fundamental concern of Stanisław Stomma and Stefan Kisielewski was the strengthening of the Polish state, both internally and in relation to its neighbors. In 1956, as a programmatic declaration, Kisielewski wrote in *Tygodnik Powszechny* that “the Polish cause is thus the organizing principle of all our political deliberations.”<sup>27</sup> The Polish people needed 1) a biological existence, 2) independence and authenticity of its cultural-spiritual life, 3) forms of societal and economic organizations adjusted to its structure and situation and 4) state sovereignty. These considerations made sense in light of the multiple invasions and awareness of Poland’s historical weakness and instability, the partitions and the failure of the interwar state to survive.

The strengthening of the Polish state was also the fundamental argument which the *Znak* intellectuals used to lobby for acceptance of the Oder-Neisse Line. As a representative for Wrocław in the Sejm, Kisielewski was connected to the post-war residents in the border

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<sup>27</sup> Stefan Kisielewski, “Dwugłos o idealizmie. Czy neopozytywizm?” 25 December 1956.

areas.<sup>28</sup> About the border changes in east and west, he stated optimistically in the early 1960s that after the war “a new, united Poland emerged, which proved to be a viable creation. It was elastic and dynamic, and to a very high degree the result of a new geographic and ethnographic situation, a new historical situation and new geopolitics.”<sup>29</sup> In other words, he believed that the unmixing of the borderlands had strengthened and vitalized Poland.

While Kisielewski kept a certain personal distance to Catholicism, he still saw it as a fundamental aspect of Polish nationality and culture, and important for Poland’s survival. In 1946, he stated in an article that Poland’s Catholicism went beyond the religious to emphasize the entire culture. Furthermore, Catholicism to him also represented the essence of Europe. “Between the dry, strict and puritan Protestantism and the sensual, subconscious, exotic Orthodoxy, Catholicism is the symbol of that which is European,” Kisielewski wrote in 1946.<sup>30</sup> He continued to believe into the early 1960s that Poland’s deep roots in Catholicism as a European “western” philosophy and Marxist “eastern” societal development combined to shape the country’s tasks and duties in the post-war East-West conflict. In 1960, he wrote in *Tygodnik Powszechny* that bridging east and west was a

task for Catholics in this place in Europe and at this moment of Polish history. This task is not only important for Poland but for the entire world. It has a global-historical importance since on our soil, two systems are colliding, two worldviews, and two philosophies, the conditions of two concepts in opposition to one another; Catholic spiritualism and Marxist materialism.<sup>31</sup>

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<sup>28</sup> Mariusz Urbanek, *Kisiel*, 75.

<sup>29</sup> Kisielewski, *An dieser Stelle Europas*, 263.

<sup>30</sup> Kisielewski, “O ideologię polityczną współczesnego polaka,” *Tygodnik Warszawski*, 1946.

<sup>31</sup> Kisielewski, “W tym miejscu Europy,” *Tygodnik Powszechny*, 4 September 1960.

Postwar Poland was a unique place where, for the first time, Marxism and Catholicism coexisted. It was partially this mindset that led him to become active in Polish politics as a Catholic independent. However, the awareness of Poland's national and civilizational uniqueness was complemented by an understanding of Poland as a bridge-builder between east and west and the spiritual affiliation to Europe at large.

Similarly, Stomma combined the concerns for a strong and ethnically unified Poland with an acute awareness of Poland's place within the larger postwar European state system. While he rejected the romantic idea of loyalty between the European nations, and Poland as a defender of European freedom, he believed in the necessity of interstate partnerships within the Cold War alliance system. In his assessment of the Cold War political context, he considered Poland's affiliation with the Soviet Union necessary in order to neutralize the threat of Germany in the immediate future. In challenging idealistic and farfetched notions of patriotism and encouraging a practical program of strengthening the state and its position, he also appropriated some of the pre-war political leader Roman Dmowski's views on geopolitics and national politics. Cautiously, he stated that he approved of "a few – I emphasize, a few – of Dmowski's theses."<sup>32</sup> Like Dmowski, he understood Poland as a modern ethnic nation-state (not a spiritual nation) which needed to be realistic about its geographically difficult location on the European continent.<sup>33</sup> Stomma also shared Dmowski's assessment of European geopolitics in which Europe would be founded on modern nation-states rather than empires or multinational kingdoms. Through the war, the

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<sup>32</sup> Stanisław Stomma, "Pozytywizm od strony moralnej", *Tygodnik Powszechny*, 14 April 1957.

<sup>33</sup> An influential thinker on Polish geopolitics, Dmowski founded the modern nationalist movement (*Endecja*) in Poland and was a lifelong political competitor to Józef Piłsudski. According to Timothy Snyder, as a contrast to Dmowski's vision, Piłsudski "envisioned a Polish political nation floating above the multinational borderlands he called home." Snyder, *The Reconstruction of Nations*, 59. Also discussed in Walicki "The three traditions in Polish Patriotism," 34.

design of the victorious states in the Second World War, the Nazis and nationalist designs, this Europe had now, at least in part, become a reality.

A pre-war supporter of Piłsudskian federalism, Stomma did not share Dmowski's racist underpinnings, and also proposed very different solutions to the problems caused by Poland's geopolitical position and the existing tensions between nations. Stomma, Kisielewski and Jerzy Turowicz developed a specific political agenda for peace, which included a vision of Poland and its place within Europe. In an article from 1965 named "Peace and the Third World," Stomma and Turowicz connected the view on the (geo)political reality of states and lingering conflicts with an agenda for peace. They wrote:

Conflicts do not suddenly disappear nor do politicians turn into angels. There is no sense in chasing utopias. We must pose real goals, expressed in real categories. The desire to oppose the growing feeling of helplessness is a real category, and more than anything the opposition to extremist powers, who consciously or unconsciously create conflicts.<sup>34</sup>

The bottom line of this agenda included three important points: first, peace does not come from national idealism and cannot be created without interactions between nations; second, negotiation and dialogue are always preferable to violent protest; and third, peace in Europe could not be created without the negotiations and interactions between *states* with all their properties, borders, institutional governments, treaties, etc.<sup>35</sup> The agenda fit well with the neopositivist solution which they proposed for domestic progress.

The relationship with the Soviet Union provided Poland with protection but at the same time, given their feeling of belonging to European civilization and culture, the Catholic intellectuals wanted to tie Poland closer to Western Europe. Decreasing tensions and establishing relations with West Germany was an important part of their European agenda.

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<sup>34</sup> Stanisław Stomma and Jerzy Turowicz, "Pokój i trzeci świat", *Tygodnik Powszechny*, 23 May 1965.

<sup>35</sup> As seen in for example "Gdzie jesteście? Dokąd idziemy?" *Tygodnik Powszechny*, 17 January 1960, "Co naprawdę jest realne?" 4 September 1960, "Czy spać na bombie atomowej?" 24 September 1961.

Arguing for a proactive foreign policy stance to secure Poland's position, Stomma stated, "our participation will lead to closing the distance between east and west. Catholics in Poland want to be a link connecting east and west, and in this way serve peace."<sup>36</sup> In this way, through Stomma's personal sympathy for Germany and through the opportunities for interactions with the West Germans as West Europeans, the Catholic intellectuals arrived at their early efforts for Polish-German relations.

One way in which Znak could decrease tension in the historical perspective on Poland's relationship with Germany was to emphasize the post-war emergence of "other Germans" who were different from those who had partitioned, occupied and killed Poles during the first half of the twentieth century.<sup>37</sup> In the article "Was Hitler not a Prussian?" Znak entered into an on-going discourse about how to distinguish Prussian from other German political traditions and whether the Prussian tradition specifically was the root of National Socialism. Stomma argued that "Prussia was an idea more political than geographic, more a system than a country."<sup>38</sup> Prussianism (*Preussentum*) was not a nation but a caste of Junkers and a political-administrative order. In this respect, he concluded that although Hitler was not a Prussian, the Prussian system prepared the ground for totalitarianism in the Third Reich.

Stomma also strove to understand German Catholics and their position under National Socialism. For example, in the article "Why Capitulation (Catholicism in Germany)?" he attempted to explain the underlying reasons why many of the German

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<sup>36</sup> Stanisław Stomma, "Dlaczego kandyduję do Sejmu," *Tygodnik Powszechny*, 20 January 1957.

<sup>37</sup> Anna Wolff-Powęska, "Poszukiwanie drog dialogu. Świeckie elity wobec Niemiec," 389.

<sup>38</sup> Stanisław Stomma, "Czy Hitler nie był Prusakiem?" *Tygodnik Powszechny*, 27 September 1964.

Catholics had supported Hitler during the war. He based his analysis on two books, the autobiographical *Fazit* by Melita Maschmann (Stuttgart, 1963) and a socio-political study *Die Kapitulation oder Deutscher Katolizismus Heute* (The Capitulation or German Catholicism Today) by Carl Amery (Stuttgart, 1963). The great evil for Stomma was German nationalism. Because of nationalism, Melita Maschmann had been brought up not to hate Poles or Jews but to consider them something less than human beings. Also, in Carl Amery's book *Stomma* pointed to the evils of nationalism, involving the mindless loyalty to one's own nation in times of war.<sup>39</sup> He considered his own Polish patriotism to be far removed from its German counterpart.

Through defining some of the dominating aspects of Nazi Germany, such as Prussianism and nationalism, Stomma could begin to identify in the Federal Republic a new post-war German nation that would leave militarism and nationalism behind. Religion also played a role in that Protestants were considered primary aggressors while Catholics from the Rhineland did not fit as well with traditional anti-German Polish stereotypes. He was able to use history in order to create a distance between Germans in the past and present.<sup>40</sup> In the official propaganda, East Germans were the new, non-fascist Germans, but to *Znak*, reformed Catholics from West Germany were becoming potential conversation partners.

#### WEST GERMAN ACTIVISTS AFTER THE POLISH OCTOBER

While the official West German stance remained aloof, the end of Stalinism and East European reforms created a sense of curiosity in Bonn about the developments behind the

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<sup>39</sup> Stanisław Stomma, "Dlaczego skapitulowano (katolicyzm w Niemczech)" *Tygodnik Powszechny*, 15 September 1963.

<sup>40</sup> Also "Dwa nurty" from 23 March 1958 distinguished between two German traditions, the old, conservative one and a new attitude which might allow renewed contacts between Poles and Germans.

Iron Curtain. In September 1955, Adenauer had traveled to Moscow, a visit that was widely published because it resulted in the release of 10,000 West German POWs still held by the Soviet Union. While establishing official relations with the Soviet Union in 1955, Bonn meanwhile hardened its stance toward the rest of the eastern block by instituting the Hallstein Doctrine by which it would not maintain diplomatic relations with any nation which recognized the German Democratic Republic. Unofficially, the West German government still explored the possibility of normalization and contacts with the other East European states.<sup>41</sup>

Bonn's interest in Polish-German relations was at its highpoint in the months following the Polish October. This was a time when contacts with Polish counterparts were initiated and Adenauer privately expressed the need for *rapprochement* with Poland. Some of these contacts were made through West German diplomats in Europe, and between the West German and Polish diplomats to Washington DC in a series of secret meetings.<sup>42</sup> However, Bonn also began a practice of using unofficial diplomats, such as business men and journalists, as go-betweens in Polish-German relations. This development was an outcome of the lack of professional diplomats to mediate and negotiate the interstate relations combined with an acute need for reliable and accurate information. One of the first such intermediaries was the Catholic journalist Klaus Otto Skibowski who was sent to Poland in 1957 on a state-sponsored reconnaissance mission.

Klaus Otto Skibowski was born in 1927 in Lyck (postwar Elk), Masuria, and thus came from an expellee background. He was a soldier on the eastern front during the Second

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<sup>41</sup> Ahonen, *After the Expulsions*, 122.

<sup>42</sup> *Ibid.*, 126.



World War and began his career as a journalist in 1946. Employed by the NDR, Hessische Rundfunk and the Catholic News Agency, he also belonged to the circle around Konrad Adenauer, and served as Adenauer's public relations specialist. Skibowski had connections in Poland since his father was an old acquaintance of the Polish Cardinal Stefan Wyszyński, with whom he had studied music in Gdańsk before the war. This personal connection to the Catholic Church and Skibowski's professional cover as a journalist made him particularly suited for diplomatic missions to Poland.

He traveled between April 19 and May 7 in 1957 at the official invitation of the Catholic Church. About his travels, he produced a private informational report for Adenauer as well as an article for *Rheinischer Merkur*.<sup>43</sup> In addition, he made a short film and took pictures which were later used for Adenauer's election campaign.<sup>44</sup> Of the two reports, one was longer, official, did not use any names and described in general terms the situation in Poland and the mood among the population, focusing largely on the question of the remaining German ethnic minority. The second report was more detailed, mentioned names of important Catholic representatives and allies, and considered certain military and security questions. In an interview in 2005, Skibowski commented that "there were always two levels to the relations with Poland."<sup>45</sup> He differed between the private, unofficial level and the official, political line. His reports and approach was focused on the Soviet dominance of

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<sup>43</sup> Klaus Otto Skibowski, "Polen und Europa. Offene Gespräche hinter den Oder-Neisse," *Rheinischer Merkur*, 24 May 1957.

<sup>44</sup> Klaus Otto Skibowski, interview by Annika Frieberg, Bonn, 3 February 2005.

<sup>45</sup> Ibid.

Poland, the martyrdom of the Polish Catholic Church during communism. He also believed firmly in the Polish cultural and spiritual affiliation with the west.<sup>46</sup>

Skibowski, relying on information from Cardinal Wyszyński and the Catholic episcopate in Warsaw, introduced *Znak* and *Tygodnik Powszechny* as the backbone of Polish Catholic political life. Skibowski reported that among Polish Catholic groups, *Znak* was the “strongest and the only one of importance.”<sup>47</sup> Stomma was described as the political leader of *Znak*, the spiritual leader of *Tygodnik Powszechny* and a personal friend of Cardinal Wyszyński. However, Skibowski also emphasized that *Znak* stood fully behind Gomułka. “Stomma does nothing without the government’s agreement, that is, the responsible minister.”<sup>48</sup> His report emphasized that the Catholic opposition in 1957 protected its position in the Sejm and relative freedom of speech through their obedience to the authorities.

Skibowski, in his own descriptions, had come to terms with the loss of the Heimat by this time. Nevertheless, he did not believe in recognizing the Oder-Neisse Line. He reported that Stomma was easy to convince that West Germany or the West German Catholics had no aggressive intentions with regards to Poland but that “the time [was] was not yet ripe” to talk about the Oder-Neisse Line.<sup>49</sup> This statement could have several meanings. Either Stomma did not want to risk alienating Adenauer, whom he hoped to engage in dialogue, or he did not want to discuss the infected border issue with Skibowski, whom he knew to be an expellee.

As a Catholic and journalist with previous contacts in Poland, Skibowski was sympathetic to the Polish people and, as he understood it, their struggle against communism.

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<sup>46</sup> Klaus Otto Skibowski, “Polen und Europa,” *Rheinischer Merkur*, 24 May 1957.

<sup>47</sup> Klaus Skibowski, report, private copy in possession of author, 1957, 1.

<sup>48</sup> *Ibid.*, 3.

<sup>49</sup> *Ibid.*, 4.

However, as a CDU representative with an eye to the West German domestic election campaign, and as an expellee within a milieu which still had not come to terms with the loss of his Heimat, he could not reconcile his sympathy for Poland with his rejection of the emerging Polish-German activism. Skibowski did not share the Znak circle's belief in reform from the inside and compromise. In addition, the Bundestag election drew Adenauer as well as Skibowski away from any Polish initiatives.<sup>50</sup> Still, throughout the late 1950s, Skibowski continued to be an interesting contact to the Znak circle. Through Skibowski's report and intervention, Stanisław Stomma was invited to West Germany for the first time in 1958. In many ways, Stanisław Stomma felt closer to center-right Catholics such as Skibowski in the Federal Republic than to the leftwing Catholics and Social Democrats who proved more interested in concrete measures toward Polish-German relations.

Skibowski later described the conflict between his sympathy for the Polish Catholics and his sense of alienation from their practical agendas in his semi-autobiographical novel *Wolken über weitem Land* (Clouds over a Wide Land). In connection with the Polish bishops' correspondence in 1965, he wrote;

Ottchen [his alter ego] felt involved but now, in the 1960s, he had no connections anymore, neither with the Polish nor the German bishops. He welcomed the reconciliation but that was it. At that, he had repeatedly emphasized that a German reunification could only follow after the fall of communism and that it would no doubt be initiated from Poland, but his remained a lone voice and over time, he dropped this argument since he did not want constant discussions.<sup>51</sup>

As his example showed, expellees, familiar with the country, with pre-war connections to the Polish people, could in this way become important as intermediators. Many of the leading activists, including Klaus von Bismarck, Marion Countess Dönhoff, Manfred Seidler,

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<sup>50</sup> Ahonen, *After the Expulsions*, 126; Klaus Otto Skibowski, interview by Annika Frieberg.

<sup>51</sup> Skibowski, *Wolken über weitem Land*, 384.

Winfried Lipscher were also expellees. At the same time, Skibowski's case also showed that sympathy for the Polish people did not suffice for involvement with the 1960s Polish-German relations activism, given their specific trappings of political compromise.

The next effort by Bonn to explore the possibility of interactions with Gomułka's Poland using an unofficial state representative took place in 1959. This time, the state-subsidized conduit was Berthold Beitz, the CEO of Krupp Industries. Beitz lived in Poland during the Second World War. As a manager for a gasoline production plant in Poland, he became famous for saving hundreds of Jews and Poles from the concentration camps.<sup>52</sup> In 1958 and 1960, he was officially invited to Poland and negotiated with high-level communist leaders about a partial opening of official relations. The intent of the Beitz mission was to establish economic ties to Poland without tampering with the official policy of the Hallstein Doctrine or recognizing the Oder-Neisse Line. Beitz remained an important figure in Polish-German relations and was also invited to accompany Willy Brandt in 1970 to sign the bilateral treaty. His involvement, more so than that of Skibowski, indicated that it was possible for the states to successfully use a non-political go-between in the relations. Beitz's efforts resulted in the 1963 exchange of trade missions between Bonn and Warsaw.<sup>53</sup>

Another consequence of the Thaw was that after 1956, West German correspondents could once more become accredited and work openly in Poland. Ludwig Zimmerer's career was jump-started by the fact that he was the only West German journalist present in Poland at the beginning of the 1956 Thaw. A young Catholic publisher with Socialist ideals, Zimmerer arrived in Poland expecting to find a successful experimental cooperation between

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<sup>52</sup> Hansjakob Stehle, *Nachbar Polen* (Frankfurt/Main: Samuel Fischer, 1963), 321.

<sup>53</sup> Stehle, *Nachbar Polen*, 322-333; Krszysztof Ruchniewicz, *Zögernde Annäherung*, 121-132.

a communist state and the Catholic Church, the only one of its kind across the globe. He had first visited Poland in 1955 through an invitation by the communist-Catholic organization Pax.<sup>54</sup> In 1956, he returned and when the strikes began in Poland, he contacted *Die Welt* and asked whether they were interested in eye-witness reports. After writing a few freelance articles, he was hired by *Die Welt* as its permanent correspondent and became the first accredited West German correspondent to Warsaw.<sup>55</sup>

Zimmerer was born in 1924 in Augsburg. Having just finished the gymnasium, he was enrolled in the army in the last war year of the Second World War but never actually saw battle. Instead, he became a prisoner of war in France where he learned fluent French.<sup>56</sup> Returning to Augsburg, he was part of a leftwing circle and in 1949, he settled in Essen with his wife, Margaret, and attempted to make a living translating and publishing French literature. The couple wanted to “bear Christian witness” and primarily published books with theological and Marxist themes.<sup>57</sup> In addition, they opened a second-hand bookstore and Zimmerer translated publications from French into German. They seem to have belonged to a fairly small sub-culture of Catholic youth.

In 1952, Zimmerer founded a Christian-Marxist publication named *Glaube und Vernunft* (Faith and Common Sense), together with the group in which he was active, “The Working Committee for Catholic Youth Against Rearmament Policy.” The publication

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<sup>54</sup> Joanna Olczak-Ronikier, interview by Annika Frieberg; Hansjakob Stehle, interview by Annika Frieberg.

<sup>55</sup> Joanna Olczak-Ronikier, interview by Annika Frieberg.

<sup>56</sup> Ibid.

<sup>57</sup> These facts are taken from a correspondence between Zimmerer and Walter Dirks in which Zimmerer introduced himself and attempted to secure support, financial and otherwise, from Dirks, the wellknown media personality. Ludwig Zimmerer to Walter Dirks, 23 September 1949, Nachlass Walter Dirks, Box 47A, FES.

received a certain attention but the early 1950s was not a good time for a group such as his. The Working Committee was barred from the “Alliance of Catholic Youth” (Bund der Katholischen Jugend) and the publication as well as Zimmerer himself struggled with serious financial difficulties.<sup>58</sup> Zimmerer found a supporter and patron in Walter Dirks but the cooperation with *Frankfurter Hefte* never developed fully and was further soured by a financial conflict. When the Constitutional Court closed down every communist press in the Federal Republic in 1956, Zimmerer had already made the decision to leave West Germany for Poland.

Once in Poland, Zimmerer quickly became disillusioned with real-life communism, its bureaucracy and idiosyncracies and with the authoritarianism and political maneuvering of the Catholic Church as well. Hansjakob Stehle, who knew him in those first years, wrote in an obituary for Zimmerer about his first meeting with “this Catholic Swabian from Augsburg with his Marxist tendencies, who now experienced the first great surge of hope of October 1956 in Poland and was forced to bury his own illusions at that.”<sup>59</sup> Although he buried his illusions about the positive Polish experiment, Zimmerer continued to operate on the assumption that inflexible anti-communism was an unproductive approach to understanding and interacting with Poland. From personal experience, he knew and sympathized with the appeal of the communist promise of a new and better world but, given his loss of faith in those ideals, was also more keenly aware of its actual failures and shortcomings.

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<sup>58</sup> Ludwig Zimmerer to Arbeitskreis katholischer Jugend gegen die Wiederaufrüstungspolitik, 27 October 1952, Nachlass Walter Dirks, Box 80A, FES; Ludwig Zimmerer, Ludwig Zimmerer to Walter Dirks, 27 November 1954, Nachlass Walter Dirks, Box 102, FES.

<sup>59</sup> Hansjakob Stehle, “Nachruf auf Ludwig Zimmerer,” *Norddeutscher Rundfunk Information Nr. 38/87*, 28 September 1987.

Zimmerer's early articles for *Die Welt* reflected his disenchantment with the Polish experiment in that they were concerned with the boundaries and reversals of the reforms that had taken place in 1956. However, while the ideological foundation of the state disappointed him, he soon formed a vivid interest in, and close connection with, the Polish society and people. He began to report not only on the communist developments but on the mood and opinion of the population. In 1958, two years after the Polish October, he wrote about Gomułka that by the time he came to power he was a "man of high reputation but in no way an idol for the people."<sup>60</sup> Gomułka disappointed a majority of people in Polish society who had felt a certain optimism about this regime change since his liberal reforms were quickly sacrificed in favor of maintaining stability between different groups of communists, as well as soothing the Soviet Union and keeping control over society.

Zimmerer had a keen sense of the discontent of the larger population. He noticed in many "especially in the young people, a nearly desperate longing to do something beyond simply providing for oneself, despite the suspicion against great ideas, a need to become involved with something."<sup>61</sup> As his personal involvement with Poland and the Polish people grew through emerging friendships and his marriage to a Polish actress, his understanding of his role as a reporter changed from being an investigator to becoming a translator of the specific Polish situation. Throughout his career as a correspondent, he continued to connect with and look for Poland beyond the political level. He listened in on the coffee shop gossip

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<sup>60</sup> Ludwig Zimmerer, "Polens Experiment," *Die Welt*, 12 March 1958.

<sup>61</sup> Ibid.

and late night bar conversations, and visited villages away from Warsaw in order to access the Poland that existed outside of the pages of the communist press.<sup>62</sup>

Unlike the heroic depictions of church resistance in the West German Catholic descriptions, such as those of Skibowski, Zimmerer's criticism of the Polish Catholic bishops in these early years was nearly as pointed as his criticism of the communist state. In an article from 1958 titled "A Chasm Divides Poland. Cold War Between State and Church" Zimmerer stated that the state attempted to pressure the church, but that the church cut a bad figure in the conflict as well. Catholic instruction in schools was one of the battlegrounds in the conflict, and Zimmerer named the Protestants in Polish small towns, whose children were treated as outsiders for not participating in Catholic instruction, as some of the victims in this conflict. "But all these circles of Protestant Christians, democratic-liberal intelligentsia, and also more open Catholics and communists regret this conflict."<sup>63</sup> From Zimmerer's perspective, the population was the victim of the conflict between two powerful institutions. The church, far from a passive victim, shared responsibility for the escalation of the conflict.

Describing Poland to outsiders, Zimmerer resisted all romantic depictions of the past and present, including the mythological status of the Catholic Church and the Cardinal. On a 1965 reading list for a first time visitor to Poland, he included Tadeusz Borowski, who wrote one of the darkest descriptions of Auschwitz in which the camp experience turned the inmates into ruthless survivors shedding all trappings of civilization; Sławomir Mrożek, who wrote plays and short stories about the bureaucratic absurdities of the communist state; and

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<sup>62</sup> Ludwig Zimmerer, "Eine Stadt hilft sich selbst. Im neuen Polen haben die Gemeinden schöpferische Möglichkeiten," *Die Welt*, 4 February 1958. "Der Überfall von Olkusz. Streit mit den Nationalkirchlichen in Polen," *Die Welt*, 15 May 1958.

<sup>63</sup> Ludwig Zimmerer, "Eine Kluft zerreisst Polen. Kalter Krieg zwischen dem Staat und der Kirche," *Die Welt*, 19 August 1958, Ludwig Zimmerer, "'Gegensätze wie Feuer und Wasser' Aber Staat und Kirche in Polen wünschen keinen offenen Konflikt," *Die Welt*, 16 March 1960.



Jerzy Andrzejewski's *Ashes and Diamonds*, about Poland in the immediate aftermath of the Second World War. Meanwhile, traditional romantic literature such as the writings by Henryk Sienkiewicz or Adam Mickiewicz was completely absent from his reading list.<sup>64</sup>

In the first years after his arrival, Zimmerer developed an extensive and solid network of intellectuals, communist journalists and artists in Warsaw and Krakow. He became acquainted with members of *Znak* and *Tygodnik Powszechny*, particularly with Jerzy Turowicz, who often stayed with the Zimmerers when he visited Warsaw. Zimmerer introduced *Tygodnik Powszechny* to the readers of *Die Welt* as a magazine subsidized by Cardinal Wyszyński, and *Znak* as a group that experimented with limited cooperation with the communists.<sup>65</sup> He agreed with many of the political conclusions drawn by the members of *Znak* such as the importance of engaging the larger population in improving the state. As Zimmerer concluded his report, "Perhaps many of the difficulties in Poland today would be solved if the communist leadership of the country knew to use a simple and open language like that of the Catholic parliament member Kisielewski, who is in no way a socialist but feels co-responsible for the fate of the people."<sup>66</sup> Zimmerer complemented his daily browsing of the communist press, the duty of foreign correspondents, by reading *Tygodnik Powszechny*. From his early years in Poland, Zimmerer drew on the *Znak* network for his political understandings and conclusions. In the 1960s, he was one of the few correspondents in Warsaw who spoke Polish fluently.

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<sup>64</sup> Ludwig Zimmerer to Klaus von Bismarck, 17 October 1963, Nachlass Klaus von Bismarck, Polenreise 1964, HA-WDR.

<sup>65</sup> Ludwig Zimmerer, "'In Polen denkt jeder nur an sich.' Katholische Kreise sprechen offen über politische Missstände," *Die Welt*, 9 November 1959.

<sup>66</sup> *Ibid.*

In addition to Zimmerer's first Polish network, his understanding of Polish culture and language skills were to a very high degree a result of private connections, specifically of his second marriage to Joanna Olczakówna. Olczakówna was one of the original actors at a famous Krakow cabaret, *Piwnica pod baranami* (Basement under the Rams, named after the building, Palace under the Rams, where it was housed) which opened in 1956. About a half year after his arrival in Poland, Zimmerer decided that he wanted to write about the *Piwnica pod baranami* and came to Krakow. Joanna Olczak-Ronikier remembered: "This was how we met but back then we only spoke French because he still didn't know any Polish and I didn't know German. Well, and that was a great love. That was why he wanted to learn Polish."<sup>67</sup> Apart from the actors of the cabaret, the *Piwnica* gathered poets, jazz musicians, authors and regime opponents in Krakow. In addition, Joanna Olczakówna's mother Hanna Mortkowicz-Olczakowa was a well-known Polish literary figure with a circle of artistic and intellectual friends in Warsaw.<sup>68</sup> Zimmerer, who connected easily to all kinds of people and soon spoke Polish without a German accent, thus quickly became friendly with the avant-garde in both Krakow and Warsaw.

In his first years, like all foreign correspondents Zimmerer lived in Hotel Bristol in Warsaw but later he moved into a house at Dąbrowiecka Street 28 in Warsaw. Having his own residence contributed to his ability to represent and network. Whereas correspondents at Bristol might invite a few people to their rooms for drinks but had limited space, the Zimmerers became famous for their large-scale Friday night gatherings, where one could

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<sup>67</sup> Joanna Olczak-Ronikier, interview by Annika Frieberg.

<sup>68</sup> In 2001, Joanna Olczak-Ronikier wrote a memoir about her family of Jewish intellectuals who was spread over the Habsburg Empire, Poland and Russia and became established among the Polish intelligentsia through her grandfather Jakub Mortkowicz in *W ogrodzie pamięci* (Krakow: Wydawnictwo Znak, 2001).

meet the elites of Warsaw, both intellectual and artistic and even parts of the communist circles. In communist Poland, open discussions and interactions took place primarily in private homes, not public spaces, but Zimmerer's home was not quite a private space since it was watched, bugged and all his telephones were tapped. During the gatherings, the security police waited in cars outside the house and recorded the license plate numbers of all cars parked on the street. In the house, since Zimmerer's wage as a West German correspondent allowed him to live well and spend generously in Poland, alcoholic beverages flowed as freely as the conversation.

The Friday night gatherings became an occasion for visiting West Germans to meet and interact with Polish circles.<sup>69</sup> The peculiar combination of artists, authors, intellectuals and a few communist representatives, of alcohol, art and state control became a trademark for Zimmerer's own brand of cultural diplomacy for almost a quarter century. WDR general director Klaus von Bismarck wrote in a 1965 letter to the editor of *Tygodnik Powszechny* Jerzy Turowicz, "Though we were not able to speak in peace and quiet at the joyful fairground of Ludwig Zimmerer's reception, I was still very glad that we met again and that I could give you some information about the things – particularly in the church realm – that have preoccupied me since our last meeting."<sup>70</sup> A few years later, Stefan Kisielewski reported in his diary:

I was at a monstrous reception at Ludwig Zimmerer's, a strange German journalist, who has been here for fifteen years already and is the husband of Joasia Mortkowiczówna (Joanna Olczak). The apartment was haunted: thousands of saints, wayside figures, naïve paintings – what a collection! The company was bizarre, mixed, Mandalian, Stomma, Rakowski, Małcużyński, Germans, young people, lots of whisky, a very odd Viennese journalist, the Swiss Mr. Balwany. I spoke with journalists from *Trybuna Ludu* (Luliński).<sup>71</sup>

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<sup>69</sup> Joanna Olczak-Ronikier, interview by Annika Frieberg.

<sup>70</sup> Klaus von Bismarck to Jerzy Turowicz, Cologne, 15 June 1965, AJT correspondence.

<sup>71</sup> Stefan Kisielewski, 25 April 1971, *Dzienniki* (Warsaw: Iskry, 2001), 594.

As the first foreign correspondent in Warsaw, Zimmerer also became a mentor to several generations of correspondents, not only West German but also from other countries. Renate Marsch-Potocka, who became a correspondent for dpa (*deutsche presse agentur*) from 1965 and Angela Nacken, who was a correspondent for *Frankfurter Allgemeine* after Hansjakob Stehle, were both mentored by Zimmerer.<sup>72</sup> Also, Krzysztof Bobiński, who arrived in Poland in 1976 as correspondent for the *Times*, mentioned the West German as a protector and teacher.<sup>73</sup> In this way, simply by providing a meeting place and useful practical information, Zimmerer was able to play an enormous role in establishing contacts between Poles and Germans and in introducing useful Polish contacts and Warsaw bureaucratic idiosyncrasies to other foreign correspondents as well as visitors.

Fluent in Polish, French and German, with Catholic and socialist networks stretching back to the early post-war days, charismatic, personable and highly intelligent, Zimmerer was the perfect networker and non-state activist. However, he was never trusted as a state mediator. He had arrived from West Germany as a figure on the margins, with Marxist leanings. To the West German state, his profile was that of an artist and wild card, and those kinds of personalities seldom make reliable diplomats. However, over time, his West German connections improved also on political levels though, unlike Stomma, Beitz or Skibowski, he never functioned as a direct back channel to the states.<sup>74</sup>

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<sup>72</sup> Renate Marsch-Potocka, telephone interview with Annika Frieberg, 7 July 2005.

<sup>73</sup> Barbara Polak, "Wszystko pod kontrolą: o inwigilacji zachodnich korespondentów z Krzysztofem Bobińskim, Bernardem Margueritte i Krzysztofem Persakiem rozmawia Barbara Polak," *Biuletyn Instytutu Pamięci Narodowej*, Nr 11(46), November 2004, 18.

<sup>74</sup> At least, there are no recorded cases of the states using him as a go-between. The journalists and colleagues, such as Stehle and Lipscher, whom I spoke with made no mention of it and neither did the memorial writings that exist on Zimmerer, including an article in *Feinde werden Freunde*, a 2004 radio manuscript from NDR or his obituaries. His first wife, Joanna Olczak, also did not mention any state connection though she also

Another beneficiary of the 1956 Polish October was Hansjakob Stehle. When Stehle became Poland correspondent to the *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung* in 1957, he had little previous experience with the country but a respectable pedigree as a political expert. Born in 1927 in Ulm, he finished primary school and gymnasium there. During the last months of the war, he served on the home front and, in the following months, became a prisoner of war. At the university, he studied philosophy, history and international law, and earned his Ph.D. in 1950. Thus, his journalistic career began in 1950 as the Federal Republic's media scene was expanding drastically at the end of the license-press era. Through a personal connection, he was hired by a local newspaper in Würzburg but in 1955 he advanced to the larger and more influential daily *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*. With an academic degree, a network of elite media personalities in the Frankfurt area and employment at one of West Germany's largest daily newspapers, Stehle was perfectly positioned to become a respected expert on Poland.

However, Stehle owed many of his Polish connections to Zimmerer, who had contacted him in 1955 or 1956 because of an article by Stehle in the *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung* on the Polish Catholic Church and the positive signs that Stalinism was ending in Poland. Zimmerer, who according to Stehle had good connections with Bolesław Piasecki and "Pax," was able to invite Stehle along to visit Poland in early 1956. As a consequence of this first trip behind the Iron Curtain, and writings on the Polish Catholic Church, when his newspaper decided to send a correspondent to Warsaw a year later, Stehle was selected. He

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said that she knew very little of his professional life. According to Winfried Lipscher, Zimmerer also did not have any form of archive for his own writings or work.

was at that time the newspaper's only political journalist with any previous experience in Poland.<sup>75</sup>

As a newcomer in Warsaw, Stehle set about making his own connections and learning to understand the Polish system. Apart from Zimmerer, he was one of the few correspondents who learned to speak the language and he did very well with establishing contacts among the communist elites, but also on other levels of society. Of course, his networking was complicated by the fact that the state discouraged contacts between Poles and westerners. His relations with Zimmerer remained good and he benefited from the latter's connections. He also developed connections with moderate communist journalists, such as Mieczysław Rakowski, editor of *Polityka*, with reformers, such as the philosophy professor Leszek Kołakowski, and with the Znak circle, particularly Stefan Kisielewski.

Unlike Zimmerer, Stehle retained stronger ties to West Germany, keeping an apartment in Frankfurt am Main and making Berlin his permanent residence once his children were of school age. His main networks remained with German circles, particularly the young journalistic elites in West German press, television and radio among which he counted himself. His credentials, academic degree, and Polish language ability elicited respect from the political, intellectual and academic elites in West Germany. His background in international relations history and political science also gave him a larger perspective on the Polish-German relations. Stehle became politically involved to a higher degree than Zimmerer.

In reworking Polish-German relations and overcoming stereotypes and antagonisms in West German press, radio and television, Stehle depended on his ability to write in an

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<sup>75</sup> Hansjakob Stehle, interview by Annika Frieberg.

easily accessible but at the same time academic and political style. Unlike Zimmerer, he arrived in Poland without many preconceptions about its state and society, and learned from the situation which he found in Poland at that particular point of time. Not only his professional career but also his political opinions and solutions, which will be described in the coming chapters, were founded on his understanding of late 1950s Poland.

## CONCLUSION

The Polish October had three important consequences for Polish-German relations. First, it led to the emergence of the Znak Circle and the Catholic intellectuals as semi-independent voices within Polish society and important focal points for West German curiosity and hopes concerning the Polish developments in 1956. The Znak circle developed its political philosophy based on a need to explain and justify their state cooperation. However, their efforts to explain their own position through reformulating and recycling important Polish nationalist tropes and narratives also had important consequences for West German understandings of the situation in Poland. The circle emphasized the importance of compromise, gradual change, reform from the inside and organic work to strengthen and protect the Polish state within a tense international situation. Their vision also influenced Zimmerer's and Stehle's perceptions of Poland in the late 1950s, and through them, the images of Polish communism in West German elite media. This philosophy also justified West German activists' acceptance of communists as conversation partners in Polish-German relations for the sake of gradual reform and in the interest of the Polish state's survival.

Another important tenet of Znak's philosophy was its geopolitical understanding. Stomma and Kisielewski believed that an ethnically and religiously unified Poland, without its minorities, was a stronger state. In this, they drew on Dmowskian concepts of a concrete

Polish nation state conceived in ethnic categories and with firm borders. However, they did not support Dmowski's racist hierarchies between European people nor did they believe in the inevitability of strife between nations. Instead, they continually emphasized the importance of building peace and improving interstate relations within the boundaries and limitations of the existing Cold War system and alliances. They emphasized the necessity of good relations with the Soviet Union to protect the Polish state's existence but meanwhile they felt deeply connected with European, not "Slavic," civilization and culture. This connection, as well as the emphasis on peace and on protecting the western border through negotiation and interaction with the Federal Republic, led to their initial activism in Polish-German relations. As time went by and the Znak representatives' role in, and compromise with, the Gomułka state became increasingly hollow, they began to reformulate Polish-German and foreign relations to become the key justification for the group's efforts. In this way, Stomma came to describe 1956 as the beginning point of Polish-German reconciliation.

The second important outcome of the opening in 1956 was the increasing importance of unofficial diplomats in information gathering and negotiations between Poland and the Federal Republic. The Thaw created a need for new contacts while the states were still not prepared to officially recognize each other. As a solution, actors such as Beitz, Skibowski, Stomma and, later, Stehle were utilized in the state contacts. Under Adenauer, an expellee representative such as Skibowski was well situated to fulfill this role. As the emphasis in the relations became more focused on cooperation with the communist government and on recognition of the lost territories in the 1960s, CDU affiliates and firm opponents to communism such as Skibowski no longer had a place in the relations. Initially, however, the



Polish Catholics would have preferred cooperation with Christian Democrats to the liberal journalists and leftwing Catholics who eventually became their official partners.

Thirdly, West German journalists could once more become accredited and work in Poland as correspondents. Ludwig Zimmerer and Hansjakob Stehle were among the earliest accredited journalists, the ones with the largest networks and the best knowledge of the Polish language. However, their backgrounds and initial expectations when arriving to Poland differed significantly. Zimmerer arrived to Poland with expectations about a successful Polish attempt to build a new form of state in which Catholicism and socialism could coexist peacefully. He quickly became disillusioned while at the same time becoming deeply involved, on a personal level, with the Polish society and people. His contacts, language abilities and networking skills elevated him to a non-state actor and non-state diplomat in the relations but, at least in the 1960s, he did not function as a state mediator, most likely because his profile did not inspire trust in the Adenauer government and because he lacked the West German contacts that might have introduced him to such a role.

By contrast, Hansjakob Stehle had all the right merits to become an unofficial state actor except for any form of sympathy for the CDU and Adenauer. He had a doctorate in political science and history, an elite media network and employment with a very prestigious West German news organ. Stehle arrived in Poland with little knowledge of the country and applied his learning skills not only to the language but also to the study of the state and society. His understanding of Poland was closely linked to the late 1950s Gomułka regime. As such, his image of Poland became strongly colored by the Polish October with its national independence, limited political freedoms and state-church interactions, which Stehle, unlike

Zimmerer, never regarded as a failed experiment and disappointment but as a unique case study of state and society under communism.

### CHAPTER 3

#### “A BEGINNING HAD BEEN MADE”: ZNAK INTELLECTUALS IN WEST GERMANY, 1957-1964

Between 1957 and 1962, the Catholic Znak circle argued that the partial West German acceptance of cooperation with the Polish communist state was in the interest of Poland's independence and cross-border dialogue. Beginning in 1957, the members of Znak traveled abroad and toured the Federal Republic promoting contacts and improvements in Polish-German relations. Their efforts were facilitated by the political opening in 1956 and supported by the journalists with whom they had established contacts in the wake of the Polish October. In addition, it corresponded chronologically with new liberal tendencies in West German society, in which broader societal groups began to question the societal consensus and take a new interest in the German past.<sup>1</sup> These liberal West German media elites included Ludwig Zimmerer and Hansjakob Stehle, German liberal Catholic intellectuals such as Heinrich Böll and the journalists employed by the large radio stations such as Paul Botta and Walter Dirks.<sup>2</sup> In traveling to West Germany, the members of Znak, in particular Stomma, had high hopes and expectations. The collective experiences but also

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<sup>1</sup> These new broader tendencies have been discussed in Herbert, *Wandlungsprozesse in Westdeutschland*, and also in Edgar Wolfrum, *Die geglickte Demokratie. Geschichte der Bundesrepublik von ihren Anfänge bis zum Gegenwart* (Stuttgart: Klett-Cotta, 2006). These institutionalized developments were not connected directly to Poland but to institutionalized processes of embedding the democracy, a process of which rethinking the past was an important aspect.

<sup>2</sup> Many of the sources dealing with these events were texts by, or interviews with, the actors themselves from the early 1990s or 2000s. It has been a particular challenge to distinguish between the political contextualization and significance assigned in these late sources compared to the earlier ones.

the differences between Stomma's and Kisielewski's expectations and results in their travels to West Germany served to adjust and reframe the agenda for Znak's Polish-German relations work during the 1960s.

To illustrate these developments, the chapter consists of four larger sections which analyzes the Znak circle's travels and their effects on Polish and West German society and media. In 1957, the Catholic Press Congress in Vienna inspired the Znak circle to extend their work abroad because of the great interest and sympathy extended to them by the western delegations attending this conference. Consequently, in 1958, Stanisław Stomma visited West Germany. This journey became a measure of the limited opportunities for impact in West German society. Stomma was aware of the importance of finding a network in West Germany but he had to reconsider where to search for his contacts. The third section on Stefan Kisielewski and his 1962 travels in the Federal Republic further emphasizes the importance of the publicity aspects of the relations in the early 1960s. A media figure in the Federal Republic, a charismatic but not always pleasant truth-teller, Kisielewski used his West German media contacts for access to public space, but he was also used by West German media to expose and criticize West German society from an outsider perspective. The fourth and final section discusses the "ripple effects" of the travels and writings by Kisielewski and how Stehle and Zimmerer communicated them to a broader public.

The Polish activists themselves, and the researchers who have analysed their early effects on Polish-German relations have not necessarily considered their media effects within a dual national framework. Unless discussed in personal memoirs and remembrances, the

Znak circle was often evaluated based on their role within a Polish context.<sup>3</sup> The activities of the Znak circle can be interpreted in new ways, however, by situating them together with their West German allies within a cross-border network.<sup>4</sup> The members of Znak were not only the earliest Polish political opposition but more importantly, initiators, and simultaneously key topics, of a particular media strategy geared toward improved Polish-German relations. In Germany, they became both objects and agents of this renegotiation in which publicity and appearance in public space became increasingly important. To distinguish between the activists' early agendas in meeting West Germans, the verifiable effects of these meetings and the public representations of the events both in the 1960s and the 1990s is not always an easy undertaking.

#### THE MOST SOUGHT AFTER MAN: THE 1957 VIENNA CONFERENCE FOR THE CATHOLIC PRESS

The efforts of the Znak circle to find conversation partners and allies in the Federal Republic were initiated in 1957, at the Conference for the Catholic Press organized by the "Union Internationale de la Presse Catholique." The real intention of the congress was the establishment of contacts, particularly with Catholics from the eastern bloc. The event took place in Vienna specifically in order to facilitate travel from Poland.<sup>5</sup> Klaus Otto Skibowski,

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<sup>3</sup> For example Robert Jarocki, *Czterdzieści pięć lat*; Anna Wolff-Powęska, "Poszukiwanie dróg dialogu. Świeckie elity katolickie wobec Niemiec," or Andrzej Friszke, *Opozycja polityczna w PRL 1945-1990* (London: Aneks, 1994) and *Koło posłów „Znak” w Sejmie PRL 1957-1976*.

<sup>4</sup> Jeremi Suri, "Non-governmental Organizations and Non-state Actors," *Palgrave Advances in International History*, 223-247; *Bringing Transnational Relations Back In: Non-State Actors, Domestic Structures and International Institutions*, ed. Thomas Risse-Kappen; Margaret E. Keck and Kathryn Sikkink, *Activists Beyond Borders: Advocacy Networks in International Politics*; Akira Iriye, *Global Community: The Role of International Organizations in the Making of the Contemporary World* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2002).

<sup>5</sup> Reconstructed after the war, the union had organized its first congress in Rome in 1950, followed by Paris in 1954, and now Vienna in 1957.

who was involved in the arrangements, stated in an interview that “It was really all about the contact exchange (*Kontaktbörse*). I cannot remember any of the talks that were held there. The main thing was that we met and made connections.”<sup>6</sup> In October 1957, Jerzy Turowicz, the editor-in-chief of the semi-independent Catholic newspaper, *Tygodnik Powszechny*, wrote a report on the Znak circle’s participation in this conference.

A total of 450 representatives of the Catholic press attended in Vienna. The Austrian delegation was the largest one with 120 delegates, next came the West German delegation with 90 delegates. For the first time after the war, a delegation of Polish Catholic journalists also participated. This was also the first delegation from the Soviet bloc to participate in a conference for the Catholic Press, and a result of the Polish October, still largely in effect. The enormous amount of attention and curiosity that surrounded the Polish delegation when they arrived in Vienna was hardly surprising. When the names of the Polish journalists were read during the opening ceremony, they were greeted by ovations, the only applause given to any delegation that day. In the world-wide Catholic media, the release of Cardinal Wyszyński and recovery of the Polish Catholic Church had been greeted with relief.

The Polish delegation consisted of eight participants, representing the newspapers *Przewodnik Katolicki* (the Catholic Guide) in Poznań, *Gość Niedzielny* (the Sunday Guest) in Katowice, *Za i Przeciw* (For and Against) in Warsaw, the Club of Catholic Intellectuals (KIK Klub Inteligencji Katolickiej) in Warsaw and *Tygodnik Powszechny* in Krakow. In addition, ten Polish émigré-representatives from England, France, Italy, West Germany and Austria attended. The conference topics included Catholic press and nationalism, international

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<sup>6</sup> Klaus Otto Skibowski, interview by Annika Frieberg.

cooperation and economic conditions. The problems of communist propaganda and Western secularization were also addressed.

The Western journalists were especially interested in the representatives of the Znak circle and *Tygodnik Powszechny*, who had the confidence of Cardinal Wyszyński and an insider position in the new communist Sejm. Stanisław Stomma and Jerzy Turowicz who represented *Tygodnik Powszechny*, Tadeusz Mazowiecki and Dominik Morawski from the Club of Catholic Intellectuals, were associated with the Znak circle.<sup>7</sup> The Austrian press wrote “At the center of attention stood naturally the Polish delegation, and the Sejm-representative Stomma from Krakow, a small, graying gentleman whose excellent German has a light Austrian tone, was the most sought-after man during the congress.”<sup>8</sup> Of the four representatives associated with Wyszyński in Vienna, only Stomma spoke fluent German at this time, which made him the natural mediator and target of the West European Catholic journalists’ interest.<sup>9</sup>

There can be no doubt that Stomma saw his role while traveling as a representative for the Polish state rather than a victim of that same state. In justifying his political affiliation with the Sejm, he had written that it would give Polish Catholics an opportunity to become involved in the crucial post-war foreign relations.<sup>10</sup> The Catholic journalists’ conference was an opportunity to begin to implement this agenda. The sympathy and curiosity of the western Catholics also justified him in his belief in the importance of his and

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<sup>7</sup> Jerzy Turowicz, “Światowy kongres prasy katolickiej,” *Tygodnik Powszechny*, 20 October 1957.

<sup>8</sup> Ibid.

<sup>9</sup> Stanisław Stomma, interview by Annika Frieberg, Warsaw, 7 October 2004.

<sup>10</sup> See for example Stanisław Stomma, “Dlaczego kandyduję do Sejmu?” *Tygodnik Powszechny*, 20 January 1957.

the other Catholic activists' role in Polish foreign relations. However, the expectations of Stomma differed from those of the West German Catholics. Stomma hoped for partnerships, political attention for Poland and normalization of Poland's western relations. Meanwhile, the West German Catholic journalists saw *Znak* as a source of information about the Polish internal situation and as survivors of communist oppression. Stomma had yet to learn that despite the positive attention on the West German political scene, a Polish Catholic Sejm representative was not considered a serious potential partner in mutual political relations.

The reports on the conference from 1957 indicate the delighted surprise of the *Znak* delegation at the attention they had received in Vienna. Turowicz proudly listed the networking successes of the Polish delegation. The delegation developed especially good relations with representatives of the Austrian, French, and West German Catholic press. Stomma commented in his memoirs, "From the West German journalists, we were met with enormous sympathy, interest and desire with regards to closer cooperation" and pointed to the importance of this conference for establishing initial West German connections.<sup>11</sup> Among the participants were "many representatives for Catholic popular and diocesan publications, for the CDU and CSU media and of course also for the Herder Verlag and Catholic News Agency, etc." Both in the reports from 1957 and 1990, the emphasis on these contacts was yet another way to indicate the success of the *Znak* circle's partial cooperation strategy and its positive effects in terms of foreign relations opportunities.

Given his political ambitions, Stomma considered the political contacts he made in Vienna of even greater importance than the Catholic connections at the conference. Both his memoirs from 1991 and his biography, written by Wolfgang Pailer in 1998, described in

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<sup>11</sup> Stanisław Stomma, *Pościg za nadzieją*, 172.



great detail how, as a consequence of Klaus Otto Skibowski's positive report from the spring of 1957, he received an invitation to a conversation from the West German consul in Vienna, Carl Hermann Mueller-Graaf. His and Stomma's conversation was held in "an atmosphere of pleasant hospitality" and lasted "for over an hour."<sup>12</sup> In the memoirs, Stomma described the conference as the earliest political connection between Poles and West Germans. He wrote, "A beginning had been made; an official representative of the government of the Federal Republic had spoken with a Pole, a parliamentary member of the Polish People's Republic, whom he knew to be connected with the Polish episcopate."<sup>13</sup> Stomma believed that he had been accepted as a semi-official representative of the revamped Polish parliament.

#### DIPLOMAT WITHOUT A STATE: THE RESULTS OF STOMMA'S WEST GERMAN VISIT IN 1958

Stomma decided to act on the positive results of the conversations in Vienna by planning a visit to the Federal Republic. The West German reports, by the consul in Vienna and by Skibowski in Warsaw, had described Stomma favorably as a politically clear-sighted, intelligent and fairly objective person and their report led to his official invitation. In April 1958, he and his wife traveled to West Germany on diplomatic visas. Stomma reported his impressions and conversations to foreign minister Adam Rapacki both before and after the

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<sup>12</sup> Wolfgang Pailer, *Stanisław Stomma*, 67; Stanisław Stomma, *Pościg za nadzieją*, 173.

<sup>13</sup> Stanisław Stomma, *Pościg za nadzieją*, 173. This grandiose claim was not strictly true since in January 1957, a high ranking West German diplomat in Washington DC, acting on von Brentano's orders, met secretly with his Polish counterparts several times. Chances are that Stomma remained unaware of these meetings, however. However, the connection with the episcopate was probably of great importance since it granted Stomma an integrity and objectivity that an official representative of Poland would not have. Ahonen, *After the Expulsions*, 127.

journey.<sup>14</sup> Officially, however, the Stommas were invited as Catholic representatives by the Catholic News Agency and its leader Karl Bringmann.

Stomma described his first trip to the Federal Republic as a disappointment. When he and his wife arrived in Bonn, their host had not arranged any specific program for them. Instead, they were taken to a four-day Catholic conference on problems in Africa. Stomma presumed that this was Bringmann's way of floating his responsibility for the Polish visitors. Skibowski disagreed, however, and argued that the problem was that no West Germans took the relations with Poland seriously in 1958. As Poland was an unimportant country and Stomma an unfamiliar name to the parliamentary members of CDU with whom he would have liked to interact, they showed no interest in a meeting.<sup>15</sup> At this point, none of the political parties except perhaps BHE had developed any specific interest in, or position on, Polish-German relations.

On short notice, Bringmann and Skibowski, who acted as an intermediary, then attempted to arrange meetings with "people, who interested me [Stomma]."<sup>16</sup> Through the intervention of the Catholic Central Committee, Stomma met with three parliamentary members who were prominent expellee representatives.<sup>17</sup> While the three representatives were polite and friendly, Stomma commented bitterly that "the fact remained that I only had

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<sup>14</sup> Ibid., 175.

<sup>15</sup> Klaus Otto Skibowski, interview by Annika Frieberg.

<sup>16</sup> Stomma, *Pościg za nadzieją*, 174.

<sup>17</sup> Herbert Czaja, Karl Theodor von Guttenberg and Ernst Majonica. Czaja also mentioned this meeting in his memoirs. Stomma made a positive impression on him and he regretted that he, Stomma, kept his distance during later meetings such as the Catholic conventions (Katholikentage). However, Czaja commented that "For him, the recognition of the Oder-Neisse Border was kind of a watershed issue." Herbert Czaja, *Unterwegs zum kleinsten Deutschland? Mangel an Solidarität mit den Vertriebenen. Marginalien zu 50 Jahre Ostpolitik* (Frankfurt/Main: Verlag Josef Knecht, 1996), 203.

the opportunity to meet three deputies who were revisionists.”<sup>18</sup> In 1958, only the expelled representatives in the Bundestag cared about the state of Polish-German relations but, unfortunately, their positions were too far removed from those of Stomma on crucial questions such as the recognition of the border for a conversation or a meeting to be possible.

In an interview ten years later, Stomma stated about his impression of the West Germans in 1958 that “it seemed to me back then, that the Germans were so satisfied with their prosperity and with the smaller European solution that they did not at all pay any attention to the difficult contemporary questions.”<sup>19</sup> Certainly, on the political scene, Stanisław Stomma was treated as a marginal figure in 1958. However, if his actual networking efforts in CDU circles were less than successful, they could still be utilized for public relations purposes, to strengthen Stomma’s own position in Poland. In the immediate aftermath of the 1958 journey Stomma did not describe it in *Tygodnik Powszechny* but ten years later, in 1969, he used it to show the continuity of Polish-German relations leading up to the more successful interactions in the late 1960s.

Because of Bonn’s temporary interest in Poland which had been triggered by the Thaw, Stomma did meet with two important representatives of Adenauer’s government, Heinrich von Brentano, the foreign minister, and Hans Globke, the director of the Federal Chancellery.<sup>20</sup> Heinrich von Brentano was at the time considering different solutions for the

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<sup>18</sup> Stomma, *Pościg za nadzieją*, 175.

<sup>19</sup> Stanisław Stomma, ”Poseł Stomma w NRF (wywiad),” trans. Anna Morawska, *Tygodnik Powszechny*, 30 November 1969.

<sup>20</sup> Klaus Otto Skibowski disagrees on this point. He believes that Stomma met with minister Paul Lücke. He states that he spoke with Lücke about Stomma’s first visit and that Lücke also confirmed a meeting. However, he has no record of Stomma’s early visit from the time but is relying on his memory of the events.

government's Ostpolitik and was personally interested in the relations with Poland.<sup>21</sup> In an interview in 2005, Klaus Otto Skibowski said that Adenauer had intended to meet and speak with Stomma himself during the 1958 visit. However, Adenauer fell ill and instead Stomma met with a minister who "could of course only stick to the official line" in the discussions about the Polish-German relations.<sup>22</sup> From Stomma's perspective, both conversations were complicated, since they touched on the specific issues preventing official diplomatic relations between Poland and the Federal Republic, particularly the border issue and the nuclear armaments debate in West Germany.

The conversation with Globke also concerned diplomatic relations. Globke, who was an old member of the Catholic Center Party, argued that diplomatic relations with Poland would only hurt the Polish Catholic Church and its associates, since they would serve to strengthen the communist regime. Extending his philosophy of gradual change and reform from within, Stomma disagreed and argued that improved political relations were a precondition for improved cultural relations, and that it would be impossible to accomplish an opening without a political foundation.<sup>23</sup> Still, it became clear that the CDU politicians who met Stomma were only willing to discuss the possibility of establishing cultural, not political, ties with Poland. Their interest in Stomma was based on a need for reliable information. From Stomma's perspective, their notions of cultural exchanges were impossible without addressing the crucial questions of the Polish state's right to existence, the security of its western border and its contacts with western Europe. In this way, the talks

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<sup>21</sup> Ahonen, *After the Expulsions*, 125.

<sup>22</sup> Klaus Otto Skibowski, interview by Annika Frieberg.

<sup>23</sup> Pailer, *Stanisław Stomma*, 82-83.

were unsuccessful since no agreement on a model for interactions could be reached and because the West German side was not sufficiently interested in concrete measures toward relations from Stomma's perspective.

Similarly, Stomma failed in finding partners for a dialogue among the Catholic establishment in the Federal Republic. He met with members of the Central Committee for German Catholics and also with Cardinal Josef Frings in Cologne. Like the CDU, the German episcopate was interested in him as an insider with valuable information on the new situation in Poland, particularly the relationship between state and church and the position of the Polish Catholic Church.<sup>24</sup> These informal exchanges, which focused largely on supporting eventual Polish Catholic resistance to communism, did not harmonize well with the agenda of Stomma either. In approaching the West German Catholics, the Polish Catholic, Stomma, brought a keen awareness of German war guilt and an expectation that the German conversation partners would be interested in Polish-German relations based on their feeling of responsibility for the wrongs that had been committed. Or, at the very least, he expected them to feel that Poland was an important link to the other part of Europe. The West German Catholic episcopate and press, on the other hand, was still more conscious of German victimhood during the war in the form of the German division and the expulsions. As for the crimes against Poland, they considered those the deed of a small minority, the Nazi leadership, and did not take responsibility for them.<sup>25</sup>

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<sup>24</sup> Certain very limited interaction existed between Polish and West German Catholics, mostly as a reaction to the communist persecution of the Polish Catholic Church in the early 1950s. For example, West German Catholics had given some financial support to the Polish Catholic University in Lublin, and the *Ostpriesterhilfe* in Königstein had held congresses on the topic of the communist threat. Żurek, *Zwischen Nationalismus und Versöhnung*, 309.

<sup>25</sup> Żurek, *Zwischen Nationalismus und Versöhnung*, 187.

Remembering the trip in 1990, Stomma summarized the results of his trip in 1958 as meager and placed much of the blame for this with his hosts at the Catholic News Agency.

Shaping his reconciliation narrative, he added that:

Nevertheless, a beginning had been made. The visit took on a breakthrough meaning despite everything. The established connections could be furthered. My trip also showed that the isolation could be overcome, and that Poles were able to have normal foreign relations. I returned to my country richer in experiences. I understood that the further progress of Polish-German relations would not be an easy matter, that there was significant [West German] resistance to leaving the state of passive ignorance. A guilty conscience with reference to Poland hindered the understanding.<sup>26</sup>

In the statement, he interpreted the lack of interest in the relations as a consequence of overwhelming guilt, an interpretation which opened more possibilities for positive development than if he had concluded that Poland was simply too unimportant to these German politicians and Catholics in 1958. The fact remained, however, that the early Polish-German relations activists needed to create a broader interest in Poland among the West Germans as well as find a way to address the problems in the relations. Marketing, networking and a positive interpretation of the non-state developments became cornerstones of the strategy of West German journalists and Polish Catholic media elites which over time crystallized into the “reconciliation narrative.”

In the meantime, a more concrete accomplishment of the early travels was the establishment of contacts with West German media elites. For Stomma, a connection which would prove very helpful throughout the 1960s was made with the editors of the ecumenical German Catholic journal *Dokumente*, Franz Ansprenger and Paul Botta, who helped and advised him during his time in the Bonn area.<sup>27</sup> Another such early ally was the editor of the leftwing Catholic *Frankfurter Hefte*, Walter Dirks. Both Botta and Dirks worked for the

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<sup>26</sup> Stomma, *Pościg za nadzieją*, 181.

<sup>27</sup> Stomma, *Pościg za nadzieją*, 178.

Westdeutscher Rundfunk and other radio stations as well as for Catholic press, thus introducing the Znak intellectuals to a larger media outlet. The West German journalists also understood the importance of presentation and narration, and would contribute to creating an image of movement between Poland and the Federal Republic and a profile for the Znak members.

In Poland, the immediate consequence of the Znak circle's West German connections and travels was their ability to publish travelogues and testimonies about the developments in the Federal Republic after the war. The medium for such travelogues was their own press, particularly *Tygodnik Powszechny*. The Znak circle's ability to travel and become eye-witnesses of postwar West Germany became central to their efforts of reworking the image of the Germans in Poland. By doing so they were challenging on one hand the descriptions by the communist press, which attempted to unify the Polish people as a whole by pointing to the West German threat to its territory and borders.<sup>28</sup> On the other hand, they were also writing for an audience that was largely unable to travel and whose experiences with Germans stemmed primarily from soldiers during the Nazi occupation and who thought of Germans as a military people, cold, brutal and formal and most of all, enemies of Poland.<sup>29</sup> Since *Tygodnik Powszechny* was practically the only alternative to the communist press, the communist regime as well as the West German correspondents followed closely the domestic efforts of *Tygodnik Powszechny* to revamp the Polish images of the West Germans.<sup>30</sup>

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<sup>28</sup> Anna Wolff-Powęska, "Poszukiwanie dróg dialogu. Świeckie elity katolickie wobec Niemiec," 365-396.

<sup>29</sup> Such an image was created both through Polish film from the postwar era, in school education, in literature and through individual and collective memories from the occupation era. Tomala, *Deutschland – von Polen gesehen*, 117-118.

<sup>30</sup> In an article from 1993, Anna Wolff-Powęska described the gradual development of a new perspective on the West Germans and emphasized the relatively limited numbers within the Catholic groupings

In January 1958, the author Leopold Tyrmand reported in *Tygodnik Powszechny* about his impressions from a visit in the Federal Republic.<sup>31</sup> He described an emerging generational conflict in West Germany, arguing that a majority of the youth rejected all notions of war and exaggerated nationalism. More and more people belonging to the younger, post-war generation were also critical of Germany's role in the war. He concluded that in this way, while Germany in the past had been militaristic, anti-Polish and nationalist, this was about to change. Furthermore, Tyrmand believed that consumerism and materialism had replaced the militarism and nationalism of the Nazi era. He noted how well dressed and elegant the people on the streets were and could not imagine that any of them would trade their clothing for uniforms. The post-war West German prosperity had led to anti-imperialism and liberalism. In short, it would be foolish to argue, as many people in Poland did that "Germany will always be Germany" and that change was impossible.<sup>32</sup> Other articles reconsidered the myth of the *Drang nach Osten*, and yet others discussed whether it would be possible for the Germans to overcome their nationalist past.<sup>33</sup> Tyrmand's travelogue was part of a larger trend in *Tygodnik Powszechny* to discover West Germany.<sup>34</sup>

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promoting pro-German openness and acceptance. Wolff-Powęska, "Poszukiwanie dróg dialogu. Świeckie elity katolickie wobec Niemiec," 365-394.

<sup>31</sup> Leopold Tyrmand was born in Warsaw in 1920. Before WWII, he studied architecture in Paris. In 1942, he was arrested by the Nazis and sent to a labor camp. In the first post-war years, he lived in Denmark, Norway and France but then returned to Poland and stayed there until 1966 when he emigrated to the United States. He contributed articles to *Kultura* and *Tygodnik Powszechny* as well as other journals. After his emigration, he wrote for *The New Yorker*.

<sup>32</sup> Leopold Tyrmand, "O Quae Mutatio Rerum..." *Tygodnik Powszechny*, 26 January 1958.

<sup>33</sup> Antoni Gołubiew, "Mit o Drang nach Osten," *Tygodnik Powszechny*, 28 February 1960.

<sup>34</sup> Also other descriptions of West Germany were published in 1958, including Mieczysław Rakowski, *NRF z bliska* (1958) and Marian Podkowiński, *Czy zegary NRF chodzą szybciej* (1958). Podkowiński was the most wellknown correspondent to Bonn working for the communist press.



However, the most extensive and controversial of these travelogues with the most wide-reaching effect also in West German circles were penned by Stefan Kisielewski.

#### STEFAN KISIELEWSKI IN WEST GERMANY

Although Stefan Kisielewski shared with Stomma the political agenda, nationality, background and association with Znak, he had a radically different public persona. Stomma was trusted by authorities in both West Germany and Poland as a discrete and reliable mediator. Kisielewski, on the other hand, was neither discrete nor particularly reliable. The Kisielewski tour of the Federal Republic in 1962 greatly boosted West German interest in Polish-German questions. In his writings about these travels, he addressed both Polish and West German audiences. His articles in *Tygodnik Powszechny* intended to present a new, though still critical, perspective on Poland's closest western neighbor and off-set some of the stereotypes and propaganda-generated misunderstandings about the West Germans.

The West German travel articles from 1962 in *Tygodnik Powszechny*, "Return to Germany," "What do the Germans Say?" and "What do the Germans Think?"<sup>35</sup> revised the domestic Polish images of German aggression against Poland. Avoiding programmatic and overly optimistic statements, Kisielewski approached the Federal Republic in an open-ended observatory way but with a critical eye, assuming the persona of a slightly suspicious, off-beat traveler from the east. In contrast to the image of the fanatic German soldier, he wrote that one of the first things that struck him when he arrived in Cologne was that all Germans were smiling. Dubbing West Germany as "The Country of Smiles," he reported that "also

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<sup>35</sup> Stefan Kisielewski, "Powrót do Niemców," *Tygodnik Powszechny*, 10 June 1962; "Co mówią Niemcy?" *Tygodnik Powszechny*, 17 June 1962; "Czy Niemcy myślą o Wschodzie," *Tygodnik Powszechny*, 24 June 1962.

the bright, precisely built, not too big airport in Cologne is dominated by smiles, eager friendliness, correctness, diligent helpfulness, speed.”<sup>36</sup> Nevertheless, he added that he still could not help wondering what these smiling and polite people had done and where they had been during the war.

Another focal point in the descriptions was the economic miracle in the Federal Republic. Kisielewski wrote about the clean, modern and expensive architecture immediately meeting him at the Cologne airport with a somewhat grudging admiration. For Tyrmand, the West German friendliness was a sign of hope and renewal but Kisielewski thought it suspect and slightly disturbing but not threatening. On the other hand, the economic miracle underscored the inequality of Polish-German relations in a way which never became apparent in Stomma’s reports on his interactions with West Germans. Kisielewski claimed that the West Germans lived a luxurious life, with cars, houses and department stores full of beautiful merchandise. He reported

Kaufhaus Merkur – merchandise – here, the German love of materialism, their cult of objects, reaches a highpoint. Everything is available here, in unbelievable quantity and quality; food, clothes, underwear, attire, jewelry, sailboats, shoes, beverages, furniture, household items, refrigerators, washing machines, TVs, carpets, crystal, flowers, toys, fruit, books, school articles – the eyes hurt from the color and the riches. I have never been greedy but here the hand reaches out by itself . . . I would really like to steal something but I am a bit afraid – they are so honest here . . .<sup>37</sup>

In this way, Kisielewski painted a distinctly “civilian” picture of West Germany in 1962. As an intellectual, he regarded the West German broader public and their interest in material wealth unsophisticated but harmless, like children playing with their toys. While not overly flattering, the evaluation of the West Germans as practical and materialist, rather than idealist and moral, broke with earlier Polish images of the Germans as ultra-political, wild-eyed

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<sup>36</sup> Stefan Kisielewski, “Powrót do Niemców,” *Tygodnik Powszechny*, 10 June 1962.

<sup>37</sup> *Ibid.*

fanatics in uniform. However, as his description showed, for the post-war Polish visitors, the material differences also created a distinct feeling of alienation and, at times, an inferiority complex.

To avoid appearing naïve or one-sided in his descriptions, Kisielewski offered criticism as well as praise for the West German society in his observations. He was outspoken about the difficulties that appeared in the dialogue between him and the West Germans whom he met. From his perspective, the central problem preventing normalization was the German avoidance of responsibility for the brutalities against Poland during the Second World War. Far from mourning their loss of territory or of the war, the West Germans seemed oblivious to the past and completely focused on the present. While soothing any fears about lingering hatred of Poland or revisionism, their short historical memory disturbed Kisielewski. In his conversations with West Germans, with reference to the German occupation of Poland, he raised the question why Germans were so extremely anti-Polish. To his surprise, the West Germans with whom he spoke did not understand this question at all. If anything, they felt very interested in, and friendly towards, Poland.

Even the occasional pro-Polish out-migrants (expellees) say that they ‘forgive’ us everything. ‘Who should forgive whom?’ I ask, somewhat irritated. ‘Did you have Hitler, or did we?’ Unfortunately, this position is perceived as tactless, mean and demagogic. One does not speak about Hitler, just like, in a decent home, one does not mention the wayward daughter.<sup>38</sup>

The visiting Pole clearly saw the West Germans as belonging to the same polity which had attacked Poland twenty years earlier and to him that history was immediately relevant. The West Germans with whom he spoke felt themselves to be victims of expulsions in which the Poles had taken part. Kisielewski concluded “and again, it becomes clear that I am wrong,

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<sup>38</sup> Kisielewski, “Co mówią Niemcy?” *Tygodnik Powszechny*, 17 June 1962.

that my historic-moral right is antiquated and outdated.”<sup>39</sup> However, it was not merely a question of remembering the past or not, it was a disagreement on which past should be remembered. Both the Pole, Kisielewski, and the Germans in this exchange felt victimized by the other country. They were willing to forgive past injustices but not prepared to accept forgiveness for injustices done in the name of their own nations toward others.

In the early 1960s, Kisielewski also wrote a few articles directly addressed to a German audience in the West German Catholic press, particularly the short-lived Catholic journal supporting French-German relations, *Dokumente*. To the West German audience, Kisielewski offered an outsider perspective on their own society and extensive information about Polish perspectives and problems. Further, a number of his articles published in *Tygodnik Powszechny* were translated into German and republished in *Dokumente* and in his 1964 book *In this Place of Europe (An dieser Stelle Europas)*.

In one of Kisielewski’s articles addressed directly to a German audience in the West German religious press, “A Word to the Germans,” he stated that the West German audience in general was uninformed about Poland, particularly about Polish history and communism in Poland. Even among those who were friendly towards the country, there was widespread ignorance. The images of Poland and the “communist East” in West Germany, he compared to “dark fairytales.”<sup>40</sup> Then, once more referring to the past, he said that recent history had proven that “dark fairytales” did not at all need to come from the east of Europe, but could just as well emerge in the west or in the center of old Christian Europe. He added that West Germans were also ignorant of the older history of Polish-German relations, particularly the

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<sup>39</sup> Ibid.

<sup>40</sup> Kisielewski, *An dieser Stelle Europas*, 257. Originally in *Stimme der Gemeinde*, Frankfurt/Main, 1963, later published in *An dieser Stelle*. Never published in Polish.

role of Prussia in the partitions of Poland. In this, he attempted to counter a German short-term post-war perspective in which communism was the leading threat by introducing a long-term perspective including the pre-war era when previous examples of German aggression towards Poland took precedence.

By removing the focus on the communist threat and placing Poland's development in a longer historical time frame, he was trying to force the Germans to consider their own country's actions of aggression against Poland in the past. He stated in the article that he was also opposed to Polish messianism because it simplified the human condition: "All humans are the same, in the bad as in the good, all humans can become anything – in the appropriate circumstances."<sup>41</sup>

On the other hand, Kisielewski was not prepared to recognize any Polish agency in the expulsions, the most immediate accusation raised in Polish-German dialogue. In an article for *Kultura* in 1962, he wrote, "the transfer of the German population (of which a portion had already fled before the approaching Red Army), took place according to the plan by the victorious Allies. Contrary to the anti-Polish propaganda, it was orderly and calm and stood in sharp contrast to that to which Hitler subjected the Poles (not to mention the apocalyptic fate of the unhappy Jewish population)."<sup>42</sup> In other words, he placed the main responsibility for the expulsions with the Allies and the Red Army; he placed it in relation to the German war crimes and presented an understated description of the expulsions in stark contrast to the descriptions by the German expellees of the same events. The larger point of this *Kultura*-article was to emphasize the important ways in which the expulsions, though

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<sup>41</sup> Kisielewski, *An dieser Stelle Europas*, 258. "Ein Wort an die Deutschen."

<sup>42</sup> *Ibid.*, 263.

unfortunate, had strengthened the post-war Polish nation-state. In his opinion, the disappearance of the Polish minority problem, through the intervention of the Germans themselves and the victors of the war, had ultimately increased the chances for stability of survival of the Polish post-war state.<sup>43</sup> His somewhat dismissive position on the expulsions developed in hindsight and in light of Cold War geopolitics. Still, despite his willingness to admit Polish error and avoid nationalist victimology, his position on the expulsions reinforced the notion that Polish victimhood during the war justified any eventual aggression against the German minorities. Psychologically, also in Kisielewski's mind, the Poles could not simultaneously be victims and perpetrators in the relationship to Germans.

Of great interest to West German audiences and conversation partners was Kisielewski's position on the division of Germany and existence of the German Democratic Republic. Kisielewski proclaimed himself much less concerned with this question. Again assuming the persona of the simple traveler from the east, he wrote that during his stay in West Germany, many people had asked him what he thought about the German question – should Germany be reunited or not? He had avoided answering this question with a simple “yes” or “no.” Instead, he stated that this was a German problem and not a Polish one. “Ulbricht is a German . . . and that is your German business. Besides, he [Ulbricht] recognizes our borders and coexists peacefully with us. And Adenauer traveled to Moscow

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<sup>43</sup> It could be argued that in his description of the expulsions, Kisielewski was simply following the official communist line. However, since the article was published in *Kultura*, in which Kisielewski had less reason than in *Tygodnik Powszechny* to be a mouth piece for the communist line and also in the context of the multiple justifications for them, most importantly the strong Polish state which was the point of the *Kultura*-piece, the marginalizing of the expulsions was likely Kisielewski's own opinion.

(in 1958) but he did not go to Warsaw since he only cares about those who are powerful.”<sup>44</sup> By feigning simplicity, he was able to evade this very complicated question without offending his associates but overall, the Znak-intellectuals tended to circle the question of the division, which was so central in the West German eastern policy. The foundation of the Znak group’s political stance was the idea of a radical acceptance of the existing borders and states in Europe.

Finally, Kisielewski discussed the crucial border question. He pointed out that the West Germans were left with no other choice than accepting the Oder-Neisse border since another border revision would now be impossible without violence. After the Second World War, Poland had been “pushed sideways” to the west. Such a move could only happen in the aftermath of a great conflict. In other words, only a new world war could lead to a new border move. “This time, it would be of cosmic and many times more demonic dimensions through the use of nuclear weapons. In the Nuclear Age, a war would be impossible unless the peoples risked a mutual suicide – particularly the centrally located nations such as the German and Polish ones.”<sup>45</sup> In this way, in his agenda for Polish-German contacts, Kisielewski attempted to reconcile the different focal points of Polish and West German perspectives in light of the futuristic horror scenario, the outbreak of a Third World War, involving nuclear weapons.

While not interested primarily in political networking, Kisielewski like Stomma grew closer to West German intellectual and media circles in Bonn, Frankfurt am Main and

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<sup>44</sup> Kisielewski, *An dieser Stelle Europas*, 220. Originally published in *Tygodnik Powszechny* as “Twierdza Zachodnia Europa,” 1962. Translated for *Dokumente* and published in translation in *An dieser Stelle Europas*.

<sup>45</sup> *Ibid.*, 266.

Cologne during his visits to the Federal Republic. These West German intellectuals also featured in his articles. On the positive side, he spoke of their friendliness toward, and interest in, Poland. In West German society, where people were generally ignorant about Poland and uninterested in the Polish-German mutual past, the intellectuals were the bright exception. Among these groups, he counted “weekly- or monthly journals with a more or less elitist character, with a relatively narrow influence but forming an important and morally relevant tendency.” He also listed the Protestant intellectuals behind the 1962 Tübingen Memorandum, an Evangelical Memorandum criticizing Bonn’s existing eastern policy, the radio stations (particularly the Bavarian Radio), and “many authors, journalists, philosophers and theologians.”<sup>46</sup> These people were commendable because of their willingness to confront a painful and complex historical past and to take a critical perspective on their own country. They had a strong sense of the guilt toward Poland which drove them to consider the territorial reordering of Potsdam a just compensation to Poland for Germany’s behavior during the Second World War.

From Kisielewski’s perspective, two problems existed in the West German intellectuals’ relationship with Poland. Since their primary motivation for taking interest in Poland was feelings of guilt for the German past, their approach was rarely founded on genuine knowledge about Poland itself. Poland became a symbol for repentance and reflection to them. In addition, the German intellectuals were a minority in their own country.<sup>47</sup> Ultimately, he stated that “the vogue for Poland among intellectuals is

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<sup>46</sup> Kisielewski, *An dieser Stelle Europas*, 205; 219. The Tübingen Memorandum is discussed in greater detail in chapter 7 on Polish-German reconciliation initiatives.

<sup>47</sup> Kisielewski, *An dieser Stelle Europas*, 205.



undeniable; one should not let it wither away through carelessness.”<sup>48</sup> The statement was directed to his likeminded compatriots and associates in *Tygodnik Powszechny* and indicated the ways in which the West German intellectuals’ interest in Poland became useful to the Polish intellectuals and their lobbying ambitions.

Like Stomma, Kisielewski also became increasingly aware of the importance of West German sponsors to introduce him to a larger audience in West German society. West German sponsors could grant a relatively unknown Pole access to press and audio-visual media, draw attention to him, his work and ideas in a West German audience, more familiar with the sponsor’s name than with his. Kisielewski was acquainted with a number of journalists, allies of *Znak* or those whom his associates, such as Stomma, had met on their trips to the Federal Republic. His earliest and most important sponsor in West Germany was Hansjakob Stehle.<sup>49</sup> In his 1968 diary, Kisielewski commented about Stehle that he was “formerly my ‘protector’ on German terrain (he wrote the foreword to my German book).”<sup>50</sup> These journalists’ introductions, articles and promotion of Kisielewski contributed to his gaining an audience among West German elite and media circles.

Returning to the Federal Republic in 1964, Kisielewski was lionized by parts of the West German media and publishing community. Paul Botta who was now the leader of the political department of Westdeutscher Rundfunk in Cologne, wrote about his expectations before meeting with Kisielewski in 1962 in a feature describing the author and his West German travels. “German and Polish friends had told me much about the agile, intelligent

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<sup>48</sup> *Ibid.*, 223.

<sup>49</sup> Hansjakob Stehle, “Hofnarr der Volksrepublik. Eine Vorbemerkung,” *An dieser Stelle Europas*, 9.

<sup>50</sup> Kisielewski, *Dzienniki*, 234.

and independent-minded Catholic politician and publisher.” He continued, “I knew of his large-scale travel reports about Western Europe and about the Soviet Union which had appeared successively in 1960 and 1961 in *Tygodnik Powszechny*, and had received a certain attention in Poland at the time.”<sup>51</sup> In describing his first impression of Kisielewski, Botta emphasized Kisielewski’s role as an outsider, his integrity and intelligence. He wrote, “The first thing I noticed about him was his battered and, for our fashion, far too long brownish trench coat. The second thing was his bright, swift eyes, which suddenly, during the course of a conversation, could become very cold, very distanced and scrutinizing.” Botta described the reactions of his Polish visitor to the West German attitudes and city-scape of Cologne. He proudly showed Kisielewski the new train station and Kisielewski reacted by asking if it was possible to find Polish newspapers as well in the newspaper stands for international press at the train station.<sup>52</sup>

Botta concluded his description of the meeting with Kisielewski by stating that he felt honored to meet “this extraordinary, courageous man.”<sup>53</sup> By framing him as intelligent, courageous and eccentric, Botta introduced Kisielewski – following the lead of Stehle – as the jester, speaking unpleasant but necessary truths but also as the Home Army resistance fighter. In this introduction of Kisielewski, he was represented as a hero of the resistance, an intellectual and artist, and not as a Catholic representative of the communist state. This framing broadened his appeal to the West German radio listeners.

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<sup>51</sup> Paul Botta, “Ein Pole sieht Deutschland,” *Kulturelles Wort*, WDR, Cologne, 11 October 1962, HA-WDR 1674.

<sup>52</sup> Although the feature was broadcast in 1964, quite possibly in connection with marketing of Kisielewski’s German book, the comments seem to refer to an earlier visit, at least judging by the content description.

<sup>53</sup> *Ibid.*

## RESPONSES TO KISIELEWSKI, 1962-1964

The travels, networking and conversations of Znak had a ripple-effect in both Polish and West German societies. They created a sympathetic response in the West German intellectual circles and a closer connection between West German journalists and Polish Catholic intelligentsia. They also caused a controversy in the Polish communist media which contributed to the growth of West German sympathy for Znak.

The travelogues were widely read in Polish society because Kisielewski was an appreciated publicist.<sup>54</sup> *Tygodnik Powszechny* and its independent line on West German travels between 1958 and 1962, including the works of Kisielewski, eventually caused the Polish censors and the communist media to react negatively. In August 1962, *Za i przeciw* a magazine published by the Christian-Social Institute (*Chrześcijańsko-Społeczny Instytut*), published an article which criticized the overall optimism about West Germany in *Tygodnik Powszechny*. The Christian-Social Institute was chaired by Jan Frankowski. It was a small, communist-loyal Catholic group which had broken away from the larger Pax.<sup>55</sup> In 1962, the group held three seats in the Sejm, compared to the five of Znak. The article in *Za i przeciw* thus illustrated the Polish resistance to the “new Germans” as well as the rhetoric which Polish communist media used to counter the efforts of *Tygodnik Powszechny*.

The authors of the article in *Za i Przeciw* argued that *Tygodnik Powszechny* provided a dangerously one-sided and overly optimistic image of West Germany. They offered a critique of twelve or thirteen articles, ranging from 1958 to 1962, and written by authors such as Kisielewski, Gołubiew, Tyrmand, Krzysztof Kozłowski and Marek Skwarnicki. Arguing

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<sup>54</sup> Mieczysław Tomala, *Deutschland – von Polen gesehen*, 221-222.

<sup>55</sup> Andrzej Friszke, *Opozycja polityczna*, 189-190.

that *Tygodnik Powszechny* was naïve and biased in its focus on West Germany's economic successes and positive changes, they also opposed the descriptions by Kisielewski and Tyrmand of the "German Economic Miracle," which they thought was exaggerated. They did not believe in the "myth" of the total destruction of German cities during the Second World War and presented some negative examples to counter the images of positive change in West Germany generated by *Tygodnik Powszechny*. The image of improvement was countered by Poland's historical experiences of German aggression.

*Za i przeciw* mentioned the violent protests against the Vatican's formal nomination of Bolesław Kominek to Archbishop of Wrocław, and expellee politician Herbert Hupka's attack on Stefan Kisielewski during his trip to West Germany.<sup>56</sup> The article cautioned against too much optimism vis-à-vis the Federal Republic of Germany. As a sign of the pro-German bias in *Tygodnik Powszechny*, it pointed out that both the correspondent of the *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*, Hansjakob Stehle, and the correspondent of the German press agency (dpa) had reacted favorably to the articles. It ended by asking for an explanation of the reasoning behind the "disturbing image" (the article's title) of the Germans. "Why do the most prominent authors of *Tygodnik Powszechny* take such a position on the German matters, and why does the editorial board allow their perspective without commentary, not trying to warn the reader through an editorial note about the danger of the sometimes subjective statements?"<sup>57</sup>

A month after the article in *Za i Przeciw*, Stanisław Stomma responded in *Tygodnik Powszechny* with a programmatic overview of the new situation for the Polish-German

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<sup>56</sup> The nomination of Kominek was part of a gradual transfer of the border dioceses to Polish Catholic possession which still remained unresolved.

<sup>57</sup> Jan Zaborowski and Jan Zarański, "Zmacony obraz NRF," *Za i przeciw*, 12 August 1962, 2-3.

relations from his perspective.<sup>58</sup> With this article, Stomma attempted to use rational argument in order to step away from the traditional historical fears of German aggression, which Zaborowski had evoked. In the article titled “Is There a German Hazard?” Stomma argued that because of present geopolitical reality, Poland as a state no longer had much to fear from the German side. While in the past, a weak isolated Poland had stood alone against a united, strong and aggressive Germany, now Poland was allied with the Soviet Union and this alliance protected it from German aggression. Germany, on the other hand, was weakened, divided and no longer free to act independently since it was part of a larger bloc as well, and any aggressive moves would be restricted by its western allies.<sup>59</sup> Because of this reality, Poland could afford to leave its old fears of German revisionism and aspirations to Polish territory behind and instead begin to prepare the way for an improved relationship.

The article also attempted to remove the focus from the top-down superpower perspective and focus on that which the individual European nation-states, specifically Poland and West Germany, could contribute in terms of political change. Making an effort to present both sides of the problem, Stomma challenged the West German government to implement policy to decrease tension in Central Europe. However, he summed up by stating that traditional German politics were driven by “logic of conflict.” Considering the Cold War and the nuclear threat, this logic was no longer realistic. “Humanity is calling more and more impatiently for the logic of peace.”<sup>60</sup> Whereas Stomma recognized the past German

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<sup>58</sup> The connection between the articles in *Za i Przeciw* and *Tygodnik Powszechny* was pointed out by Ludwig Zimmerer. Ludwig Zimmerer, “Ein Pole sieht Deutschland. Berichte und Ausschnitte über die Artikelserie des polnischen Journalisten Kisielevsky über seine Deutschlandreise und deren Reflexe in der polnischen Öffentlichkeit,” *Kulturelles Wort*, Cologne, 11 October 1962, HA-WDR 1674.

<sup>59</sup> Stanisław Stomma, “Czy istnieje niebezpieczeństwo niemieckie?” *Tygodnik Powszechny*, 19 September 1962.

<sup>60</sup> *Ibid.*

potential for aggression towards Poland, he believed that peace with West Germany was possible not despite the Cold War system of alliances but because of them.

On 7 October 1962, Ludwig Zimmerer reported in an NDR/WDR-radio feature on Kisielewski, his writings and the reactions in Poland to these articles. Zimmerer also described wider protests in Polish society, including the article in *Za i Przeciw*. He reported that one of the authors, Zaborowski, was a strict Catholic, a former follower of Roman Dmowski who had now made a career as a communist specialist on Germany.<sup>61</sup> Whereas the political affiliation of Zaborowski had changed radically since before the Second World War, his stance on Germany had remained remarkably consistent. Unlike many western colleagues, Zimmerer took into consideration the continuities of Polish patriotic and nationalist anti-German traditions and sentiments, unbroken by the implementation of communism.

Both Zimmerer and Stehle emphasized in their reports that the efforts of *Tygodnik Powszechny* and Kisielewski to promote West Germany were not appreciated by the Polish state. Zimmerer wrote that while Kisielewski had enjoyed an unusual amount of freedom with regard to the post-1956 Polish censorship, the articles about the West German travels, which slipped past the censor through a misunderstanding, sent the authorities into a rage. This anger affected the communist relationship with *Znak*, *Tygodnik Powszechny* and the Catholic intellectuals overall. As a result, the following 1962 articles, in which Kisielewski reported from France, were entirely censored from the Polish press.<sup>62</sup> Hansjakob Stehle wrote in his foreword to the book by Stefan Kisielewski, which was translated into German,

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<sup>61</sup> Zimmerer, "Ein Pole sieht Deutschland.," HA-WDR 1674.

<sup>62</sup> Zimmerer, "Ein Pole sieht Deutschland.," HA-WDR 1674.

that the communist press accused the author of “disconcerting nonchalance toward the revisionist activities” in West Germany.”<sup>63</sup> There was good reason for the correspondents’ in-depth reports on the communists’ negative reactions to Kisielewski. If the Polish author could be fitted into the West German notion of persecuted Polish Catholics, it functioned as a guarantee for his integrity and heightened public interest in him. It became difficult for opponents in West Germany to argue that Kisielewski was merely repeating the party line in his critique of Bonn or his demand for a border recognition if the communist party was attacking those very same articles.

Zimmerer also cited Stomma’s “Does a German Hazard Exist?” extensively in explaining the Znak circle’s position on Germany. “I have cited Stomma’s article . . . for another reason as well” he added.

Stomma’s article is, unlike Zaborowski’s, free from all anti-German spite. Nevertheless, it ultimately illustrates how difficult the task of a Polish-German understanding is and would be even if cool-headed people, such as Stomma and Kisielewski, and not Zaborowski and his like-minded friends (*Gesinnungsfreunde*), dictated the tone in Poland today. What Stomma requires from the Germans is not just a friendly gesture but a radical political change.<sup>64</sup>

His commentary was an example of the kind of translations, interpretations and mediation between Polish writing and West German audiences which only someone like Zimmerer could provide. Thus both Stehle and Zimmerer functioned as interpreters of the Znak circle to a larger West German audience.

The “Kisielewski effect” continued to unfold in West German media. Two years later, in 1964, Piper & Co. in Munich published a book with an extensive collection of the articles by Kisielewski, including the travel reports, translated into German, under the title *An*

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<sup>63</sup> Hansjakob Stehle, “Vorwort,” *An dieser Stelle Europas*, 13. Stehle had taken the citation from a Polish communist newspaper, the *Trybuna Robotnicza*.

<sup>64</sup> Zimmerer, “Ein Pole sieht Deutschland,” HA-WDR 1674.

*dieser Stelle Europas* (In This Place of Europe). In the book's foreword, Stehle presented Kisielewski as an essayist, journalist, novelist, political publisher, parliamentary speaker and composer. He also spoke highly of the intelligence, courage and "roguish shrewdness" characterizing Kisielewski.<sup>65</sup> "The court jester of the Polish People's Republic" had become the poster child not only for the renewal of the Polish-German relations but also for the "new" Polish state.

The book contributed to the interest in Poland in a new generation of West German intellectuals and journalists. Renate Marsch-Potocka mentioned it as a contributing factor to her decision to become a correspondent in Warsaw. "I was interested in Poland. I had read Stefan Kisielewski's *An dieser Stelle Europas* and imagined a country which was socialist but where people still thought independently."<sup>66</sup> Interestingly, the image of Poland which the book generated, as well as the state-loyalty of Stefan Kisielewski, was eroding by 1965. While Stefan Kisielewski abandoned his position in the Sejm by 1965 and his relationship with the authorities became increasingly strained, his argument for a strong and stable Polish state with a communist leadership as introduced in his German book continued to reach a West German audience.

As an image of Poland, *An dieser Stelle Europas* thus took on a life of its own. It was championed and marketed by Kisielewski's contacts and allies in the West German media. Paul Botta was now in a leadership position at the Westdeutscher Rundfunk. He, Klaus von Bismarck, Marion Countess Dönhoff and others, promoted Kisielewski in West German

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<sup>65</sup> Hansjakob Stehle, *Nachbar Polen*, 10. The book was translated by Wanda Bronska-Pampuch except in the instances where the articles were taken from the pages of Paul Botta's *Dokumente*.

<sup>66</sup> Renate Marsch-Potocka, phone interview with Annika Frieberg, 7 June 2005. Renate Marsch-Potocka was born in 1935. She had been living in Paris for a few years and had returned to West Germany in 1961 to work for the German Press Agency in Hamburg. In 1965, the agency wanted to send a correspondent to Warsaw and Renate Marsch volunteered to go.



media. In 1964, Ulrich Gembar dt, also at the political desk at WDR, contacted Hansjakob Stehle. “I know that you have a lot to do” he wrote. “Nevertheless, I want to ask you for something. Piper is publishing the complete collection of essays by Stefan Kisielewski with a foreword by you. I would really like to promote this book.”<sup>67</sup>

Gembar dt requested a radio manuscript of one hour and fifteen minutes by Stehle with long excerpts from Kisielewski, and Stehle consented in a letter on August 8, 1964. The feature “A Look to the East and the West” was broadcast on October 13, 1964. Stehle copied much of his foreword to the manuscript and, as intended, the program functioned essentially as a promotion of the book. It solidified the image which Stehle had created of Kisielewski earlier. The radio program ended with one of Stehle’s favorite quotes from Kisielewski:

The idea of a Poland within the present borders and in alliance with Russia agrees with me. Perhaps because I cannot imagine another version of the Polish state in contemporary times, or because I am born in this country, have lived my whole life here and want to die here. Because, despite everything, I am a state-person (państwowiec, Staatsmensch) and do not like peoples without states – regardless of which system rules that state and whatever hesitations I have against that system. I only have one humble postulate: that my state is ruled by sense and reason. Simply human common sense. Is that too much to ask?<sup>68</sup>

To Stehle, this quote explained, in the voice of Kisielewski, why the status quo must be protected in the interest of the Polish people. It also normalized the notion of a communist regime in power in Poland, as long as that regime was willing to work within the existing Cold War system. However, Kisielewski’s days as a “state-person” were soon coming to an end.

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<sup>67</sup> Ulrich Gembar dt to Hansjakob Stehle, Cologne, 29 July 1964; Hansjakob Stehle to Ulrich Gembar dt, Berlin, 16 August 1964, HA-WDR 2502. The perspective of Hansjakob Stehle on the Polish-German relations and the Poland-policy of the Westdeutscher Rundfunk will be the topic of a later chapter in my dissertation.

<sup>68</sup> Hansjakob Stehle, “Blick nach Ost und West. Hansjakob Stehle stellt den polnischen Publizisten Stefan Kisielewski vor,” WDR, Cologne, 13 October 1964, HA-WDR 2502.

## CONCLUSION

The expectations of Stanisław Stomma when he traveled to the Federal Republic for the first time after the war had little to do with reconciliation. Based on the successes in his interactions with West German Catholic journalists, with Klaus Otto Skibowski and with the West German ambassador to Vienna, he was hoping, as a Catholic representative of the Sejm, to initiate political and social dialogue about the problems in Polish-German relations, importantly the Oder-Neisse Line and its recognition. His preferred conversation partners were the West German Catholic establishment, parliament representatives belonging to CSU/CDU and members of the Catholic Central Committee.

He had misjudged the interest of his previous West German conversation partners, however, to mean a readiness to speak about political Polish-German relations, and about the Oder-Neisse Line. Once in West Germany, he was dismayed to discover that his hosts had not arranged any political meetings for him and that he was being treated as a rather special tourist rather than a conversation partner. He had the opportunity to meet with a few high level CDU representatives from Adenauer's inner circles and with expellee representatives whom the Catholic hosts had invited at the last minute on the assumption that they would have some knowledge of, and interest in, communist Poland. Through these meetings and the absence of other political interest, it became clear to Stomma that though the Adenauer associates and members of the Catholic establishment were interested in any information he could give them about the situation in Poland under Gomułka, they were not prepared to discuss Polish-German questions.

Later in the 1960s, Stomma narrated the early meetings within a smoother narrative of gradual improvement of the relations. He described himself as the earliest beginning of the establishment of political relations. While he clearly expressed his disappointment in the

Germans' lack of interest, he interpreted it as a sign of German feelings of guilt rather than a disinterest based in power-political or economic inequalities.

Kisielewski arrived in the Federal Republic with very different expectations than Stomma. He intended to explore and discover the “new” Germany and then report on them in a series of travelogues which he published in *Tygodnik Powszechny*. His vivid descriptions were directed to a Polish audience, who was largely unable to travel to the west because of financial or political reasons, and whose familiarity with the Germans was based on interactions with occupation soldiers during the Second World War. To them, Kisielewski described the glittering buildings and overflowing material wealth, but also his impressions of smiling, friendly and materialistic Germans in civilian clothes who were far from soldier material. In countering the fear of the West Germans, Kisielewski used his eye-witness accounts strategically and he also took great care in appearing believable through inserting criticism of the German postwar materialism, lingering suspicions about the past in the Germans he encountered and disagreements he had with his German conversation partners. It was important to Kisielewski to meet Germans on all levels of society, to meet the “people” as opposed to only politicians and intellectuals in presenting as accurate an image as possible of the Federal Republic.

The Polish communist media reacted negatively to the travelogues by Kisielewski, which violated the official line on West German revisionism and, in addition, acknowledged the great material wealth of the west. The article in *Za i Przeciw* which attacked Kisielewski particularly stated that his descriptions of the Economic Miracle were exaggerated, and continued to reinforce traditional Polish fears of German revisionism and anti-Polish aggression.

In their collective experiences with travels in West Germany, Stomma and Kisielewski gradually realized that the West German intellectuals, writing for elite media, were their best and most reliable connections. Secondly, they reasoned at this time, their best way to influence the West Germans toward a greater interest in Poland and concern for Polish-German relations, was gaining access to West German public space. Their West German associates encouraged them in this strategy and actively promoted them through their media outlets. Kisielewski particularly let himself, through his eccentric persona, pointed honesty and dramatic background become a poster child for Poland. Thus, in the early 1960s, Znak were no promoters of reconciliation but they were coming to realize that straightforward political networking was less effective in creating change than networking with West German media elites and a program of public relations

## **PART 2**

### **NEGOTIATING CHANGE. POLISH-GERMAN ACTIVISM IN AUDIO VISUAL MEDIA**

#### **CHAPTER 4**

##### **TELEVISIONING THE TERRITORIAL CONFLICT. WEST GERMAN JOURNALISTS AND MEDIA STRATEGIES IN RECONCILIATION, 1960-1964**

On the evening of May 7, 1963, Jürgen Neven du Mont's "Poles in Breslau," a documentary about the former German, now Polish, city and its current population aired in prime time, at 8.15 p.m. Opening with images of newborn Polish babies on a maternity ward in Wrocław and describing the entrepreneurial spirit, hopes, ambitions and lives of the Polish inhabitants of Wrocław, the documentary was a criticism of the former German inhabitants' refusal to recognize that they could not return.<sup>1</sup> It sought to show the new Polish generation who was growing up there and would have nowhere to go if the territories were returned to Germany. The portrayal triggered violent protests in expellee circles and also a larger confrontation concerning whether the television stations should support official German foreign policy with regard to Poland.

The broadcasting of two central documentaries, "Polen in Breslau" by Jürgen Neven-du Mont and "Deutschlands Osten-Polens Westen?" by Hansjakob Stehle took place at around the same time as two larger developments in West German society: a rise in the interest in Poland as well as Ostpolitik in cultural elites and a public debate between

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<sup>1</sup> Jürgen Neven-du Mont, "Polen in Breslau," NDR, Hamburg, 7 May 1963, NDR/ARD, BAK, N/1279, 131, Neven du Mont.

journalists and state about the role of media in the West German democracy. This and the following two chapters discuss how elite journalists were able to utilize audio-visual media to implement their strategies of furthering Polish-German relations, and marginalize the groups opposed to a border recognition and political change. On the other hands, these negotiations in both West German and Polish media also had some unintended effects on Polish-German relations.

German television had first been broadcast in 1954 by ARD. The new medium was originally met with suspicion but this situation quickly changed and by the early 1960s, at the time of “Polen in Breslau,” TV superseded radio as the leading mass medium in the Federal Republic. In 1954, 11,658 households in West Germany owned a TV and by 1958, it was already over one million and in 1964, fifty-five per cent owned a TV.<sup>2</sup> At the same time as the new medium exploded into the public sphere, it offered a very limited choice for its viewers in terms of content since only one channel, ARD, existed until 1963 when *Zweites Deutsches Fernsehen* (ZDF) began to broadcast. As historian Christina von Hodenberg has pointed out, “the competition between the programs was low, in the beginning non-existent; well-placed broadcasts foreseeably became the talk of the town and could count on extensive press responses and political reactions.”<sup>3</sup>

The conflict between politicians and journalists about the media’s role in a democratic state played out in a series of confrontations between 1957 and 1964. The late 1950s saw a generation shift within West German media as a postwar generation rose to

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<sup>2</sup> Kansteiner, *In Pursuit of German Memory*, 134. The polls were undertaken by Institut für Demoskopie Allensbach on behalf of the Süddeutsche Rundfunk. Ibid., 432. For more on the institute see Anja Kruke, “Responsivität und Medialisierung,” *Medialisierung und Demokratie*, 151.

<sup>3</sup> Hodenberg, *Konsens und Krise*, 19.

prominent positions and began to push the limits of media's space for criticism of the state and its policies. A series of clashes between state and media functioned to democratize public space and the journalists used them in an effort to break taboos and test the boundaries of press freedom. The relationship with Eastern Europe played a central but symbolic role in these confrontations. The disagreements between media and political establishment concerned defense policy, the image of communism and foreign policy toward the GDR, Russia and Poland but oftentimes, the real point of disagreement, was the right of media to freely introduce critical perspectives on the position of the government in Bonn.<sup>4</sup>

In 1957/58, the state-media confrontations began with a court case against the journalist Wolfgang Stiller who refused to reveal the name of one of his informants in a report about corruption in the city administration of Winsen. The journalists' organization used the trial to push for the media's right to confidentiality (to refuse to give evidence). In 1958, another early case concerned the television drama "Besuch aus der Zone" (Visit from the Soviet Zone) produced by the *Süddeutscher Rundfunk*. CDU/CSU representatives protested the play's portrayal of East Germany, which they felt was too positive, and of West Germany, which they thought was overly critical. *Süddeutscher Rundfunk* and its leadership defended the production and its author.

The political magazine "Panorama" in *Norddeutscher Rundfunk* was at the heart of the experimental news production and political discussion. It was founded in 1961/1962 and was from the beginning particularly disliked by the conservative establishment within CDU. In 1963, 1964 and 1966, four of its moderators were forced to resign because of the

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<sup>4</sup> Christina von Hodenberg, "Die Journalisten und die Aufbruch zur kritischen Öffentlichkeit," 278-314.

conflicts.<sup>5</sup> On discussions of Ostpolitik and Poland, news magazines such as “Panorama” frequently had Hansjakob Stehle as a guest in the studio. In addition, one of its controversial moderators was also the Bensberger Memorandum initiator Eugen Kogon.

In this way, the Poland experts and activists were connected with, or part of, the very same media network that was clashing with the state on media freedom. The producers of “Panorama” considered themselves a network of media avant-garde among which they also counted the journalists in *Spiegel* and *Stern* with its editor-in-chief Henri Nannen. They cultivated close ties to *Frankfurter Hefte* since the 1940s, not only through Kogon but also through others. Stehle worked for *Die Zeit* and *Stern* in 1964/1965 before he was hired by Klaus von Bismarck and Westdeutscher Rundfunk.<sup>6</sup> *Die Zeit* and its editor in chief Marion Countess Dönhoff also became involved in the discussions surrounding Ostpolitik, and the relationship with Poland. Gerd Bucerius, the owner of *Die Zeit* and of *Stern*, also supported his journals’ right to freedom of the press but was at the same time a parliamentary member of CDU. *Stern* as well as *Spiegel* became targeted in the government’s attempt to restrict the state criticisms which the media could publish, and in 1962, Gerd Bucerius left CDU because of the party’s criticism against *Stern* and *Die Zeit*.<sup>7</sup> Given the close connection between the Poland-experts and these journalists, the way in which questions of foreign policy and freedom of the press merged was not surprising.

The state-media confrontations culminated in the *Spiegel* Affair in 1962, in which the minister of defense, Franz Josef Strauss, searched the magazine’s offices and arrested a

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<sup>5</sup> Eugen Kogon, Rüdiger Proske, Gert von Paczensky and Joachim Fest all left. Christina von Hodenberg, *Konsens und Krise*, 303.

<sup>6</sup> Hodenberg, *Konsens und Krise*, 302-323.

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*, 326.



number of journalists because of an article about problems in the defense.<sup>8</sup> This event solidified media resistance against state intervention in the name of freedom of expression. Spearheaded by television, particularly the magazines “Internationale Frühschoppen” in WDR, “Panorama” in NDR, an almost united West German media, press, radio and television, criticized Strauss. Despite Adenauer’s attempts to support him, Strauss was eventually forced to resign.<sup>9</sup> The clashes about the Poland-documentaries followed in 1963 and 1964. However, whereas confrontations led to a greater democratization of the West German public space, they also nationalized the debates on Ostpolitik and on Poland, and marginalized Poland as a topic in West German media.

#### POLAND, OUR NEIGHBOR. HANSJAKOB STEHLE’S EARLY PORTRAYAL OF POLAND

Stehle’s early articles in *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung* showed how his understanding of the situation of Poland emerged and crystallized during the early Gomułka era. During these years, he followed the relationship between state and church as somewhat equal players and came to believe that this was a positive larger development for the reform of East European communism.<sup>10</sup> Also when the state attempted to limit the influence of the church, negotiations between state and church continued to take place, sometimes through the mediation of the Znak circle. Stehle noted the positivism and statism of the church as

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<sup>8</sup> Mathias Weiss, “Öffentlichkeit als Therapie,” 115, Leo Brawand, *Der Spiegel – ein Besatzungskind: Wie die Pressefreiheit nach Deutschland kam* (Hamburg: Europäische Verlagsanstalt, 2007); Peter Merseberger, *Rudolf Augstein. Biographie* (Munich: Deutsche Verlagsanstalt, 2007); Dorothee Liehr, *Von der Aktion gegen der Spiegel zur Spiegel-Affäre; zur gesellschaftspolitischen Rolle der Intellektuellen* (Frankfurt/Main, New York: P.Lang, 2002).

<sup>9</sup> Christina von Hodenberg, *Konsens und Krise*, 323-344.

<sup>10</sup> Hansjakob Stehle, “Die polnische „Opposition” im Zwielficht. Chancen und Grenzen eines politischen Katholizismus,” *FAZ*, 1 October 1956.

well as the willingness of Gomułka to compromise with Wyszyński.<sup>11</sup> His early writings also described the limited liberalizing efforts, such as the installation of a Sejm including a small Catholic opposition. In January 1957, he especially mentioned Stomma and Zawieyski as key players on the new political scene.<sup>12</sup> The articles also discussed the open opposition by Stomma and Kisielewski to the reversal of certain church rights in 1959.<sup>13</sup> Though small, these changes seemed revolutionary against the background of Stalinism, and contributed to Stehle's optimism about the reformability of Polish communism.

Stehle's positive take on the compromises and liberalization within the Polish state inspired his belief in the possibility of establishing Polish-West German relations. At the same time, his early years in Poland sensitized him to the terrible results of the Second World War in Poland. Traveling in Poland in the late 1950s, he came face to face with the very recent Nazi past in Poland, with cities and villages in ruins as well as people protesting against spoken German in public places because "this language hurts my ears!"<sup>14</sup> The war-based Polish antipathies against Germany featured prominently in Stehle's articles, radio and television contributions. He became aware of the importance of the Oder-Neisse Line to his Polish conversation partners as well. Finally, the late 1950s was a time when the Polish moderate communists were actively seeking opportunities for relations with West Germany. In late 1957 and early 1958, an important topic was the proposal by foreign minister Jerzy

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<sup>11</sup> Hansjakob Stehle, "Kardinal und Parteichef unter vier Augen. Im Spannungsfeld polnischer Koexistenz," *FAZ*, 30 January 1960.

<sup>12</sup> Hansjakob Stehle, "Der Wahl die Polen. Einheitsliste mit der Freiheit," *FAZ*, 19 January 1957.

<sup>13</sup> Hansjakob Stehle, "Der Sejm fordert religiöse Toleranz. Temperamentvolle Debatte im polnischen Parlament," *FAZ*, 13 February 1959.

<sup>14</sup> From a journey through the borderlands. Hansjakob Stehle, "Grüne Grenzen, Bunker und Barack," *FAZ*, 30 August 1958.

Rapacki of a nuclear weapons free zone in Central Europe.<sup>15</sup> Stehle supported this proposal and shared the Polish frustration with West German refusal to even discuss the Rapacki Plan. His opinion of Adenauer and CDU's Polish politics was strongly colored by his awareness of lost opportunities at the time of the Polish October.

Stehle had been a Warsaw correspondent for five years at the time of his breakthrough as a prominent expert on Polish-German relations connected to his book *Nachbar Polen*, published in 1963 by the S[amuel] Fischer Verlag. The book was an amalgamation of his Polish experiences and the topics discussed in the early *Frankfurter Allgemeine*-articles. A journalistic piece, *Nachbar Polen* became widely respected in Poland and a bestseller in West Germany. The book was also republished in an extended second German edition in 1968.<sup>16</sup> It was also translated into English under the title *The Independent Satellite: Society and Politics in Poland since 1945* in 1965.<sup>17</sup> The lingering popularity, second edition and translation of the book meant that Stehle's impressions of Poland under early Gomułka continued to inform West German knowledge of Polish communism also during the late Gomułka regime in which the internal situation and the relations between moderate opposition, church and state had changed considerably.

*Nachbar Polen* opened in the fashion of a travelogue, describing the border crossing in Frankfurt/Oder into Słubice and the first impressions of Poland. Many of Stehle's articles, as well as his documentary, had the same format of a journey to a country which was simultaneously foreign and familiar. He then moved on to a description of Warsaw as the

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<sup>15</sup> Hansjakob Stehle, "Signale aus Warschau," *FAZ*, 2 January 1958.

<sup>16</sup> Hansjakob Stehle, *Nachbar Polen. Erweiterte Neuauflage*, 2nd ed. (Frankfurt/Main: Samuel Fischer Verlag, 1968).

<sup>17</sup> Hansjakob Stehle, *The Independent Satellite: Society and Politics in Poland since 1945* (New York: Frederick A. Praeger, 1965).

heart of Poland. The story placed a great emphasis on the post-war Polish entrepreneurial spirit and ability to rebound from the enormous damage of the Second World War. “Eighty-five per cent of all buildings were destroyed, 800,000 of the 1, 3 million inhabitants had died. Being faced with the simply impossible, many people recommended just leaving the rubble in place and building the city in a new place.”<sup>18</sup> Describing how the Poles reconstructed the Old Town stone by stone, this section inspired admiration for Polish accomplishments but it also appealed for sympathy to a generation of German readers who themselves had experienced rebuilding their cities from rubble after the Second World War.

The opening section also emphasized the positive developments in Polish communist society under Gomułka. Compared to the Stalinist era, the post-1956 Poles had experienced moderate improvements in living standard, personal freedoms, access to Western press, and greater freedom of speech.<sup>19</sup> The theme of Polish-style communism was picked up and strengthened in the second chapter, which dealt exclusively with the Gomułka-government, and its strengths and weaknesses from a more analytical perspective. Stehle argued that the Polish communist party leadership was more loyal to the Polish nation than to the Soviet Union.<sup>20</sup> Whereas Gomułka’s reforms did not live up to the promises of 1956, they still introduced greater freedoms for the people and showed more Polish independence from the Soviet Union than was the case in the other Soviet Bloc-countries. Stehle described Gomułka as a difficult but hard-working and incorruptible man. Stehle argued that the Polish communist party was internally weak, and that Gomułka held it together based on a

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<sup>18</sup> Stehle, *Nachbar Polen*, 15.

<sup>19</sup> *Ibid.*, 16, 19.

<sup>20</sup> *Ibid.*, 36.

compromise between “Stalinists” and “Partisans,” or orthodox communists and reformers.<sup>21</sup> It was this weakness that made the regime open to the idea of cooperation with the Federal Republic.

The chapter about the Polish Catholic Church treated the power struggle between state and church soon after 1956. Stehle described the strength, populism and combative mentality of the Polish Church, which “contrary to western slogans, [was] a Church which never, not even during the times of pressure, was ‘mute’ but was always fighting and usually winning.”<sup>22</sup> The image of the combative and powerful church countered the image of martyrdom of the Polish Church under communism and suggested the possibility of pluralism and compromise within the Polish state.

Znak and other intermediary groups also played a key role in Stehle’s first book. Stehle profiled Jerzy Zawieyski as “the most important man in Znak,” Stomma as “the politically leading parliamentarian” and Stefan Kisielewski as the group’s “most interesting figure.”<sup>23</sup> He considered the Znak group important because it had the weight of the Catholic Church behind it in the parliament. He also explained the political philosophy of Znak, particularly the neopositivism, in detail. Stehle’s heavy reliance on Znak as inside commentators also became clear in that he cited Kisielewski and Stomma in several other places, noticeably in the section discussing the “democratic” efforts of the parliament and on Polish foreign policy vis-à-vis the Federal Republic.<sup>24</sup>

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<sup>21</sup> Ibid., 31,

<sup>22</sup> Ibid., 99.

<sup>23</sup> Ibid., 135-136.

<sup>24</sup> Ibid., 136, 305.

In the section on Polish foreign policy, he discussed the 1958 Rapacki Plan in great detail, emphasizing the West German lack of response.<sup>25</sup> Stehle also outlined the improving relations between Poland and the United States, its relationship with the German Democratic Republic and the relationship with the Federal Republic. About GDR, he wrote:

The GDR, the actual neighbor, is populated by those Germans with whom the Poles historically had the most frequent contacts: the Prussians and the Saxons. Considering them, the anti-Prussian, anti-Protestant and anti-Stalinist sentiments become mixed in the general consciousness. In the last few years, something like a marriage of convenience – if no great affection – has developed between Warsaw and East Berlin.<sup>26</sup>

However, he added that the Poles considered the German Democratic Republic much less important than the Federal Republic, and that GDR was rarely mentioned in the press or in conversation. These descriptions and discussions encompassed what he had learned about Poland during his years of living there as a correspondent between the late 1950s and 1963. American academic reviewers of the translated edition of his book after 1965 commented that his book was particularly valuable because of his sensitivity to Poland as a West German, but a few of them also commented that his description of Polish politics had become dated by the late 1960s.<sup>27</sup>

In the conclusion to *Nachbar Polen*, Stehle ended with a criticism of Bonn for the lost opportunities to improve Polish-German relations. He outlined the measures he thought must be taken in order to accomplish a change in West German society toward Ostpolitik, in which

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<sup>25</sup> Ibid., 297.

<sup>26</sup> Stehle, *Nachbar Polen*, 307.

<sup>27</sup> Stephen Fischer-Galati, "review of *The Independent Satellite: Society and Politics in Poland after 1945*," *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science*, Vol. 365, The Peace Corps. (May, 1966), 184; Peter Brock, "review of *The Independent Satellite: Society and Politics in Poland after 1945*," *Political Science Quarterly*, 82: 2. (Jun., 1967), 328-329; Andrzej Korbonski, "review of *The Independent Satellite: Society and Politics in Poland after 1945*," *Slavic Review*, 25:4 (Dec., 1966), 706-707; Leopold B. Koziembrodzki, "review of *The Independent Satellite: Society and Politics in Poland after 1945*," *The Journal of Politics*, 28:3 (Aug., 1966), 689-691; W.W.Kulski, "review of *The Independent Satellite: Society and Politics in Poland after 1945*," *Russian Review*, 25:3. (Jul., 1966), 312-314.

Poland was a central question. Stehle argued that for two years, between 1956 and 1958, Poland had been prepared to unconditionally open diplomatic relations with the Federal Republic. However, after 1958, the communists made the recognition of the border and of the German Democratic Republic a precondition for diplomatic relations. The bottom line of his description was that the Adenauer government had lost an opportunity for normalization through its passivity.<sup>28</sup>

Stehle recommended that the politicians begin to prepare ground in West German public space for the day when the Federal Republic would be forced to recognize the border because all other options had become unrealistic. He emphasized the necessity for confronting the West German masses with the truth that the border territories were permanently Polish rather than allowing them to maintain dangerous illusions about the future. Finally, he wrote: "A key to peace in Europe today lies in correcting the image which the two neighbors construct of one another, in the attempt through continuous official conversations and contacts to remove distrust and win confidence, but also in the decision to take concrete measures."<sup>29</sup> Developing this practical agenda, based on his Polish experiences, for politically involved readers and political decision makers, he also outlined his own agenda for improving Polish-German relations in the coming years.

#### TELEVISION AND POLISH-GERMAN RELATIONS

For Stehle and the West German media elites, chipping away at the taboos that had surrounded post-war Polish-German relations and at the silent consensus of media to support

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<sup>28</sup> Stehle, *Nachbar Polen*, 312.

<sup>29</sup> *Ibid.*, 362.

the governmental foreign policy in Eastern Europe, television became an efficient tool. Whereas their traditional magazines and journals reached only a small percentage of the larger population, television was rapidly becoming a leading media.<sup>30</sup> In addition, TV offered opportunities to craft a new “image of the Other” which the press did not have, including the perceived immediacy of the filmed images which suggested a high level of authenticity and a closer intimacy between the filmed event or object and the viewer.<sup>31</sup> “Polen in Breslau” and “Deutschlands Osten-Polens Westen?” illustrated how the medium could be utilized to argue for a reconsideration of the Polish-German relations in the early 1960s. The elite journalists also effectively used strategies through audio-visual media to marginalize and defeat the opposition embodied by the expellees on Polish-German relations in public space.

In 1963, the reporter and journalist Jürgen Neven-du Mont produced “Polen in Breslau” for NDR. Neven-du Mont was born in 1921 in Munich. In 1946, he began his professional career as a theater director in Munich and he became political journalist for *Süddeutsche Zeitung*, then *Münchner Illustrierte* in 1949. After working as a publisher at the Ullstein Verlag, he became a reporter for television at *Hessischer Rundfunk* and in 1957 he joined *Norddeutscher Rundfunk*. In the early 1960s, he began producing documentaries about Eastern Europe, including “Drei Jahre danach CSSR,” (Three Years Later in the Soviet

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<sup>30</sup> A study from 1966/1967 indicated that whereas the press as a whole still reached a higher per cent of the population daily (79,8%) than television (73%), the main press exposure stemmed from tabloids, such as *Bild-Zeitung* and regional daily newspapers. Large supranational newspapers such as *Süddeutsche Zeitung*, *FAZ* and *Die Welt* reached only about six per cent of the overall population. Horst Holzer, *Massenkommunikation und Demokratie in der Bundesrepublik Deutschland* (Opladen: C.W.Leske Verlag, 1967), 11-12.

<sup>31</sup> Meike Vogel, “Der 2. Juni 1967 als Kommunikationsereignis. Fernsehen zwischen Medienritualen und Zeitkritik,” *Medialisierung und Demokratie*, eds. Frank Bosch and Norbert Frei (Göttingen: Wallstein Verlag, 2006); David Ludvigsson, *The Historian-Filmmaker’s Dilemma. Historical Documentaries in Sweden in the Era of Hager and Villius* (Uppsala: Acta Universitatis Upsaliensia, 2003), 68-72; Keith Beattie, *Documentary Screens. Nonfiction Film and Television* (New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2004).



Union) “Polen ist anders” (Poland is Different) and in 1961 “Zwischen Ost und West: Polen 1961” (Between East and West: Poland 1961). These documentaries explored Poland under Władysław Gomułka and its specific combination of communism, patriotism and Catholicism.<sup>32</sup> Similarly to Stehle’s and Zimmerer’s descriptions, Neven-du Mont emphasized the positive aspects of Polish life and culture despite communism and aggressively criticized expellee positions. In 1963, he was the first West German journalist to receive an entrance visa for filming in the Soviet Union. On a journey throughout the country, he produced “Images from the Soviet Union” in three parts. He also wrote books such as *Denk ich an Deutschland* (When I think about Germany), a book which criticized the anti-German stance of the intelligentsia and *Zum Beispiel 42 Deutsche. Bericht aus einer deutschen Stadt* ( A Profile of Forty-Two Germans, or a Story from a German City), which published interviews in which ordinary Germans spoke about their relationship with the recent past.<sup>33</sup> Neven-du Mont was a typical representative of the younger generation of journalists. He wished to solidify West German democracy through critical media, but also to educate the broader public and convince them to reflect on Germany’s place in the world and on their own history.

Unlike Neven-du Mont’s earlier documentaries, “Polen in Breslau” dealt directly with the sensitive political issue of the borderlands and their future. The manuscript of the documentary was carefully neutral. Its straightforward message was that regardless of who had a legal right to the city, the Poles had populated, rebuilt and made Breslau their own. This angle supported the argument that with each year it was becoming more and more

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<sup>32</sup> Jürgen Neven-du Mont, “Zwischen Ost und West: Polen 1961,” NDR, Hamburg, 21 August 1961, BAK, N/1279, 131, Neven-du Mont.

<sup>33</sup> Munich: Nymphenburger Verlag, 1968.

impossible for the Germans to return to the “Heimat.” In its positive portrait of rebuilding and rebirth in Wrocław, the documentary also discussed the positive influence of the Catholic Church, and commented on the fact that Polish families could be both members of the communist party and good Catholics. It pointed out that 50,000 of the adult Polish inhabitants were going back to school. “This means, that every fifth Breslau adult is spending fifteen hours a week in the classroom. These people want to complete their elementary school education or graduate from lyceum. They want to fill in those gaps in their education, which emerged because they came from the countryside or were used as forced labor during the war.”<sup>34</sup> To illustrate this point, Neven-du Mont used interviews with a Polish headmaster of a school in Wrocław and filmed the university and school areas.

Neven-du Mont’s documentary received a certain amount of free marketing through the expellee protests against it which began before the documentary had been broadcasted. However, many of the initial reactions of mainstream media to the documentary ranged between critical, neutral and troubled. A typical remark was that of the *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*, which commented that the film by necessity must evoke painful emotions in the earlier Breslau inhabitants.<sup>35</sup>

*Die Welt* reported that the Polish party newspapers had reacted positively to the documentary as an objective and honest portrayal of the city, a circumstance which did not increase the West German audience’s general trust in its objectivity. Conservative media certainly interpreted praise from the communist press as a sure sign that “Polen in Breslau” was slanted. *Süddeutsche Zeitung*, without commenting on its content, simply reported that

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<sup>34</sup> Neven-du Mont, “Polen in Breslau.”

<sup>35</sup> “Breslau,” *FAZ*, 9 May 1963.

the expellees had protested against the documentary and that the president of BdV (the Union of Expellees) had called it “communist propaganda.”<sup>36</sup> Escaping the ideological trappings of the Cold War was nearly impossible at this time and the larger moderate newspapers were somewhat hesitant about where to place the film in the ideological arena.

In addition, in the initial reactions, the format and style of “Polen in Breslau” did not sit especially well with reviewers and cultural critics in the high end press. The critics in several major newspapers were lukewarm in their responses to the documentary. The TV reviewer in *Die Zeit* felt that the reactions to “Polen in Breslau” were disproportionate since the quality of the film in itself was quite low. The reviewer stated that the image of Breslau was overly sentimental and lacked an edge or critical voice. Its sole intention was to educate “those thickheaded groups among the German Silesia-expellees, who insist on the inability of the Polish population to administer and further develop the German provinces.”<sup>37</sup> This aim made for flat and uninteresting television. *Die Welt* stated that the film was patronizing to Eastern Europeans. By marveling at signs of modernity, the film treated the Poles as an “exotic tribe.” In addition, no reports on instances of modern art or western dance events should overshadow the fact that freedom was limited for the population under the communist leadership.<sup>38</sup> These criticisms indicated that the film was directed to a broader audience and had a populist angle, which the cultural desks at elite media would not appreciate. Nevertheless, they still covered and commented extensively on the documentary, especially after the expellee protests.

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<sup>36</sup> “Kritik an Breslau-Fernsehsendung,” *Süddeutsche Zeitung*, 10 May 1963.

<sup>37</sup> “Blasses Breslau,” *Die Zeit*, 17 May 1963.

<sup>38</sup> “Breslau – ein fälliges Nachwort,” *Die Welt*, 15 May 1963.

An exception to the early critical stance of the moderate press, Hansjakob Stehle's former employer *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung* was considerably more positive toward the film. The newspaper acknowledged that the subject matter must be painful for the earlier inhabitants but commended the project overall. In a review of the program, the newspaper reported its content and the "impressive" rebuilding-efforts in the formerly German city. The report concluded: "Life has moved on in Breslau."<sup>39</sup> A positive response also came from the liberal *Frankfurter Rundschau*, which stated, "Jürgen Neven-du Mont thoroughly countered the propagandistic negatively colored notions about the Polish-administered German eastern territories in his program 'Poles in Breslau'."<sup>40</sup>

The rightwing and expellee press and representatives were the most outspoken against the documentary. Resisting the request for understanding and sympathy for the Polish situation, the expellees distanced themselves from the emotional appeal that images of newborn Polish babies in Wrocław evoked. This aspect of the film was mentioned in several of the articles and comments. The *Schlesische Rundschau* wrote; "A whole lot of children were no doubt born there during this time but where is that not the case? However, that has nothing to do with the fact that Poland taking over the German eastern territories was against international law (*völkerrechtswidrig*)."<sup>41</sup> The CDU *Pressedienst* mentioned and rejected the emotional appeal of the newborn Polish babies as well.<sup>42</sup>

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<sup>39</sup> "Breslau," *FAZ*, 9 May 1963.

<sup>40</sup> *Frankfurter Rundschau*, 8 May 1963.

<sup>41</sup> "Deutsche ohne Verantwortung," *Schlesische Rundschau*, 17 May 1963.

<sup>42</sup> "Vertriebene kritisieren Breslau-Sendung. Verzerrung der gegenwärtigen Verhältnisse/Wieder Protest gegen Befragung," *FAZ*, 10 May 1963.

Apart from the legal argument, the expellees utilized traditional nationalist perspectives of the Polish-German relations, and stereotypes of the Poles, describing the Polish-German relations as an automatically antagonistic relationship and a Social Darwinian struggle for survival, arguing that sympathy for Poland automatically translated into a betrayal of Germany. They also connected the question of German reunification with the territorial question. In *Bayern-Kurier* expellee politician Clemens Riedel wrote that if Germans accepted the line Neven-du Mont propagated “that the currently Polish-administered Breslau should be seen as a reality coming from the lost war,” it would also mean renouncing any thoughts of reunification and accepting Berlin as a free city.<sup>43</sup> They could argue this by connecting *all* results of the lost war as irreversible, both the division of Germany and the loss of territory.

The right-wing *Deutsche Nationalzeitung* announced in a response to the documentary that they had produced authentic, true reports from the areas for months about the “increasingly degenerating and decaying German villages and cities, about how the once fertile fields were laid bare.” The newspaper added that “our correspondents were not guests of the Soviet-Polish propaganda institutions; they did not describe Potemkin villages.”<sup>44</sup> *The Deutsche Ostdienst* (dod) and *Der Schlesier* went so far in their accusations that “Breslau” was communist propaganda that Neven-du Mont took them to court for libel. In the fall of 1965, the editor-in-chief for *Der Schlesier* was sentenced to pay a fine and the editor-in-chief for dod had to issue an official apology to the filmmakers.<sup>45</sup>

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<sup>43</sup> Clemens Rieder, “Heute Breslau, Morgen Berlin?” *Bayern-Kurier*, 18 May 1963.

<sup>44</sup> “Bundesdeutsche Instinktlosigkeiten. ‚Die Uhren der polnischen Wirklichkeit gehen anders’,” *Deutsche National-Zeitung und Soldaten-Zeitung*, 24 May 1963.

<sup>45</sup> “Rechtsverfahren,” *Rheinische Post*, 25 October 1965.

As the reviews indicated, it was not necessarily the high quality of the documentary but the expellees' own actions which decisively swayed mainstream media toward sympathy for Neven-du Mont. A month or two after the film was broadcast, Neven-du Mont was assaulted at an expellee meeting for the Silesians, which he was attempting to film together with a crew.<sup>46</sup> The attack became a media event in itself, and contributed to the established media's support of Neven-du Mont. As a consequence, the press, both on the left and right, undermined the expellee organizations' position by casting them as dangerous and anti-democratic rightwing radicals. In an interview after the attack, *Rheinischer Merkur* asked Jürgen Neven-du Mont to comment on the film and the attack. The reporter for the *Merkur*, a conservative Catholic organ, was in full agreement with Neven-du Mont about the importance of promoting greater knowledge of the postwar situation in Poland.<sup>47</sup>

To add insult to injury, the expellee leaders attempted to place the blame for the attack with Neven-du Mont himself for provoking the crowd by attending and filming at the meeting. Although the expellee leadership of the Bund der Vertriebenen and Silesian Homeland Society soon retreated from this position in official statements, the statements contributed to solidify support for Neven-du Mont.<sup>48</sup> Whereas critics in the media might disagree with the aesthetics of the film after the attack, the press still sided with Neven-du Mont and condemned attempts to censor or control his information about the borderlands, as well as any attacks on journalists and reporters.

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<sup>46</sup> Ahonen, *After the Expulsions*, 169.

<sup>47</sup> "Der Wirbel um 'Polen in Breslau.' Gespräch unseres Bonner Redakteurs P W Wenger mit dem Fernsehreporter des NDR Neven-du Mont," *Rheinischer Merkur*, 21 June 1963.

<sup>48</sup> A few weeks after the incident at the Silesian expellee meeting, Neven-du Mont also became a victim of a murder attempt. Ahonen, *After the Expulsions*, 169.

## DEUTSCHLANDS OSTEN-POLENS WESTEN?

Not long after the controversy surrounding “Polen in Breslau,” in the fall of 1963, *Hessischer Rundfunk* contacted Stehle with a request that he write and direct another documentary about the borderlands for television. The request should be considered in the context of both the controversies surrounding Neven-du Mont’s film as well as the building media resistance in the face of state- and expellee intervention with critical broadcasting. Together with a film team from *Hessischer Rundfunk*, Stehle traveled through the Oder-Neisse areas, filmed and spoke with the Polish inhabitants, at the end of July 1964.<sup>49</sup> The team travelled over 3400 miles in the formerly German territories.

The documentary was shown on 2 October 1964 on West German television. Another prime time feature, it again reached very large numbers of a West German audience. Viewer ratings showed that forty-four per cent of the then ten million West German television sets were tuned in to the documentary.<sup>50</sup> The film opened with images of a typical Sunday in Gdańsk with views of the Old Town and the harbor. While opening with a peaceful view of 1964 Gdańsk, Stehle referred in a cut to the first attack the city by Hitler on September 1, 1939. After the opening scene, the film inserted images of German soldiers and tanks during the Second World War. The quick cut to the German invasion of Poland was typical for all of Stehle’s works on Poland; the German past was constantly introduced as a backdrop to the Polish present. The documentary also followed the pattern of “Polen in Breslau” with sympathy-evoking images of ordinary Polish people.

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<sup>49</sup> Stehle, *Deutschlands Osten-Polens Westen?*, 28.

<sup>50</sup> *Ibid.*, 65. The discussion of the documentary content is based on the film script which was published in its entirety in Stehle’s book.

As with *Nachbar Polen*, Stehle inserted plenty of commentary from the Polish population, allowing them to tell their own stories.<sup>51</sup> Through the interviews and images of the rebuilding efforts and success stories of the new inhabitants, his film projected a feeling of intimacy with Poles which would otherwise emerge only in personal meetings with the interviewees. He countered existing stereotypes both through narration and images. Directly challenging descriptions in the expellee- and rightwing press, his commentary stated that “on the five thousand kilometer travels, we did not see any empty farms or abandoned fields.”<sup>52</sup>

Careful to give a politically balanced account, Stehle did not downplay that a tragedy had taken place with reference to the former German inhabitants in the areas. He interviewed, and referred to, the German expellees and the small German minority still living in Poland. Following an interview where a German man told his story of belonging to neither country, Stehle commented; “His children do not have these problems anymore. No one calls them “Szwaby,” the bad word for Germans.” He continued “Other remaining Germans – and they are not so few – are still waiting for permission to leave . . . They are the last victims, one hopes, of the fates of peoples, which only time can heal.”<sup>53</sup> He also commented that few people knew the former German place names and history of the areas. However, he did not allow the expulsions and the difficulties faced by the German minority to dominate the mood of the film.

The expellee press reacted predictably with protests, accusations of communist cooperation and calls for political intervention against Stehle. However, Stehle decided on a

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<sup>51</sup> Ibid., 42

<sup>52</sup> Stehle, *Deutschlands Osten-Polens Westen?* 45.

<sup>53</sup> Ibid., 44.



somewhat different response to these attacks than Neven-du Mont. Whereas Neven du-Mont had fought against the expellee press in court, Stehle published a book in 1965 named *Deutschlands Osten-Polens Westen? Eine Dokumentation*, in which he collected clippings from major newspapers as well as expellee press and political statements in response to the documentary. His strategy was both to give an overview of his basis for support as well as clearly documenting the aggressive rhetoric and protests by the expellees.

By citing the expellee press attacks in detail, Stehle could evoke the sympathy of unengaged media audiences. More importantly, he could elicit the support of the mainstream media, following a similar pattern as the responses to “Polen in Breslau.” He reported that, just as they had done to Neven-du Mont, the expellee press accused him of being a communist sympathizer. *Deutsche Ostdienst* wrote for example, that “the ‘Poland-expert’ Stehle, who is responsible for the direction of the film, was and is persona gratissima in Red Warsaw thanks to his continued labor of love and the fact that he in barely cloaked form pleads for the renunciation of the Polish territories.”<sup>54</sup> His documentation also emphasized that he was not the only target of the expellee attacks. Dod had also written that Stehle was considered an expert only by “the part of the press, radio and television, which believes unconditionally in friendship with Poland,” namely *Die Zeit*, *Stern*, and WDR.<sup>55</sup> It continued to complain that the general directors of both WDR (Klaus von Bismarck) and *Hessischer Rundfunk* (Werner Hess) supported the misconceptions which Stehle spread to the public in radio and television, and finally called for censorship of the radio and television institutes.

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<sup>54</sup> Stehle, *Deutschlands Osten-Polens Westen?* 82, dod, October 1964 (41).

<sup>55</sup> Stehle, *Deutschland Osten-Polens Westen?* 83.

As expected, this attack on the leading media and television again triggered the media institutes and press to defend its duties and rights in publishing or broadcasting on the topic of Polish-German relations. The expellee groups directed accusations against *Hessischer Rundfunk* about its pro-Polish and anti-German bias, which they extended to other leading radio and TV institutes as well. These institutes were said to be controlled by an intellectual clique, which did not represent a true political majority. Through arguing for renouncing the borderlands, the expellees charged, the film challenged the work of parliament and government who were all officially supporting a return of the eastern territories to Germany.<sup>56</sup> The targeted media professionals responded that the media's function was to confront the Germans with the uncomfortable truths about the border and the eastern territories. In an appearance in NDR in the show "Auf ein Wort," Stehle responded; "what is politically more dangerous for our country? To continue to stir up hope in people who have experienced suffering and then suddenly one day these hopes are disappointed – or to familiarize them with a reality, which emerged almost two decades ago?"<sup>57</sup> Neven-du Mont had argued for the importance of objective reporting and truth-telling in defending his documentary.<sup>58</sup> Stehle also stated that the journalist had an important political responsibility not to support national claims to territory but to introduce uncomfortable facts as a course of public education. These arguments resonated beyond pro-Polish circles to larger sections of the media elites and fit well within the larger state-media controversy about the rights and responsibilities of media in a democratic society.

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<sup>56</sup> Stehle, *Deutschlands Osten-Polens Westen?* 89 Declaration by Bundesvorstand der Pommerschen Landsmannschaft.

<sup>57</sup> Stehle, *Deutschlands Osten-Polens Westen?* 93.

<sup>58</sup> "Życie rozmawia z Neven-du Montem autorem audycji telewizyjnej NRF o Wrocławiu," *Życie Warszawy*, 9 September 1963.

During the debate about the content of documentaries such as “Polen in Breslau” and “Deutschland Osten-Polens Westen?” the expellees and media elites both claimed to have broad support in the West German society and public. The expellee representatives argued that broad layers of the West German population as well as the major parties opposed the political goals behind “Polen in Breslau.”<sup>59</sup> Neven-du Mont stated in an interview that eighty per cent of the West German press was in agreement with the format and style of the film. The polls concerning the public reactions to “Polen in Breslau” showed that forty-eight per cent of West German households owning a television viewed the documentary. Twenty-seven per cent of the polled viewers reported that they found the documentary “excellent,” fifty-two per cent found it “good.” Eight per cent reported that it was “satisfactory,” ten per cent “fair” and three per cent “very bad.”<sup>60</sup> About “Deutschlands Osten-Polens Westen?” Stehle reported that in the polls made by the media institutes, three-fourths of the viewers reported a positive response to the documentary and stated both in his book and in a later interview that the viewer ratings were ones “that TV producers nowadays can only dream about.”<sup>61</sup>

In his book Stehle expressed a certain disappointment with the media response, however. “It is noticeable, however, that several big newspapers (with the exception of the

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<sup>59</sup> “Kritik an Breslau-Fernsehsendung,” *Süddeutsche Zeitung*, 10 May 1963.

<sup>60</sup> “Infratest,” 7 May 1963, BAK, Neven-du Mont, N1279/93. Infratest was one of the several polling institutes from which media and political instances could order polls in order to measure effects on public space. Anja Kruke makes the absolutely fascinating and crucial point in her book that the use of polls and particularly the publication of polls in themselves challenged traditional concepts of public space in the Federal Republic and that use of polls for example in election campaigns was in itself a topic for controversy since they diversified public space and removed some of the control over formation of opinion from political and media elites to the opinion of the masses. Anja Kruke, *Demoskopie in der Bundesrepublik Deutschland. Meinungsforschung, Parteien und Medien* (Düsseldorf: Droste Verlag, 2007), 456.

<sup>61</sup> Infratest, Munich. Stehle, *Deutschlands Osten-Polens Westen?* 65. Hansjakob Stehle, interview by Annika Frieberg.

*Frankfurter Allgemeine*) either did not comment at all or did not allow their political columnists to pick up their pens. The ‘hot iron’ was mostly left to the television reviewers.”<sup>62</sup> In this battle about viewer numbers and broader sympathy, neither the expellee leadership nor the journalists had full control. The statistics showed that the expellee organizations could not mobilize a broader opposition or count on public support against the documentary. In fact, the documentary was likely viewed by a high percentage of expellees but condemned only by a very low percentage of its viewers. On the other hand, the elite journalists could not fully control the conclusions drawn by the general public about the images of Wrocław. Curiosity about post-war Wrocław and the magnetic pull of evening television might have compelled them to tune into the documentary, but there is no evidence that they formed an engaged and independent opinion about Poland under communism. However, beginning in the early 1960s, the use of polls in themselves was becoming an important method to add weight to one’s own argument and to use public opinion in a political debate.<sup>63</sup>

Attempting to establish a new image of Poland, challenge the expellee and CDU agendas on Ostpolitik, and promote the recognition of the Oder-Neisse Line, the West German journalists had the advantage of dominating, or even monopolizing, TV and radio. As the *British Observer* wrote about TV and “Polen in Breslau” in 1963: “German television, still a new medium, has shown far more courage and dash in its treatment of news than the extremely cautious daily press.”<sup>64</sup> After the occupation era ended, the media institutes had been reasonably successful in defending their independence against the state attempts to gain

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<sup>62</sup> Stehle, *Deutschlands Osten-Polens Westen?* 65, 67.

<sup>63</sup> Anja Kruke, “‘Responsivität’ und Medialisierung. Meinungsforschung für Parteien in den sechziger Jahren,” *Medialisierung und Demokratie im 20. Jahrhundert*, eds. Frank Bösch and Norbert Frei (Göttingen: Wallstein Verlag, 2006), 145-178.

<sup>64</sup> “New ‘Spiegel-case’ over outspoken TV editor,” *Observer*, 19 May 1963.

a greater influence. Adenauer considered this independence a great problem for his state and had worked hard to gain greater control over TV. His most recent attempt to found a second TV channel directly in state control to compete with the existing ARD had only recently fizzled, and in 1963 the Zweites Deutsches Fernsehen was founded, remaining an independent channel under the control of the media institutes.<sup>65</sup> As a consequence, programming decisions also remained in the hands of the stations even when economical and technological decisions were made by political elites.<sup>66</sup> The general directors also cooperated with each other in order to resist increased state control. The consumers, on the other hand, had only what could be considered a veto power: to watch, to switch to the second channel or to turn the TV off, but not to determine the content of media. As a consequence, as long as he had the support of his own general director, a leading reporter such as Neven-du Mont did not need to worry about competition from expellees within his own medium or about losing his larger audience.<sup>67</sup> This dominance of the audio-visual media by the elite networks greatly contributed to the Poland-experts' ability to marginalize expellees in the discussion about Ostpolitik and Polish-German relations.

On the other hand, in 1963 and 1964, the expellees still had a broad support within the political parties which they now attempted to mobilize. This support was evident in the SPD and CDU statements after the attack and assault on Neven-du Mont. Both major parties issued statements to the effect that the attacks on Neven-du Mont were justified in light of the

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<sup>65</sup> Dietrich Leder, "Fernsehen. Eine Erfolgsgeschichte," *Am Puls der Zeit: 50 Jahre WDR, Band 2*, 152.

<sup>66</sup> Kansteiner, *In Pursuit of German Memory*, 135.

<sup>67</sup> In the face of enough political protests, NDR did see the need to let journalists go, however, as the story of "Panorama" indicated. Still, compared to the much more diversified press, which also needed to be much more aware of the opinion of their readers who had multiple other newspapers to choose from, TV had an entirely different freedom to choose topics.

documentary's "dubious" content.<sup>68</sup> It seemed a natural course of action for the expellees to attempt to control the media content about Poland and the Oder-Neisse Line through asking for parliamentary intervention against Neven-du Mont and Stehle. In the case of "Polen in Breslau," the basis for their protest even before the documentary was broadcast was the attempt by NDR to collect information about the former inhabitants in Breslau now living in the Federal Republic as a part of the documentary. The producers sent out a televised appeal to former Breslau-inhabitants to contact NDR. The leaders of the expellee organizations advised their members not to respond. As Clemens Riedel, CDU politician and expellee, explained in the *Bayern-Kurier*, "It is not part of the competency of radio and television as public institutions to be the stage for this kind of 'manipulating of opinions'."<sup>69</sup> The strong reaction against the attempt by Neven du Mont to find out if the expellees wished to return to Breslau suggests that the expellee organizations feared that the poll would show that their political agenda lacked broad support among expellees.<sup>70</sup> These protests illustrated the awareness of the expellee organizations of television's growing importance as well as their inability to control its content.

In fact, the expellees' alliance with the parties in an attempt to censor television backfired in the existing media climate of discussions about media and democratization. Stehle's record of the expellee protests against his documentary reported that the expellee

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<sup>68</sup> Ahonen, *After the Expulsions*, 171.

<sup>69</sup> Clemens Rieder, "Heute Breslau, Morgen Berlin?" *Bayern-Kurier*, 18 May 1963. The protests against the poll were also mentioned in two articles in *Frankfurter Allgemeine*; "Breslau," 9 May 1963, and "Vertriebene kritisieren Breslau-Sendung. Verzerrung der gegenwärtigen Verhältnisse/Wieder Protest gegen Befragung," 10 May 1963.

<sup>70</sup> "Der Wirbel um 'Polen in Breslau.' Gespräch unseres Bonner Redakteurs P W Wenger mit dem Fernsehreporter des NDR Neven-du Mont," *Rheinischer Merkur*, 21 June 1963. However, in light of Kruke's research, Rieder's opposition might also indicate the resistance to allowing public opinion polls to define public space.

leadership poured gasoline on the fire in attempting to “muzzle” the German television. They stated publicly that they wished to institute control instances that would censor TV materials on the eastern territories, and that they planned for a collection of signatures to petition for a referendum with this effect. At this late point in time, in the aftermaths of the public relations fiasco which the Spiegel Affair had become for Bonn and in light of the constitution’s protection of the freedom of expression, such a control instance was not likely to become a reality. Nevertheless, in the public attention which the media directed to these statements the expellees emerged as enemies of democracy.

Expellee representatives in the Bundestag attempted to convince the government to act against the responsible radio and television stations (the same strategy had also been used with “Polen in Breslau”). Once more, the government was hesitant to become involved in the debate and the responsible minister (Höcherl, Bundesminister des Innern) declined to make a statement on the documentary since he had not seen it himself.<sup>71</sup> In the existing media climate, the expellees’ attempt to control public space through political pressure and lobbying, which had worked well in the late 1950s, was now failing.

In a letter on October 19, the general director of *Hessischer Rundfunk*, Werner Höss, responded to the criticism. He stated that he believed the role of television to be to inform and to further knowledge about the current situation in the eastern territories and that the documentary by Stehle fulfilled this task.<sup>72</sup> He also called the statements and actions of the expellee leaders “terror of opinion” (*Meinungsterror*). *Frankfurter Rundschau* wrote that the actions of the expellees showed a lack of understanding of a functioning democracy and

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<sup>71</sup> Stehle, *Deutschlands Osten-Polens Westen?* 98 Fragestunde der 141. Sitzung, 23 October 1964, Protokoll S. 7047 ff.

<sup>72</sup> Stehle, *Deutschlands Osten-Polens Westen?* 97.

democratic media. When Wenzel Jaksch, SPD-representative and expellee leader attacked West German television for not allowing dissenting opinions, he was in turn severely criticized by other SPD-representatives and media.<sup>73</sup> These sentiments were also shared by the Deutsche Gewerkschaftsbund and *Welt*, neither of which directly championed the Polish-German relations questions. Meanwhile, Stehle had placed himself out of reach of such criticism by allowing for the dissenting voices of German minorities in the borderlands in his documentary, and for the dissenting voices of the expellees themselves in his publication.

The consequences of these two documentaries was, as their producers had intended, to convince their audiences to let go of the illusion that it was possible for German expellees to return to their former cities and homes, or that the Polish inhabitants in the borderlands could simply be requested to go back to whence they came. The films also powerfully challenged any attempts to consider the current borderland inhabitants in the abstract and focus exclusively on the German legal rights to the territory. Secondly, the producers of these documentaries, particularly Stehle, operating from within a network of elite journalists, supranational newspapers, weeklies and radio- and TV reporters successfully marginalized expellee opinion in the discussions. Naturally, the expellee leadership was not innocent victims of this strategy: by a series of extremist or unfortunate statements, and through the failing strategy of seeking political support for silencing audio-visual media, they greatly contributed to alienating themselves from mainstream media. However, as the interview with Neven-du Mont in *Rheinischer Merkur* and Stehle's 1965 publication indicated, these two journalists also consciously drew attention to the expellee attacks with the intent of further galvanizing media opposition against expellee opinion. Expellee influence in the

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<sup>73</sup> Stehle, *Deutschlands Osten-Polens Westen?* 104.



political and media sphere was one of the greatest roadblocks on the road to recognition of the Oder-Neisse Line and improved relations with Poland. In this sense, the strategy contributed to improving the relations. On the down side, the intense focus on media and democratization of public space and on expellee voices also marginalized Poland in the discussions following the documentaries. Stehle's pronounced goal of "correcting the image which the two neighbors construct of one another" had to take a backseat in the ensuing conflicts. The portrayal of Poland was reduced to a catalyst for the debates about freedom of expression.

Another effect of the use of TV to further Polish-German relations was the even closer focus on cooperation with the communist state rather than the Polish society, a structural necessity both in light of Polish state monopoly on television and the institutionalized approach which the West Germans needed to produce film in Poland. In a letter to Klaus von Bismarck from October 25, 1963, Neven-du Mont listed the Polish contacts who had assisted him as he produced his documentaries. They included the director of the Polish state film, the director of Polish Documentary Film, the mayor of Wrocław and the leading reporter at the Polish Television.<sup>74</sup> Such men were appropriate allies for help with permission to travel in Poland with a film team, and for technical assistance while in Poland. Stehle and his film team had to wait for entrance visas and permission to film for a few months. In a later interview, Stehle said that his connections with Mieczysław Rakowski, the editor-in-chief of the communist weekly *Polityka*, helped in retrieving the needed permissions.<sup>75</sup> Rakowski supported Stehle as well as other western journalists in their

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<sup>74</sup> Jürgen Neven-du Mont to Klaus von Bismarck, 25 October 1963, Nachlass Klaus von Bismarck, Lauf.Nr. 163, HA-WDR.

<sup>75</sup> IHansjakob Stehle, interview by Annika Frieberg.

work. Also the fact that Stehle was known to the Polish authorities as a pro-Polish force in West German media made it easier for him to receive the required travel documents. Meanwhile, the Polish opposition, in the form of the Clubs of Catholic Intelligentsia, the Znak circle, journalists for *Tygodnik Powszechny* or ordinary people were not useful contacts in the film projects and went unmentioned in Neven-du Mont's letter.

The communist press followed the controversies closely as "Polen in Breslau" was broadcasted on West German television. They also carried out their own end of the discussion by asserting to their readers that there was no element of a Potemkin village about Neven-du Mont's portrayal of Poland. *Trybuna Ludu*, functioning as the voice of the party, wrote; "Neven-du Mont – sees what he wants, talks with whom he wants and films what he wants. Poland is not afraid of the truth."<sup>76</sup> According to the newspaper, the debates surrounding the film indicated a process of change in West German public opinion since this was the first time that Poland observed a public controversy about the necessity of recognizing Wrocław as a Polish city in the Federal Republic. Still, the newspaper cautioned, it was too early to judge the extent of the changing sentiments. *Trybuna Ludu* pointed to other, more disturbing trends in West German society: the Federal Republic had arrested a GDR correspondent and initiated an action against another "progressive" TV reporter, Gert von Paczensky. The Polish party press thus acknowledged the new tendencies in West German media, but continued to ascribe them to a small group of intellectuals.

Communist media also immediately reported on the broadcast of "Deutschlands Osten-Polens Westen?" as it was broadcast. *Polska Agencja Prasowa* (pap) commended its

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<sup>76</sup> "To co stare – i to co nowe," *Trybuna Ludu*, 17 May 1963.

objectivity. Pap also compared the documentary to Neven du-Mont's "Polen in Breslau."<sup>77</sup> Like Stehle, the correspondent for pap noticed that the West German dailies avoided extensive political commentary. "They limited themselves to see the show only as a contribution about the true situation in the areas next to the Oder and Neisse without connecting this question with 'the recognition of the border on the Oder and Neisse,' which is controversial in West Germany."<sup>78</sup> Whereas Stehle lamented the lack of political response in the media, the Polish interpretation was considerably more positive.

Neven-du Mont and Stehle both agreed to broadcast their documentaries to a Polish audience, with the intention of proving to a larger Polish audience that not all West Germans were anti-Polish and revisionist. A few weeks after the original broadcast in West Germany, Polish television broadcast a discussion about "Polen in Breslau" called "Casus Neven-du-Mont" with excerpts from the original film. Since Polish television worried about what the unabridged film could do to the image of revisionist Germans in Poland it elected to show only brief excerpts. Polish television justified this by claiming a lack of time while on the same night extending a report from Moscow about the quarter finals in boxing by half an hour.<sup>79</sup>

*Trybuna Ludu* commented positively on this program but complained that only minimal excerpts of the original documentary were sent. *Życie Warszawy* also responded positively through their West German foreign correspondent, Ryszard Wojna, and a few

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<sup>77</sup> "W telewizji 'Hessischer Rundfunk' obiektywny reportaż o Polsce," *Trybuna Ludu*, 3 October 1964.

<sup>78</sup> Stehle, *Deutschlands Osten-Polens Westen?* 123.

<sup>79</sup> Leszek Goliński, "Rozmyślenia przy telewizorze. Czego najbardziej nie lubią tygrysy," *Trybuna Ludu*, 5 June 1963.

months later followed up with an interview with Jürgen Neven-du Mont.<sup>80</sup> Also *Sztandar Młody* and *Słowo Powszechne* were cautiously positive. In East Germany, *Neues Deutschland* omitted all commentary on the debate about “Polen in Breslau.” While the film was widely recognized in Polish communist television and print media, *Tygodnik Powszechny* only mentioned the film and debate in a brief note. In matters of Polish-German television cooperation, the Polish moderate opposition was excluded since the means to television production was entirely controlled by the communist state. Possibly, this exclusion also led to their hesitance to become involved in the publicity surrounding “Polen in Breslau.”

In mid-October 1964, Polish Television requested from Stehle and *Stern-tv* (which held the international rights) permission to broadcast “Deutschlands Osten-Polens Westen?” on Polish television. *Stern-tv* agreed on the condition that the film would be shown completely unabridged and uncut, that the introduction to the film would not include any polemical statements against Bonn and that the general positive response to the film in West German media must be mentioned.<sup>81</sup> The royalties should be paid in Polish złoty to the Polish Red Cross. The payment to the Red Cross, Stehle later explained, was a solution to a dilemma concerning his integrity as a journalist. If he did not ask for a payment, critics would accuse him of having given the film to the Polish communists for free but if he did require payment, they would accuse him of getting paid by communists.<sup>82</sup>

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<sup>80</sup> Ryszard Wojna, “Prawda o Wrocławiu w zachodnioniemieckiej TV,” *Życie Warszawy*, 9 May 1963; “Zycie rozmawia z Neven-du Montem autorem audycji telewizji NRF o Wrocławiu,” *Życie Warszawy*, 9 September 1963.

<sup>81</sup> Stehle, *Deutschlands Osten-Polens Westen?* 123.

<sup>82</sup> Hansjakob Stehle, interview by Annika Frieberg.

The Polish television agreed to the conditions but the showing of the film was delayed by a few months while the party leadership pondered the conditions and its consequences on the official line on the Federal Republic. The film was finally broadcast in Poland on December 15, 1964. In the introduction, the commentator stated that the film had on the one hand elicited positive responses in the serious West German press, on the other hand sharp criticism in the “revisionist press.” He described the efforts by Jaksch and other expellees to create an opinion against the film and its producers. The film was presented as an “attempt” to show Polish reality in the western territories. Stehle had shown “our daily problems and our difficulties . . . in a fairly one-sided and distorted way as a critic of the communists ruling Poland.”<sup>83</sup> Polish television admitted that it was a break with the common negative images of the former German territories dispersed in the Federal Republic.

*Trybuna Ludu* wrote a few days later that the film had caused lively exchanges of opinions among Polish viewers and would be suitable material for the “tele-clubs,” organized television discussion circles.<sup>84</sup> According to the Warsaw correspondent for the *Frankfurter Allgemeine*, Stehle’s successor Angela Nacken, this was the first time that a West German film was aired completely unedited in Polish television.<sup>85</sup> Not only the controversy in the West German press but also the large space assigned to communist media responses in Poland indicated the penetrating power of the documentaries by Stehle and Neven-du Mont. The cooperation surrounding the documentaries contributed to improving cooperation between the West German Poland-experts and Polish state media. A sense of trust between

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<sup>83</sup> Stehle, *Deutschlands Osten-Polens Westen?* 126.

<sup>84</sup> “Rozmyślenia przy telewizorze. Nauka nie idzie w las,” *Trybuna Ludu*, 23 December 1964.

<sup>85</sup> “Am polnischen Bildschirm,” *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*, 17 December 1964

Polish moderate communists and West German media elites gradually emerged, which would benefit the larger project of cooperation between ARD and *Polskie radio i telewizja* discussed in the following chapter but not necessarily long-term Polish-German relations.

*Trybuna Ludu* also stated that even though the film was overly critical of the Polish state, its objectivity was proven by the controversy that it had triggered in the Federal Republic.<sup>86</sup> The Polish communist press also allowed its evaluation of Stehle's film to be influenced by the reaction of the expellee press and circles. Meanwhile, the expellee press based its criticism of the film on the positive Polish responses, and Hansjakob Stehle's good standing in Poland in 1964. In this way, battle lines were drawn between on the one hand German nationalist, expellee-affiliated and anti-communist media and on the other hand, Polish moderate communist and West German liberal and anti-nationalist media elites. In this cross-border debate about the documentaries, the Polish media ended up as one of "us," a promoter of improved relations with West Germany, more supportive to the cause than the German nationalists, expellees and hard-core anti-communists in opposition.

## CONCLUSION

The wish of Stehle and Neven-du Mont in producing documentaries about Poland for West German television was to utilize the new powerful medium in order to reach a larger audience with images of postwar Poland and arguments about the necessity to recognize the Oder-Neisse Line. West German television in 1963 and 1964 was a particularly powerful medium since it had an almost complete monopoly with only two channels to choose from and, at the time, received a lot of political and societal attention in the center of the ongoing

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<sup>86</sup> "Rozmyślenia przy telewizorze. Nauka nie idzie w las," *Trybuna Ludu*, 23 December 1964

struggle between the state and media about the boundaries of the freedom of expression and function of media in a democracy. These circumstances contributed to drawing large audiences to the documentaries and also fuelled the ensuing debates about their content in mainstream and expellee media.

The documentaries could also transmit an immediate depiction of the Polish inhabitants and their lives in the borderlands, which had a seemingly high degree of authenticity and created a sense of intimacy between West German viewers and Polish filmed populations. According to the polls, a majority of TV audiences responded positively to the documentaries and felt that they provided a fair image of the borderlands. The producers also intended to challenge the expellees' hopes to one day return to their former homes in the east by confronting them with the new permanent residents there. Finally, by using audio-visual media on which expellees had very little influence, the producers could discuss Poland on their own terms. The expellees were powerless to counter them in the same medium and resorted to public protests and attempts to exert political pressure over the institutes instead. In the media debates following the documentaries, the producers consciously attempted to marginalize expellees by emphasizing their violent rhetoric and actions and alienating them to a larger public and to mainstream media, which sided with its own members. In addition, the expellee strategies in engaging political support against media backfired in the aftermath of the Spiegel Affair and debates about freedom of expression. The politicians were hesitant to become involved in the discussions and the expellees were portrayed in media as enemies of democracy. An unintended effect of Stehle's and Neven-du Mont's media strategies however, was that the focus on the media's rights and duties became

more central than the image of Poland. This was an example of how movements of change in West German society during the 1960s, nationalized Polish-German debates.

The West German journalists also cooperated with Poland in producing the documentaries. The cooperation was a practical necessity: to travel and film in the Polish People's Republic, the West German TV-producers had to develop and maintain contacts with Polish state media and sympathetic state actors. Furthermore, they also negotiated to allow for the films to be broadcast on Polish Television in order to reach a larger Polish society with the message that not all Germans were revisionist and anti-Polish. Again, in order to do so, they had to develop and maintain closer contacts on high levels in the communist state. In this way, audio-visual media exchanges and cooperation created ties between West German media instances and Polish centralized state organs while it marginalized semi-independent actors such as the Catholic intellectuals, from the relations.



## CHAPTER 5

### RADIO AND RECONCILIATION: WDR, KLAUS VON BISMARCK AND POLAND

In February 1964, at the Protestant Academy in Müllerheim/Ruhr, the general director of *Westdeutscher Rundfunk*, Klaus von Bismarck, held a presentation titled “The National Tasks of Radio and Television in the East-West Conflict.”<sup>1</sup> The presentation summed up Bismarck’s perspective and expectations in bridging the division between the eastern and western part of Germany and the significance of the German question for Europe at large. More broadly, the presentation also raised crucial questions about the reformulation of German national identity, as well as the awareness of a larger European community and East-West relations through radio policy. While Bismarck in his presentation was practical and somewhat optimistic, there were considerable political, economic and cultural obstacles to implementing a closer media cooperation or changing societal opinions on Eastern Europe. This chapter will analyze and illustrate the ambitions and practical implementation by Bismarck and WDR of a plan to improve the Polish-German relations through radio. In addition, it will address the ways in which the personal backgrounds, preferences and networks of Klaus von Bismarck and Ludwig Zimmerer influenced the radio relations.

In his 1964 presentation, Bismarck correctly assumed that radio- and TV-broadcasting could play an important role in reformulating and solidifying postwar German national consciousness and that this national consciousness was also connected to German

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<sup>1</sup> Klaus von Bismarck, “Die nationalen Aufgaben von Rundfunk und Fernsehen im Ost-West-Konflikt,” WDR Jahresbuch 1964 (Cologne: WDR, 1964), 25-30.

foreign relations in the east.<sup>2</sup> The ongoing state-media confrontations over questions such as the relationship to the East Germans, criticism of the own state and criticism of foreign policy with regard to the Oder-Neisse territories were in many ways connected to the development of postwar German national identity, and were also tied into broader changes in West German society.<sup>3</sup> After he became general director in 1961, Klaus von Bismarck immediately began developing programming on German-German relations, in the interest of preserving a national community through the ether.<sup>4</sup> Over time, he also extended his personal and professional interest to contacts with the rest of Eastern Europe as well.

During Bismarck's years as general director, the station opened two television studios in Warsaw and Moscow. In addition, together with *Norddeutscher Rundfunk* and *Sender Freies Berlin*, in 1963 *Westdeutscher Rundfunk* initiated the Ost-West Redaktion under the leadership of Jürgen Rühle to profile the political east-west questions more strongly.<sup>5</sup> In addition, in 1961, NDR, WDR and Sender Freies Berlin established a cooperative desk on the east-west broadcasting, the *Ost-West-Gemeinschaftsredaktion*. In television, in 1963,

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<sup>2</sup> For discussions about the connection between media, memory and national identity see Wulf Kansteiner, *In Pursuit of German Memory*; Thomas Berger, "The Power of Memory and Memories of Power: the Cultural Parameters of German Foreign Policy-Making Since 1945," *Memory and Power in Post-War Europe*, ed. Jan-Werner Müller (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 76-99, and for a more recent example, Monroe E. Price, "Memory, the Media and NATO: Information Intervention in Bosnia-Herzegovina," *Memory and Power in Post-War Europe*, ed. Jan-Werner Müller (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 137-156.

<sup>3</sup> For the processes of change in the media, see Christina von Hodenberg, *Konsens und Krise; Medialisierung und Demokratie*, eds. Norbert Frei and Frank Bösch. For broader societal changes in West Germany, see *Wandlungsprozesse in Westdeutschland*, ed. Ulrich Herbert.

<sup>4</sup> Seven years old at the time, WDR had branched off from *Nordwestdeutscher Rundfunk* in 1954. Ansgar Diller and Brigitte Knott-Wolf, "Das WDR-Gesetz von 1954 in Theorie und Praxis," *Am Puls der Zeit: 50Jahre WDR. Band 2. Der Sender: Weltweit, Nah dran*, ed. Klaus Katz et.al. (Cologne:Kiepenheuer & Witsch, 2006), 284, Klaus Katz, "Organisation," *Am Puls der Zeit: 50Jahre WDR. Band 2. Der Sender: Weltweit, Nah dran*, ed. Klaus Katz, et.al. (Cologne:Kiepenheuer & Witsch, 2006), 311.

<sup>5</sup> Angela Reuber, *Deutschland- und Ostpolitik im Fernsehen. Die Sendungen der Ost-West-Redaktion des Westdeutschen Rundfunks 1966-1969*. Magisterarbeit, Universität zu Köln, Philosophisches Fakultät, Historisches Seminar. 2003, 11.

WDR founded the *Ost-West-Redaktion* under the leadership of Jürgen Rühle with almost unlimited resources at its disposal.<sup>6</sup> After two trips to Poland in 1964 and 1965, Bismarck, WDR and ARD launched their Polish Policy, an active program to improve Polish-German relations. As Bismarck's 1964 presentation indicated, the national concerns and international relations were closely related in his personal opinion as well as radio and television policy.

#### BISMARCK – PERSONAL BACKGROUND

Until 1945, Klaus von Bismarck seemed to be the perfect embodiment of Prussian nobility. Belonging to a family famous for its role in German history, he was a soldier and land-owner, a typical representative of the Junkers.<sup>7</sup> His main interests included fencing and horseback riding, and he also competed professionally in these sports. Bismarck was groomed to become a farmer and an officer, completing an agricultural degree and his military training as a reserve officer between 1934 and 1938.<sup>8</sup> In 1938, he left the military briefly to help with the family estate but was recalled into service in 1939 at the time of the invasion of Poland.

As an officer, he served both on the eastern and the western fronts. He became regimental commander, and was decorated for his service. Typical for his background, he considered becoming a soldier the ultimate test of strength, manhood and endurance and

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<sup>6</sup> Reuber, *Deutschland- und Ostpolitik*, 11, 12. Jürgen Rühle (1924-1986) was an East German dissident, journalist and former communist who arrived to the Federal Republic in 1955 and was hired by WDR in 1963.

<sup>7</sup> He was the great grand nephew of Otto von Bismarck.

<sup>8</sup> *Am Puls der Zeit. 50 Jahre WDR Band 2. Der Sender: Weltweit Nah Dran, 1956-1985* (Cologne: Kiepenhauer and Witsch, 2006), 37-38.

believed in the necessity to defend his nation against all enemies.<sup>9</sup> Furthermore, he was a believer in an “honorable war,” following rules of warfare. In this way, he could easily reconcile his participation in the German campaigns with his conscience and Christian faith. He retained the belief that despite the Nazi crimes, the German army had fought a just war until he was in his seventies.<sup>10</sup>

However, as a consequence of the end of the war, he lost all the underpinnings of the life he had seemed destined to live. His estate was now administered by Poles, and without it, he was unlikely to put his agricultural education to use. In addition, given the Allied occupation and the effort to civilize the population, Germany had no use for officers after the war. Thirdly, unlike known Nazi opponents, war resisters, Social Democrats and returning exiles, Bismarck had none of the background necessary to be invited to take part in the Allies’ reconstruction efforts. Between the spring and fall of 1945, he was a prisoner of war in a British camp. He was released, together with many other German soldiers, in August 1945 and traveled to Westphalia in search of his wife and family. He wrote in his memoirs that “For me, the time as prisoner of war between May and August 1945 was a necessary time and felt like waking up from a nightmare. I needed this time, to mentally and spiritually breathe out and stretch, as one who has been sick and for the first time dizzily stands up and takes a few shaky steps.”<sup>11</sup> Using the language of a rebirth seemed appropriate to him in this situation.

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<sup>9</sup> Klaus Bismarck, *Aufbruch aus Pommern. Erinnerungen und Perspektiven* (Munich: Piper GmbH&Co, 1996), 99.

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*, 171.

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*, 166.

Nevertheless, he still had his name and his network to rely on in his search for a new life. Through contacts, and with little previous experience of such work, he completely changed gears and took a position as the leader of the Jugendhof Vlotho, an educational facility for young people in Westfalen. These years as a displaced person contributed to his rethinking of Germany's position in the world, past, present and future. He wrote, "I myself was far from finished processing the shocks of history and relied on influences from my surroundings in this respect. One such influence in Vlotho was, for example, Marie Médard, who told the youth leaders [during educational programs for Protestant youth leaders] about her experiences which she, a young Frenchwoman and longtime inmate in Ravensbrück, had as a student in a Christian organization saving Jewish children from the SS."<sup>12</sup> In this way, he began to move away from an earlier unquestioning stance toward the German role during the war, and also in the justification for the war.

During the time at Vlotho, Bismarck became involved with the Frankfurt-based media network that would rise to prominence in the audio-visual media during the late 1950s and early 1960s. As Vlotho's administrator, he connected with small Catholic groups, including Walter Dirks, Eugen Kogon and the group around the *Frankfurter Hefte*, who became important to the programming at the youth center. He commented that they represented a form of critical and intellectual culture which was lacking in Protestant youth circles at this time.<sup>13</sup> Letter exchanges between Walter Dirks and Klaus von Bismarck from this time discussed the formation of study groups for discussions and analysis of the working

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<sup>12</sup> Ibid., 182.

<sup>13</sup> As discussed above, also Ludwig Zimmerer belonged to these Catholic fringe groups in the late 1940s. His activities and publication of *Glaube und Vernunft* seem to support Bismarck's comment. However, Żurek in *Zwischen Nationalismus und Versöhnung* only mentions Walter Dirks as the exception to the generally cautious and German-centered position of the Catholic Church in the late 1940s. Żurek, *Zwischen Nationalismus und Versöhnung*, 202.

class problems in Germany, the Marshall plan and particularly the French-German relations “which are of crucial importance to the future of Europe.”<sup>14</sup> In his memoirs, Bismarck also commented about the Catholic youth groups that they “had a much more fundamental interest in the interaction with the “Other” than similar Protestant groups.”<sup>15</sup> During these years, Bismarck laid the foundation for reforming his position on Germany’s past, beginning to accept his personal losses and engaging in a future of rebuilding Germany within a European state system.

In 1949, Bismarck became the head of the new Sozialamt (social office) for the Protestant Church in Westfalen and settled in Villigst bei Schwerte together with his wife, Ruth-Alice, and children. This time period, which lasted until 1960, seems to psychologically have been his most challenging period of adjustment. He wrote about his life in Haus Villigst in Schwerte:

We were like a pile of leaves swept together. People who had been left behind by the war. The rootless, the injured, the guilty (perhaps the guilty were the most important ones). ‘Normally’, barely one of us would have been interested in church activity. Many like myself came to the decision because they had experienced something serious and wanted a new beginning. This life was not free of conflict.<sup>16</sup>

At the same time as he was psychologically grappling with his own past and present, he continued to extend his political and social engagement through his engagement in the Protestant Church, ecumenical work and through the youth exchanges with France, which he

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<sup>14</sup> Klaus von Bismarck to Walter Dirks, Vlotho, 1948; see also Klaus von Bismarck to Walter Dirks, Vlotho, 6 November 1946; Walter Dirks to Klaus von Bismarck, Frankfurt, 27 November 1948. The earliest letter dates from 5 January 1948 from Dirks to Bismarck referring to an earlier correspondence in 1947 in which Bismarck sent materials to *Frankfurter Hefte* informing about the work done by Vlotho. Nachlass Walter Dirks, Box 23B, FES.

<sup>15</sup> Bismarck, *Aufbruch aus Pommern*, 197.

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*, 217.

had begun in Vlotho. He also became very active at the annual Protestant national conventions (Kirchentage).<sup>17</sup>

In 1961, Bismarck was elected to succeed Hans Hartmann as the general director of Westdeutscher Rundfunk in Cologne. At the same time, he had been offered the position as president of the Protestant German Lay Assembly. After some hesitation, he decided to accept the position at WDR. Through his central position and active stance within both the Protestant Church and West German media, although only one individual, he was able to greatly influence the West German civil sphere.

In his activism in Polish-German relations, Bismarck combined both his new understandings of postwar Germany's role within Europe and tasks following the war as well as his old connections with the German east and feelings of responsibility for furthering and serving the German nation. Though he grew up in the easternmost parts of Germany, as a young man he had very little experience with the Polish people. Apart from Polish riders against whom he competed during the 1936 Olympics, Bismarck had barely interacted with Poles on a personal level until the 1939 invasion.<sup>18</sup> As an officer, Bismarck arrived in Poland with few ideas about the country except for, as he put it, a few undigested notions and stereotypes which had been perpetuated by German propaganda. According to his memoirs and other writings, his first impressions of Poland included the hardships and the deep religiosity of the Poles, and the equally deep hatred with which he, as a German officer, was

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<sup>17</sup> For an in-depth exploration of the Evangelische Kirchentage, and among other aspects, Klaus von Bismarck's work within the Protestant realm, see Benjamin Pearson, *Faith and Democracy. Political Transformations at the German Protestant Kirchentag, 1945-1969*, Dissertation, UNC-Chapel Hill, 2007.

<sup>18</sup> Klaus Bismarck, "Ein evangelischer Christ erfährt Polen," *Ungewöhnliche Normalisierung: Beziehungen der Bundesrepublik Deutschland zu Polen*, ed. Werner Plum (Bonn: Verlag Neue Gesellschaft, 1984), 133.

met at the time.<sup>19</sup> By the time of the invasion of Russia, Bismarck stated that he had conclusive evidence about the atrocities committed against Poles by the National Socialists. After the war, Bismarck did not interact with Poles again until ten years later in Cologne and did not return to Poland or to Pomerania until 1964.

His personal connection with Poland through his former home areas along with his belief in the need to reform the perspectives on the German past to accord with international opinion and a post-war world initially engaged him in the Oder-Neisse question. In 1954, at the German Protestant Convention in Leipzig, Bismarck made a controversial statement about the impossibility of reacquiring the formerly German areas in Poland without further violence and conflict. The presentation addressed his own sense of uprootedness when he opened the presentation by asking “am I Bismarck-East or Bismarck-West?” and continuing to state “Perhaps, the Klaus von Bismarck-East who was active as agronomist for fifteen years in Pomerania would not have been able to entirely understand the Bismarck-West who comes to you from the Ruhr area today.”<sup>20</sup>

In his argument, he equaled acceptance of God’s plan with acceptance of the loss and change which he as an expellee had experienced in the postwar era. This was a very personal position which nevertheless had important political consequences. He spoke of his claims to his family’s property in Pomerania and stated that “in my opinion, history, over which God rules, has already changed the property order which is possible there.”<sup>21</sup> While he still felt a sense of responsibility for his former lands, he assured his audience that if he knew that they

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<sup>19</sup> Ibid., 134; Bismarck, *Aufbruch aus Pommern*, 124.

<sup>20</sup> Klaus von Bismarck, “Die Freiheit des Christen zum Halten und Hergeben,” 9 July 1954, *Seid fröhlich in Hoffnung. Der sechste Deutsche Evangelische Kirchentag vom 7. bis 11. Juli 1954 in Leipzig*. Stuttgart: Kreuz Verlag, 1954, 432.

<sup>21</sup> Ibid., 437.



were well-managed and cared for by happy people in a just social system, he would be pleased to advise the new inhabitants based on his experience in practical and technical considerations such as where to find the drainage system. The speech was criticized by the expellee organizations in the media. It was the first but not the last occasion on which Klaus von Bismarck would disappoint his fellow Pomeranians.

His next controversial statement concerning the Oder-Neisse border and Poland was also in the context of Christian activism, but was no longer limited to personal experience and faith-based reasons for acceptance of loss. In 1961, he developed and signed the Tübingen Memorandum together with a group of other prominent lay Protestants, including Friedrich von Weizsäcker and Professor Ludwig Raiser. Reflecting Bismarck's own increasing involvement with current politics and public discourse, the memorandum introduced new ways for West Germany to negotiate its political position within a larger European realm, both in the west and the east.

In order for West Germany to regain the trust of its international allies and move closer to the goal of reunification, Bonn needed to develop a proactive Eastern Policy, primarily with respect to the demand for a revision of the post-war border. The Tübingen Eight wrote: "We say nothing new when we articulate the opinion . . . that we will have to give up the demand for sovereignty in the areas behind the Oder-Neisse Line."<sup>22</sup> They added that whereas political considerations prevented politicians from openly stating this known fact, they believed that it was necessary to prepare the public and not let them live in the illusion that the areas could be returned to Germany in the future. Another key factor in

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<sup>22</sup> "Auszug aus dem „Tübinger Memorandum“ vom 6. November 1961 (veröffentlicht am 24.2.1962),” *Bonn-Warschau 1945-1991. Die deutsch-polnische Beziehungen. Analyse und Dokumentation*, eds. Hans-Adolf Jakobsen and Mieczysław Tomala (Cologne: Verlag Wissenschaft und Politik, 1993), 114-115.

restoring trust among foreign allies was to work for a normalization of relations with the eastern neighbors. Poland and Germany must remove the possibility for the Soviet Union to play them against one another.<sup>23</sup> Also the focus of cultural relations and the removal of causes of distrust and aggression between Poland and the Federal Republic reflected Bismarck's growing ambitions to influence West German politics.

The Tübingen Memorandum served as a watershed moment, publicly clarifying Bismarck's changing alliances. His expellee network and extensive social milieu of German nobility became painfully aware of his redefinition of postwar Germany. The tone of their letters, though upset, still remained surprisingly civil since they continued to regard him as one of their own with whom they thought they would be able to reason. They assured him that although certain parts of the expellee press were calling him a traitor, they were opposed to this kind of name calling.<sup>24</sup> They proposed "meetings behind closed doors" with leading moderate voices within the expellee organizations to discuss the memorandum. As Bismarck's brother, Philipp von Bismarck, was a leading functionary in the Pomeranian Landsmannschaft, a personal line of communication existed between Bismarck and the expellee leadership.

Less politely, the Pomeranian expellees also voiced their disappointment and disbelief that he no longer subscribed to their concept of German history, memory and identity. "This has distanced yourself and your friends from the feelings and thoughts of the part of the population, who follow the voice of the heart and the conscience in questions concerning the Fatherland and are perhaps a final obstacle on the road to the complete

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<sup>23</sup> The memorandum referred to Germany as a whole rather than two separate parts.

<sup>24</sup> Klaus von Bismarck to Hasso von Blanckenburg, 9 March 1962, HA-WDR, Lauf. No. 163 Memorandum Allgemeine Korrespondenz A – Z 1962 IV.

materialization of our times. Surely, you do not wish for this.”<sup>25</sup> His rejection of their position hurt them particularly because, through his name, Bismarck functioned as a symbol for pre-war German pride and power. “Without doubt, as a private person, You have the right to have Your own political opinion. I am also not arguing about whether or not this opinion is foolish or incomprehensible. I only question that You, as the carrier of one of Germany’s most famous names, have given the memorandum extra weight.”<sup>26</sup> At this point, however, Bismarck’s opinion of how he could further his nation and restore it to a European community and a place among civilized nations had deviated very far from these older models and he was using his name precisely to give weight to his new ideas.

As his concept of this nation and his beliefs about the wisest course for it to take changed, Bismarck extended his cultural and political activity to implement his visions of Germany’s future on a European stage. By 1962, he believed that the Germans must accept the loss of the territories in the east but not necessarily the division of the country. He thought that the most important way in which to recover the nation and strengthen its position in the larger Europe was through recognizing clearly and publicly the dark aspects of the German past. He also believed that in the interest of the nation it was of crucial importance to strengthen relations with other European states, such as France and Poland, on a political and cultural level. Radio and television, his personal area of expertise, could play a central role in improving these relations as well as reforming the German self-perception.

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<sup>25</sup> Redel to Klaus von Bismarck, Gissen, 5 April 1962, HA-WDR Lauf. No. 163, Memorandum Allgemeine Korrespondenz A – Z 1962 IV.

<sup>26</sup> G. Korth to Klaus von Bismarck, 11 June 1962, Nachlass Klaus von Bismarck, Lauf.No. 163, Memorandum Allgemeine Korrespondenz A – Z 1962 IV, HA-WDR.

Between 1961 and 1963, *Westdeutscher Rundfunk* and Bismarck developed a number of programming, funding and administrative initiatives to increase their connections with, and information about, the East Germans. Bismarck discussed these initiatives extensively in the article “The National Tasks of Radio and Television in the East-West Conflict,” stating his belief that radio had a central role to play in unifying spiritually the eastern and western parts of the nation. In this discussion about the German-German radio relations, Poland was mentioned as a mere side note. Bismarck commented that the “Zone inhabitants” should not be encouraged to wait for communism to fall but should be made aware about the possibilities of development within their existing system. “For this reason, we consciously report from other eastern block states, particularly Poland, but more recently also Hungary, because there, communists rule as well but under more humane and sensible conditions than in the Soviet Zone.”<sup>27</sup> However, though still closely tied to national concerns, by 1964 the Polish agenda had grown beyond being part of the German-German coverage. For Bismarck and the WDR leadership, Polish-German radio relations were becoming a concern in themselves.

#### THE 1964 WDR/ARD TRIP TO POLAND

When Klaus von Bismarck travelled to Poland for the first time after the Second World War in 1964, the trip took place through an invitation by the Polish Chamber of Commerce with the intent to investigate the possibility for more extensive cooperative effort between ARD and Polish Radio and Television. The visit was simultaneously a private and official visit. Bismarck traveled together with his wife, Ruth-Alice. As general director of

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<sup>27</sup> Klaus von Bismarck, “Die nationalen Aufgaben von Rundfunk und Fernsehen im Ost-West-Konflikt,” 28.

WDR and chairman of ARD, his goals were to network with Polish intellectuals and media personalities, create goodwill for West Germany and West German radio. He also wanted to gather information about the Polish media elite and explore their willingness for cooperation on a radio and television level. On the personal level, he wished to visit his former home in Pomerania and see Poland and Polish society for himself.

Having very limited experiences with postwar Poland, Bismarck began the preparations for his trip in the fall of 1963 by seeking the advice of colleagues in West German media with some expertise on Poland. Since *Norddeutscher Rundfunk* and *Radio Bremen* had already worked with the Polish Radio and Television, he asked for advice from Gerhard Schröder and Heinz Kerneck, these stations' general directors. He also sought the advice of Jürgen Neven-du Mont, who had spent extended time periods in Poland and had cooperated with Polish media during the filming of his multiple Poland-documentaries. Jürgen Neven-du Mont responded that "First of all, without doubt, you will be assisted in an exemplary way by our correspondent Ludwig Zimmerer in Warsaw. Since he lives in Poland, is married to a Pole, has many Polish friends and an excellent knowledge of the situation in Warsaw, it is almost presumptuous of me to still dare to draw your attention to a few things, almost in the hope that Mr. Zimmerer might forget to mention them."<sup>28</sup> Neven-du Mont also provided Bismarck with a list of Polish television and radio journalists as well as cultural and academic leading figures who would be interested in German connections and were all German-speakers.

Overall Schröder, Kerneck and Neven-du Mont all agreed in their responses to Bismarck that Zimmerer was the crucial contact for Bismarck in his preparations for the trip.

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<sup>28</sup> Jürgen Neven-du Mont to Klaus von Bismarck, 25 October 1963, Nachlass Klaus von Bismarck, Polen-reise 1964, HA-WDR.

Also Heinz Kerneck at Radio Bremen enthusiastically referred to Zimmerer as the ultimate contact and authority on Poland. Kerneck mentioned his personal contacts at the Polish radio but emphasized that for all other contacts, authors, actors, journalists, but also high functionaries, Bismarck should contact Zimmerer, who “probably has the best connections to the elites possible for a foreigner and non-communist journalist in a dictatorship state.”<sup>29</sup> This focus on Zimmerer as a contact also indicated the difficulties which a non-Polish speaking semi-official visitor faced in finding contacts in a harshly controlled state. The West German Foreign Office could be of little or no help; although the West German trade mission had been established in Warsaw a year or two earlier, its representative was isolated from larger Polish society.<sup>30</sup>

Zimmerer responded to Bismarck’s request for initial information in a long, detailed letter. In preparation for traveling to Poland, he wrote, Bismarck should read Hansjakob Stehle’s *Nachbar Polen* but also some Polish literature, such as the translated plays and short stories by Mrozek, *Ashes and Diamonds* by Andrzejewski and, importantly, *Steinerne Welt* by Tadeusz Borowski.<sup>31</sup> Sławomir Mrozek, whom Zimmerer himself translated into German, satirized the socialist state whereas Jerzy Andrzejewski made a more earnest attempt to describe the complexities of post-war Poland in *Ashes and Diamonds*. Borowski

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<sup>29</sup> Heinz Kerneck to Klaus von Bismarck, 30 September 1963, Nachlass Klaus von Bismarck, Polenreise 1964, HA-WDR.

<sup>30</sup> The trade mission was a result of Polish-West German political negotiations through Beitz. Mumm von Schwarzenstein had arrived in early 1964 with instructions from Foreign Minister Schröder to lead the Trade Mission. Schröder wrote, “Your task will exclude any visible or quick successes. It requires a high measure of patience and tact. You should strive to gradually improve our relationship with Poland. This concerns primarily the economic relations but also, if it proves possible, other limited aspects, such as the cultural relations.” Dok. 80, *Akten zur Auswärtigen Politik des Bundesrepublik Deutschlands*, 1964, ed. Hans-Peter Schwarz (Munich: R. Oldenbourg, 1989), 376.

<sup>31</sup> This is a German translation of Borowski’s short stories from his time at Auschwitz. Some of the corresponding stories were translated into English and published under the title *This Way for the Gas, Ladies and Gentlemen*.

was a camp-survivor who described the experience of the concentration camp brutally and without illusions. All three authors were enthusiasts of the Polish communist system in the early 1950s. Borowski committed suicide in 1951.<sup>32</sup> The others gradually became disillusioned during the 1960s and 1970s. Through his choices, Zimmerer attempted to give Bismarck a nuanced picture of the Polish history and post-war society introducing him to various societal layers, to culture as well as politics. Importantly, he led him toward the leading Polish literature on the Second World War and early communism but steered him away from traditional romantic nationalist literature.

By December 1963, Bismarck had in his hands a report based on the answers from Neven-du Mont, Schröder, Zimmerer and Kerneck, to be used as his main guide in preparing for the Poland trip. The report presented general political information for the semi-official visitor, information about key personalities at the Polish radio who would be the main conversation partners for Bismarck in his role as WDR general director, and information about the existing program exchanges and contacts between West German and Polish radio, its possibilities and problems. It also discussed how to conduct a conversation with Poles about the mutual Second World War Past and the current Cold War situation, and gave general advice about visiting and cultural norms.

Importantly, the report gave advice on what German visitors could expect in terms of the Polish understanding of Polish-German relations during the Second World War. The visitor, Bismarck, should keep in mind that the political climate was characterized by a deep and total distrust of the Germans and be prepared to answer questions about the German past.

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<sup>32</sup> Andrzejewski and Borowski were the figures Alpha and Beta in Czesław Miłosz's famous 1953 essay *The Captive Mind* about Polish intelligentsia and the communist system in the first years after 1945. Its first edition, *Zniewolony Umysł* was published in 1953 in Paris by Instytut Literacki.

“The years of suffering are unforgotten and almost every family is regretting the loss of one or several victims,” the report stated. Furthermore, as to the question of victimhood, it was important for Bismarck to know that Poles considered Germans the perpetrators of Polish suffering during the Second World War; “Both officially and unofficially, the Poles are of the opinion that the effort toward understanding must come from the German side.”<sup>33</sup> Finally, the Polish people were united in considering the current territorial status quo beyond question and could not understand the West German stance which combined the declaration of non-violence with a refusal to accept the existing territorial agreement.

The report also gave several pieces of cautionary advice with regard to the current political situation. Bismarck ought to keep in mind that they would be constantly followed by the Polish secret service, their telephones tapped and hotel rooms bugged. It also discouraged them from keeping addresses and texts with them when crossing the borders since visitors would be thoroughly searched, and this could endanger their Polish contacts. Schröder also emphasized that the Poles considered the West German radio stations an extension of the federal government and that Bismarck should mention the relative independence of WDR from Bonn. This specific advice indicated the in-between position of media officials as simultaneously state- and non-state visitors.

Finally, the report treated the question of gift giving, stating that books, records and, for the ladies, “Kölnisch Wasser” (eau de cologne) were desired articles and could be given “without embarrassment.”<sup>34</sup> Sensitivity toward the Polish memories of the Second World War, the Cold War situation and the state-media relations in both countries as well as

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<sup>33</sup> “Erste Informationen zur Polen-Reise,” marked: B.5.12, meaning Bismarck read it on December 5, 1963, Nachlass Klaus von Bismarck, Polen-reise 1964, HA-WDR.

<sup>34</sup> Ibid.



friendly gifts would all contribute to Bismarck successfully negotiating his first face to face interactions with the Polish people since the German invasion.

Already before he left the Federal Republic, Bismarck anchored his Polish ambitions and brought attention to the journey in a broad group of potentially interested individuals within his own institute. Copies of the preparatory report were sent to several important leaders in the *Westdeutscher Rundfunk*, including Klaus Baring, Otto Tomek, Helmuth Lange and Paul Botta who had earlier been involved with the Polish intellectuals, as well as Walter Dirks, who was the leader for the cultural desk. Though they would not accompany Bismarck on his travels, these men played and would continue to play crucial roles in developing Polish-West German radio relations throughout the 1960s.

An important ambition of Bismarck was to establish a network of Polish conversation and cooperation partners. To that purpose, he had gathered information both from the other radio institutes and WDR about already existing contacts. Between Polish Radio and Television and *Norddeutscher Rundfunk* previous cooperation consisted primarily of musical programming. NDR general director Schröder pointed out that financial inequality made the exchange of cultural programming more difficult since the Poles could not afford West German licensing fees. Radio Bremen's interaction with Polish Radio was mostly restricted to letter exchanges although employees from Polish Radio occasionally visited the radio station. In WDR, the political desk of the *Westdeutscher Rundfunk* had a few previous contacts and planned a series about Eastern Europe titled "Die Deutschen und Ihre Nachbarn" (The Germans and their Neighbors). Klaus Baring, who worked with the series, had recently travelled to Poland to establish preparatory contacts. The leader for the musical

desk, Dr. Otto Tomek, also entertained some contacts with Poland for the purpose of musical program exchanges.

It had become clear during the preparations that Zimmerer would be particularly important to networking with any non-communist Poles. In his letter, Zimmerer had listed three groups of people that Bismarck should meet while in Poland. The first group was the official one, including representatives for radio and television, the media department of the foreign ministry and possibly also a representative at the foreign ministry. In this context, Zimmerer recommended a meeting also with Dr. Mumm von Schwarzenstein, the trade mission representative. As a central figure in Polish-German relations at this time, Zimmerer attempted to support the recently established mission in its work.

Secondly, Zimmerer wanted Bismarck to be introduced to the Warsaw intelligentsia, with whom Zimmerer was personally acquainted. “You could meet a similar circle in Krakow through my mother-in-law, who lives there as an author” he added.<sup>35</sup> Zimmerer prioritized the Catholic intellectuals, including Stomma and Kisielewski whose names he assumed were already familiar to Bismarck. Thirdly, Bismarck ought to drive through the countryside and speak with people who lived outside of Krakow and Warsaw, for example a mayor of a small town, a party secretary and the director of a school. He thought it best to select a community in the Oder-Neisse area. “I have frequently found out much that was unknown to the Warsaw or Krakow intellectuals in these kinds of conversations” he concluded.

Bismarck followed the networking agenda which Zimmerer had outlined quite closely and his Polish contacts emerged primarily as a result of these mediated interactions. In

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<sup>35</sup> Ludwig Zimmerer to Klaus von Bismarck, 17 October 1963, Nachlass Klaus von Bismarck, Polenreise 1964, HA-WDR.

Warsaw, he met and was deeply impressed by the Znak circle. Bismarck wrote that the evening with the representatives of Znak was closest to his heart because of the Znak-representatives' openness and friendliness and their personal integrity. The conversation touched upon fundamental concerns of "the Polish existence," namely the coexistence of communism and Catholicism.<sup>36</sup> Stanisław and Elwira Stomma, Stefan and Lidia Kisielewski, Dominik Morawski, and Tadeusz Mazowiecki were present. The Znak group described the unwillingness of both the Catholic hierarchy and the communist party to cooperate, making the bridge position of Znak an impossibility.<sup>37</sup> Though Bismarck's official duties to establish radio and TV media contacts would eventually side-line the Znak circle as cooperation partners, the shared Christian-political perspectives and concerns nevertheless allowed him to establish a lasting connection with them, and allowed the Znak intellectuals to win another powerful West German media ally.

Klaus von Bismarck retained and deepened his contacts with the Znak circle during the 1965 trip and later as well. A few weeks after the 1965 trip, he wrote in a letter to Jerzy Turowicz that "although we were unable to speak in peace and quiet at the lively market place which was the reception at Ludwig Zimmerer's, I was very pleased that we met again and I could inform you a little about the things that have kept me busy – particularly in the context of the church – since our last meeting."<sup>38</sup> In the letter, he included a pamphlet about WDR ecumenical programming concerning ecumenical discussions, an article by Ruth-Alice

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<sup>36</sup> Klaus von Bismarck, "Reise nach Polen. Entwurf," Nachlass Klaus von Bismarck, Polen-reise 1964, HA-WDR, 5.

<sup>37</sup> Bismarck later commented that Jerzy Turowicz in Krakow seemed less critical of the Polish Catholic hierarchy than the Znak members in Warsaw.

<sup>38</sup> Klaus von Bismarck to Jerzy Turowicz, 15 June 1965, Correspondences A-Z, Archiwum Jerzego Turowicza, Kraków.

von Bismarck about the trip to Pomerania and a article co-written by himself and Walter Dirks. On the same day, he also sent a letter to Stomma including the same pamphlet, article, and other information about his work for the Protestant Church. Through Bismarck's interactions with Stomma and Turowicz, his religious activism and private contacts went hand in hand with official and political activism. As a natural part of his Poland networking, Bismarck developed relations also with Turowicz's and Zimmerer's families, and in the letters, he not only included the article by his wife but also extended his greetings to their wives.

In 1964, the Bismarcks also spent several evenings with Ludwig Zimmerer including attending a larger reception which he arranged in their honor. Zimmerer's home and extensive collection of Polish folk art woodcarvings made a particularly strong impression on Klaus von Bismarck, who commented that it was the living space of "an educated and artistically inclined man." For networking purposes, Zimmerer invited about twenty guests to meet Klaus von Bismarck. These guests included a member of the old Radziwiłł family, once one of the richest and most famous aristocratic families in Poland; a business professional and diplomat who was now employed by the Gomułka-regime; the poet Stanisław Jerzy Lec, one of Warsaw's most prominent actresses, a Jazz musician, a leader of a cabaret in Krakow (probably "Piwnica pod baranami" in which Zimmerer's wife Joanna Olczak was an actress) and journalists both from Catholic *Znak* and communist *Trybuna Ludu*.<sup>39</sup> The evening was accompanied by "a great amount of Polish vodka and whyski [sp.]" and the interactions with the guests formed a "mosaic of conversations with witty and

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<sup>39</sup> Klaus von Bismarck, "Reise nach Polen. Entwurf," Nachlass Klaus von Bismarck, Polen-reise 1964, HA-WDR, 8.

remarkable personalities.” Zimmerer seemed to have chosen the guests with great care in order to introduce his West German visitor to the greatest possible range of prominent Warsaw people, communist and non-communist.

In addition, Bismarck interacted on an official level during his trips, functioning as an unofficial diplomat or state back channel in the mold of Stomma, Beitz and Skibowski although to a lesser extent than these journalists. This role was underlined in a Warsaw meeting at the Department of Foreign Affairs, where he was treated as an informal channel for the Warsaw government to communicate with Bonn. He met with officials who on the one hand expressed their approval of Bismarck’s participation in the 1962 Tübingen Memorandum. On the other hand, they informed him of their disappointment that the shift from Adenauer to Erhard had not led to a more active eastern policy. The Polish representatives also made clear their dislike of Bonn’s tendency to cultivate individual and cultural, rather than official, contacts with Poland. Before his 1965 trip, Bismarck also received suggestions from the West German Foreign Office with reference to statements which they wished to make on the topic of the current Polish-German relations. The Foreign Office Representative Dietrich Sattler proposed that Bismarck might regretfully mention the lack of interest in cultural relations from the Polish side if given the opportunity in a conversation, but recommended that he not mention the Trade Mission specifically.<sup>40</sup> Also

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<sup>40</sup> Dietrich Sattler to Klaus von Bismarck, 4 May 1965, Nachlass Klaus von Bismarck, Lauf. No. 259, Unterlagen Polen-Reise, HA-WDR. Such cultural diplomacy involving intellectuals was common in the Cold War World. See Volker Berghahn, *America and the Intellectual Cold War In Europe: Shepard Stone Between Philanthropy, Academy and Diplomacy* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2001); Giles Smith-Scott, *The Politics of Apolitical Culture: The Congress for Cultural Freedom, the CIA and Post-War American Hegemony* (London, New York: Routledge, 2002), Peter Coleman, *The Liberal Conspiracy: The Congress for Cultural Freedom and the Struggle for the Mind of Postwar Europe* (New York: Free Press, 1989). These works were involved in controversy concerning CIA’s sponsoring of the intellectuals’ attempts to institute détente.

this exchange gave evidence of the way in which the Polish and West German states continued to talk past each other.

While in Warsaw, Klaus von Bismarck engaged in the discussions with the officials at Polish Radio about the possibility for program exchanges. These talks would become the foundation for WDRs exchange and cooperation program with Polish state media in the coming years. Before leaving the Federal Republic, he prepared for the trip by discussing the extent of existing cooperation with Poland by WDR and other radio stations. In Warsaw, the Polish Radio associates themselves described the cooperation with different West German radio stations. They had established loose contacts with *Bayerischer Rundfunk*, *Radio Stuttgart*, *Südwestdeutscher Rundfunk* and *Hessischer Rundfunk*, primarily concerning the exchange of musical programming. *Radio Bremen* and *Norddeutscher Rundfunk* had a more extensive cooperation, including the support for the Neven-du Mont films about Poland. About *Radio Bremen*, Bismarck commented that “Here we can see that which Warsaw apparently wants to happen, namely for the Polish Radio to participate in the development of broadcasting on the German stations.”<sup>41</sup> At the time of his visit, Bismarck was the chair of ARD and in the report, he stated that the contact opened should also be considered an official ARD-contact “so that in this way, the contact between ARD and Radio Warsaw take on a more official and stable nature.” These were important statements. They showed that the Polish communist media attempted not only backdoor official contacts in the Federal Republic, but also to reach a broader audience through West European media. It is clear that West German media officials were aware of their ambition and willing to accommodate it to

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<sup>41</sup> Klaus von Bismarck, “Reise nach Polen. Entwurf,” Nachlass Klaus von Bismarck, Polen-reise 1964, HA-WDR, 2. The chair position was circulated between the general directors of the West German radio stations

an extent in exchange for the opening of those cultural connections which Warsaw had been unwilling to accept.

The WDR leaders also had the practical ambition to broadcast certain self-critical or pro-Polish West German media productions to a Polish audience so as to contribute to lessening suspicions about the anti-Polish aggression and revisionism in the West Germans. Bismarck particularly wanted the Poles to be exposed to films providing an “objective” perspective on the territorial question, such as Neven-du Mont’s “Polen in Breslau” and films that critically engaged with Germany’s role during the Second World War. To that effect he proposed that WDR should bring the documentary series “Das Dritte Reich,” a co-production by Westdeutscher- and Süddeutscher Rundfunk about Nazi Germany, to Poland and show it to selected audiences.<sup>42</sup>

In the summer of 1964, the international program director of Polish Radio, Hubert Meller, visited WDR in Cologne and while he was in West Germany, discussions about cooperation and program exchanges were continued. During these conversations, it was decided that a few episodes of “Das Dritte Reich” should be shown to limited Polish audiences in order for the Poles to “familiarize themselves with a [West German] scrutiny (*Auseinandersetzung*) of the past through television.”<sup>43</sup> Overall, Bismarck considered the early conversations in 1964 to be a success.

Leaving Warsaw, the Bismarcks attended to their more personal motives in visiting Poland. Though received by local radio officials in Krakow, they took time for ordinary tourist pleasures in the Polish cultural capital. They visited Wawel, the royal castle, went to

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<sup>42</sup> Bismarck, *Aufbruch aus Pommern*, 281.

<sup>43</sup> Klaus von Bismarck to Hubert Meller, 20 July 1964, HA-WDR, Nachlass Klaus von Bismarck, Lauf.No. 259, Unterlagen Polen-Reise, HA-WDR.

a jazz club and spent time shopping. A crucial ingredient in any official or semi-official German visit to Poland, they also visited Auschwitz and Birkenau. About the visit to Auschwitz, Bismarck simply wrote; “It is not possible to casually include that which we saw there in a travelogue.”<sup>44</sup> Still, he went on to describe a few images, the mountains of human hair and children’s shoes that stood out in his memory. At the end of the visit, they were asked to sign the guest book for prominent visitors, noticing the names of Urho Kekkonen, Finland’s president, and Walter Ulbricht. Bismarck wrote;

It is not entirely easy to write our names in this book but it later became clear that it was the right thing to do; to set out for Silesia, Pomerania, Breslau and Stettin through the dark gates of Auschwitz. One sees the fate of the former German areas in an entirely different way after this entrance, and after this experience.<sup>45</sup>

Not a unique statement for a German early visitor to Poland, it is nevertheless important to notice that the awareness of, and responsibility for, the concentration camps was a main precondition for West German dialogue with Poles, particularly for a former soldier.

The personal journey back to Pomerania also assumed political implications in an article which Ruth-Alice von Bismarck published in *Die Zeit*, titled “I was born here...”<sup>46</sup> Though it was a very personal piece, it was published in the journal’s political section. The article described the Bismarcks’ emotions and experiences of meeting the Poles now living in the couple’s childhood homes, running the former farms, and going to mass in the family’s chapel. She began by describing the connection between the old Prussian families and their estates which vividly came to mind during the visit of their former home. Ownership of

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<sup>44</sup> This is the edited comment. Originally, he had written; “There is little to say in detail about what we saw there.”

<sup>45</sup> Klaus von Bismarck, “Reise nach Polen. Entwurf,” Nachlass Klaus von Bismarck, Polen-reise 1964, HA-WDR.

<sup>46</sup> Ruth-Alice von Bismarck, “Hier bin ich geboren...’ Besuch in der pommerschen Heimat - Merkwürdig, dass man einfach lächeln kann’,” *Die Zeit*, 4 September 1964.



these estates was, in her description, a loan and an assignment and being born into the aristocratic, land-owning families was to be part of a larger collective, which in turn was a part of German history. This chain, connected to land and history, had now been broken and the families forced to transplant themselves into a new social context.

The Bismarcks met the present Polish administrator of the estate, who seemed intelligent and “could have been a Pomeranian overseer.” Initially, the atmosphere at the meeting was gloomy but the Polish family handed over some heirlooms belonging to the Bismarcks. The dark mood passed as the conversation was directed toward practical matters of farm maintenance, turning “to the question which my husband had already long expected: ‘How in the world are we to find the drainage system?’ And now all the internal emotions can be channeled into the concentrated effort of retrieving from memory another piece of useful advice for the current situation.”<sup>47</sup> Also in this situation, the Bismarcks experienced and described to a West German audience the Polish fear and suspicion. The article ended on an optimistic note, however. The villagers of the former Jarchlin had kept their distance, but late in the visit the Germans were invited home by one of the women. Suddenly, the relationship transformed and the interaction found a new formula: “The expression of anxious insecurity which has met us in almost all faces here is replaced by the warmth and dignity of the host.” Despite the tensions, the memory of the past and the property conflict, the idea of Polish hospitality and warmth became the lasting impression of the meeting.

Similarly to Klaus von Bismarck’s 1954 presentation at the Protestant National Convention, Ruth-Alice von Bismarck’s article used the personal experience as a prime victim of the changed geopolitical situation, to show a way to face and overcome the past,

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<sup>47</sup> Ibid. Bismarck had, in fact, expected that very question and been prepared to answer it since his Leipzig speech in 1954.

and to establish connections to the Poles. By using the family name and position, she was able to generalize their private emotions and psychological approach to a wider expellee population in West Germany. Marion Countess Dönhoff used her position as former land-owning nobility in similar ways, particularly in her memoirs.<sup>48</sup> These personal narratives of overcoming the past and looking forward became parts of the larger reconciliation narrative which was beginning to emerge. Ultimately, the Bismarcks' personal feelings and psychological traumas could be transformed into representations of national experiences.

#### “DAS DRITTE REICH” AND WDR IN POLAND 1965

“Das Dritte Reich” was one of the earliest documentary series on West German television which critically discussed the rise of Hitler in Germany, the effect of the Nazi party on German society and the resulting war. Made in fourteen parts, it was also one of the largest early West German productions about Germany's role in the Second World War, and it drew considerable attention from television audiences in the Federal Republic: in West Germany, forty-two to sixty-nine per cent of the television sets were tuned in to the documentary series throughout its broadcasting period in late 1960 and early 1961.

While made in a new spirit, the portraits in the series still emphasized the “moments of seduction and violence” in National Socialism and downplayed the broad popular support among the middle classes for Hitler.<sup>49</sup> The focus on the Nazi regime's violent nature also contributed to justify the fact that so very few Germans protested openly against the Nazis. In

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<sup>48</sup> Marion Dönhoff, *Kindheit in Ostpreussen* (Berlin: Siedler, 1988).

<sup>49</sup> Hodenberg, *Konsens und Krise*, 272; Peter Zimmerman, “Vergangenheitsbewältigung. Das „Dritte Reich“ in Dokumentarfilmen und Fernsehdokumentationen der BRD,” *Der geteilte Himmel. Arbeits, Alltag und Geschichte im ost- und westdeutschen Film*, eds. Peter Zimmerman and Gebhard Moldenhauer (Konstanz: UVK Medien, 2000), 57-75.

addition, the film emphasized small pockets of resistance within German society.<sup>50</sup> Bismarck commented that the film was suitable for a Polish audience “since we saw in it an important cultural political contribution to reconsidering the German history as well as *rapprochement*.”<sup>51</sup> Overall, its producers thought it suitable to strengthen West German democracy and also show the world the progress which the Germans had made since 1945. Gerd Ruge wished to produce a shorter version of the series for an American audience to this purpose.<sup>52</sup>

As a result of the negotiations in the previous year, in 1965, between May 16 and 25, five West German representatives travelled to Warsaw and Wrocław to show three parts of “Das Dritte Reich” to a select group of Polish media officials. The episodes shown were “the SS-State” (Der SS-Staat), “the Consolidation of Power” (Die Gleichschaltung) and “Total War and Resistance” (Totaler Krieg und Widerstand). “The Consolidation of Power” discussed the Nazi take-over of press and society beginning in 1933. “The SS-State” treated the terror apparatus in the Third Reich and “Total War and Resistance” showed the Nazi state’s war in Europe but also German resistance, in particular the 20 July movement in the German army in which a few officers tried to assassinate Hitler. The group included the producers Gerd Ruge, Heinz Huber and Waldemar Besson. Ruge, who was responsible for the journalistic work with the film, had been the first West German correspondent to Moscow. He was currently Washington DC correspondent for German Television. Huber was a reporter at the Süddeutscher Rundfunk. Finally, Waldemar Besson, who functioned as

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<sup>50</sup> This portrayal still largely harmonized with prevalent guilt avoidance models used by West Germans in the 1950s, which projected all responsibility on Hitler’s state and the treatment of the Nazi era as a natural catastrophe over which human agency had little influence. Kansteiner, *In Pursuit of German Memory*, 211.

<sup>51</sup> Bismarck, *Aufbruch aus Pommern*, 281.

<sup>52</sup> Hodenberg, *Konsens und Krise*, 272.

an expert advisor, was a progressive professor of political science at the University of Erlangen. They were also accompanied by Bismarck and Ulrich Schaeffer, who was responsible for international contacts at WDR.

Compared to Bismarck's visit the previous year, the Polish hosts attempted to control the contacts between the West German guests and Polish larger society to a much higher extent in 1965. Professor Besson, who had never before visited Poland, asked the hosts to arrange meetings with some Polish academic colleagues, but his request went unanswered. Also Bismarck expressed his disappointment afterwards that the delegation was unable to meet with people beyond the communist circles. Ludwig Zimmerer had provided Bismarck with a list of individuals in Warsaw who should be invited to the viewing of "Das Dritte Reich," and WDR sent a request to Polish radio to extend invitations to these individuals. However, the Polish Radio and Television officials sidestepped Zimmerer's proposals and also excluded Zimmerer himself from the official meetings.

The Polish side wanted to limit the role as mediator and translator of Zimmerer. There might have been several reasons for this. Bismarck speculated that the initiative to exclude Zimmerer came from a particular person in Polish Radio and Television, but also that the Polish bureaucrats felt uncomfortable in including Zimmerer, who was the only actual expert on Poland and the only Polish-speaker.<sup>53</sup> In a letter a few months earlier Zimmerer had also indicated that he was in bad standing with the authorities, perhaps even risking a termination of his work visa, because of his critical radio reports on the communist authorities. To make matters worse, these reports were being translated into Polish and

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<sup>53</sup> Bismarck, "Polen-Reise vom 16.5. bis 25.5.1965. Eindrücke und Ergebnisse," Nachlass Klaus von Bismarck, Lauf.No. 259, Unterlagen Polen-Reise, HA-WDR.

broadcasted back into Poland by Radio Free Europe.<sup>54</sup> Finally, self-critical West German media portrayals of the Second World War did not at all fit with the projected communist propaganda image of West German revisionism and continuity from the Nazi era. For these reasons, it was important for the communists to keep close tabs on the particular mission of this delegation.<sup>55</sup>

As shown in the rejection of Zimmerer's list of invitees to the film showing, the Polish officials were not willing to allow access to "Das Dritte Reich" of even limited elite circles outside of the communist party. However, the visitors had some limited success in circumventing this control of their showings and networking. At another reception at Zimmerer's house, they met with important Warsaw intellectuals and writers, including once more Stanisław Jerzy Lec, Stanisław Stomma and also the professor of philosophy at Warsaw University, Leszek Kołakowski. Bismarck and Besson also traveled to Krakow where they met Jerzy Turowicz. Furthermore, whereas the film showing was to be limited to the communist elites only, in Wrocław, the local functionaries broke official instructions. Bismarck described in his memoirs how, after he had gone to bed, someone knocked on the door to his hotel room and asked if he would be willing to show the film once more to a

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<sup>54</sup> Ludwig Zimmerer to Klaus von Bismarck, 6 December 1964, Nachlass Klaus von Bismarck, Lauf.No. 259, Unterlagen Polen-Reise, HA-WDR.

<sup>55</sup> After 1963, the Polish communist press expressed great disappointment with Chancellor Erhard and his continued insistence on the borders from 1937. The press emphasized that Erhard's "new" eastern policy changed nothing concrete, and the Federal Republic continued to be insincere and untrustworthy. Tomala, *Deutschland – von Polen gesehen*, 227-229, Meanwhile, Erhard complained in international relations talks about the constant reference in the east to the German danger, which he considered "highly unbelievable." German soldiers were completely integrated into NATO and West Germany stayed well away from nuclear weapons. Dok. 139, *Akten zur Auswärtigen Amt*, 1965, ed. Hans-Peter Schwarz (Munich:R.Oldenbourg, 1989), 572.

larger group. So he got up, showed it a second time and participated in a “long, very straightforward and interesting discussion” in a private home.<sup>56</sup>

During the second trip, the conversations concerning the radio and television cooperation continued between Polish and West German media officials, now also representing *Süddeutscher Rundfunk* through Ruge and Huber. The conversation partners discussed the possibility of the exchange of programming, particularly radio theater, music and children’s programming. *Süddeutscher Rundfunk* had successfully initiated an exchange of children’s broadcasts with Czechoslovakian Radio and Television, which Huber proposed as a model for similar exchanges between WDR and Poland. Exchanges of films, both documentaries and others, were also proposed. Bismarck reported that “both sides agree that no folklore should be offered but films about science and education (*Bildung*).”<sup>57</sup> Already earlier, in Cologne, WDR- and Polish Radio representatives had discussed the exchange of films and the Polish Television had prepared samples of a few films which they proposed as suitable for the exchange. However, for the taste of the West German reporters, these films had an all too nationalist and ideological slant. Heinz Huber commented that they were “the kind of unbearable and dishonest mix of medieval national history, folklore, flower wreaths and industrial reconstruction so typical for authoritarian states. A partially very good camera technique does not make such garbage any easier to digest.”<sup>58</sup>

Other proposed measures included further mutual visits and improving the support which the correspondents in each country received. The last proposal was partially an effort

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<sup>56</sup> Bismarck, *Aufbruch aus Pommern*, 282.

<sup>57</sup> Report, Bismarck, Nachlass Klaus von Bismarck, Lauf.No. 259, Unterlagen Polen-Reise, HA-WDR. The absolute rejection of folklore stemmed from its nationalist connotations which the West German partners considered damaging to Polish-German dialogue.

<sup>58</sup> Huber, Report., Nachlass Klaus von Bismarck, Lauf.No. 259, Unterlagen Polen-Reise, HA-WDR, 3.

to improve the working conditions in Warsaw for Zimmerer in light of his vulnerable position with the communist leadership. The Poles emphasized that West German daily news programs should report regularly on Poland. Hubert Meller, one of the Polish radio representatives, spoke of the importance of destroying distortions in the German image of Poland by exposing German viewers to Polish perspectives on a regular basis. Polish weeks, such as those arranged by Radio Bremen and NDR, were valuable but not enough to accomplish a change in public opinion toward Poland.<sup>59</sup> However, as would become clear in the coming years, the Polish side were more engaged in transforming the image of Poland in West German media than undertaking a similar process in their own media.

In the years that followed, WDR attempted to launch some of the exchanges and projects discussed in Warsaw and Cologne during these early trips, with varying success. In August in an internal report, and in the end of December 1965 in a letter to the general director of Polish Radio and Television, Sokorski, WDR summarized the attempts to establish cooperation with Polish television. Three journalists and Polish radio officials visited Cologne and WDR in 1965 and two Polish plays were sent in WDR radio.<sup>60</sup> In March 1966, WDR's chamber orchestra, Capella Coloniensis toured in Łódź, Warsaw and Poznań where their performances were well received. The report also stated that WDR planned to send Polish opera in connection with a Warsaw music and theater festival in early 1966. The reports made clear, that the exchanges of cultural personalities and programming had worked

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<sup>59</sup> Hubert Meller was a curious figure in the Polish communist media. He was a native German speaker and had lived in the Federal Republic. Now, he was working for Polish radio but was not well viewed by his colleagues because of his German ethnic background. The reports commented about him that he was very familiar with the West German situation but also very guarded because of the suspicions against him. Bismarck, Report, Nachlass Klaus von Bismarck, Lauf.No. 259, Unterlagen Polen-Reise, HA-WDR, 5.

<sup>60</sup> Klaus von Bismarck to W.T. Sokorski, 22 December 1965, Nachlass Klaus von Bismarck, Lauf.No. 259, Unterlagen Polen-Reise, HA-WDR.

primarily as a one way street, from Poland to the Federal Republic, and not the other way around.

The failure to launch more extensive West German programming in Poland had both political and economic reasons. During the Warsaw visit, WDR had agreed to send the remaining episodes of “Das Dritte Reich” to Warsaw. However, in the end, licensing problems forced them to cancel this plan. The many different owners of the rights to the footage in the series required high license fees, which the cooperation partners were unable to pay. Some of the owners also placed conditions on the use of the film which the WDR leadership knew that the Polish side would not accept.<sup>61</sup> Importantly, the exchanges and interactions could only be undertaken as long as the highest instances of WDR considered them financially viable. In this way, though film and audio-visual media had great potential for improving the image of the other through their broad appeal, the actual costs and resources going into film production also presented an obstacle to exchanges.

Notably, in both the state and non-state contacts, the meetings and interactions were entirely dependent on West German funding. Because of differences in currency value, Poles could only visit the Federal Republic if a West German host institution or private person sponsored their visits. As a consequence, West German radio sponsored both these visits and their own travels to Poland. Furthermore, in the case of the audio-visual media exchanges, all licensing costs must be either suspended or taken over by the West German side. As general director, Bismarck could decide over the specifics of program and internal costs but the ultimate control was held by the Administrative Council who reviewed the

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<sup>61</sup> The responsible person estimated the licensing cost to 250,000 DM in case of a decision to broadcast the films on Polish television. Internal WDR communication, Otto Heuft to Klaus von Bismarck, 15 August 1965, Nachlass Klaus von Bismarck, Lauf.No. 259, Unterlagen Polen-Reise, HA-WDR.



WDR budget and expenses on an annual basis. From this perspective, exchanges between traditional print media and personal contacts and exchanges were less costly to arrange than audio-visual media sharing.

Political questions played a role in hampering contacts as well. Internally, Bismarck found some resistance to concerted efforts of promoting Poland in West German radio. The director for Radio Theater Friedhelm Ortmann, although positive to importing some Polish plays, rejected the idea of a Polish week, similar to those organized by *Radio Bremen* and NDR since “it looks too much like deliberate propaganda for me.”<sup>62</sup> On the Polish side, the cooperation became more difficult both in light of bureaucratic unwieldiness and the Polish communists’ unwillingness to accept cultural cooperation as a compensation for official political ties. Exchanges with West Germany and free exposure to West German culture and people also undermined the official anti-German propaganda. In fact, the exposure to West German wealth and greater familiarity with the west might even constitute a danger to the communist control over the Polish population.

In the fall of 1966, another WDR report again discussed the ongoing exchanges and cooperation with Polish Radio and Television, including more musical exchanges, noticeably the performance of the *Lukas-Passion* by Krzysztof Penderecki in Münster and the successful tour of *Capella Coloniensis* in Poland. Several Polish artists visited WDR and one or two West German artists traveled to Poland for events. West German artists more rarely visited Poland than vice versa, in part for financial reasons but mainly because the Polish communists were more interested in introducing Polish talent on an international scene than

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<sup>62</sup> Internal WDR communication from Friedhelm Ortmann (Hörspiel) to Klaus von Bismarck, 5 July 1965, Nachlass Klaus von Bismarck, Lauf.No. 259, Unterlagen Polen-Reise, HA-WDR.

in an equal exchange with the Federal Republic.<sup>63</sup> Another few radio officials had visited WDR again including the famous author Andrzej Szczypiorski (1928-2000), who was active for the improvement of Polish-German relations. Throughout this time, Zimmerer continued to function as resident expert with a consulting role in the projects which both NDR and WDR launched in terms of cooperation with Polish Radio and Television.<sup>64</sup>

After his return to the Federal Republic in 1965, Bismarck also attempted to maximize the political importance of his Polish trip by informing as many prominent political and cultural West German contacts as possible of its results. His 1965 travels took place with the full support of the West German Foreign Office, which sent an advisory letter to Bismarck a few weeks before his departure. In the letter, the ministry assured Bismarck that the state was in support of Polish cultural events in the Federal Republic and “definitely interested in an intensification of cultural contacts with Poland.” After listing the initiatives taking place in the Federal Republic, the letter stated that the Poles on their side were reluctant to develop cultural contacts and often let inquiries and proposals go unanswered. In addition, he mentioned that since the Trade Mission in Warsaw was prevented from any kind of cultural initiatives, WDR’s program exchange was very welcome.<sup>65</sup> However, direct interaction with the Foreign Office was not enough for Bismarck, who was still more concerned with challenging and reinventing Ostpolitik initiatives through political lobbying and publicity work.

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<sup>63</sup> Tomala, *Deutschland – von Polen gesehen*, 253.

<sup>64</sup> Helmut Drück, Notiz für Herrn von Bismarck zum Gespräch mit Handelsrat Leszczynski betr: Stand der Polen-Kontakte bzw. –projekte, 14 September 1966, Nachlass Klaus von Bismarck, Lauf.No. 259, Unterlagen Polen-Reise, HA-WDR.

<sup>65</sup> Dietrich Sattler to Klaus von Bismarck, 4 May 1965, Nachlass Klaus von Bismarck, Lauf.No. 259, Unterlagen Polen-Reise, HA-WDR.

After the trip, all participants were asked to write reports about their experiences of the trip and impressions of Poland. They also described the reception of the film by Polish audiences, arguing that it made a deep impression on their audiences in both Warsaw and Wrocław, evidenced also by the additional last minute viewings. The reports stated that both in Warsaw and Wrocław, viewers commented on the courage and responsibility of the filmmakers in representing the Nazi past. The discussions about “The Consolidation of Power” and “The SS-State” were relatively limited. Huber believed that “The Consolidation of Power” hit a little too closely to home for the Polish communists in terms of totalitarian control.

The liveliest discussion concerned the last episode, as Bismarck had predicted. The Poles protested against the positive treatment of the 20<sup>th</sup> July-movement both on ideological and national grounds. Ideologically, the episode did not describe the resistance among the working class and the German communist party extensively enough according to the Polish communists. As Poles, they felt that the officers in the 20<sup>th</sup> July conspiracy only wanted to prevent Hitler from losing the war in the east and that their plans for domination of Poland were still very similar to those of the Nazis. The Polish viewers also found the description of the German army too positive and argued that it too was guilty of atrocities in Poland. Bismarck dutifully recorded these objections but, as his memoirs discussed, only in the 1980s was he forced to admit that the German army took part in war crimes on the eastern front.<sup>66</sup>

As for their general impressions, the West German visitors commented that there seemed to exist an honest wish among the functionaries at the Polish Radio and Television to open a dialogue. The diversity, fairness and willingness to a dialogue among the communist

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<sup>66</sup> Bismarck, *Aufbruch aus Pommern*, 171.

media officials was larger than expected. Ruge stated that compared to the Soviet Union where he had been a correspondent, the reporters seemed to be able to discuss content decisions with the censors or appeal a censorship decision to a higher level.<sup>67</sup>

Meanwhile, they also described the political mood in the larger society as bleak based on their interactions with Zimmerer's acquaintances. Bismarck commented that not even the intellectuals' sardonic sense of humor could compensate for this dark mood.<sup>68</sup> For Ruge, the interactions though interesting had not given an opportunity for deeper contacts, however. "I thoroughly enjoyed the ambiance at the reception by the Zimmerers but am not really able to remember the names of my conversation partners, let alone to judge their importance."<sup>69</sup> For Waldemar Besson, the first-timer in Poland, the visit in Auschwitz stood out in his descriptions of Poland. In his report, he stated that the visit to Poland for him was a "nightmare" in light of the persecution of the Polish intelligentsia and of Auschwitz.<sup>70</sup>

The reports written by Besson, Ruge, Huber and Bismarck were merged into a travel report discussing the group's impression of politics, culture and media in Poland, as well as of the reception of "Das Dritte Reich" by the communist audiences.<sup>71</sup> Bismarck distributed this report to a large circle of his political, Protestant and Catholic associates, people known for their work in the Polish-German relations and media. Copies went out to the co-signers of the Tübingen Memorandum accompanied by a letter in which Bismarck stated that "since

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<sup>67</sup> Ruge, report. Nachlass Klaus von Bismarck, Lauf.No. 259, Unterlagen Polen-Reise, HA-WDR.

<sup>68</sup> Bismarck, report. Nachlass Klaus von Bismarck, Lauf.No.259, Unterlagen Polen-Reise, HA-WDR.

<sup>69</sup> Ruge, report..

<sup>70</sup> Besson, report. Nachlass Klaus von Bismarck, Lauf.No. 259, Unterlagen Polen-Reise, HA-WDR.

<sup>71</sup> Bericht über die Polen-Reise der WDR/SDR-Delegation, Nachlass Klaus von Bismarck, Lauf.No. 259, Unterlagen Polen-Reise, HA-WDR.

the question of an activation of the Eastern Policy was also addressed in our memorandum, I am sending you a report about a trip to Poland which will probably be of interest to you.”<sup>72</sup> He also sent copies to Berthold Beitz and Marion Countess Dönhoff who responded and thanked him for the information. In addition, he sent the report to a wide variety of politicians including the ministers Gerhard Schröder and Rainer Barzel, Erich Mende, who was minister for “German-German affairs,” and Federal President Heinrich Lübke who all responded and thanked him for the report, personally or through their offices. He also reported in person to the members of the WDR radio council (*Rundfunkrat*), which together with the administrative council (*Verwaltungsrat*) served as the highest instances for WDR and to whom he, as the general director, was ultimately responsible.<sup>73</sup>

## CONCLUSION

Klaus von Bismarck’s driving motives behind the travels in 1964 and 1965 was to create contacts in Poland, improve the image of the Federal Republic in Poland, and explore the possibilities for a more extensive program exchange in the coming years. By exchanges, closer cooperation and the showing of the Second World War-production “Das Dritte Reich” to Polish audiences, WDR hoped to challenge deep Polish fears of German revisionism and prove that the Germans were beginning to think critically about their past. With the help and advice of Ludwig Zimmerer, Bismarck succeeded in creating and maintaining a Polish network consisting on the one hand of the intellectuals in *Znak* and *Tygodnik Powszechny*, on

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<sup>72</sup> Klaus von Bismarck to Hellmut Becker, Joachim Beckmann, et.al., 9 July 1965, Nachlass Klaus von Bismarck, Lauf.No. 259, Unterlagen Polen-Reise, HA-WDR.

<sup>73</sup> Klaus von Bismarck to members of Rundfunkrat, 22 July 1965, Nachlass Klaus von Bismarck, Lauf.No. 259, Unterlagen Polen-Reise, HA-WDR.

the other hand of more or less cooperative officials and journalists at Polish Radio and Television. WDR also had partial success in reaching a larger audience in Poland with the documentary series, particularly since the communist officials in Wrocław broke with official instructions and organized a second film showing for a larger audience.

As the discussion shows, on the one hand, political and official considerations, on the other, private networks and the personal impact of Zimmerer and Bismarck played a crucial role in developing agendas for the WDR Polish-German relations. Bismarck personally launched the project of improved relations with Poland because of his own engagement with the eastern questions. He was a public figure with a strong sense of responsibility for his nation, which he believed must reform, adjust to the losses in the east and develop new European relations in order to grow stronger and more successful again. These ambitions inspired his German-German and Polish-German program. In addition, Zimmerer's personal network, views and preferences in Warsaw greatly influenced Klaus von Bismarck's agenda and personal impression of Poland in 1964. Also the way in which the personal journey back to their former home became transformed to an event symbolizing national change for the Bismarcks indicated the importance of personal background and experiences to the relations. This transformation could take place because of Bismarck's prominent position, famous family name and history but also because of his personal approach to overcoming the past.

Also political and financial concerns deeply influenced the agendas and their boundaries, however. Politically, the Polish officials were hesitant to open up a free exchange of programming with the Federal Republic since they were struggling to maintain control over the image of the Federal Republic in their media. They were willing to make a few exceptions, particularly in exchange for inroads to West German audio-visual media,

through which to introduce their own cultural representations. However, as the stricter control of guests and documentary series during the 1965 trip showed, they were not ready to grant foreign media access to their own audiences and population. Licensing issues presented the second largest problem. Because of the high costs of television and radio productions, fewer West German broadcasting materials could be imported and introduced in Poland than WDR originally planned. Because of these two limitations, the Polish-German radio and television exchange became primarily limited to the import of Polish programming and culture to the West German radion.

Ultimately, WDR had succeeded in establishing contacts with the Polish media officials, the Znak circle and the intellectuals they were able to meet through Ludwig Zimmerer. They had only limited success in accessing Polish broader society in order to challenge the image of Germany as dangerous revisionists. However, through Bismarck's personal intervention and extensive contacts in West Germany, WDR succeeded in marketing the travels and their Polish-German agenda to larger West German domestic audiences. The following chapter will treat the West German radio's attempt to create a greater general interest in, and a better understanding of, Poland through introducing Polish topics and voices into their own programming.

## CHAPTER 6

### REFLECTIONS ON THE OTHER, REFLECTIONS ON THE SELF: STEHLE, ZIMMERER AND POLAND IN WDR RADIO, 1960-1967

Klaus von Bismarck and his WDR colleagues had gone to great lengths in 1964 and 1965 to establish contacts with Polish audio-visual media, as well as develop cultural contacts and exchanges. They established Polish networks, introduced program exchanges, invited Polish artists to the Federal Republic and attempted to ensure that their political reporting on Poland was accurate and informed. In 1965, they also hired Hansjakob Stehle as Southeastern Europe correspondent in order to extend the radio station's competency on the Polish questions.<sup>1</sup> What were the outcomes of their Polish-German relations efforts on radio broadcasting, and its reception? This chapter will illustrate how a tension existed between the media elites' wish for closer cooperation, in-depth reports in combination with a broader reception of their Polish programming and the structural, political and cultural preconditions for realizing these Poland agendas.

By the mid-1960s, the journalists' understanding of their own and media's function in West German society was changing. As the previous chapter showed, radio had been regarded in a traditional manner by elites and politicians as a link between state and society, which should transmit the state's value systems, attitudes and ideologies to the society, and

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<sup>1</sup> Klaus von Bismarck mentioned in his presentation in 1964 that one of the problems the radio station faced in terms of the east-west programming was a lack of journalists who were both qualified and willing to take an interest in the East European questions. Klaus von Bismarck, "Die nationalen Aufgaben von Rundfunk und Fernsehen im Ost-West Konflikt," *WDR Jahrbuch 1964* (Cologne: WDR, 1964), 28.



legitimate its leadership.<sup>2</sup> This model changed over time as new generations of media elites began considering radio, or media, an arena where different societal and political forces were vying for dominant positions within public space.<sup>3</sup> The struggle took place within the media institutes, as well as in a larger public space in clashes between politicians, expelled organizations and media representatives.<sup>4</sup> The media controversies developed especially around sensitive crucial questions of foreign policy toward Eastern Europe, which also informed the plans for programming on Poland in WDR. By increasing and broadening the broadcasts on Poland, the leading liberal journalists also hoped to renegotiate German self-perceptions and the general freedom of expression.

However, not only the media elites and their relationship to the state and political circles were changing. With the introduction of television, radio audiences began changing in terms of their time preferences, demography and listening habits. In 1958, the average radio listening time per citizen of the Federal Republic per day was two hours and forty-nine minutes. By 1960, it had gone down to two hours and twelve minutes. Television was more and more becoming the primary entertainment for the West Germans, particularly during evening hours.<sup>5</sup> With the introduction of television and the change of radio to become a secondary medium, audiences also began to listen more passively than when radio was a

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<sup>2</sup> Inge Marssolek and Adelheid von Saldern, "Massenmedien im Kontext von Herrschaft, Alltag und Gesellschaft. Eine Herausforderung an die Geschichtsschreibung," *Radiozeiten. Herrschaft, Alltag, Gesellschaft (1924-1960)*, eds. Inge Marssolek and Adelheid von Saldern (Potsdam: Verlag für Berlin-Brandenburg, 1999), 14.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid.

<sup>4</sup> Christina von Hodenberg, "Die Journalisten und der Aufbruch zur kritischen Öffentlichkeit," 278-314.

<sup>5</sup> Hans Jürgen Koch and Hermann Glaser, *Ganz Ohr: Eine Kulturgeschichte des Radios in Deutschland* (Cologne: Böhlau Verlag, 2005), 261.

prime time medium for evening entertainment.<sup>6</sup> Through the new listening patterns, radio was turned on during day time, as a back drop to other activities. In addition to a lack of control over changing listening patterns, the GDR and the Polish as well as the West German radio producers struggled with the fact that it was very difficult to determine how an audience would respond to certain messages and reports in the radio.<sup>7</sup> Questions of passive listening as well as independent and unexpected interpretations of radio programming also presented a challenge to those who tried to influence wider audiences with programming about Poland.

Over time, the competition from television required the radio producers to respond and adjust to the new media landscape. Radio began broadcasting short regular news reports several times during the day. Other ways to manage the audience competition was to increasingly profile programming into easily recognizable genres, and to use familiar hosts for the different broadcasts. Radio also began to offer ambitious late evening programming for subcultures, including the leftist circles and intelligentsia.<sup>8</sup> Late night programming had been a particular medium for and by intellectuals throughout the 1950s, and while larger evening audiences moved to television in the evening time, this trend continued to

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<sup>6</sup> These questions are discussed by Inge Marssolek and Adelheid von Saldern, "Massenmedien im Kontext von Herrschaft, Alltag und Gesellschaft. Eine Herausforderung an die Geschichtsschreibung," *Radiozeiten. Herrschaft, Alltag, Gesellschaft (1924-1960)*, eds. Inge Marssolek and Adelheid von Saldern (Potsdam: Verlag für Berlin-Brandenburg, 1999), 14. See also Heide Riedel, *Lieber Rundfunk...75 Jahre Hörgeschichte(n)* (Berlin: Vistas, 1999).

<sup>7</sup> Elisabeth Klaus, "Macht und Ohnmacht des Publikums. Oder: Wer macht das Publikum?" *Radiozeiten. Herrschaft, Alltag, Gesellschaft (1924-1960)*, eds. Inge Marssolek and Adelheid von Saldern (Potsdam: Verlag für Berlin-Brandenburg, 1999), 183-205.

<sup>8</sup> Koch and Glaser, *Ganz Ohr*, 263.

strengthen.<sup>9</sup> For reasons of interest and suitability, the increased programming on Polish topics was often placed in the evening cultural programming and features produced by and for the intelligentsia. These features were not directed to or intended for a broader audience, more likely to be watching TV. In this way, the interests and agendas of the journalists, the structure of programming and funding, and finally awareness of consumer interests determined the nature and effects of the WDR Polish programming.

#### POLAND ON THE RADIO IN THE EARLY 1960S

In 1956, the radio stations introduced coverage in the aftermaths of the Polish October. Still, reporting on Poland was scarce, and the occasional political reports were generally focused on the harsh and unforgiving character of the communist regime. Such reports were also broadcast on Radio Free Europe and Radio Liberty. At this time, these stations were openly anti-communist and in their reports, the ideological tensions, and east-west superpower conflict were allowed to take precedence.<sup>10</sup> More thorough West German radio coverage of Russia and Eastern Europe began in 1955, after Adenauer's trip to Moscow, which resulted in the release of German prisoners of war. At that time, the public interest in the Soviet Union rose drastically and the radio general directors in ARD agreed to maintain a permanent correspondent there. WDR was responsible for Moscow in 1956.

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<sup>9</sup> Ibid., 246-247, Monika Boll, "Kulturradio: Ein Medium intellektueller Selbstverständigung in der frühen Bundesrepublik," *Demokratie und Medialisierung im 20. Jahrhundert*, eds. Frank Bösch and Norbert Frei (Göttingen: Wallstein Verlag, 2006), 121-144.

<sup>10</sup> See for example Arch Puddington, *Broadcasting Freedom. The Cold War Triumph of Radio Free Europe and Radio Liberty* (Lexington, KY: University Press of Kentucky, 2000), 50, and George R. Urban, *Radio Free Europe and the Pursuit of Democracy. My War Within the War* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1997), 48-49.

Their first Moscow correspondent was Gerd Ruge, the future co-creator of “Das Dritte Reich.”<sup>11</sup> The member stations of ARD shared the correspondents’ reports.

In 1961, NDR hired Ludwig Zimmerer for the position of Warsaw correspondent, replacing Sven Hasselblatt.<sup>12</sup> Zimmerer’s employment alternated between NDR and WDR for the following twenty years. As a consequence of the foreign correspondent agreement between the radio stations, Zimmerer’s broadcasts went out to audiences in the entire Federal Republic. Because of his personable and pleasant style, Zimmerer gradually became popular in his own right and contributed to a general interest in Poland. Political demand and developments connected to the Thaw and movements toward détente largely motivated the news broadcasts on Poland in the early 1960s. Compared to other regions and countries in the world, it is clear that Poland was a small topic in “Echo des Tages.” Between 1962 and 1964, in the thirty to forty correspondent manuscripts of “Echo des Tages” found in the WDR archive, Warsaw had only two reports during these two years while certain other studios, such as Paris and Washington D.C., reported each week.

Until 1962, Poland was little more than a marginal political topic. Around 1962, the volume of Poland-coverage in WDR increased considerably as the territorial question was developing into a controversy. Features and discussions in the media began to consider the Oder-Neisse Line in light of the German past as well as the current situation of the Polish state and people. WDR encouraged a select group of Polish representatives, such as the

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<sup>11</sup> *Am Puls der Zeit, Band 2*, 85.

<sup>12</sup> He replaced Sven Hasselblatt. Letter from NDR to Polish Foreign Ministry, 25 July 1961, Bestand Nr. 621-1, Akte Nr. 972, Ludwig Zimmerer 1961-1965 Staatsarchiv Hamburg

Catholic intellectuals in *Znak*, to present their arguments about why West Germany should formally relinquish the eastern territories.

The 1962-1963 wave of Polish programming was connected to other liberalizing developments in the political, cultural and elite media spheres.<sup>13</sup> The political developments included the establishment of a trade agreement between Bonn and Warsaw, and the opening of trade missions in the two countries. The contact with Polish intellectuals such as Kisielewski was increasing. The 1962 publication of the Tübingen Memorandum in which Bismarck had been involved, and the media discussions surrounding it also contributed to increased radio coverage on Polish-German questions. The controversy about the Tübingen Memorandum was also covered by other radio stations. In the program “Political Forum” from NDR in March of 1962, in which participants from SPD, CDU and FDP participated, debate took place on a decidedly domestic political stage. In this case, the discussion turned to the political decisions of the ruling party and the criticism of the SPD which nevertheless still did not concern foreign policy as much as social policy, whether existing foreign policy was realistic and the relationship with communism.<sup>14</sup> These discussions were important for Polish-German relations in the long-term but focused on national concerns. In the eleven page long manuscript, Poland was not mentioned at all.

In the 1960s, “We Speak about the Soviet Zone” began to include more studies of life in Eastern Europe at large.<sup>15</sup> These broadcasts by the political desk regularly aired twice,

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<sup>13</sup> For essays about the 1960s and the changes in media, politics, social norms and attitudes towards the past, see *Wandlungsprozesse in Westdeutschland. Belastung, Integration, Liberalisierung, 1945-1980*, ed. Ulrich Herbert (Göttingen: Wallstein Verlag, 2002) and also *Dynamische Zeiten. Die 60er Jahren in den beiden deutschen Gesellschaften*, eds. Axel Schildt, Detlef Siegfried and Karl Christian Lammer.

<sup>14</sup> “Politisches Forum in NDR,” NDR, Hamburg, 11 March 1962, HA-WD, Lauf. No. 163.

<sup>15</sup> *Am Puls der Zeit, Band 2*, 62, 82.

around midnight and at 7am for about ten to twenty minutes. A few were also broadcast around 7pm in the evening. Shorter series which included Zimmerer and Stehle were, for example, “In a Word,” a five-minute program with political commentary, satire and humor from the political desk founded in 1956. “In a Word” was sent in the first program of WDR and discussed both domestic and international topics. Another regular program which began to include Poland coverage was “Critical Diary,” founded in April 1967, consisting of brief reactions on developments in society that wished to teach the listeners to be aware of political developments.<sup>16</sup> Zimmerer in particular contributed several times during the late 1960s to “Critical Diary.”

At this point in time, Westdeutscher Rundfunk had three radio programs. The first program included news and entertainment, and the second program was mostly local broadcasting. The third program, similarly to all West German radio stations, was based on the BBC’s *Third Programme*, featuring longer scripted programs, radio theater (*Hörspiele*) and round-table talks.<sup>17</sup> These formats were particularly suitable for analyzing the developments in Poland and Polish-German relations on a higher intellectual level.<sup>18</sup>

Whereas the first program covered news and larger political developments, radio officials felt that the third program was suitable for more in-depth Polish coverage.

Although the interest in Poland was most clearly visible in the specialty programs in the Third Program, leaders for the political desk were also becoming more involved with Russia and Eastern Europe. Examples of these political journalists included Ulrich

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<sup>16</sup> Ibid., 100, 105.

<sup>17</sup> Monika Böll, “Kulturradio,” 125-126.

<sup>18</sup> Monika Böll argued that the late night programs were intended for “self-education of the intellectual elites.” Monika Böll, “Kulturradio,” 134.

Gemhardt, Hans Joachim Lange, Helmut Drück and Franz Wördemann. These journalists shared the experience of having been children and teenagers during the war as they were born in the 1920s. They had become influential in West German radio at about the same time and also shared an intellectual debt to their American or British training, and substantial international experience.<sup>19</sup> If engaged with political and economic desks they were also, with a few rare exceptions, men. Still, in the late 1960s, a politically engaged female journalist was counted as an exception and something of a curiosity. Anchors on radio and television could not be female until 1974.<sup>20</sup> In Polish-German relations, Wanda Bronska-Pampuch was one of the first women in West German radio to contribute manuscripts on the Polish questions.<sup>21</sup>

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<sup>19</sup> **Ulrich Gemhardt** was born in 1919 and had studied at the Frankfurt School of Sociology with Max Horkheimer and Theodor Adorno. He became a reporter for WDR in 1962. Hans Joachim Lange had studied languages and art history and begun his media career at the American-led *Neue Zeitung* For the special milieu of *Neue Zeitung* and the position of its journalists as cultural brokers between American occupation powers and West German society, see Jessica Gienow-Hecht, *Transmission Impossible. American Journalism as Cultural Diplomacy in Post-War Germany 1945-1955* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1999). **Helmut Drück**, who was also involved with the Polish broadcasts, had a law degree from the university in Göttingen as well as a master of law from Harvard in 1963. In 1965, he began working for the political desk at WDR and became part of the general director's office with Bismarck in 1972. In 1951, he became program director for radio and television at Hessischer Rundfunk and in 1960 he was recruited by Bismarck's predecessor Hans Hartmann as director for television at WDR. He in turn recruited several other important journalists who also became involved with international relations questions, creating a faction of leading political reporters involved with the East European questions. *Wer ist Wer 2007/2008* (Lübeck: Schmidt Römhild, 2007), 259. **Franz Wördemann** left Germany after the war and emigrated to London, where he became a correspondent for the BBC. In 1957, he returned to the Federal Republic as the correspondent to West Germany for the BBC but soon afterward, he was recruited by WDR where he worked for television. In 1965, he led the magazine "Monitor" for TVAm *Puls der Zeit*, 160-161. **Paul Botta** worked for the political desk at the radio and was originally involved with the French-German Catholic journal *Dokumente* and also familiar with the Frankfurt groups and *Frankfurter Hefte*. As a WDR employee, he became an expert on Ostpolitik, the Middle East and France, and was in this way engaged with Polish-German relations as well.

<sup>20</sup> Hodenberg, *Konsens und Krise*, 238.

<sup>21</sup> Wanda Bronska-Pampuch worked as a translator. She also published two books on Poland and Eastern Europe: *Poland between Hope and Despair* in 1958 and *Neighbors in the East*, an edited volume with text selections of East European authors in 1966. Wanda Bronska-Pampuch, *Polen zwischen Hoffnung und Verzweiflung* (Cologne: Verlag für Politik und Wirtschaft, 1958), *Nachbarn im Osten. Europäische Länder zwischen Ostsee und den Scharzen Meer* (Munich: Verlag Mensch und Arbeit, 1966).

One example of how Poland was used in the 1962 features about policy change was the play “Relinquishing the Eastern Territories?” by Rudolf Fiedler, which was transmitted at 9pm on June 5, 1962.<sup>22</sup> The play was set up as a debate between “Mr. Pro” and “Mr. Contra” but also involved statements of German politicians and historians, Kennedy, Stalin and of Polish, American and British commentators. The idea behind the play was to present both sides of the territorial argument in a balanced, objective, and entertaining fashion. The fictional characters ensured that the argument could not be associated with any particular journalists or associates of WDR. The two fictional characters argued about whether the principle of *Völkerrecht* (international law) held any value in the actual current-day situation between Poland and West Germany. “Mr. Pro” argued that given the German crimes against the Poles in the Second World War as well as the situation for the Poles who were settled and born in the eastern territories, the *Völkerrecht*-argument had lost its meaning. “Mr. Contra” claimed that undermining the basic rights of people to their property and home would be accomplishing reconciliation based on an injustice. From a political strategic angle, he claimed that it would be a tactical mistake for West Germany to give up the right, even on paper, to the eastern territories without receiving any political concessions from Poland or the Soviet Union in return. The territorial question should be used as a trading chip for German reunification. In addition, he argued that the Polish people’s suffering could not negate the German people’s suffering simply by sheer numbers.

The play included Polish voices, for example those of communist ministers and representatives, well-known Polish emigrants such as Juliusz Mieroszewski, who published

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<sup>22</sup> Rudolf Fiedler, “Verzicht auf die Ostgebiete? Tatsachen und Irrtümer, Argumente und Illusionen,” WDR, Cologne, 5 June 1962, HA-WDR, Lauf. No. 162.



in *Kultura*.<sup>23</sup> Also the voices of the Polish exile government in London were included. These Polish voices were not arguing independently for a Polish perspective but were used in different ways to give credence to the two German discussion partners. Mr. Contra used some of the emigrants and London exile ministers to show that at the end of the war, the Poles did not necessarily want the former German territories. Both German counterparts used the Polish communists to discuss the geopolitical context and the consequences of West Germany's current political line. The Poles were not given agency, but were instrumentalized for the two German positions.

Starting in the early 1960s, West German radio also attempted to introduce more in-depth cultural portraits of Poland which nevertheless had to be positioned within the Polish-German project. Polish music, literature and culture were increasingly featured in WDR. Cultural programming was part of the conscious effort to change West German perceptions of Polish-German relations and the relationship with the neighboring states in the east. In May 1962, Bastian Müller reported on a new book by Polish writer Czesław Miłosz in a late night hour-long feature on the third program titled "Dangerous Stereotypes – Threatening Ignorance. On Czeslaw Milosz's Thoughts about Poland."<sup>24</sup> The manuscript presented a complex picture of the Polish society based on Miłosz's book, which had appeared under the German title *West- und östliches Gelände* (East-West Landscape). Its original Polish title was *Rodzina Europa* (European homeland) and its English title became *Native Realm*.

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<sup>23</sup> Juliusz Mieroszewski (1906-1976) originally came from Krakow but emigrated to London after the Second World War. Between 1950 and 1972, he published a column in *Kultura* on English questions under the pseudonym Londyńczyk.

<sup>24</sup> Bastian Müller, "Gefährliche Vorurteile – bedrohliches Nichtwissen. Zu Czeslaw Miloszs Gedanken über Polen," WDR, Cologne, 18 May 1962, HA-WDR 1962.

The radio script opened with a sharply critical description of German and Russian stereotypes of Poles as a non-historical people of “primitive, somewhat Hunnish diligent work horses, whom one just had to keep on a short leash with a little pork and schnaps and their Krakowiak (a traditional folk dance from Krakow) on Sunday, after the mass of course.”<sup>25</sup> It also mentioned the stereotypes of the “beautiful Polish woman” as an erotic fantasy by the western male. Overall, stated Müller, the greatest problem was the ignorance in West Germany about Poland and the taboo which the territorial conflict created. Against these national stereotypes, the manuscript pitched Miłosz’s highly complicated and sophisticated image of multicultural and multilingual Polish borderlands, their history and position in Europe.

The book presentation spent much time clarifying Miłosz’s simultaneously national and non-national stance in *Native Realm*. Müller explained that although Miłosz emphasized his own multi-national background and his suspicion of nationalism, in his discussion he also drew sharp boundaries between Russia and Poland. According to Müller, Miłosz was Polish because of the way in which he distanced himself from Germany and Russia, Poland’s powerful neighbors. Also, his great focus on and involvement with history was a typical Polish characteristic. Miłosz represented Poland in his nuanced, sophisticated treatment of history, space and national identity, but leaving any Lithuanian context and roots out of the discussion.

Müller also argued that Miłosz’s book proved that Poland did not belong to a Slavic east despite its current alliance with Russia. Based on Christian ideals and the cultural

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<sup>25</sup> Ibid., 2.

connection with the west since the 10<sup>th</sup> century, Poland was European.<sup>26</sup> The manuscript touched on a basic contradiction with reference to Polish-German relations and the post-war geopolitical situation. On the one hand, the German intellectuals, as well as Czesław Miłosz, wished to distance themselves once and for all from the destructive and aggressive nationalism which had ruled in Europe throughout the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. On the other hand, they wanted to protect and strengthen the relatively homogeneous nation-states and post-1945 borders which were a result of this nationalism. In doing so, they had to somehow reinvent national belonging and identity and separate it from ethnonationalism. In this reinvention, Müller's agenda trumped Miłosz's position on national developments. Miłosz's book blurred the boundaries between national identities, states and borders by referring to the complex national past of Poland and Lithuania. His description fit with neither communist nor traditional Catholic national identities. Müller used this complexity to argue for the *Polish* sophistication of thought surrounding history and current political relations. He firmly placed Miłosz's discussions and descriptions as representative of the Polish intellectual milieu and plugged Miłosz into the Polish side of Polish-German relations. In this way, Müller framed Miłosz in more clearly national terms as a representative of Polish elites than the book warranted. This description of Miłosz's complex background and sophisticated perspective on Europe challenged the formerly mentioned nationalist stereotypes of Poles as simple and somewhat primitive but in order to do so, it necessarily needed to reassert the ethnonational language- and culture-based belonging of Miłosz to a Polish nation-state, the catch 22 of postwar European objections to nationalism.

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<sup>26</sup> Ibid., 51.

The Miłosz-script indicated an ambition among German journalists to overcome traditional stereotypes about Poland and its people by familiarizing its intellectual audiences with Polish books, plays, history, society and traditions using the voices of the Poles themselves. This ambition went beyond the narrowly defined political discussions and considerations of Polish-German relations. It helped particular Polish representatives to greater publicity in West German media but also plugged them firmly into a more Polish context in order to promote improved Polish-German relations as the activists intended.

In the media discussions about developments in communist society, about the larger political situation in Eastern Europe, or about the border question, Poland remained an important but largely passive factor. However, a trend existed and was growing stronger in which a few journalists wishing to reframe the two earlier questions presented in-depth portraits of Polish culture and society, and used Polish voices and cultural personalities to do so. The Miłosz manuscript was a case in point. Also in both countries, a trend of searching for the other people outside of state frameworks existed. This trend was part of the television documentaries by Hansjakob Stehle and Jürgen Neven-du Mont, of Zimmerer's broadcasts and of Kisielewski's articles and visit to West Germany. By casting the Poles as active participants, the journalists wished to create greater agency for Poland, and greater West German knowledge about Polish perspectives. Their ulterior mode was to persuade their audiences to reconsider German and Polish identities together in light of the Second World War and the Nazi occupation of Poland.

#### POLAND ON THE RADIO AFTER 1964

After Klaus von Bismarck's 1964 and 1965 travels to Poland, the Polish themes in radio remained largely the same. However, Poland became a topic in its own right, instead

of a part of the reports on the “Soviet Zone.” New Polish voices reached the West German media as a result of the interaction and cooperation projects between WDR and Polish Radio and Television. In the play “Pro and Contra” the Polish voices had been limited to Polish emigrants, a few Polish publishers and official voices representing the Polish communist leadership in the 1940s and 1950s. This situation stemmed from a shortage of Polish representatives who were willing, able and considered trustworthy enough to speak in West German radio. The same shortage had led to the great interest in Stomma and the Znak representatives as insider Polish representatives who were not discredited through propaganda efforts. After 1965, an additional number of pro-German moderate communists, including some of the leaders for Polish Radio, and a number of Polish singers and musicians could represent Poland to a West German radio audience. On the other hand, certain earlier members of the moderate opposition, including Kisielewski and after 1968, Leszek Kołakowski and Adam Rapacki, were becoming restricted in public space and prevented from traveling abroad as the liberalizing measures from the late 1950s were revoked further and further.

In an effort to raise awareness of Poland in broader society, several of the radio stations, including Radio Bremen and NDR, arranged “Poland weeks.” As *Radio Bremen* general director Heinz Kerneck stated in his opening speech to the station’s 1963 Poland Week: “Each report which attempts to show us the situation as is, helps to relieve us of stereotypes.”<sup>27</sup> Referring to the recent expellee attacks on the Poland-documentary by Neven-du Mont, he claimed that political factions in West Germany attempted to prevent journalistic work in connection with Poland. *Norddeutscher Rundfunk* also organized its

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<sup>27</sup> Heinz Kerneck to Klaus von Bismarck, 30 September 1963, Nachlass Klaus von Bismarck, Polen-Reise 1964, HA-WDR.

Polish week in April 1963 in its third program and cooperated on a limited basis with Radio Warsaw in doing so.<sup>28</sup> The NDR and Radio Bremen Poland weeks included invited Polish guest artists and featured Polish books and plays. In November 1966, the Südwestfunk arranged a similar Polish cultural week in which among others the author Andrzej Szczypiorski participated. Szczypiorski would over time become known as a promoter of Polish-German reconciliation and his visit and individual travels in West Germany were the WDR representatives' first interactions with him. The timing and political framing of these weeks indicated how closely the introduction of Polish culture, artists and talent into West German radio was connected to the dispute about the border and the conflicting images of expellee representatives and liberal elite media of Poland and Polish society.

The radio administrators also acknowledged that there were problems involved in launching Poland weeks, particularly related to Polish state and media involvement and reactions. In an internal letter, Kerneck mentioned the difficulties of negotiating about artists and materials with officials at the Polish Radio.<sup>29</sup> Also the Polish state disliked the impact which these weeks might have on their Polish radio audiences. Intelligence reached the West German radio representatives that the Polish state had jammed transmission from Łódź during the precise time period of the Polish week by the Südwestfunk. None of the West German Poland-friendly broadcast reached a Polish audience.<sup>30</sup>

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<sup>28</sup> Gerhard Schröder to Klaus von Bismarck, 21 October 1963, Nachlass Klaus von Bismarck, Polen-Reise 1964, HA-WDR.

<sup>29</sup> Heinz Kerneck to Klaus von Bismarck, 30 September 1963, Nachlass Klaus von Bismarck, Polen-Reise 1964, HA-WDR.

<sup>30</sup> Helmut Drück, Internal report for – Gemhardt, 11 September 1967, Nachlass Klaus von Bismarck, Polen-Reise 1964, HA-WDR.

In addition, in the talks during the WDR trips in 1964 and 1965, the Polish communist conversation partners expressed some concerns about the concept of Poland weeks. They did not want “Polish days” and “Polish weeks” to be the one and only form in which information about Poland was transmitted to West German listeners, as a form of national curiosa.<sup>31</sup> Instead, Poland should regularly appear as a topic in ordinary radio- and news broadcasts. In comments in the margins, Klaus von Bismarck agreed with this statement.

Perhaps as a consequence of Bismarck’s position, WDR did not launch its own Polish week. However, the city of Cologne arranged a Polish cultural week in the fall of 1967, in which the radio station participated. WDR hosted a “Polish evening” as a part of the city’s Polish week in which a jazz ensemble from Warsaw, named “Novi,” and the singer Ewa Demarczyk took part. Also Stefan Kisielewski’s son Tomasz, who was a pianist in the Federal Republic, and the wife of one of the administrative leaders at Radio Warsaw participated as artists in the musical events.<sup>32</sup> Cultural programming included theater as well. For example, WDR Hörspiele reported in the annual report at the end of 1964 that they had broadcasted a great number of East European plays translated into German, including those of the Polish authors and playwrights Tymoteusz Karpowicz, Zbigniew Herbert and Ireneusz Iredyński.<sup>33</sup> Even in other features programming, literature and music played a certain role to emphasize the cultural prowess of Polish artists and society, and to create a broader appeal

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<sup>31</sup> Janina Kowalikowa to Klaus von Bismarck, 10 April 1964, Nachlass Klaus von Bismarck, Polen-Reise 1964, HA-WDR.

<sup>32</sup> Kalkulation polnischer Abend Gürzenich/Köln, 27 October 1967, Nachlass Klaus von Bismarck, Polen-Reise 1964, HA-WDR.

<sup>33</sup> ”WDR Jahresbuch des Intendanten für die Zeit vom 1. Januar bis 32. Dezember 1964,” WDR 1964, 41.

for West German listeners.<sup>34</sup> Such cultural programming still remained specialty features directed primarily to the intellectuals.

The cultural exchanges had an important public relations and marketing aspect to them. In 1966, the WDR baroque orchestra made a tour of Polish cities as part of the cultural and radio exchange programs which WDR, ARD and Polish Radio and Television had discussed in the previous years. The tour lasted five days and the orchestra visited three cities, Łódź, Poznań and Warsaw. WDR enthusiastically promoted the tour as progress in the relations and a public relations success in Poland for the *Westdeutscher Rundfunk*.

Even before the trip, the orchestra leader Ferdinand Leitner received instructions from Bismarck to take every opportunity to create goodwill for West Germany. In Warsaw, Leitner was interviewed on West German radio by Ludwig Zimmerer. In this interview, he described the performance in Łódź as a great triumph and the Polish audience as very enthusiastic. Zimmerer, the resident expert, broke in and emphasized since the Polish concert audiences as a rule were somewhat reserved the performance had really been a great success. At this, Leitner suggested that baroque music was such a specialized field that it perhaps drew an audience which was passionate about their performance because of their particular preexisting interest.<sup>35</sup> While Zimmerer and the WDR strove to represent the orchestra tour as a broader success for Polish-German cultural relations Leitner's innocent remark about the limited appeal of the art form undercut the notion of a broader appeal in Polish audiences.

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<sup>34</sup> Ludwig Zimmerer, "Intellektuelle in Polen," NDR, Hamburg, 23 February 1973, HA-WDR 8539.

<sup>35</sup> Ludwig Zimmerer, interview with Ferdinand Leitner, NDR, Hamburg, 5 March 1966, Nachlass Klaus von Bismarck, Polen-Reise 1964, HA-WDR.



Klaus von Bismarck, in communicating with the West German Foreign Office, described the tour as cultural representation of West Germany of great importance for the political relations. Bismarck noted especially that the orchestra had been asked for three or four encores in each of their performances.<sup>36</sup> The Foreign Office, through Bismarck, also involved the orchestra in their effort to strengthen the ties with the isolated trade mission. During the orchestra's stay in Warsaw, its members were invited to a reception at the trade mission. Again, Leitner's personal report commented that the reception was unsuccessful since no Polish guests attended. The publicity campaign and the interactions between WDR and the Foreign Office showed the great importance which the representations of the tour assumed in domestic discussions.

According to Bismarck's reports, Polish media wrote about the performances by Capella Coloniensis as well. Polish radio interviewed Leitner and Polish television made a short film of the orchestra, which they broadcast. *Trybuna Ludu* published a review of the performance.<sup>37</sup> Generally, cultural exchanges were a safe way to interact and deemed acceptable by the communist partners. Still, the WDR efforts to introduce German culture and programming in Poland were met with great hesitation. Cultural programming was easier than politics or documentary but the Polish state media was still largely uninterested in importing West German culture. The Capella Coloniensis visit remained an unusual exception in the 1960s which was also why the attention and publicity surrounding it was so great.

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<sup>36</sup> Klaus von Bismarck to Dieter Sattler, 11 March 1966, Nachlass Klaus von Bismarck, Polen-Reise 1964, HA-WDR.

<sup>37</sup> I was unable to find the review in the relevant issues of *Trybuna Ludu*.

## LUDWIG ZIMMERER'S POLAND

In contrast with the radio scene at large, Ludwig Zimmerer related in a more independent fashion to the media's concern with *Vergangenheitsbewältigung* and political change. Of course, beginning in the early 1960s, Zimmerer's regular duties as a correspondent involved writing reports for "Echo of the Day" as a correspondent, including new developments in the communist sphere of interest or related to German politics. Most of the daily correspondent reports for western press were based on the writings in the communist press, particularly *Życie Warszawy* and *Trybuna Ludu*. Zimmerer, like all other correspondents in Warsaw, spent each morning with the daily communist press trying to read between the lines what was happening in the party, whether the regime was tightening its grip or loosening it and whether any internal disagreements or disagreements with other countries were emerging.<sup>38</sup> One such report, from 1963, discussed the Polish-West German trade agreement and its consequences for Polish-German relations. In a typical statement, Zimmerer wrote that *Trybuna Ludu* had reported positively on the agreement and that its tone gave evidence of the change in official attitudes toward West Germany.<sup>39</sup> Correspondents also reported on the travels of Polish communist officials, the clashes between party and church, and other Polish developments.

Zimmerer's reports illustrated how a West German correspondent discussing Polish-German questions or the Second World War had to choose his words carefully, in consideration of both Polish communist and West German audiences. If he criticized the

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<sup>38</sup> On the work and working conditions of foreign correspondents in Warsaw during the 1960s, see Barbara Polak, "Wszystko pod kontrolą: o inwigilacji zachodnich korespondentów z Krzysztofem Bobińskim, Bernardem Margueritte i Krzysztofem Persakiem rozmawia Barbara Polak," *Biuletyn Instytutu Pamięci Narodowej*, Nr 11(46), November 2004, 18-36

<sup>39</sup> Ludwig Zimmerer, Mss Korrespondentenberichte 1962.07.07-1963.09.14, Echo der Welt 15.3.63, Warschau, HA-DWR 5257.

Polish state too harshly and the authorities took issue with the statements, he ran the risk of losing his accreditation. His reports also had to accommodate to some extent the German sensibilities. This carefulness could be seen for example in a correspondent report from 1964, which discussed the commemorations of the Warsaw Uprising in 1944. The description of the Uprising was edited in two interesting ways. First, the negative role of the Red Army as it delayed its entry into Warsaw until after the Germans had defeated the Home Army was entirely omitted. In 1990s and 2000s celebrations of the Warsaw Uprising, the Polish participants sharply criticized the Red Army's role in the uprising but Zimmerer's 1964 report limited itself to describing Poland's attempts to resist communist rule with no blame directed at the Soviet Union.<sup>40</sup> Secondly, the original text referred to "the horror of the German occupation." However, "German" had been crossed out and replaced by "National Socialist" in the revisions. The change of German into National Socialist was significant in that it limited the responsibility for Poland's situation in 1944 to the Nazis.

After Bismarck's official visits to Poland in 1964 and 1965, Zimmerer was invited to write several longer features for WDR on Poland. These included a 1966 contribution to the radio series "What the Day Brings" named "The Conflict Between State and Church in Poland," a 1965 "In a Word" contribution on Poland's attitude toward Auschwitz and a 1965 hour-long feature named "The Writer and the Party." Still well within the reach of traditional topics, these special features were designed to broaden and deepen the knowledge of Poland and Polish life under communism. Some of Zimmerer's manuscripts were expert commentaries on larger developments, such as the Polish Catholic bishops' letter of reconciliation to the German Catholic bishops, which will be discussed in the following

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<sup>40</sup> Ludwig Zimmerer, date unknown, Mss Korrespondentenberichte, 1963.09.28-1964.09.12, Politik, Echo der Welt, HA-WDR 5258.

chapter, or the student protests and party cleansing action and anti-semitic media campaign in 1968. The Polish-German mutual past continued to be a central topic in his programs. Between 1963 and 1965, the very public Second Auschwitz trials, in which lower level camp administrators at Auschwitz were on trial, took place in Frankfurt.<sup>41</sup> The Polish communists allowed the court, in the interest of fair proceedings, to visit Auschwitz in order to control and confirm the testimonies on the grounds. Zimmerer wrote a contribution for “In a Word” in December 1964, discussing the Polish reactions to the proceedings.

He began his report by stating that he had hoped to be able to leave the topic of Auschwitz for a while and focus on other events, but that his Polish friends and acquaintances kept asking for his opinions. He wanted the West Germans to know that the Poles struggled with understanding and accepting the visits of the court to Auschwitz as a legal concern. They rejected the cold administrative treatment by a German court of a place which to them was such a central symbol of suffering. Zimmerer stated that most of all the Poles “wanted to know whether the average German really understood what Auschwitz was. They want to know if he is horrified by Auschwitz or if he would prefer to dismiss it as a thing of the past.”<sup>42</sup> The Second World War was a topic which interested both Poles and Germans though for different reasons. The public trials and their media exposure were part of the continuing West German efforts toward *Vergangenheitsbewältigung* while in Poland it colored all perspectives of the Germans and informed national collective memories of the war to a high degree.

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<sup>41</sup> Devin Pendas, *The Frankfurt Auschwitz trial, 1963-1965 : genocide, history, and the limits of the law* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006).

<sup>42</sup> Ludwig Zimmerer, *Auf ein Wort*, WDR, Cologne, 18 December 1964, HA-WDR 8018.

Zimmerer more often wrote analytical features about Poland and communism, his particular area of expertise. The 1966 “Conflict between State and Church” was written in the aftermath of the Polish Catholic bishops’ letter of reconciliation to the German bishops. In his contribution, Zimmerer argued from a skeptical position that the context to the letter was primarily the state-church power struggle. Unlike most journalists, Zimmerer explained the background to the state-church conflict, outlining the continuities of the Polish Catholic Church and its position from the interwar era. He pointed out that the interwar church tendencies were not just militantly anti-communist but also “anti-intellectual, anti-liberal and almost completely anti-semitic” and that the interwar Church wished for “an authoritarian regime, a moderate form of fascism connected to the Church.”<sup>43</sup> Throughout this time period, the church had explicit state-ruling ambitions strengthened by the absence of a strong Polish state. In addition, since Poland never developed a bourgeois middle-class, unlike the western Catholics, the Polish Church never needed to adjust to a modern society. Zimmerer, subscribing to the idea that nationalism in the west was carried by the liberal middle-class, stated that in Poland, by contrast, there was never a conflict of interest between nationalism and conservatism. Thus removed from its heroic mold as prime resister to communism, the church was not necessarily a force for democracy and progress in Poland, Zimmerer warned.

In this way, he was highly unwilling to accept the heroic mold of the church under communism, or after the bishops’ letter of reconciliation. He was particularly critical of Wyszyński’s refusal to accept the separation of state and church. Zimmerer’s description of the state-church conflict was unique in that it attempted to analyze the church’s political legacy, rhetoric and national idea outside of its position under the communists. From his

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<sup>43</sup> Ludwig Zimmerer, “Der Konflikt zwischen Kirche und Staat in Polen,” WDR, Cologne, 28 April 1966, HA-WDR 2888.

perspective, the Polish Catholic bishops' letter was simply another aspect of this larger ongoing conflict between Wyszyński and Gomułka and that conflict was part of an even longer church policy to interfere with politics in Poland. Such a reinterpretation was the diametrical opposite of Hansjakob Stehle's technique of taking domestic Polish developments and reinterpreting them in light of their importance for Polish-German relations. It clearly showed that at this time, in 1965, Zimmerer was not exclusively invested in the reconciliation project and certainly not a reconciliation with the Catholic Church as a main actor

Zimmerer's manuscripts reflected his Polish interests and passions as well, including the Polish folk art which he had begun collecting, Polish literature which he translated into German and intellectual life in Warsaw. His circle of friends included authors and writers, and the peasant artists of his wood carvings. In a feature from January 8, 1965, he described the conflict between the Polish public intellectuals and the communist party. He argued that the role of Polish intellectuals could not be compared with the role of western intellectuals. During the times when Poland had no state, the intellectuals had been "the politicians, the pedagogues and the pastors of the nation."<sup>44</sup> Paralleling the intellectuals' position to that of the Polish Church, he stated that the church was in a much more powerful position and that the church and the party had many similarities as state-building institutions while the writers/intellectuals were entirely without influence on the course of the state.<sup>45</sup>

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<sup>44</sup> Ludwig Zimmerer, "Die Schriftsteller und die Partei – die Partei und die Schriftsteller," WDR, Cologne, 8 February 1965, HA-WDR 2504.

<sup>45</sup> For a description of the Warsaw intelligentsia in the 1950s and 1960s, see Marci Shore, *Caviar and Ashes: A Warsaw Generation's Life and Death in Marxism* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2006).

Using his postwar experience of Poland as the chronological time frame, he argued that the low point of the relations between Gomułka and the public intellectuals took place in 1957 and 1958 as the intellectual journal *Po Prostu* was cancelled. The party further alienated the intellectuals by refraining at the last minute from granting a license for a new arts and literature journal which was to have the name *Europa*. As a consequence, some of the high profile authors, such as Jerzy Andrzejewski, Mieczysław Jastrun, Paweł Hertz, Jan Kott and Adam Ważyk, left the communist party. Between 1958 and 1962, the situation remained calm with the occasional writers becoming disgraced in the eyes of the party and thus providing fuel for Warsaw coffee house gossip. Now, by the mid-1960s, a general pessimism and resignation was spreading among the Polish writers. This pessimistic atmosphere was detrimental to the creative climate in Poland. Though Zimmerer was much more sympathetic toward the writers and intellectuals than the church, he nevertheless commented pointedly that because of the great national reverence for intellectuals, even mediocre writers got an exceptional amount of attention in Poland.

Over time, Zimmerer became more and more of a Polish cultural personality himself. His personable reports attracted a faithful circle of listeners whose interests were not necessarily political and he almost singlehandedly introduced Polish religious wood carvings to West German audiences. His giant collection of, and engagement with, Polish folk art, his appearance sporting a full beard and his translation work from Polish to German contributed to his profile as something of a beloved eccentric. In an interview, his second wife, Joanna Olczak-Ronikier related how one day he remarked jokingly in a radio report that there was suddenly no jam to be had in all of Warsaw, and he did so miss putting jam on his bread at breakfast. As a consequence, many of his listeners sent jars of homemade jam from West

Germany and he was called in to the foreign department and warned that if he indicated that Poland lacked basic food products again, his accreditation as correspondent would be revoked.<sup>46</sup> In this way, he became a cultural character rather than just a political reporter.

#### HANSJAKOB STEHLE'S POLAND

While they often agreed on political evaluations concerning Poland's communists and West German foreign policy, Hansjakob Stehle's actual coverage of Polish-German topics in WDR differed significantly from that of Ludwig Zimmerer in its more focused political agenda. Stehle was deeply involved with the West German domestic media project of rehabilitating the Germans, improving the Federal Republic's position in the world, establishing official relations with Poland and recognizing the Oder-Neisse Line. Although Stehle had begun as a Poland-expert and continued to write features on Poland regularly, by 1963 and 1964 he extended his profile to all of Eastern Europe's communist countries. Throughout the 1960s, Stehle continued to contribute a number of manuscripts on Polish political and cultural topics.

An example of this Polish coverage was the manuscript on the six-hundredth anniversary of the Jagiellonian University, which was broadcast on June 8, 1964.<sup>47</sup> This feature showed Stehle's ambitions for state-building as well as his approach to reforming and moderating Polish nationalism to fit with Europeanizing agendas. The manuscript included an interview with a representative for the university and a general description of the university's history during the partitions and the Second World War.

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<sup>46</sup> Joanna Olczak-Ronikier, interview by Annika Frieberg.

<sup>47</sup> Hansjakob Stehle, "600 Jahre Krakauer Universität," *Kulturelles Wort*, WDR, Cologne, 8 June 1964, HA-WDR 719.



In interviewing the university representative, Professor Karol Estreicher, Stehle attempted to fit the position of the Jagiellonian University with his own agendas. Stehle began by pointing out that his guide around the oldest university building also addressed him, Stehle, who was the one German present, in German at times and that the others in the tour seemed to find this both acceptable and natural.

In the interview, Stehle particularly wished to emphasize Galicia's and the Jagiellonian University's multicultural past. In interviewing Estreicher, he returned several times to Poland's multiethnic and multinational history, arguing that the university had always educated a non-nationalist European elite and that its Galician past removed it from hard-core Polish patriotism. Estreicher, on the other hand, distanced himself from Stehle's multi-cultural description of the Jagiellonian University and assured him that it was just as patriotic as the rest of Poland.<sup>48</sup> The disagreement reflected the West German elites' rejection of traditional nationalism on all levels which did not correspond to the Polish elites' national idea, which remained untainted and unaffected by National Socialist associations.

The Polish art professor and Stehle were in greater agreement concerning the positivist tradition which developed in Krakow and was connected to the university during the nineteenth century. Stehle asked the professor whether this positivism meant acceptance of the partitions of Poland. The professor responded that during the partitions, the university had still wanted a reunification of Poland but through a "peaceful solution" rather than through another violent uprising. These comments could also refer to Poland under

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<sup>48</sup> Possibly, Stehle was also referring to Estreicher's own Habsburg background. Karol Estreicher Jr. (1906-1984) was a famous Polish art professor who was also engaged in saving Polish art from the Nazis during the war; his father Karol Estreicher Sr. was also a famous 19<sup>th</sup> century bibliographer and director of Jagiellonian University under Habsburg rule, who also wrote on Polish literature and poets. His father, whose name originally was *Österreicher*, was an Austrian artist. In this way, the family had gone from imperial subjects under the Habsburgs to become Polish patriots during the past one hundred years.

communism. In the end, Stehle described the modernizing efforts made by the university during the communist era and summed up the presentation by stating that during communism, the professors at the Jagiellonian University belonged once more to the resisters of the regime. However, they were also pragmatists who wished to reform the Polish People's Republic from the inside.<sup>49</sup> In this way, Stehle portrayed the professors as moderate resisters who still wanted to preserve the post-war Polish state, an image which supported the political relations which he promoted between the Polish People's Republic and the Federal Republic.

On the inevitable theme of German atrocities and war crimes in Poland, Stehle narrated the story about how the Nazi authorities in 1939 in Krakow arrested 183 professors, teachers and assistants at the university on the premises of a public speech to the university associates. These professors were sent to the concentration camps of Dachau and Sachsenhausen. Whereas most of them were later released, thirty died in the camps. Stehle cited one of the surviving victims of the concentration camp Sachsenhausen, who had stated "I would really like to forget everything that we experienced here between 1939 and 1945. We would like to forget it all, but only on one condition: that all decent Germans know what we want to forget."<sup>50</sup> The report was an example of how questions of resistance and politics were closely intertwined also with relatively innocent topics such as the university's anniversary, and how Stehle reflected them in relation to his opinions of how to relate to the Polish communist state and, by extension, how to build Polish-German relations.

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<sup>49</sup> Estreicher was a member of the Polish PEN-Club and on March 14, 1964, he signed a petition against censorship, "List 34," which was given to the Polish minister president, Josef Cyrankiewicz. As a consequence, in 1966 he lost his professorial chair at the university.

<sup>50</sup> Hansjakob Stehle, "600 Jahre Krakauer Universität."

In general, Stehle published and broadcasted extensively on the inner workings of the communist societies. His ambition was to challenge what he once referred to in a private letter to Polish bishop Kominek as “stupidly anti-communist misunderstandings.”<sup>51</sup> In 1964, in the third program of WDR ran a series named “Interview with the Press” in which German correspondents and reporters interviewed newspaper reporters in other countries, including the editors-in-chief of, for example, the French *Le Monde*, the Swiss *Neue Züricher Zeitung*, and, from Poland, an interview by Stehle with five of the leading journalists of the Warsaw daily *Życie Warszawy* (Life in Warsaw).<sup>52</sup> The discussion and arguments were held at a high intellectual and political level but directed to an audience with limited knowledge of the Polish situation.

In the first part of the interview, Stehle attempted to provide West German listeners with a more nuanced and in-depth knowledge of the workings of the communist press. He asked the editors about their relationship with the censorship, with their readers and how *Życie Warszawy* differed from the communist party newspaper *Trybuna Ludu*. The *Życie Warszawy* representatives explained that there was no oppositional press in Poland which challenged the fundamentals of the communist system or larger policy issues such as the cooperation with the Soviet Union. Still, *Życie Warszawy* was able to take an independent line and criticize the political leadership on other issues, such as the economic reforms or the

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<sup>51</sup> Hansjakob Stehle to Bolesław Kominek, 24 April 1966, copy in private possession of author.

<sup>52</sup> Hansjakob Stehle, “Hans Joachim Stehle interviewt Redakteure der polnischen Zeitung ”*Życie Warszawy*,” *Kulturelles Wort*, WDR, Cologne, 17 April 1964, HA-WDR 1682. The interview took place in Polish. Stehle personally translated it into German, and the final 45-minute long manuscript was read by four readers in WDR on April 17, 1964. Both translated and edited, the interview was a far cry from today’s magazine-style live interviews where interviewers and interviewees pit their rhetorical skills against one another.

housing situation in Poland. They described the censorship as mostly consisting of self-censorship by the journalists and editors themselves.<sup>53</sup>

Stehle also emphasized that not all of the editors and journalists whom he interviewed were long-time communists. Before the war, the editor in chief of *Życie Warszawy* was a conservative National Democrat. Stehle asked, and the interviewees answered, that out of the sixty-nine newspaper editors, only a quarter were members of the party.<sup>54</sup> The economic conditions for the newspaper were described as somewhat independent of state sponsorship. Its publication costs were paid for by the subscribers and readers, by advertisements and only partially by state funding. This was a truth with modification since the state controlled the paper supply and could withhold it in case of a disagreement. However, the interview wished to disprove the West German common preconception which considered all communist press mindless propaganda organs of the regime, harshly controlled and speaking in a unified voice.

Also, Stehle's scripts in "We Speak to the Soviet Zone" were concerned with more nuanced portrayals of the specific communist states. His scripts included for example "Developments in Czechoslovakia," "Election Successes of the Italian Communists" and "Tendencies to Greater Independence from Moscow in the Eastern Block States."<sup>55</sup> In another script, Stehle explained the differences between Chinese, Italian and East European

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<sup>53</sup> Jane Leftwich-Curry makes the point in *The Black Book of Polish Censorship* that journalists in communist Poland were forbidden to refer to the existence of censorship and that the guidelines for censorship were kept closely under locks. This meant that the editors of *Życie Warszawy* were quite limited in their ability to respond to Stehle's questions and that they were surprisingly open with him. Jane Leftwich-Curry, *The Black Book of Polish Censorship* (New York: Vintage Books, 1984), 8.

<sup>54</sup> Hansjakob Stehle, "Hans Joachim Stehle interviewt Redakteure der polnischen Zeitung "Życie Warszawy."

<sup>55</sup> HA-WDR 2748, HA-WDR 2750, HA-WDR 2753.

communist systems and philosophies.<sup>56</sup> The Polish topics in “We Speak to the Soviet Zone” were covered by other writers, including Wanda Bronska-Pampuch. In emphasizing national independence from the Soviet Union and plurality of thought in the communist states, Stehle continued to build on the understanding of communism which he had developed during his years as Warsaw correspondent.

He also directly criticized black-and-white German anti-communism. In one of the contributions, he discussed German negative reactions to Soviet films and anti-Russian sentiments in West Germany, which he connected to anti-communism. He even commented in “In a Word” in 1964 on a statement by the minister president of Nordrhein-Westfalen, Franz Meyers, agreeing that a total ban on the Communist Party in Germany (KPD) would only serve to drive the party into the underground. Stehle felt that if the communist party was allowed to exist it, would soon become clear that it had almost no public support and was very weak in the Federal Republic.<sup>57</sup> Revealing his larger intent with these scripts, he wrote that in the West people did not stop and think about “what the difference is between an anti-communism which defends democratic freedoms against a totalitarian regime, and a fascist hate against everything foreign, against “the East,” and “the Russians,” which is dressed up as anti-communism.”<sup>58</sup>

Stehle believed that West German foreign policy, both toward the GDR, Poland and in other communist states, was hurt by a blind fear of communism. His stance provoked and irritated not only the expellees but also other moderate or conservative West German

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<sup>56</sup> Hansjakob Stehle, *Wir sprechen zur Zone*, WDR, Cologne, 4 April 1963, 3 May 1963, HA-WDR 2748.

<sup>57</sup> Hansjakob Stehle, *Auf ein Wort*, WDR, Cologne, 4 March 1964, HA-WDR 677.

<sup>58</sup> Hansjakob Stehle, *Wir sprechen zur Zone*, WDR, Cologne, 31 May 1963, HA-WDR 2748.

commentators. At the same time, since the East German and Polish communist governments considered him an ally in the western media, he had unique connections. Living in Berlin where Willy Brandt as mayor was developing a new approach to the Eastern Policy, and with his Polish experiences in mind, Stehle became increasingly involved with the project of SPD Ostpolitik. In “Indivisible Germany” from 1964, he reported approvingly on the agreement which Willy Brandt had concluded with East Berlin to allow Berliners to visit with their relatives on the other side of the wall over the Christmas holidays, the “policy of small steps.”<sup>59</sup> At this time, he became a supporter of Willy Brandt and he later dedicated a book to the chancellor and became part of his advisory group on Eastern Europe.<sup>60</sup> Throughout the 1960s and into the 1970s, his manuscripts frequently commented about the importance of the border recognition. In 1970, he wrote once more “the border, which has divided Poles and Germans from the Baltic Sea to Silesia for twenty-five years now will, like all borders on this continent, cease dividing peoples and nations when it is no longer disputed, when it has become secured.”<sup>61</sup>

As already noted, Stehle at times criticized the Polish as well as the West German positions in Polish-German relations. He was aware of the dangers of excessive Polish nationalism in damaging the relations and discouraging a will to *rapprochement*. He considered the media’s role to be central in changing attitudes and contributing to an improvement. The second part of his 1964 interview with the editors of *Życie Warszawy* developed into a dispute about the newspaper’s editorial line toward the Federal Republic of

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<sup>59</sup> Hansjakob Stehle, *Unteilbares Deutschland*, WDR, Cologne, 4 January 1964, HA-WDR 2764, For more background on Brandt’s “policy of small steps” see Timothy Garton Ash, *In Europe’s Name*, 61.

<sup>60</sup> Hansjakob Stehle, *Nachbarn im Osten. Herausforderung zu einer neuen Politik* (Frankfurt a. Main: S. Fischer, 1971).

<sup>61</sup> Hansjakob Stehle, “Polen hinter Oder und Neisse,” WDR, Cologne, 7 March 1970, HA-WDR 2565.

Germany, which Stehle criticized for undermining Polish-German relations.<sup>62</sup> He pointed to the newspaper's tendency to constantly project an exaggerated image of threat coming from West Germany. The editors responded that they were basing their reports on facts, which were that West Germany refused to recognize their western border and also chose to accept and reintegrate former Nazi criminals into their society. Stehle then questioned the newspaper's conflation of West German "revisionism" with "revanchism." He argued that whereas a much larger number of West Germans could be accused of revisionism, the refusal to accept the border move, very few were in actuality revanchists, desiring revenge on the Polish state. The editors were hesitantly forced to agree with him but still claimed that this was just a matter of word choices. The facts remained the same and they left it up to their readers to draw their own conclusions. They did not admit to any use of stereotyping or anti-German traditional stereotypes in their reporting.

Stehle then asked "what are you doing in your newspaper to oppose the danger of anti-German sentiments . . . or to avoid the emergence of such sentiments."<sup>63</sup> With this question, he reframed the roles of Polish and German journalists to becoming promoters of improved relations. Rejecting his model for media involvement through challenging stereotypes, the editors responded by placing the responsibility for improved relations exclusively with Bonn. They stated that if the political line of West Germany ruined any chances to *rapprochement* while the East German political line was beneficial to the relations, they would report this clearly. The disagreement indicated how Stehle perceived of

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<sup>62</sup> Hansjakob Stehle, "Hans Joachim Stehle interviewt Redakteure der polnischen Zeitung 'Zycie Warszawy'."

<sup>63</sup> Ibid., 19.

media's role in the relations as promoting political change rather than merely reporting on actual developments.

During 1965, Stehle's cooperation with WDR intensified and his themes also began changing. One example of Stehle's cooperation with WDR from 1965 was a manuscript named "Strange Neighbors. Notes on the Margins to a Journey Through East Central Europe," which aired in the second program on September 27, 1965.<sup>64</sup> Together with other Poland-experts in radio and television, he had initiated a strategy of describing current Polish life and accomplishments in the borderlands to drive home the point that a return of the territories to Germany was impossible. 1965 was also the year when Stehle became engaged in the media work around the Polish Catholic bishops' reconciliation effort.

In 1966, Stehle was permanently employed by WDR as their Southeastern Europe correspondent with residence in Vienna. He became part of Bismarck's drive to expand coverage on Eastern Europe and might have been offered the position of Poland correspondent had it not already been occupied by Ludwig Zimmerer. However, at this point, he had new professional goals. He agreed to the position only on the precondition that he would be given the post as Vatican correspondent in 1970 when the current WDR Vatican correspondent retired. Fluent in Italian, since he had spent a year in Italy as a student, and increasingly involved with the political aspects of Catholicism, the position fitted him and his ambitions perfectly.

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<sup>64</sup> Hansjakob Stehle, "Fremde Nachbarn. Notizen am Rande einer Reise durch Ostmitteleuropa," WDR, Cologne, 27 September 1965, HA-WDR 1352.



## WHAT DO THE POLES THINK ABOUT US?

While striving to introduce a greater exchange of Polish and German radio programming and more in-depth coverage of Poland and the Poles, the activists still closely connected their Poland-reports with German self-perceptions, particularly those of the intellectual elites that were the primary audience to the extended features on Poland and Polish-German questions. Frequently, Polish representatives like Stanisław Stomma and Stefan Kisielewski were asked to give their opinion on post-war Germany and the Germans. Practically all of Stehle's and many of Zimmerer's manuscripts on Poland included a discussion about Polish perspectives on the German people, political developments and past history. These elite networks of journalists utilized the Polish voices and perspectives to reform German self-definitions and national identity. Throughout 1965 to 1967, as part of the media exchange WDR representatives attempted to convince a reporter from Polish Radio and Television to travel through the Federal Republic and make a documentary feature about his impressions. WDR would provide the camera team and pick up all costs for the travels and film making. In Poland, the feature would familiarize audiences with, and create sympathy for, the West Germans whereas in the Federal Republic, the feature would become another exercise in self-reflection. From the Polish media's side, the enthusiasm for this project was considerably smaller.

This self-reflective exercise, which emphasized the closeness between Polish and German media representations of national identities, was perfectly illustrated by "From the Neighbors' Perspective: The Poles look at Germany and the Germans" which was aired on July 3, 1965 in the third program. "From the Neighbors' Perspective" was one and a half hour long and discussed how the Poles perceived of West Germans, Germans in general and of West German political decisions in particular. Hansjakob Stehle was its author and it was

part of a series of programs, conceived by Ulrich Gembardt, in which neighboring peoples were asked to give their opinions on the Germans. West German correspondents or experts on several countries including Czechoslovakia and Denmark mediated the responses and pieced them together into manuscripts. For the Polish feature, Gembardt stated immediately in his introduction “according to plan the broadcast that you are about to hear is not kind at all. It is intended to be forthright, and I know that Hansjakob Stehle is nothing if not forthright.”<sup>65</sup> In other words, the series intended to present a self-critical, not a comforting, image of Germany.

In this script, Stehle especially addressed the Polish opinions on the division of Germany, the German past and its influence on Polish perspectives. He also treated the post-war situation and Polish opinions about the current West German “Ostpolitik.” Finally, he asked his interviewees if they, based on historical reasons, actually disliked or hated the Germans. His information came from a wide variety of Polish sources but he was ultimately responsible for the selection of information. He explained that “After having spent years in Poland as a correspondent, and on many trips through the country, I am familiar with the Polish image of Germany. Therefore, also in conversations with people whom I did not know at all, I could arrange opinions into a mosaic, an image that seemed representative of the Polish opinion.”<sup>66</sup> The script “In the View of the Neighbors” made it an overall aim to use the other people as a mirror in which to study one’s own reflection. As the writer,

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<sup>65</sup> Ulrich Gembardt, introduction to Hansjakob Stehle, “Im Blick der Nachbarn. Die Polen sehen Deutschland und die Deutschen,” WDR, Cologne, 3 July 1965, HA-WDR 3277.

<sup>66</sup> Hansjakob Stehle, “Im Blick der Nachbarn. Die Polen sehen Deutschland und die Deutschen,” WDR, Cologne, 3 July 1965, HA-WDR 3277, 4.

translator and journalist, Stehle held up the mirror to the radio listeners and angled it in order to influence how the West Germans saw themselves..

Stehle's Polish conversation partners for the most part professed neither to hate nor to love the Germans. Especially the older generation who had lived through the war stated that the memories of the Nazi occupation of Poland made them fearful and suspicious of Germans and their intentions, however. On the other hand, the younger generation felt less antagonistic toward the Germans. Interestingly, a student from Krakow commented especially on her irritation with East German tourists who came to Poland and acted self-confidently and arrogantly.<sup>67</sup> In this case, the postwar exposure, which had primarily been with East Germans, increased the antagonism. In general, when asked about the differences between East and West Germans, the Poles interviewed said that they were more interested in the West Germans. Most also stated that they would prefer to visit the Federal Republic.

Stehle also brought up the topic of German reunification with his conversation partners. The communist party in Poland officially maintained friendly relations with GDR, while attempting to keep the antagonism against the Federal Republic and its refusal to recognize the Polish-German border alive in its population. In attacking the Federal Republic, the communists drew on traditional anti-German Polish nationalist sentiments. However, Stehle pointed out that this strategy was dangerous since, once stirred, Polish nationalism in broader society could easily also turn on East Germany or the Soviet Union.<sup>68</sup>

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<sup>67</sup> The tourist interactions between Poles and West Germans were extremely limited. Mieczysław Tomala stated that between 1966 and 1967, no larger groups of Poles went to the Federal Republic and only about 4000 West German s belonging to youth groups entered Poland. Tomala, *Deutschland – von Polen gesehen*, 254.

<sup>68</sup> Hansjakob Stehle, "Im Blick der Nachbarn," 21.

Stehle did not always distinguish clearly between the Federal Republic and the GDR, nor did his interviewees always seem to stress the difference with the exception of official representatives and journalists. For example, Stehle asked a 22-year-old actress whether or not she would like to visit “Germany” and when she answered that yes, she would like that even if it frightened her, he continued by asking whether she thought there would be any difference in traveling to the GDR or the Federal Republic. She responded, “Oh, you know, I think the difference for me would probably be that the Federal Republic had better shop windows.”<sup>69</sup> The young woman who disliked East German tourists stated that she would probably rather go to the Federal Republic because “the people in the GDR seem much duller and less colorful.”<sup>70</sup> To Stehle’s Polish interviewees the topic of Germany’s division and eventual reunification was also somewhat problematic given the communist propaganda line on the German Democratic Republic and East Germans with whom the Poles were supposedly already reconciled.

Toward the end of the script, Stehle extensively described the Polish commentary on West German policy towards Poland. Whereas he had gathered voices of the “ordinary people” from different age groups and professions for the discussions on the likeability of the Germans, for the political discussion he used trusted expert opinions. He included longer commentaries from Stanisław Stomma and Mieczysław Rakowski, who were both long-time acquaintances and political allies. Rakowski commented on his travels in West Germany and stated that whereas he had seen several positive examples of change, they seemed to be primarily connected to press and media. He as well as Stomma criticized the political

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<sup>69</sup> Ibid., 15.

<sup>70</sup> Ibid.

positions in the Federal Republic with familiar arguments about the unwillingness of the sitting government to recognize the border and establish active relations. In his summary, Stehle reiterated the steps necessary in order to overcome the difficult past, the necessary political improvements, the overcoming of stereotypes and the importance of dialogue and contacts.

## CONCLUSION

West German radio broadcasts on Poland tended to focus on two overriding political themes: the development of communist politics and life under communist rule on the one hand, and German national concerns, including the territorial question, Ostpolitik and Polish perceptions of Germany on the other hand. The content of broadcasts about Poland and the Polish voices represented in West German radio changed over time, particularly after 1965, but these two themes continued to dominate the media scene. Whereas radio could be used across borders, as was the case with Voice of America, Radio Free Europe or Radio Liberty, the West German radio stations broadcasted for their own nation primarily, including both East and West German listeners. The West German radio's somewhat insular quality despite efforts to the contrary was also reflected in the multiple ways in which Polish topics were evaluated based on their relevance for West German political agendas. On the West German side, many of the extended broadcasts on Polish topics were particularly directed to a small intellectual group, the audience of the cultural, evening and late night programming in the Third Program. The sophistication of the features' language, rhetorical arguments and topics also indicated that their target groups were not a broader popular audience.

The volume of Poland coverage increased first in 1962 connected to political developments and the exchange of trade missions but also to media developments as Klaus

von Bismarck and seven other Protestants wrote the Tübingen Memorandum, which will be discussed as a media event in the next chapter. However, the great change took place in 1964 and 1965 in connection with the developing cooperation with Polish Radio and Television. As a consequence, WDR made a concerted effort in all its channels to increase Polish topics and, at the particular request of their Polish media partners, to broaden the programming outside of special theme evenings and weeks into the first and second programs as well. The voices representing Poland were also complemented by new intellectuals, artists and moderate communists who were able to travel abroad and represent their country.

Certain West German journalists also made an effort toward historical and cultural portraits of Polish society, as well as by broadcasting Polish plays and music. Of WDR's two leading Poland experts, Zimmerer reported with greater independence from the ongoing West German intellectual media debates. His perspective was characterized by an ambition to broadly describe all layers of Polish society as well as an uncompromising stance toward the Catholic Church in Poland. Like Kisielewski, his public profile was that of the eccentric and truthsayer, but also his reports needed to remain within the boundaries that his accreditation as journalist in Poland and his considerations toward the West German audience created. Stehle's reports were closely tied into the project of *rapprochement* as well as reforming Ostpolitik. His primary perception of the media's role in Polish-German relations was its duty toward political activism, information and education of the radio listeners.

A tendency existed in the West German reports on Poland during the 1960s to tie the representations so closely with current West German political discussions that the knowledge

about Poland became a secondary concern. While Stehle and Zimmerer, as well as a few other West German journalists, resisted the tendency to make Poland into a passive object in the Eastern Policy discussions, or to use Polish voices in order to reinforce the existing German political positions, they still tended to use Poland as a reference point for West German national identity changes. During the 1960s, West German media elites made use of Polish voices and perspectives for the purpose of measuring international opinion on the Germans from an eastern perspective. The same was true for coverage on the Polish Catholic Church although here, as we will see in the next chapter, the Polish episcopate managed to insert a powerful voice into the public space on their own accord through their reconciliation correspondence in 1965.

### **PART 3**

#### **POLITICS AND RECONCILIATION. THE CHURCHES, MEDIA AND OSTPOLITIK, 1968-1972**

### **CHAPTER 7**

#### **RECONCILIATION IN THE HEADLINES: CATHOLICS, PROTESTANTS AND THE MEDIA IN POLISH-GERMAN RELATIONS, 1962-1969**

Five religious statements contributed to introducing reconciliation as a political concept in Polish and West German public space during the 1960s: the 1962 Tübingen Memorandum, the 1965 Protestant Memorandum on the Situation for the Expellees, the 1965 Polish Catholic Bishops' Statement of Reconciliation to the German Catholic Bishops, the 1966 German Catholic Bishops' Response and the 1968 Bensberger Memorandum. The reconciliation activism also included the travels and initiatives by the East German Aktion Sühnezeichen. These memoranda have been hailed in both larger works and special commemorative writings and anthologies as some of the earliest civil society initiatives toward improved Polish-German relations.<sup>1</sup> While most studies of religious activism in Polish-German relations have posed the question about the memoranda's role in the relations, this chapter is concerned with media's role in shaping and utilizing the memoranda.

Religious and West German media networks were closely entwined, and media became

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<sup>1</sup> They are mentioned by Timothy Garton Ash, *In Europe's Name*, 298ff., Dieter Bingen, *Polen-Politik der Bonner Republik von Adenauer bis Kohl*, 87-89, and also in specific essays and books such as Piotr Madajczyk, *Na drodze do pojednania: Wokół orędzia biskupów polskich do biskupów niemieckich z 1965 roku*, Edith Heller, *Macht, Kirche, Politik. Der Briefwechsel zwischen den polnischen und deutschen Bischöfen im Jahre 1965*.



much more than simply a vehicle in the religious initiatives. The religious statements and memoranda influenced the media discussions in Poland and West Germany on Polish-German relations, but media attention and context also influenced the content, structure and development of religious statements. In the larger perspective, what impact did the memoranda *as mediated through the media* have on Polish-German relations?

Several historians have discussed the changing dynamics within the churches, and between media and churches, a few of them with reference to Polish-German relations and nationalism within the church.<sup>2</sup> The members of the Protestant Church became more politically diverse from the 1950s to the 1960s. Meanwhile, the changes also brought a new pluralism into the church structure, and an intensification of church debates and democratization. The change began in the 1950s and manifested itself in Polish-German relations through the Tübingen Memorandum which in turn led to new debates and controversies within the Protestant Church.<sup>3</sup> In the Catholic Church on the other hand, although smaller groups contributed to intellectual debate and diversity, the mainstream Catholic establishment on the whole resisted the liberalization process, public transparency and two-way relations with a larger public space until at least the 1970s.<sup>4</sup> The Second Vatican Council together with a wish to react with greater flexibility to increasing societal

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<sup>2</sup> Robert Żurek, *Zwischen Nationalismus und Versöhnung*.

<sup>3</sup> Martin Greschat, "Protestantismus und Evangelische Kirche," *Dynamische Zeiten. Die 60er Jahren in den beiden deutschen Gesellschaften*, eds. Axel Schildt, Detlef Siegfried and Karl Christian Lammers (Hamburg: Hans Christians Verlag, 2000), 552.

<sup>4</sup> Benjamin Ziemann, "Öffentlichkeit in der Kirche. Medien und Partizipation in der Katholische Kirche der Bundesrepublik, 1963-1972," *Medialisierung und Demokratie im 20. Jahrhundert*, eds. Frank Bösch und Norbert Frei (Göttingen: Wallstein Verlag, 2007), 179-206.

change contributed to the hesitant renewal of the Catholic Church.<sup>5</sup> The Council provided influences for a change toward greater democratization, ecumenical work, acceptance of the modern world and dialogue, the consequences of which became crucial to efforts in Polish-German relations, both through the Polish bishops' interactions and through the Bensberger Circle.<sup>6</sup> However, the Polish-German Catholic relations existed in the tensions between the new influences of the Vatican Council, the internal developments of the Protestant Church and the hesitance toward internal change in the West German and Polish Catholic Churches.

#### TÜBINGEN MEMORANDUM

In November 1961, eight Protestant lay men sent an internal document to all Protestant members of the West German parliament as an initiative toward political discussion. These men were Hellmut Becker, a sociologist, legal expert and president of the "Deutscher Volkshochschulverband"; Joachim Beckmann, president of the Protestant Church in the Rhineland; Werner Heisenberg, Nobel-prize winner and professor in astrophysics; Dr Günter Howe of the Evangelisches Studiengemeinschaft in Heidelberg; Dr. Georg Picht, active in pedagogy and religious philosophy, from Hinterzarten; Law Professor Ludwig Raiser, who was in the leadership of the German Protestant Church, particularly as member of its advisory board; and Professor Carl-Friedrich von Weizsäcker, also active within the field of astrophysics and in philosophy.<sup>7</sup> These men shared an extensive education, high

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<sup>5</sup> Karl Gabriel, "Zwischen Aufbruch und Absturz in die Moderne. Die katholische Kirche in den 60er Jahren," *Dynamische Zeiten. Die 60er Jahre in den beiden deutschen Gesellschaften*, eds. Axel Schildt, Detlef Siegrfried and Karl Christian Lammers (Hamburg: Hans Christians Verlag, 2000), 528-543.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid.

<sup>7</sup> "Das Memorandum der acht evangelischen Persönlichkeiten zur Bonner Politik. Wortlaut der Stellungnahme veröffentlicht/Ursprünglich Grundlage für interne Gespräche mit Abgeordneten," *Süddeutsche*

public profiles and large networks in West German society. They met twice in the summer of 1961 to draft the memorandum and finally signed it in November 1961.

The memorandum criticized different aspects of West German politics, including social politics and the notion of nuclear rearmament. However, the central aspect of the memorandum concerned foreign policy and the possibility of a German reunification, arguing that a more active eastern policy was necessary in order to accomplish reunification, and that Bonn's current passive position was a mistake. Furthermore, whereas Germany had the world's sympathy in their wish for freedom for the East Germans and East Berliners, particularly after the erection of the Berlin Wall, they had no international support in their demand for a reinstatement of the borders from 1937. The memorandum also stated that the relationship with Poland was key to the German question. In light of these considerations, the West German politicians must seriously consider relinquishing the eastern territories. The authors also charged the political parties with certain dishonesty. The politicians were aware of the truth that the territories were lost for all future but they were withholding this truth from the public in order to preserve their good standing with the electorate.<sup>8</sup>

The document was received by the Protestant parliamentary members, who also met with the eight authors of the document and discussed different aspects of its political statements. The memorandum might have remained one internal document among many others circulating in the Bundestag in Bonn, had not parts of it been leaked from an unknown source to *dpa* four months after its publication. In early March 1962, its contents entered the

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*Zeitung*, 26 February 1962. See also Martin Greschat, "Protestantismus und Evangelische Kirche in den 60er Jahren," 555.

<sup>8</sup> "Das Memorandum der Acht. Wissenschaftler warnen vor Selbstgefälligkeit und Illusionen," *Die Zeit*, 2 March 1962. *Die Zeit* and *Süddeutsche Zeitung* published the memorandum in its entirety.

media scene and became public property. The well-known names of its authors, Weizsäcker, Bismarck, Raiser and Heisenberg, the bluntness of a statement which was not intended to become public and the attacks and calls about “betrayals of the nation” from rightwing groups and expellees contributed to the great media interest surrounding the Tübingen Memorandum.<sup>9</sup> At this point, the authors elected to publish the full text of the memorandum in the *Evangelisches Amtsblatt* in order to avoid false rumors and misinterpretations.

Most of the media responses and political statements to the Tübingen Memorandum were quite measured. The media agreed that the memorandum brought up important points and thoughts, but also felt that the foreign policy suggestions of recognizing the Oder-Neisse Line were farfetched. Even the most sympathetic responses often considered the suggestion of relinquishing the territories outlandish. In *Die Zeit*, Marion von Dönhoff wrote that whereas she considered the authors of the Tübingen Memorandum voices of reason, and their political commentary well-worth thinking about, she questioned whether post-war Germans had the right to give up lands where their forefathers had lived for 700 years. *Die Zeit*, *Süddeutsche Zeitung* and *Frankfurter Rundschau* were the most sympathetic voices reporting on the memorandum. *Die Zeit* and *Süddeutsche* were the only news organs to publish the seven-page document in its entirety. *Frankfurter Rundschau* considered the document’s suggestions realistic and justified but it still stopped short of directly promoting its policy line. Moving in circles around the territorial question, the article stated that the authors had every right to pose these questions and emphasized that the worrisome lack of serious political discussion in West Germany had led lay Protestants to officially participate in

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<sup>9</sup> The expellees were cited in for example “Diskussion über das Memorandum eines evangelischen Kreisse. Nicht harten Entscheidungen asuweichen/Anerkennung der Oder-Neisse-Linie gefordert/Widerspruch der Vertriebenen,” *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*, 26 February 1962, “Oder-Neisse-Grenze anerkennen. Denkschrift von acht führenden deutschen Protestanten,” *Die Welt*, 24 February 1962.

political dialogue.<sup>10</sup> At this time, the press was still cautious in its approach to Polish-German relations. Mainly audio-visual media was raising questions about Bonn's Eastern Policy.

The moderate, conservative and Catholic press was even more critical of the memorandum. *Frankfurter Allgemeine* wrote that although some of the criticisms in the memorandum were to the point, the commentary about secrecy in political circles was a strange accusation since the authors themselves had intended the memorandum as an internal document. In addition, according to *Frankfurter Allgemeine*, the politicians had good reason to postpone discussions about the border issue to the future since there were currently no realistic solutions available to the border question.<sup>11</sup> *Welt am Sonntag*, a Christian conservative newspaper, gave the article about the Tübingen Memorandum the title "Sharp attack on the political parties." The article itself repeated the content of the memorandum and stated that it had provoked a fierce discussion. Many of the newspapers reported that all political parties rejected the demand for official recognition of the Oder-Neisse Line although SPD assured the media that it still welcomed initiative to a dialogue around the Eastern Policy.

In late March, a number of the left-oriented and liberal newspapers reported that Willy Brandt, then the mayor of Berlin, defended the memorandum's political line.<sup>12</sup> Brandt stated that the memorandum must be taken seriously although he himself opposed it on certain levels. He felt that the memorandum had unfairly included the Social Democrats in

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<sup>10</sup> "Verkümmernde Freiheit," *Frankfurter Rundschau*, 28 February 1962.

<sup>11</sup> "Stachel ins Fleisch," *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*, 26 February 1962.

<sup>12</sup> "Brandt fordert aktive Ostpolitik. Scharfe Kritik an Bonner Koalition/„Tübinger Acht nicht allein," *Frankfurter Rundschau*, 26 March 1962; "Brandt zum Memorandum der Acht. „In einigen Punkten der gleichen Meinung – aber auch ernste Bedenken," *Süddeutsche Zeitung*, 26 March 1962; "Brandt zum „Memorandum der Acht," *Stuttgarter Zeitung*, 26 March 1962.

criticisms that should be directed primarily to the FDP and CDU. He also believed that the Oder-Neisse-Line question was less a central topic than the division of Germany and the existence of the Berlin Wall. In the aftermath of the wall, it was more important to focus on Soviet politics and the possible security threat towards Berlin than on the Polish-German border and the Polish politics. Nevertheless, Brandt complemented the writers and stated about them that an “uncomfortable democrat is a thousand times more preferable than a half-hearted follower.”<sup>13</sup> Brandt was attaching himself to the idea of an active Ostpolitik but so far he considered Polish-German relations a relatively minor concern.

Articles in the traditional print media frequently emphasized the controversy surrounding the memoranda, the debates which they caused, and the criticism to which CDU parliamentary members and expellee representatives subjected them. While these reports often intended to discredit and undermine the statements, the reports on dissent and controversy seemed to have had a very different effect in hindsight. They kept the discussions in the headlines, created a greater interest and caused new discussants and factions to become engaged with the border and Polish-German relations. This was true for the Tübingen Memorandum which was publicized since there had been an “indiscretion” and known to a larger public because of the fierce reaction of the expellee groups.

The expellee organizations made concerted efforts to reach a larger public with the condemnation of the memorandum but also in this context, they had difficulties gaining access to audio-visual media. Aware that WDR belonged to the “other side,” they sent statements of protest to the press and to the other West German radio stations. However, many of the general directors, for example Hans Bausch for the *Süddeutscher Rundfunk*,

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<sup>13</sup> “Brandt zum Memorandum der Acht,” *Süddeutsche Zeitung*, 26 March 1962.

sympathized with Klaus von Bismarck against his opponents. Bausch forwarded the statement to Bismarck for information purposes and added in a note that “I am sending the attached letter from the Landsmannschaft der Ost- und Westpreussen as an original. I am not intending to confirm or answer it in any form.”<sup>14</sup> A similar note arrived from a leading representative of the ARD.

For Bismarck, the broad public reactions were somewhat unexpected and not entirely welcome. He had only been the director of WDR for one year and wished to avoid a too intense controversy. A few months after the memorandum was made public, he answered a request for an editorial in the *Kölner Stadtanzeiger* “After the publication of the memorandum, I have my hands full with answering questions about it, and defending its arguments where necessary. I would like to lay low with other statements in the public space for the time being. You will surely understand.”<sup>15</sup> Throughout March and April, Bismarck received letters and communications from widely differing groups. The letters ranged from threats to long discussions about the expellee question.<sup>16</sup>

An important result of the Tübingen Memorandum being leaked to a larger public was that it acquired a Polish audience. The correspondent for *Trybuna Ludu* in Bonn, Marian Podkowiński, reported by telephone on the memorandum and his reports were immediately published in Warsaw. The Polish readers thus knew that the Tübingen Eight were opposed to nuclear rearmament in the Federal Republic, a great fear in the Polish context, and that they

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<sup>14</sup> Hans Bausch to Klaus von Bismarck, 24 May 1962, Nachlass Klaus von Bismarck, Lauf.No. 163, HA-WDR.

<sup>15</sup> Klaus von Bismarck to Christoph von Imhoff (*Kölner Stadt-Anzeiger*), 2 April 1962, Nachlass Klaus von Bismarck, Lauf.No. 163, HA-WDR.

<sup>16</sup> Anonymous letter from May 1962, Franz Rendel (Pommersche Landsmannschaft) to Klaus von Bismarck, 5 April 1962, Nachlass Klaus von Bismarck, Lauf.No. 163, HA-WDR.

supported recognition of the Oder-Neisse Line.<sup>17</sup> The memorandum seemed all the more remarkable in Poland in that it was signed by Prussians such as von Bismarck, whose family name was connected to the “Drang nach Osten” myths about the Polish-German antagonism, and that it was authored by German Protestants, traditionally considered the opponents of Polish Catholicism. The Tübingen Memorandum contributed to Bismarck’s good report in Poland and facilitated his visits and work there in 1964 and 1965.

The memorandum was not an official statement of the Protestant Church, or of the Ostkirchenausschuss (Committee of the Church in the East), which was particularly concerned with the church in the eastern territories. The Ostkirchenausschuss consisted of Protestant clergy and other activists with an expellee background, and it opposed the initiative by the Tübingen eight. On March 5, 1962, Ostkirchenausschuss issued an official comment to the Tübingen Memorandum which criticized the statements in the memorandum. Ostkirchenausschuss argued that the memorandum rejected the right to self-determination for the German people and thereby for all peoples in Eastern Europe. The committee accused the memorandum of supporting Soviet power politics. The argument that the relationship with Poland could be improved through an official recognition of the Oder-Neisse border was an illusion “in light of the Polish public opinion within and, unfortunately, also outside of the communist-controlled country.”<sup>18</sup> Internally, in the leadership of the Protestant Church, discussions began quite soon about whether they should not issue their own official statement on the Oder-Neisse Line. In 1963, some members suggested such a

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<sup>17</sup> “Echa wystąpienia działaczy ewangelickich w sprawie Odry i Nysy,” *Trybuna Ludu*, 25 February 1962.

<sup>18</sup> “Sondernummer. Stellungnahme des Ostkirchenausschuss der Evangelischen Kirche in Deutschland aus ‘Memorandum der Acht’ vom 6. November 1961,” Ostkirchen-Informationsdienst, Hannover, 5 March 1962.



statement. However, the Ostkirchenausschuss asked for restraint, referring to the importance of a united front given the difficult question and situation.<sup>19</sup> The discussions developed into a turf war in which the expellee representatives defended their right to represent the entire church in Polish-German questions. The monopoly of the Ostkirchenausschuss on Polish-German relations which had been weakening since the late 1950s, was finally overridden within the Protestant Church in 1965.

#### THE PROTESTANT MEMORANDUM IN 1965

Initially, the Protestant Church planned for the Ostkirchenausschuss to draft a response to the Tübingen Memorandum in the name of the entire church, defending the rights of the expellees. However, a few influential lobbyists insisted that one interest group such as the Ostkirchenausschuss should not be allowed to speak in the name of the entire church.<sup>20</sup> In 1963, the “Kammer für öffentliche Verantwortung” under the leadership of Ludwig Raiser began to prepare a general memorandum on the situation of the expellees. The group attempted to take into consideration both the opinions of Protestant expellee representatives and also Protestant leaders from the German Democratic Republic. They were unable to reach any agreement with the expellee representatives, among them Philipp von Bismarck.<sup>21</sup> As for the GDR representatives, they were initially hesitant to become part of the controversy which the document was expected to evoke: they did not want the conflict with the expellees to spread onto East German territory. On the other hand, they agreed with their West

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<sup>19</sup> W. Schweitzer to Klaus von Bismarck, 10 November 1965, and Martin Niemeyer to W. Schweitzer, 20 January 1963, Nachlass Klaus von Bismarck, Lauf.No. 163, HA-WDR.

<sup>20</sup> Particularly, Bishop Kunst and Bishop Kurt Scharf lobbied for a more general statement. Martin Greschat, “Protestantismus und Evangelische Kirche,” 559.

<sup>21</sup> Greschat, “Protestantismus und Evangelische Kirche,” 563.

German colleagues that the church should not be divided into an eastern and western part. Ultimately, they were also represented in the document.<sup>22</sup>

In October 1965, the “Kammer für öffentliche Verantwortung” of the Protestant Church published their document on the expellee situation. The memorandum’s full name was “The Situation for the Expellees and the Relations of the German People with its Eastern Neighbors.” *The Times* of London reported that the memorandum became a reality after some of the Protestant Church leaders visited the United States and became aware of American and other western expectations that West Germany make an effort and some concessions in the peace process.<sup>23</sup> Unlike the Tübingen Memorandum, the Expellee Memorandum was intended as a media document, officially representing the Protestant Church and its position on the border question and Poland with an eye to international opinion as well. Given its public nature, every word was weighed carefully in the document. The memorandum was published in large numbers and several editions by the “Verlag des Amtsblattes der Evangelischen Kirche in Deutschland.”

The Protestant Memorandum served as a wake-up call in West German society. Its publicity and media attention far superseded that of the Tübingen Memorandum despite its much more careful statements. The Protestant Memorandum proclaimed that as Christians, the German Protestant Church held a responsibility for politics. In its introduction, it assured the readers that the Protestant Church was not attempting to replace elected political representatives.<sup>24</sup> The church was also not responsible for formulating detailed political

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<sup>22</sup> Ibid., 564.

<sup>23</sup> “Church Challenges Politicians of Bonn,” *The Times*, 1 December 1965.

<sup>24</sup> “Die Lage der Vertriebenen und das Verhältnis des deutschen Volkes zu seinen östlichen Nachbarn. Eine evangelische Denkschrift,” 5th ed., (Hannover: Verlag des Amtsblattes der Evangelischen Kirche in Deutschland, 1965), 5.

goals and solutions. “However, it belongs to the political service of Christianity to represent the structural and human preconditions for politics that serve humanity and peace.” Because of this responsibility, the church should confront political mistakes. Since it considered the “German Eastern Policy” one of these problems, the church proposed that the policy should be reformulated.<sup>25</sup>

As the Ostkirchenausschuss had done with the Tübingen Memorandum, the arguments supporting expellee rights often cited the German minorities’ “right to a homeland,” and claimed that recognition of the post-war border violated human rights on a universal level. The Protestant Memorandum engaged with this *Heimatrecht*-argument by stating that the human rights of the expellees must not be ignored and that the questions about compensation for those expelled should be addressed as political issues. However, the German people should also remember that this would include bringing to the forefront questions about compensation for the suffering and loss which German actions had caused Polish and other Eastern neighbors. The memorandum suggested that in light of the terrible German crimes in the east, there might be human rights reasons why the German state and nation should not be allowed to keep its territory from 1937.

The memorandum’s argument about recognition of the border was careful but clear. It was not the Protestant Church’s task to determine the right point of time to develop a new active policy toward Poland and Eastern Europe. However, “the formal argument, that only a future all-German government could make such far-reaching decisions can no longer justify postponing indefinitely the solution of the fundamental questions which come into play

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<sup>25</sup> Die Lage der Vertriebenen (hereafter Evangelische Denkschrift.), 41.

here.”<sup>26</sup> Given the size and authority of the Protestant Church even these phrases carried great weight and contributed to their shock effect in West Germany.

Noticeable in the media reactions to the Protestant Memorandum was that for the first time the media on all sides of the political spectrum emphasized the necessary conciliatory aspects of Polish-German relations. Even those who opposed the memorandum criticized it precisely because it failed to accomplish a true reconciliation.<sup>27</sup> Marion Countess Dönhoff was critical toward the strategy behind the memorandum. She commented that the attempt at reconciliation with the eastern neighbors was commendable but added that “this is only possible however if the church can accomplish a reconciliation among its own. And that is precisely what has been neglected.”<sup>28</sup> *Rheinischer Merkur* represented a more positive attitude toward the memorandum and argued under the title “Necessary appeal for reconciliation” that the memorandum had been misunderstood by its critics. It never intended to change policy, only to begin a dialogue in the spirit of reconciliation.<sup>29</sup> *Die Welt*, similarly to *Die Zeit*, argued that the memorandum did not live up to its ambitions to a spirit of reconciliation since it failed to accomplish reconciliation within its own ranks first.<sup>30</sup>

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<sup>26</sup> Evangelische Denkschrift, 7.

<sup>27</sup> This point was also noted by Arnold Sywottek, “Nationale Politik als Symbolpolitik,” 354.

<sup>28</sup> Marion Countess Dönhoff, “Kontroversen in die Kirche, *Die Zeit*, 29 October 1965. The memorandum did indeed cause several divisions and conflicts within the church. Not only the Ostkirchenausschuss protested sharply but Bishop Reinhard Weiter who was responsible within the church for remigration and expellee questions, officially asked to be relieved of his position. Further, a number of prominent Protestants formed a Notgemeinschaft Evangelischer Deutschen in Stuttgart in the spring of 1966 since they felt that they were not represented by the church’s leadership. Martin Greschat, “Protestantismus und Evangelische Kirche,” 568.

<sup>29</sup> Paul Wilhelm Wenger, “Notwendiger Appell zur Versöhnung. Die umstrittene Denkschrift der Evangelischen Kirche in Deutschland,” *Rheinischer Merkur*, 22 October 1965.

<sup>30</sup> Bernd Conrad, “Die Grenzen im Osten. Eine kirchliche Denkschrift,” *Die Welt*, 19 October 1965.

As with the documentaries and the Tübingen Memorandum, the expellee organizations and the conservative political and Catholic circles issued negative statements in response to the memorandum.<sup>31</sup> However, the Protestant Memorandum came from a powerful enough institution that they could no longer marginalize it as the opinion of an intellectual clique. In addition, as had begun to be evident in the discussions surrounding Stehle's documentary, the political parties' support of the expellee lobby was for the first time weakening. Instead of instantly siding with the expellees, the politicians issued carefully phrased and intentionally vague statements indicating a growing willingness to reconsider the territorial question.<sup>32</sup>

#### THE POLISH CATHOLIC BISHOPS' LETTER IN 1965

The Protestant Memorandum and the great media debates surrounding it also played a role in spurring an initiative on the Polish side. Bishop Bolesław Kominek had been in contact with West German intellectuals, elite journalists and others who promoted improved relations between the two countries. Kominek grew up in Silesia and was fluent in both Polish and German, although he considered himself culturally Polish. He studied theology with German colleagues. After the war, he became a close associate of the Catholic intellectuals in the Znak-group and regular contributor to *Tygodnik Powszechny*. Kominek firmly supported the right of the Polish people to the border areas and he had played a crucial role in integrating newly arrived Polish Catholics from the east into his area, the diocese of Wrocław. He had become one of the apostolic administrators to the new Polish dioceses,

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<sup>31</sup> Greschat, "Protestantismus und Evangelische Kirche," 565.

<sup>32</sup> Pertti Ahonen, *After the Expulsion*, 205.

named by the Polish Cardinal as an emergency solution when the Pope was unwilling to formally install Polish bishops before a peace treaty between united Germany and Poland had been signed. Later, he was instituted as Archbishop of Wrocław.

While pro-German in the sense that he nurtured German friendships and language and admired the German culture, Bishop Kominek did not doubt that Poland had the right to the Oder-Neisse territories after the war and that the German minorities should leave. He had actively encouraged German priests to leave Silesia after the war, believing that the country could only be stabilized if it was homogeneously Polish.<sup>33</sup> At the same time, he shied away from Polish traditional nationalism and also did not believe in an eternal enmity. In an article from May 1965 on the occasion of the 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the presence of the Polish Church in Wrocław, he argued that not ancient rights but the terrible consequences of the Second World War justified Poland's possession of these territories.<sup>34</sup> In this argument, he disagreed with Cardinal Wyszyński who had claimed ancient Polish rights to the territories in his speech at the celebration in Wrocław. Kominek also emphasized that many exceptions to German aggression and expansionism eastwards existed, including among the “representatives of the German episcopates.”<sup>35</sup>

The non-national rhetoric and the bilingualism of Bishop Kominek led to his cooperation with Hansjakob Stehle, which first began in 1964 when Stehle published a critical article about the Polish bishops, particularly Cardinal Wyszyński but also Kominek, in *Die Zeit*. Kominek wrote a letter to the editor of *Die Zeit* and criticized the article which he

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<sup>33</sup> This according to Thomas Urban, *Die Vertreibung der Deutschen und Polen im 20. Jahrhundert* (Munich: Verlag C.H.Beck, 2004), 134.

<sup>34</sup> Bolesław Kominek, “Ziemie Zachodnie. Mandat sprzed 20 lat,” *Tygodnik Powszechny*, 30 May 1965.

<sup>35</sup> *Ibid.*

thought was based on false information and would contribute to making the situation for the Polish bishops more difficult. Stehle responded by sending over the copies of the materials on which he based his article as well as publishing the full text of Kominek's letter in *Die Zeit* as a correction. In his letter, Stehle stated that it was not his intent to make the situation worse for the bishops. He had heard that Kominek possessed a copy of *Nachbar Polen* and he should thus be familiar with Stehle's pro-Polish perspective. Kominek would surely understand, based on *Nachbar Polen* and Stehle's articles, "how regrettable Cardinal Wyszyński's sermon appears, not just for me but for all people who are involved with Polish-German understanding."<sup>36</sup> Kominek must have understood Stehle's point of view because they remained in touch. However, in their correspondence, Kominek frequently worried that Stehle would present the Polish Church in an unfavorable light. The focal point of disagreement was the nationalist and sometimes anti-German rhetoric of Cardinal Wyszyński. These disagreements showed how crucial the western media reception appeared to the Polish bishops. West German media might improve or worsen their standing internationally but also undermine their position domestically with respect to the communist state.

In September 1965, the Polish Cardinal Wyszyński held a sermon in Wrocław in which he stated that these border territories were ancient Polish property. Stehle reported on these statements and compared them unfavorably with Jerzy Turowicz and Bishop Kominek. About Kominek's speech on the same occasion he wrote: "Here spoke facts, practical

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<sup>36</sup> Hansjakob Stehle to Bolesław Kominek, Berlin, 28 February 1964, copy in private possession of author.

common sense and patriotism without national narrow-mindedness.”<sup>37</sup> After the celebrations in Wrocław, Kominek wrote to Stehle and thanked him, with some reservations, for the media reports. Then he wrote worriedly that he had heard that Stehle was preparing a radio feature on Poland and religion: “This gave me a fright: what are you making of it?! It is not a question of my own person, but more about not contrasting me with the Cardinal as a sensible friend of the Germans – and the Cardinal as an altogether ‘bad guy’ (*schwarzen Mann*).”<sup>38</sup> In this way, the relationship between the two slowly developed and expanded based on their common interest in Polish-German questions and their mutual usefulness to each other. While Stehle got a reliable insider connection in the Catholic Church in Poland and another role model for the new relationship, Kominek gained a channel into respected West German media. However, the relationship was not uncomplicated and Kominek also maintained it for the purpose of damage control.

Sometime in 1965, based on his feelings that a dialogue with the West Germans was necessary and on the commonsensical justifications for the Polish possession of the border areas, Kominek began drafting a letter in the name of the Polish episcopate addressed to the German Catholic episcopate. At this early point, he was supported by a few of his colleagues, notably the bishop in Krakow, Karol Wojtyła, the future Pope John Paul II. The Cardinal, Stefan Wyszyński, was hesitant, however, since he suspected that the letter could become a point of conflict with the state, and he also did not consider relations with the Germans a matter of primary importance.

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<sup>37</sup> Hansjakob Stehle, “Zwanzig Jahre polnisches Breslau. Die Kirche feierte Vergangenheit und Gegenwart in den Oder-Neisse Gebieten,” *Die Zeit*, 10 September 1965.

<sup>38</sup> Bolesław Kominek to Hansjakob Stehle, Rome, September 1965. Copy in private possession of author.



During the Second Vatican Council, 1962 to 1965, Kominek and a few of the other Polish bishops who were visiting Rome met and dined with their German colleagues. Their conversation turned to Polish-German relations and their obstacles. According to official records, these conversations inspired Kominek to draft a letter of reconciliation to be sent to the German Catholic bishops, and the German bishops were also involved in an advisory function in the development of the text. During 1965, Kominek also corresponded with Hansjakob Stehle. While the documents do not indicate that Stehle was a full confidante to the development of the letter, at the time of its writing Kominek spoke with and wrote to Stehle at length about the major issues of Polish-German relations. In a letter dated May 1965, he wrote: “I confirm your letter from May 10<sup>th</sup>. I will certainly be at home in Breslau on June 15<sup>th</sup>. In the meantime, I have been able to ponder the problems that we spoke about in Rome in April. I am grateful for your openness in many things.”<sup>39</sup> These correspondences indicated that Kominek found inspiration for his letter not only in conversations with the German Catholic hierarchy but also with Stehle.<sup>40</sup> In addition, he was well aware of, and close to, the thoughts of the *Znak* group and *Tygodnik Powszechny*. In this way, he gathered inspiration for the first draft of his letter in both Polish and German media circles.

In the letter to Stehle in May 1965, Kominek stated his hesitance to become a “political bishop.” He was aware that the relationship with the Germans was highly controversial both to Poles and Germans. He had already experienced some of the West German reactions to the border question. In addition, the communist regime might react

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<sup>39</sup> Bolesław Kominek to Hansjakob Stehle, 15 May 1965, copy in private possession of author.

<sup>40</sup> See also Dominic Rappich to Bolesław Kominek, 24 November 1965, in which he mentioned Stehle’s documentary and also expressed his satisfaction with the developing acquaintance between the Archbishop and Walter Dirks, Nachlass Walter Dirks, Box 128A, FES.

negatively to such a statement. In an effort to deflect any communist protests early on, Kominek kept the representative for the Polish People's Republic in Rome, Ignacy Krasicki, updated on the progress of the statement and also provided him a copy of the text. However, according to Hansjakob Stehle, Krasicki did not forward the text to Warsaw as a message from Kominek with a request for approval. He sent the letter to Gomułka as a secret copy which he had intercepted. Because of this circumstance, Gomułka suspected the episcopate of going behind his back in foreign policy questions but decided to withhold his reaction until the letter was published and the German bishops had responded.<sup>41</sup> Ultimately, Cardinal Wyszyński as well as all other Polish bishops signed the letter to the German bishops, and it was made public on November 18 of 1965.

The Polish bishops' letter consisted largely of a narration of the Polish Christian history and Polish-German relations, from 966 when Mieszko I was baptized and Poland became a Christian country to the present. The letter described the origins of the Polish-German enmity from the Polish perspective beginning with the Teutonic Knights' settlement on Polish territory in the 13<sup>th</sup> century. It emphasized the positive aspects of the relations, such as medieval cultural exchanges, for example that of the German craftsman Veit Stoss (Wit Stwosz) who settled in Krakow from Nuremberg and made the famous altar plates in the Church of Mary, or the queen Hedwig, Jadwiga, a German princess who came to Poland through marriage and became one of its national saints. On the other hand, the letter also

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<sup>41</sup> Hansjakob Stehle, *Eastern Politics of the Vatican, 1917-1979*, trans. Sandra Smith (Columbus, OH: Ohio University Press, 1981), 344.

mentioned those Germans who contributed to the increasing fear and hatred of Germany in Poland: “Albrecht of Prussia, Frederick the so-called Great, Bismarck and finally Hitler.”<sup>42</sup>

Despite its emphasis on the positive examples of Polish-German interactions, the historical narrative in the letter was well within the traditional Polish patriotic rhetoric. Naturally, the bishops equated Polish national identity with Catholicism. They wrote “The symbiosis between Christianity, Church and State existed in Poland from the beginning and was never really disrupted. Over time, it created the almost universal Polish notion: to be Polish is to be Catholic.”<sup>43</sup> The letter also drew on romantic nationalist images of Polish sacrifices for Europe. “In all fights for freedom during the times of oppression, the Poles always manned the barricades with these symbols, the white eagle on one side and the Mother of God on the other side of the banner of freedom. The motto was always ‘for your freedom and ours.’”<sup>44</sup> Finally, the letter firmly confirmed Polish national historical narratives of victimology.

In its last few pages, however, the letter changed its tone and stated: “and, despite all this almost hopelessly historically burdened situation, precisely from this situation, honorable brothers, we call out to you: “Let us try to forget! No polemics, no more Cold War, but the beginning of a dialogue.”<sup>45</sup> The letter referred to the new spirit of the Second Vatican Council of dialogue and ecumenical cooperation. Its most famous line became: “We forgive

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<sup>42</sup> “Die Botschaft der polnischen Bischöfe an die deutschen Bischöfe, Rom, 18. November 1965,” *Bonn-Warschau*, 139

<sup>43</sup> *Ibid.*, 136.

<sup>44</sup> *Ibid.*, 140.

<sup>45</sup> *Ibid.*, 141.

and ask for forgiveness.”<sup>46</sup> These were the lines that created headlines in western media, and the phrase about forgiveness would reshape the media discussions on the relations entirely and their effects would last beyond the end of communism into the next century. Perhaps unwittingly, they also presented a formidable challenge to the Polish people, namely the expectation to overcome the past and to admit to any Polish wrongs committed during or after the war.

In West Germany, the letter became part of the already existing debate on eastern policy and relinquishing the border territories. The immediate question in West German media concerned the German Catholic bishops’ response to the Polish letter. An expectation existed in Poland, based on earlier statements by Cardinal Döpfner and also on the awareness of the Protestant Memorandum’s content, that the German Catholic bishops would make a similarly grand gesture and acknowledge the Polish rights to the border areas. This expectation existed also within parts of the West German society. Walter Dirks wrote in his report in *Frankfurter Hefte* from Rome: “Finally, the message of the Polish episcopate was silently being prepared. Since the message is one of its fruits, will the Council in its last moments help to ease certain domestic German tensions?”<sup>47</sup> Other circles, such as the Catholic expellees, feared that the bishops would create a statement similar to the Protestant Memorandum and declare the territories a part of Poland.

However, almost immediately and before they had published their response, the German Catholic bishops stated to the media that no such gesture could be expected. Bishop Hengsbach of Essen, who was part of the preparing committee, explained to the *Frankfurter*

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<sup>46</sup> Ibid., 142.

<sup>47</sup> Walter Dirks, “Im Rom, Spätherbst 1965,” *Frankfurter Hefte*, Januar 1966, 34.

*Rundschau* that “it is not for the bishops to be involved in categories of state law (*staatsrechtliche Kategorien*) and the Oder-Neisse Border is a political matter.”<sup>48</sup> At the same time, the German bishops felt pressured by world opinion and by standing in the public spotlight to answer the Polish letter in the same spirit as it had been issued. Whereas the Polish bishops had been able to develop their letter in relative privacy, worked on the text for several months and had also given drafts of it to their German conversation partners for responses, the German bishops were under time constraints. The response must be issued soon to appease the Polish side and while the exchange was still a news item.

The bishops’ letter did not radically shift political positions in West Germany on the relations. But it made two things clear: first, that attempts toward dialogue were not, as the Ostkirchenausschuss had argued in 1962, pointless in light of widespread Polish anti-German sentiments. Second, it reminded the West German public forcefully that Poland was not simply a helpless victim in the hands of Polish and Soviet communists. Conservative media, such as *Die Welt*, continued to insist on the helplessness of both German and Polish actors in the perspective of the Cold War and of Soviet power politics.<sup>49</sup> However, *Bayern-Kurier*, a weekly organ of the Christian Democrats in Bavaria (CSU) also wrote that the bishops’ letter was a hopeful sign since it was a voice of the “historical Poland” as opposed to “communist Poland.”<sup>50</sup> Through its letter, the episcopate had reintroduced non-communist Poland into the West German public awareness. To the West German liberal media elites, the Polish bishops

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<sup>48</sup> “Hengsbach wünscht Gespräch in versöhnlichem Geist,” *Frankfurter Rundschau*, 2 December 1965.

<sup>49</sup> *German-Polish Dialogue*, 118, translated excerpt from *Die Welt*, 4 December 1965.

<sup>50</sup> *German-Polish Dialogue*, 124, translated excerpt from *Bayern-Kurier*, 29 January 1965.

had suddenly emerged as a powerful ally or argument in the internationally situated argument for a change in the Ostpolitik, and recognition of the border.

On December 5, 1965, the German Catholic bishops responded to the Polish letter. The German message was much briefer than the Polish one. The German bishops thanked the Polish bishops for their open-hearted communication. They only mentioned the historical aspects very briefly but did state that they were grateful for the remembrance of the better aspects of German neighborly relations, and aware of the painful aspects. “Terrible things were done by Germans and in the name of the German people to the Polish people” they stated and later “We are grateful that you are also keeping the hard fate of the million expelled Germans and refugees in your thoughts next to the immeasurable suffering of the Polish people.”<sup>51</sup> About the Oder-Neisse territories, they wrote that they were well aware of their importance to the current-day Poles living there. They assured the Poles that the expellees had no aggressive intentions with regard to these territories and hoped that the territorial question would find “a solution which is just and satisfactory to all sides.”<sup>52</sup> Removed from its political context, this message was friendly and showed good will to dialogue. However, in the context of the Tübingen Memorandum, the Expellee Memorandum and the Polish bishops’ letter, which had all entered much more contested and controversial political ground, it seemed overly cautious and bland.

The Polish bishops, the Polish communists and the communist media were not overly impressed with the German bishops’ message. Furthermore, the Polish communist press had stayed ominously silent during the first ten days after the bishops’ letter became public.

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<sup>51</sup> “Die Antwort der deutschen Bischöfe an die polnischen Bischöfe, Rom 5. Dezember 1965,” *Bonn-Warschau*, 143.

<sup>52</sup> *Ibid.*, 144.

Now, they launched a full-scale attack on the Polish bishops, accusing them of trying to supersede the state in foreign policy matters. They also attempted to draw on societal anti-German feelings against the bishops. The Polish bishops' letter had talked about the Oder-Neisse area as the "Potsdam western territories" and the communist press now attacked this term since it did not clearly recognize the ancient Polish rights to the territory, the ones which Cardinal Wyszyński had mentioned in his Wrocław sermon in September.<sup>53</sup> Similarly, the communist press harshly criticized the phrase "we ask for forgiveness," believing that this would be the most controversial aspect of the message for the Polish people. "In whose name," asked *Życie Warszawy* in its headline, "are you asking for forgiveness?"<sup>54</sup> The newspaper suggested that it was outrageous to ask Germans for forgiveness in the name of the many Poles who died at Auschwitz.

The Znak group might have been natural allies to the bishops but its members had been excluded from the preparatory stages of the letter. They were under severe pressure from Gomułka and were also offended that the bishops had not drawn on their expertise on Polish-German questions. In the discussions in the Sejm surrounding the letter, only Jerzy Turowicz came to the defense of the statement. This silence on behalf of the Znak circle led to conflict with Wyszyński when he returned from Rome to Warsaw.<sup>55</sup>

Indeed, for many Poles, the bishops' action was difficult to understand. The *Tygodnik* journalist and associate of Turowicz, Józefa Hennelowa, later said in an interview

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<sup>53</sup> "Wobec 'orędzia' do biskupów niemieckich. W czyim imieniu?" *Życie Warszawy*, 10 December 1965.

<sup>54</sup> Ibid.

<sup>55</sup> Andrzej Micewski, *Cardinal Wyszyński: A Biography*, trans. William R. Brand and Katarzyna Mroczkowska-Brand (San Diego: Hartcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1984), 258.

that when she and other young church-loyal Catholics heard about the letter they could not understand its intent.

What caused this reaction was not the “We forgive” part but the words “We ask for forgiveness.” Our reaction concerned this one fragment, not about granting forgiveness. We knew that it was our duty as Christians to forgive also when this is difficult but we could not understand why the bishops had stated that “We ask for forgiveness.” Back then, this was an absolute black hole in which we could not find ourselves again. And I have to say that Karol Wojtyła never really convinced us in this discussion.<sup>56</sup>

Also the intellectuals in the student opposition reacted negatively to the letter. One of the most prominent members of the student opposition, Adam Michnik, later criticized his own unquestioning antipathy to the bishops’ letter in an essay. He wrote:

It took me ten years before I actually read a copy of the letter. But now that I have read it carefully, the truth is that I can find in it nothing, absolutely nothing, that could justify the surprisingly hostile reaction it elicited in otherwise quite civil people. Nor can I find anything that might explain the unexpected susceptibility of these critics to the demagogic arguments of officialdom. And I am not speaking of your average journalistic lackeys. On the contrary, I’m talking about respected people.<sup>57</sup>

The commentaries showed the difficulties in larger Polish society to accept the phrase “we ask for forgiveness,” which the communist press also highlighted and attacked in particular.

When Wyszyński returned from Rome, he and several other bishops, including Bishop Choromański in Warsaw, Bishop Kominek in Wrocław and Bishop Wojtyła in Krakow set out to explain and soothe their audiences. Wyszyński’s strategy was to immediately turn the audience’s attention toward the communist attack on the bishops. He asked them to trust the bishops above the state media and stated ironically about the censors that must always be correct “since they are the wisest of the Polish people . . . wiser even

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<sup>56</sup> Józefa Hannelowa, “Gespräch mit Józefa Hannelowa,” *Wir vergeben und bitten um Vergebung’ Der Briefwechsel der polnischen und deutschen Bischöfe von 1965 und seine Wirkung*, eds. Basil Kerski, Thomas Zycia and Robert Żurek (Osnabrück: Fibre, 2006), 202. Hannelowa is referring to meetings in the Catholic milieu with Wojtyła and his young mentees that he had gathered around himself in Krakow as Archbishop.

<sup>57</sup> Adam Michnik, *The Church and the Left*, trans. David Ost (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1993), 87.



than the bishops and everyone else."<sup>58</sup> He also assured the Polish people in the sermons that at least two-thirds of the letter had focused on the German cruelties against Poland during the war and that the phrase “we ask for forgiveness” was thus taken out of context.

The communist attempt to undermine the bishops in Polish society by attacking the statement misfired both domestically and in West Germany. Domestically, the ensuing church-state battle and blatant propaganda attacks on the church which dragged on into the early months of 1966 turned the Polish people’s sympathy back to the church. The attacks on ceremonies and symbols of the church by the state during the celebration of the 1000<sup>th</sup> anniversary as always strengthened the support of the people for its church. In May 1966, in front of thousands of Poles who had gathered on Jasna Góra, one of Poland’s holiest places, with reference to the bishops’ correspondence, Cardinal Wyszyński had the crowds chanting again and again “We forgive! We forgive!”<sup>59</sup> Forgiveness was certainly a crucial aspect in healing the Polish-German relationship but once again the victimology at the heart of Polish Catholic national identity remained untouched. The expellee narratives of potential mistreatment in Polish hands after the war had no place in this national self-perception and the notion that the victims could at times also have been perpetrators remained unthinkable.

In the West German press, the communist attacks also drew sympathy and strengthened the support for the Polish bishops as well. West German media could no longer be in doubt about the widespread Polish expectation that the border be recognized which had been expressed in the letter. However, the question was still whether a policy change was

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<sup>58</sup> Stefan Wyszyński, “Fragmenty kazania wygłoszonego w Warszawie w kościele Najczystszego Serca Marii 19 grudnia 1965 r. dotyczące ‘Orędzia’ biskupów polskich do biskupów niemieckich,” *Orędzie biskupów polskich do biskupów niemieckich. Materiały i dokumenty* (Warszawa: Wydawnictwo ‘Polonia’: 1966), 129.

<sup>59</sup> Heller, *Macht, Kirche, Politik*, 171.

possible, or had a purpose, in light of the communist oppression of Polish society and this debate strengthened with the emerging state-church conflict in early 1966. Various newspapers, including *Frankfurter Allgemeine* and *Frankfurter Rundschau*, darkly predicted a new highpoint to the communist persecution of the church in Eastern Europe.<sup>60</sup> In *Frankfurter Allgemeine*, about half of the articles connected to the bishops' correspondence concerned the content of the letter and the domestic discussions surrounding it. The other half of the articles focused on the escalating state-church conflict in Poland. The communists failed in their attempt to undercut the bishops' position in Polish society and in some sense elevated the Polish bishops' status as independents and heroic resisters in West German media. However, their actions did draw attention away from the reconciliation concept in Poland toward safer topics such as communist resistance.

Whereas the Znak group could and would not be openly involved with the reconciliation correspondence, the West German activists on the other hand "marketed" the Polish Catholic letter in the media. This was especially true for Stehle, who had already corresponded extensively with Kominek, but also for Zimmerer and other journalists such as Angela Nacken.<sup>61</sup> Stehle on his end was very active in transmitting the correspondence and the situation for the Polish Catholic Church to a larger media audience. His and Kominek's interactions and cooperation had reached a highpoint during the fall of 1965. On November 9, ten days before the letter was made public, Kominek wrote to Stehle and thanked him for the two television programs about Poland and the Catholic Church. One of the programs was "Deutschlands Osten-Polens Westen?" of which he had just received the published

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<sup>60</sup> Angela Nacken, "Die umstrittene Botschaft. Der Briefwechsel mit den deutschen Bischöfen steht zwischen Staat und Kirche in Polen," *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*, 14 December 1965.

<sup>61</sup> Renate Marsch-Potocka, phone interview with Annika Frieberg, 7 July 2005.

manuscript. The second one was named “Gott im Osten” (God in the East) and concerned the Polish Catholic Church and its relations with the state and the people. Kominek also scolded Stehle again for keeping to his habit of criticizing Cardinal Wyszyński in the programs but his reproach had a half-serious and tolerant quality. Overall, Kominek expressed his appreciation for the positive light in which the Polish religious life was portrayed. He informed Stehle about an article which he had written for *Tygodnik Powszechny* and which he hoped would appear soon. He did not, however, mention the bishops’ letter of reconciliation with which he must have been very involved and concerned at the time.<sup>62</sup>

If the letters before the end of 1965 were somewhat cautious, Stehle’s support and help during the time immediately after the bishops’ correspondence removed many of Kominek’s hesitations however.<sup>63</sup> On January 10, an interview by Stehle with Kominek was also sent on the first program of Deutsches Fernsehen in “Panorama.” It seemed that Stehle had advised Kominek to give an interview on television in order to clear up the misunderstandings surrounding the correspondence. Stehle also attempted to get Cardinal Döpfner to appear together with Kominek, but the German Cardinal rejected the proposal.<sup>64</sup> In the interview, Kominek stated that the greatest misunderstanding surrounding the letter was the assumption that it was a political document. The letter should function as an

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<sup>62</sup> Bolesław Kominek to Hansjakob Stehle, Rom, 9 November 1965, copy in private possession of author.

<sup>63</sup> Hansjakob Stehle, “Die Allianz der Kalten Krieger: Wie die Bischöfe in Polen und Deutschland missverstanden wurden,” *Die Zeit*, 17 December 1965, Hansjakob Stehle, “Versöhnung mit der Grenze. Eine bedeutsame Rede im polnischen Parlament,” *Die Zeit*, 24 December 1965. The article to which Kominek may have been referring primarily was Hansjakob Stehle, “Kein Pass für den Kardinal. Der Bischofsbriefwechsel und seine politische Folgen,” *Die Zeit*, 14 January 1966.

<sup>64</sup> Hansjakob Stehle, “Seit 1960: Der mühsame katholische Dialog über die Grenze,” 162.

exclusively religious invitation to dialogue and reconciliation. In order to counter the attack from the communist press, Kominek also emphasized that the bishops had never questioned that the Oder-Neisse territories belonged to Poland. “The Oder-Neisse border cannot be changed since it is a precondition of existence for the Polish people.”<sup>65</sup>

The third clarification in the television interview concerned the national myth that Poland should be a bastion for Christianity which German readers thought emerged through the letter. Kominek rejected this notion; “the Christian Church in Poland wishes to be a peace church . . . It wants to be a bridge-builder, a mediator and not a bastion.”<sup>66</sup> Stehle compared the correspondence with the Protestant Memorandum from September, an important parallel which Kominek had wanted to draw in the letter but which his German Catholic advisors had asked him to omit. Kominek agreed about the positive reception of the Protestant Memorandum in Polish circles. Finally, the bishop stated his optimism before the future but asked for the German people’s understanding that the Polish people still feared overwhelming power and potential aggression from the Germans.

The interview was well received in West Germany and resulted in some positive letters to Kominek. Kominek credited Stehle with the success. “This time, you have really outdone yourself,” he wrote enthusiastically from Schärding in Switzerland where he was spending some vacation time in January, 1966, “and I am very very grateful for all of it.”<sup>67</sup> He continued by commending the advice which he had received from Stehle concerning the media and public attention in connection with the publication of the letter. The letter ended

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<sup>65</sup> Full text of television interview in , “Wir bitten um Verständnis,” *Petrus-Blatt*, 23 January 1966 and “Ich bin Optimist...,” *Christ in der Welt*, date unknown.

<sup>66</sup> Ibid.

<sup>67</sup> Bolesław Kominek to Hansjakob Stehle, Schärding, 20 January 1966, Copy in private possession of author.

by assuring Stehle that “in Breslau, the door is always open to you and the heart even more.” In only two years, the relationship between the Polish Silesian bishop and the German journalist had improved immeasurably through their cooperation surrounding the reconciliation correspondence. Stehle kept writing about Kominek, and the two also continued meeting and stayed in touch through correspondence.

Meanwhile the relationship between state and church in Poland deteriorated further as the church got ready for their millennial celebration of the Polish Christian nation in the spring of 1966. In early 1966, the state refused for the first time in many years to grant the cardinal a passport to visit Rome as well as rejected the visa applications into Poland for all foreign bishops as well as the Pope for the millennial celebrations.<sup>68</sup> The Polish population loyally sided with the episcopate in the developing conflict with the state. The Cardinal encouraged this shift in perspective away from the international relations and toward the domestic state-church conflict in the series of sharply worded sermons he held in December 1965 and continuing into the early spring of 1966. The full text of the letter had been published in Poland in December in the magazine *Forum* but the cardinal informed his audiences that the state had changed the phrasing to show the episcopate in a negative light. Generally, he asked the Polish people to trust him and the other bishops more than the communist press, something which they were inclined to do at any rate.<sup>69</sup>

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<sup>68</sup> Karpiński, *Poland since 1944: A Portrait of Years* (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1995), 135.

<sup>69</sup> Stefan Wyszyński, “Fragmenty kazania wygłoszonego w Warszawie w kościele Najczystszego Serca Marii 19 grudnia 1965 r. dotyczące ‘Orędzia’ biskupów polskich do biskupów niemieckich,” 129.

## THE 1968 BENSBERGER MEMORANDUM

In West Germany, the press followed the developing conflict closely, and gradually the Polish disappointment with the German bishops' response became clear to those with Polish connections. Walter Dirks, who had reported so enthusiastically about the letter and the German response in his initial article became convinced that West German Catholics had neither lived up to Polish expectations nor to the Protestant statements with regard to the border issue. Together with a group of associates, many connected to the Catholic peace organization Pax Christi, others associates from radio circles or academic colleagues, Dirks began conversations about publishing yet another document on Polish-German relations. The founding fifty to sixty members of the Bensberger Circle met for the first time on 7-8 May 1966 in the Thomas-Morus Akademie in Bensberg, near Cologne. The official invitation letter to the founding meeting in Bensberg on 8<sup>th</sup> of May 1966 spoke of the need to follow up on the efforts made at the Second Vatican Council and to contribute to the 1965 Protestant document. "We owe it not only an answer but also a supplement; the community of faith with the Polish Catholics gives us specific sources of recognition, relations and responsibilities. We also owe the Polish bishops an answer to their appeal, which on a foundational level goes beyond the German bishops and addresses us all."<sup>70</sup> At this meeting, the circle elected a Poland Commission, which composed a text on the Polish-German relationship in the following two years.

The Tübingen Memorandum had been meant as an internal document for the Bundestag, and the Polish bishops' letter as a communication with the German Catholic hierarchy. The Protestant Memorandum was conceived as a public document, at the very

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<sup>70</sup> Bensberger Circle, letter to Heinz Missala, 13 April 1966, BK Protokoll, Erklärungen, Bensberger Kreis 54, FES.

least for German Protestants as a whole. However, none of the earlier documents were as much a public effort as the Bensberger Memorandum. Its authors wanted to create a German Catholic document which complemented the Protestant Memorandum and satisfied the Polish bishops' expectations but they also very much intended to jumpstart public- and media debate with their document.

From their first meetings, rather than having a leader or chairman, they nominated speakers (*Sprachrohre*) to represent them in the public space. They also made sure to structure the group independently in order to be able to express their views freely. A letter exchange between Gottfried Erb and Walter Dirks, two of the most active founding figures, considered the form this gathering should take. They agreed that the gathering should be a group of Catholic laity independent of church structures and Pax Christi in order to make it "politically freer and more flexible."<sup>71</sup> These considerations also reflected the increasingly politicized West German media scene.

The Bensberger Memorandum was sponsored by wellknown radio and print journalists. Walter Dirks, who drafted its original text together with Gottfried Erb, and Eugen Kogon, who wrote the initial outline, were the editors of the Catholic journal *Frankfurter Hefte* since 1946. They had a firm background as public intellectuals and were closely linked with the networks of West German elite journalists in radio and television. Dirks, who had studied theology, was an established journalist for the left-wing Catholic press during the Weimar era. During the Allied occupation and license press era, he was listed as politically clean and had no difficulties in receiving a publishing license by the American occupation authorities. From 1949, he was a political commentator for

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<sup>71</sup> Walter Dirks to Gottfried Erb, 4 January 1966, Nachlass Walter Dirks, Box 128, FES.

Südwestfunk and between 1965 and 1967, he worked as the cultural desk leader for WDR. He was also a long-time acquaintance of Klaus von Bismarck from the early days of Bismarck's career when he was leader for the Jugendhof Vlotho and became involved with French-German reconciliation as well as ecumenical initiatives between Protestants and Catholics.

Eugen Kogon (1903-1987) was the son of a Russian diplomat to Germany who spent his childhood at Catholic academies, studied national economy and sociology in Munich, Florence and Vienna and got his Ph.D. in 1927. As an opponent of National Socialism, he spent six years in the Buchenwald concentration camp until he was liberated in 1945. Kogon wrote one of the first standard works on Nazi Germany, *Der SS-Staat. Das System der deutschen Konzentrationslager* (The SS-State. The System of the German Concentration Camp) in 1946. He participated in early debates on the Nazi war crimes and their connection with German society at large. Kogon and Dirks founded the *Frankfurter Hefte* in 1946. In 1951, Kogon became professor at the Technischen Hochschule in Darmstadt where he stayed until his retirement in 1968. In 1964, he became a controversial leader for NDR's news magazine "Panorama" and he was let go in 1966 because of the controversies surrounding the television program.

The Bensberger Circle approached Polish-German relations based on their Christian understanding and application of peace, reconciliation and forgiveness between peoples. The argument for improved relations with Poland involved the notion of an internal process of confessing one's own guilt, overcoming hostility and giving and receiving forgiveness. In the memorandum they wrote: "The Christian message of salvation refers in its central promises – reconciliation, justice, peace – also to the world changing forces of contemporary



society. In the service of this message, Christians are charged to assume public responsibility in a critical and liberating manner.”<sup>72</sup> The memorandum pointed out that this responsibility for reconciliation was also the message of the two most recent popes, John XXIII and Paul VI, and of the Second Vatican Council. The reconciliation with Poland was described as the concrete challenge for the West German Catholics to enact the Vatican II message of peace.

This responsibility to reconcile with Poland had not been fulfilled by the German Catholics up to this point. ”In the light of the terrible injustice committed against the Poles” the German Catholics had not protested in a way ”which would do justice to the fate of the victims beyond all diplomacy and political calculations.” To protest perceived injustice of the state had a precedent in the New Testament according to the memorandum. Jesus, by proclaiming this message of peace, had also often come into conflict with the “official powers of his time.”<sup>73</sup> Christian responsibility was reinterpreted to mean the right to follow one’s conscience against the decisions of the ruling authorities, the state, as well as the church authorities.

In its political assessments, the Bensberger Memorandum was in many ways close to the Tübingen Memorandum. It also used the same reasoning and arguments as the Protestant Memorandum but the Protestant Memorandum’s language and argumentation was a lot more cautious. The Protestant Memorandum had proclaimed a similar but more moderate line on the Christian responsibility for politics and had assured in its introduction that the Protestant Church was not attempting to replace elected political representatives.<sup>74</sup> The church was not

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<sup>72</sup> “Ein Memorandum deutscher Katholiken zu den polnisch-deutschen Fragen. Herausgegeben vom Bensberger Kreis” (Mainz: Mathias-Grünewald-Verlag, 1968), 7.

<sup>73</sup> Ibid., 7.

<sup>74</sup> “Die Lage der Vertriebenen und das Verhältnis des deutschen Volkes zu seinen östlichen Nachbarn. Eine evangelische Denkschrift,” 5th ed., (Hannover, 1965), 5.

responsible for formulating detailed political goals and solutions. “However, it belongs to the political service of Christianity to represent the structural and human preconditions for politics that serve humanity and peace.” Because of this responsibility, stated the Protestant document, the church should confront political mistakes. It made clear that it considered the “German Eastern Policy” one of these problems and proposed that it should be reformulated.<sup>75</sup>

Two concepts were at the foundation of the Bensberger Memorandum’s political concept of peace. First, it built on the idea of national self-determination. This idea had been the foundation for the Potsdam Conference decisions of “humane and orderly population transfers” of German ethnic minorities out of Eastern European countries and was now becoming accepted as premises for long term peace. However, a large segment of the West German population belonged to the very ethnic minority that had been forced to leave the formerly multiethnic border areas and the Bensberger Memorandum as well as the other German church memoranda were forced to address the problem of peace with this group in mind. On the one hand, the German nation had lost part of its territorial body. The memorandum stated that “We Germans experienced the loss of East Germany as an amputation.”<sup>76</sup> On the other hand, Poland’s loss of eastern territories to the Soviet Union meant that the nation depended on the new western territories for its very survival. The memorandum stated; “We thank the Polish bishops for . . . placing the emphasis of their argumentation for the Polish territorial claims on the contemporary facts; the territorial loss in the east of Poland, the hardship in its middle part where the war passed through twice, and

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<sup>75</sup> Evangelische Denkschrift., 41.

<sup>76</sup> Ein Memorandum deutscher Katholiken (hereafter Bensberger Memorandum), 8.

life and work for the new settlers.”<sup>77</sup> In the interest of peace and the survival of an independent Poland, the ethnically cleansed post-war nation-states and their borders had to be accepted however painful the territorial loss and uprooting of the German ethnic minorities.

Secondly, the creators of the Bensberger Memorandum believed that Polish-German reconciliation must largely be carried out through normalization between the states. On the second page, the memorandum assured the reader that German Catholics would “support with all their powers, that the German people respect the Polish people’s national right to existence.”<sup>78</sup> The phrase came out of the intertwined Polish-German past, the Prussian participation in the partitions of Poland, followed closely by the Nazi Occupation and the Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact. As the memorandum hinted, the Polish nation had been stateless and occupied by foreign powers (including Prussia) for over one hundred years. The Federal Republic refused from the moment of its creation in 1949 to recognize either the Polish state borders or eventually the communist state itself based on the Hallstein Doctrine. From both a geopolitical and historical perspective, Bonn ought to recognize the existing Polish state and ensure the security of the nation before any form of reconciliation could take place. This was the background and context to the opening comment that German Catholics must respect the Polish people’s right to its national existence. By this line of reasoning, the Bensberger Circle arrived at the necessity of coexistence with Poland’s communist state in the interest of peace and Poland’s survival which it also shared with the West German liberal media and with the Znak circle.

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<sup>77</sup> Ibid., 20.

<sup>78</sup> Ibid., 4.

More than the other documents, the content and timing of the Bensberger Memorandum were determined by the interaction with the media. Long before the draft was even remotely done, the media interest in the memorandum was enormous and rumors about its content and existence kept surfacing in the press throughout 1966 and 1967. Between 1966 and 1968, the Bensberger Circle collected over 1500 press clippings concerning issues related to the memorandum.<sup>79</sup> This collection – kept in the archives of the Friedrich Ebert Foundation – indicated that the circle was highly interested in the media reactions, strategizing to off-set criticism and use the attention to its maximum effect. The media debates also actively influenced the document’s shape and content, and changed and expanded its mission.

An incident within the circle indicated how closely intertwined the circle’s work was with the media response. Between the summers of 1966 and 1967, the work on the memorandum was almost completely put aside. Eugen Kogon had developed an outline for a draft but had not found time to write the full text, and Walter Dirks was in poor health and also otherwise engaged.<sup>80</sup> A third member of the commission, Hans Werhahn, felt that the memorandum would not be interesting to a greater public if its publication was delayed for too long. He kept urging the commission to use the momentum of the earlier church documents and finally wrote a first draft himself. This draft was rejected by a majority of the circle but did serve the purpose of spurring the Poland commission into renewed action. In June of 1967, Dirks and Erb retreated to the Schwarzwald for a week and developed an

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<sup>79</sup> Gottfried Erb, “Das Memorandum des Bensberger Kreises zur Polenpolitik,” *Ungewöhnliche Normalisierung. Beziehungen der Bundesrepublik Deutschland zu Polen*, ed. Werner Plum (Bonn: Verlag Neue Gesellschaft, 1984), 182. Folders with press clippings also in Friedrich Ebert Stiftung.

<sup>80</sup> Manfred Seidler to the members of the “smaller circle” of the Poland-commission, 31 May 1967, Bensberger Kreis, Polen, Mi 60, FES.

alternative draft which became the foundation of the memorandum in its final form.<sup>81</sup>

Timing and content became crucial in light of their public relations effect.

In 1967 and 1968, three leaks about the memorandum's content appeared in the West German press which determined its final date of publication. In the fall of 1967, a conservative Catholic weekly, *Echo der Zeit*, reported in an article that the memorandum indicated a "radical leftist orientation of German Catholics" and would demand the recognition of the German Democratic Republic.<sup>82</sup> The leaks also worried the German episcopate. Cardinal Döpfner, the president of Pax Christi, wrote to the Bensberger leadership after the *Echo der Zeit* article and wanted more information of the group's work since people were "writing to [him] from all sides."<sup>83</sup> The media attention had forced the West German episcopate to become involved, if hesitantly, with the memorandum.

It was also at the episcopate's urging that on February 4, 1968, representatives of the Bensberger Circle met with representatives from the Catholic expellee organizations to investigate whether the groups could reach a consensus or at least open an internal Catholic dialogue between different groups. Nine expellee representatives who had read the draft participated in the meeting. Among their many criticisms, the most frequent and important for this discussion was the memorandum's ignoring of the role of Russia and the Soviet Union in the Polish past and present. The expellee representatives, like the conservative press, argued that smaller states, such as Poland and the Federal Republic, let alone smaller independent groups, could not have a decisive impact on Cold War political relations.

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<sup>81</sup> Norbert Greinacher to Manfred Seidler, 1 September 1967, Bensberger Kreis, Polen, Mi 60, FES.

<sup>82</sup> "Ostdruck bei den Katholiken. Kardinal Döpfner's Bistumsblatt für Anerkennung der Oder-Neisse-Grenze," *Die Zeit*, 24 November 1967.

<sup>83</sup> Julius Döpfner to Alfons Erb, 6 December 1967, Bensberger Kreis, Polen, Mi 60, FES.

Later during the same month, *Die Welt* reported that the authors had tried, but failed, to win the German episcopate's support for their project. Shortly thereafter, the German Press Agency gained access to drafts of the text through an unknown contact and published them.<sup>84</sup> The Bensberger Circle decided to go ahead and publish the text in its entirety to prevent further rumors from spreading. The Bensberger Memorandum was released to the public in March 1968.

The newspapers responsible for the leaks hoped to sabotage the internal negotiations of the circle and alienate the general public from its aims and intents. In fact, the circle found the leaks problematic at the time. The media attention alienated moderate to conservative Catholics and disturbed the difficult negotiations with the Catholic organizations of German expellees from the Polish borderlands. In hindsight, however, the leaks also had positive effects. According to Gottfried Erb, the quality of the memorandum improved after the Poland Commission came under external pressure from the press. He wrote later: "All the intrigues led to a greater effort to improve the style and content of the statements since it had become clear that we could no longer formulate analyses and requirements in peace and quiet, noticed by only a few."<sup>85</sup> They brought the memorandum into the public eye, prevented its marginalization and forced the authors to sharpen their arguments. The publicity around the document took on a life of its own in the media debates and drove the project forward.

Throughout the 1960s, the media reactions depending on the newspapers' political and religious affiliation remained divided into more or less the same camps. However, a trend

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<sup>84</sup> Gottfried Erb, "Das 'Bensberger Memorandum'/Geschichte und erste Stellungnahmen," *Frankfurter Hefte*, April 1968, 219.

<sup>85</sup> Erb, "Das Memorandum des Bensberger Kreises zur Polenpolitik," 182.

toward sharper divisions and harsher reactions became visible between the early 1960s and the Bensberger Memorandum in 1968. The Tübingen Memorandum had been quite as succinct about the necessity to accept the Oder-Neisse Line as the Bensberger Memorandum. However, the media and expellee groups had reacted to the Tübingen Memorandum by scattered agreement, suggesting further conversations and by attempting to reason with the authors. At the request of the Catholic hierarchy, the Bensberger Circle attempted to negotiate and reason with the expellee circles but the attempts were doomed since positions had become too polarized for negotiations and compromises. In addition, both sides used the media to try to turn the attention surrounding the document to their advantage: the expellee partners or conservative church members through leaking the unfinished document to the media, and the circle in its very intent to provoke discussions.

Meanwhile, the Polish communist and Polish Catholic perspectives on the memoranda changed and evolved in different directions from each other. In the early 1960s, the Polish Catholic intellectuals and bishops considered the Tübingen and Protestant Memoranda positive signs of change. However, the Polish stance was quite influenced by the consequences of the Polish bishops' letter to the German Catholic bishops and the German response. After the episcopate's letter in 1965, which members of *Znak* criticized publicly, relations between the episcopate and the group were chilly but in the ensuing escalation of tensions between the state and church, they improved again.<sup>86</sup> The *Znak* group welcomed the Bensberger Memorandum particularly as a Catholic document contributing to Polish-German reconciliation.<sup>87</sup> Wyszynski agreed with *Znak*'s positive evaluation of the

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<sup>86</sup> Robert Jarocki, *Czterdzieści pięć*, 221; Wolfgang Pailer, *Stanisław Stomma*, 103.

<sup>87</sup> Tadeusz Mazowiecki, "Polska-Niemcy i memorandum 'Bensberger Kreis'," *Więź* 1968: 5, 4-5. Jerzy Turowicz, "Memorandum 'Bensberger Kreis,'" *Tygodnik Powszechny*, 17 March 1968.

Bensberger memorandum although he felt that the Bensberger document could not make up for the lack of response by the German bishops and kept a certain distance. Nevertheless, in September of 1968, he sent a letter of acknowledgement to the Bensberger Circle. The letter first thanked the Bensberger Circle cordially for their “courageous phrasing” of the document. The letter added, “As shepherds of the Polish people, we evaluated the letter less from a political than from a social-religious point of view.” It commended the Bensberger Circle’s “Christian courage, honest good will and international outlook on the world.”<sup>88</sup>

Meanwhile, the Polish communists, targets of the massive German drive toward normalization, *rapprochement* and reconciliation were focusing primarily on their own domestic situation rather than international politics. Domestic censorship had been strengthened further after 1964, and Gomułka was balancing precariously between different factions within his own party, those of the technocrats and those of the orthodox communists. In March of 1968, student protests on the streets after a performance of Adam Mickiewicz’s *Dziady* (the Forefathers) had been cancelled led to a large number of arrests. In connection with these events, one of the orthodox communists, General Moczar, who was also Minister of the Interior attempted to create enough instability to undercut Gomułka’s position but was thwarted in his attempt. Instead, Gomułka remained in the leadership of the party but the 1968 events lead to a general scapegoating of the “Zionists” in Poland, and the emigration of many of Poland’s remaining Jews. This scapegoating also included some influential communists of Jewish background, such as Leszek Kołakowski, a philosopher and a 1956 favorite with the West German media.<sup>89</sup> At this time of domestic instability and also given

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<sup>88</sup> Stefan Wyszyński to the Bensberger Circle, 12 September 1968, Bensberger Kreis, Polen, Mi 60, FES.

<sup>89</sup> Norman Davies, *God’s Playground. A History of Poland, Vol. II*, 590.



the situation in Eastern Europe after the Prague Spring, the gradual improvement in foreign policy became a positive, but somewhat neglected, aspect of the Gomułka state.

In addition, given the disagreement with Wyszyński over the Catholic reconciliation correspondence, Gomułka and the communist press were less than enthusiastic about the Catholic efforts toward dialogue in the Federal Republic, and more interested in political developments. The 1969 elections for West German chancellor were drawing closer and Willy Brandt was running on a platform which focused heavily on rethinking of Bonn's Eastern Policy. Ironically, at a time when Polish-German relations showed positive development, Polish-Jewish media and political concerns, closely related to similar questions of the past, and state-church relations were at a low-point.

## CONCLUSION

Throughout the 1960s, the memoranda of the churches and Christian groups in Poland and the two Germanies turned into significant media events. The attention in the media was fuelled by the already existing agenda of changing German Eastern Policy in the West German audio-visual media and part of the press, and the controversies surrounding these media outlets. Media attention, negative as well as positive, also influenced the content, structure and development of religious statements. The intense concern in public space with the memoranda, led their authors on the one hand, as in the case of the Protestant Memorandum and the German Catholic bishops, to weigh their words carefully. On the other hand, as with the Polish Catholic statement, the Protestant Memorandum and the Bensberger Memorandum, the Christian groups counted on media controversy to stir debate not just within their own confession but in public space and political circles at large.

While Christian public documents became increasingly politicized, media debates adapted religious elements and imagery. The media, conservative, moderate and liberal, was influenced to take into consideration or even adopt Christian philosophy of penance, forgiveness and internal change into the high political discussion about relinquishing the border territories and coming to terms with the Polish-German past. Particularly, the moral and ethical authority of the Polish bishops, whose status was enhanced by the state persecution they endured, left its imprint on not only “pro-Polish” press but also on sympathetic conservative Christian media, such as *Christ und Welt* or *Rheinischer Merkur*, and on Cold War-focused publications such as *Die Welt*. The Christian concept of reconciliation (“Aussöhnung”) suddenly came to the forefront of media debates on Polish-German relations and added a Christian, shared cultural aspect to the dialogue. The West German journalists had acquired not only a new vocabulary in which to discuss the relations but also a powerful symbolic ally in Poland. Meanwhile, the Polish Church had appeared on the West German media stage aided and advised by a group of public relations veterans.

The letter should of course not be evaluated simply as another tool in the West German media strategies surrounding reconciliation and Ostpolitik. On the contrary, a careful reading of the letter and also the way in which Cardinal Wyszyński mediated it to his own Catholic community showed that the Church had different priorities and perspectives. The Polish Church was attempting to reason with its German Catholic colleagues on the importance of recognizing the border, and it did so in a compromise between traditional nationalist Polish historical narrative and Bishop Kominek’s much less traditional notions of forgiveness and mediation. However, in the communist attack on the bishops and the population’s hesitant reaction, Cardinal Wyszyński retreated from the controversial statement

about asking for forgiveness and instead focused on the developing state-church conflict. This was a successful strategy with respect to the Polish Catholic population which sided with the Cardinal, but it meant that the compromise with the German perspective on the mutual past was weakened.

## CHAPTER 8

### RECONCILIATORY POLITICS? POLISH-GERMAN RELATIONS IN THE MEDIA 1968-1972

On January 9, 1968, a secret meeting took place in the apartment of Hansjakob Stehle. Egon Bahr met with the counselor at the Polish Embassy to Austria Jerzy Raczkowski for two and a half hours to discuss the possible premises of a new Ostpolitik should SPD gain power in the coming elections. The meeting was one of the most important which SPD carried out with Warsaw at this time.<sup>1</sup> Although Brandt was now a significant political player as foreign minister in the grand coalition, the cooperation with CDU/CSU limited his position on Poland considerably. In March 1968, Brandt made a statement at the SPD Convention in Nuremberg in which he profiled the position of SPD on the Oder-Neisse border away from that of CDU and the existing government to the consternation of his CDU colleagues in the government and excitement of liberal media. A few months later, however, all the efforts to reach new common ground in the Eastern Policy with the Soviet Union and Warsaw were jeopardized. The invasion of Czechoslovakia by Soviet, East German and Polish tanks meant that the tensions between short-term political results of normalization and treaties, and long-term goals of reconciliation between peoples emerged more clearly.

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<sup>1</sup> Stehle, Hansjakob, "Eine vertrackte Vorgeschichte. Zum Warschauer Vertrag: Wie ein Schlüsseldokument verschwand und wieder auftauchte," *Die Zeit*, 7 December 1990. Egon Bahr, *Zu meiner Zeit* (Munich: Karl Blessing, Verlag, 1996), 232. Of course, Bahr was himself a radio journalist who had worked for RIAS between 1950 and 1960. Bahr, *Zu meiner Zeit*, 62; 104. He reported from Bonn in the 1950s. His biography does not mention if he was familiar with Stehle from those years or if he first made his acquaintance in Berlin in the early 1960s.

The Bahr-Raczkowski meeting in Vienna indicated the extent to which the Berlin SPD-leadership around Willy Brandt and Polish communist party leaders had come to trust Stehle as a moderator. The meeting showed Stehle's commitment to the state relations. However, were the two concepts of establishing political relations and reconciling intellectuals entirely compatible? Timothy Garton Ash commented in 1992 that "it is doubtful whether reconciliation as such is a credible explicit goal for the foreign policy of a state."<sup>2</sup> The media discussions throughout the 1960s in their entirety had concerned the cost of reconciliation, and whether its short- and long term advantages were worth those costs. How did the elite journalists and intellectuals integrate the conflicting political developments which took place in the end of the 1960s and early 1970s with their long term goals of European integration, peace and reconciliation with Poland?

The main influences on the SPD Ostpolitik as it was beginning to become instituted in 1968 came on the one hand from Brandt's years as mayor in Berlin. When the Berlin wall was erected and Brandt called for decisive action on behalf of the western Allies, he was met with delays and an unwillingness to act from the Federal Republic's western associates. Their stance forced him to realize that Berlin, and the Federal Republic, could not expect American or West European aid in the face of an East German or Soviet threat. As a consequence, Brandt and his associates began developing "a policy of small steps," believing that within their limited abilities they must actively improve and strengthen their position eastwards and negotiate directly, without leaning on powerful allies, with the eastern neighbors. Their 1963 agreement with the GDR in which East and West Berliners could visit each other over Christmas they considered an early success for this policy. Also the journalistic elites,

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<sup>2</sup> Timothy Garton Ash, *In Europe's Name: Germany and the Divided Continent* (New York: Vintage Books, 1993), 309.

including Stehle, responded positively to this experiment.<sup>3</sup> “The policy of small steps” was complemented with the concept of *Wandel durch Annäherung* (transformation through engagement), the idea that only the establishment of active relations could lead to political change in West Germany’s relations eastwards, and by extension to a reunification.<sup>4</sup> Expanded further, these localized concepts became the foundation of Brandt’s and Bahr’s Ostpolitik. On the other hand, there was the more general Cold War development toward détente and the pressure which western allies such as France and the United States put on West Germany to relax their relations with East Germany and Eastern Europe. In this context, Brandt’s relationship with John F. Kennedy also influenced the implementation of the Social Democratic model of détente.<sup>5</sup>

The third influence on Ostpolitik was non-state activism in the 1960s and domestic and media-related political developments in the late 1960s and early 1970s. Historians have commented that the “Poland-politics from below” contributed to raising the awareness of, and changing public opinion around, Polish-German relations. The changing political ideas had an important domestic dimension in the form of public opinion.<sup>6</sup> The liberal and reform-minded media, the religious memoranda and statements and the intellectuals prepared public space for opening the questions of recognition of the Oder-Neisse Line. Their work in

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<sup>3</sup> Hansjakob Stehle, *Wir sprechen zur Zone*, WDR, Cologne, 23 December 1963, HA-WDR 2570.

<sup>4</sup> Garton Ash, *In Europe’s Name*, 66.

<sup>5</sup> Arne Hofmann, *The Emergence of Detente in Europe: Brandt, Kennedy and the Formation of Ostpolitik* (New York: Routledge, 2007).

<sup>6</sup> Bingen, *Polen-Politik der Bonner Republik*, 86; Timothy Garton Ash, *In Europe’s Name*, 227, particularly with reference to the expellees and CDUs position; Arnold Sywottek, “Nationale Politik als Symbolpolitik,” 342-361.

shaping public opinion paved the way for the political change which became manifest in 1969, when Brandt became chancellor based on a platform of foreign policy change.<sup>7</sup>

#### STABILITY OR LIBERTY? 1968 AND POLISH-GERMAN RELATIONS

In early 1968, the developments in Eastern and Western Europe initially seemed to follow similar trajectories with student protests, and political change. In the history of Western Europe, 1968 was a year of youth rebellions. The students protested particularly against the United States' Vietnam War but also against the establishment, the university system and press monopoly in West Germany, against the educational system and unemployment in France and for civil rights in the United States. In France and West Germany, students and leftwing movements took to the streets and many believed that this was the origins of a world revolution.

Meanwhile, Eastern Europe also saw traces of student protests, such the ones in Warsaw focusing on the play "the Forefathers" by Adam Mickiewicz which triggered the communist party purge in March 1968. Gomulka and the orthodox factions of the communist party attacked certain party functionaries, such as Adam Rapacki, as well as several prominent professors at the Warsaw University, such as Leszek Kołakowski, Włodzimierz Brus and Zygmunt Bauman.<sup>8</sup> As a consequence of the purges and the anti-Semitic media campaigns, the majority of Jews remaining in Poland finally left the country. The party purge had serious consequences in terms of reducing the possibility for moderate opposition,

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<sup>7</sup> Garton Ash, *In Europe's Name*, 60; Barbara Marshall, *Willy Brandt. Eine politische Biographie* (Bonn: Bouvier, 1993), 61-62.

<sup>8</sup> "Gomulka nimmt Stellung," *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*, 20 March 1968.

compromise or change from within in the Polish party system.<sup>9</sup> The Church did not sympathize very closely with the atheistic leftist opposition and communists in direct line of fire but nevertheless, they issued a protest statement against the violence against the student protesters.

For those who believed in gradual reform and internal change of the communist system, the year of 1968 was quickly becoming a low-point. Later in the year, it became clear that the Soviet Union had no intention to allow liberalization or protests within their sphere of influence. In January, Alexander Dubček had been elected party leader in Czechoslovakia and initiated a wave of reforms which lasted until August. On August 22, Soviet, East German and Polish tanks crossed the borders to Czechoslovakia and reached Prague by mid-morning. The reform program was halted, Dubček lost his leadership position and was eventually replaced by Gustav Husák in 1969.

When the domestic situation had stabilized and settled down into an uneasy calm in the Polish People's Republic, Gomułka could once more concentrate on the relations with the west. Based on the secret meeting in 1968, on May 17, 1969, he extended an invitation to West Germany to open diplomatic relations with Poland. The proposal included the recognition of the Oder-Neisse Line as the Polish border.<sup>10</sup> In September 1969, Brandt was elected chancellor of the Federal Republic at the helm of a SPD-FDP coalition. This election was headline news in the Polish press even though its consequences for Polish-German

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<sup>9</sup> Dudek and Grys, *komuniści i Kościół w Polsce*, 266. "Bischöfe Polens stellen sich hinter Studenten., Brutale Gewalt verurteilt," *Die Welt*, 25 March 1968.

<sup>10</sup> Tomala, *Deutschland – von Polen gesehen*, 269-273.



relations were not openly mentioned.<sup>11</sup> Soon thereafter, the Federal government initiated negotiations with the Polish, East German and Soviet government representatives.

Both the Soviet Union and the GDR had to be taken into account in the official Polish-West German negotiations. For Bonn, the relations with the GDR were a priority, but also the most difficult ones, since they were emotionally charged for domestic opinion and since the East German communists were reluctant to engage them. In the government declaration on October 1969, Brandt recognized the de facto existence of two German states, and twice during that fall, he met with the East German Prime Minister Willi Stoph.<sup>12</sup> On the Polish side, the relations with West Germany had to be coordinated with the relations with Ulbricht and the GDR. Ulbricht insisted that the West German recognition of the GDR as a state must be a part of a Polish-West German agreement and suspected Gomułka of going behind his back in establishing the connections with West Germany. Meanwhile, Gomułka equally distrusted the German-German negotiations taking place in his absence.<sup>13</sup>

Even more, the Poles distrusted the negotiations between West Germany and the Soviet Union given the negative historical experiences of Poland with German-Russian agreements, including the Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact. The treaty with Moscow was a precondition for both the East German and Polish negotiations, particularly in light of the intervention in Czechoslovakia in 1968, but the Polish leadership worried about being passed

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<sup>11</sup> “Czy zmieni się dotychczasowy układ sił? Dziś wybory w NRF,” *Życie Warszawy*, 28/29 September 1969, “Wyniki wyborów w NRF. CDU/CSU ciągle najsilniejszą partią: Umiarkowy sukces SPD. Brandt ubiega się o urząd kanclerza,” *Życie Warszawy*, 30 September 1969.

<sup>12</sup> Garton Ash, *In Europe's Name*, 127.

<sup>13</sup> Tomala, *Deutschland – von Polen gesehen*, 284.

over and included in a “package deal” between the Federal Republic and the Soviet Union.<sup>14</sup> However, from the West German perspective of *Vergangenheitsbewältigung* and moral closure in the east, Poland was a key to the Ostpolitik as conceived by SPD-FDP.<sup>15</sup>

The 1968 events had put a temporary damper on networking between the Bensberger Circle and their Polish conversation partners as well. In May 1968, the Bensberger Circle invited Jerzy Turowicz and Władysław Bartoszewski to the Protestant-Catholic Publisher’s gathering in Loccum, but the visit never took place.<sup>16</sup> The visit was not cancelled for lack of good will: in May 1969, a year later, Bensberger Circle member Winfried Lipscher traveled to Poland with Aktion Sühnezeichen and reported that the Bensberger Memorandum was known and well regarded in Polish society.<sup>17</sup> At this time, the Bensberger Circle began discussing the publication of yet another Poland-memorandum. The group wished to reinforce the importance of détente despite the Soviet intervention in Czechoslovakia, the new stabilization in the eastern bloc and Gomułka’s offer to the Federal Republic of an official treaty.<sup>18</sup> In the draft of this document and in its background documentations, no mention was made of the current Polish domestic situation. The Bensberger discussions focused on the importance of continuing to develop the relations with Gomułka, the recognition of the Oder-Neisse Line and relaxation of the relations. To them, the primary

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<sup>14</sup> The implications of a Soviet-German agreement above the heads of the Poles is treated for example in Władysław Bartoszewski, *Und reiss uns den Hass aus der Seele*, 106.

<sup>15</sup> Bingen, *Polen-Politik der Bonner Republik*, 115-116.

<sup>16</sup> J. Pawliczek, letter for the Bensberger Kreis to Jerzy Turowicz, Freiburg, 2 April 1968, correspondences, AJT.

<sup>17</sup> Winfried Lipscher, “Report Polen-Reise,” 20 May 1969, FE Erb, Bensberger Kreis, FES.

<sup>18</sup> Gottfried Erb, “Anregungen für ein zweites Polenmemorandum des Bensberger Kreises,” 27 May 1969, FE Erb, Bensberger Kreis, FES.

obstacle to an improvement in the relations remained the protests and counter-suggestions within West German society by the expellee organizations.<sup>19</sup> Their treatment of Polish-German relations smoothed over East European developments which might hinder the relations and provide the conservative opposition or the expellees with stronger arguments.

In October 1969, when Stanisław Stomma visited the Federal Republic again, his situation in Poland had changed dramatically, a change which was subtly reflected in his public stance during the visit.<sup>20</sup> During his travels, he gave an interview to the small West German Catholic journal *Publik*. In the interview, Stomma took great care not to act as a representative for the Polish state. He stated that he hoped for an agreement between Poland and the Federal Republic, as suggested in public discussions. But he made this statement as a private Catholic visitor rather than an official representative and he also emphasized that this was the only public interview he would make during his visit.

The delay in Znak-Bensberger contacts should be considered in the context of the Polish events the previous year. In the spring of 1968, in connection with the anti-Semitic actions by the communist party and press, Znak had been harshly attacked in the Sejm. In his memoirs, Stomma described the attack on the group. He wrote that Cyrankiewicz took an active part in the attacks and that Moczar supported them. Among a long list of accusations, the group was criticized for being unpatriotic, for trying to “balkanize” Poland, and for supporting the Polish bishops against the state. At this time, the Znak circle was also plagued by internal conflicts as some of its members supported the anti-Zionist campaign of the

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<sup>19</sup> Gunthar Lehner, draft of Second Poland memorandum, 12 June 1969, FE Erb, Friedrich Eberth Stiftung (Hereafter FES), 3.

<sup>20</sup> The article was translated by Anna Morawska, a journalist and *Znak*-associate, and published in *Tygodnik Powszechny* “Poseł Stomma w NRF,” *Tygodnik Powszechny (wywiad)*, 20 November 1969.

party.<sup>21</sup> As a result of these problems, the parliamentary members of Znak had little or no contacts with the communist leadership until December 1968 when the conflict had petered out.

In the spring of 1969, elections for a new Sejm approached. The question was whether the party would allow the Znak group to remain in the Sejm. Ultimately, Gomułka allowed four members of the group to remain, but made sure that they belonged to different Catholic camps to further weaken their voice in the public and political realm. The party also removed Jerzy Zawieyski from his parliamentary position in Znak. Zawieyski had already been removed from the State Council (Rada Państwa) in the aftermath of the March 1968 events. Following his removal from the Sejm which became clear in April 1969, Zawieyski fell ill and died suddenly after a fall from the third floor in the hospital in which he was treated, on June 18, 1969. The official sources suggested that he committed suicide and this is also what Stefan Kisielewski presumed in his diary.<sup>22</sup> However, later articles have suggested that his death may have been a political murder.<sup>23</sup> All these events took precedence over interactions with the West Germans. When Stomma did travel abroad again, he was aware that his position was entirely different from the one he had held during the early Gomułka-years.

In West Germany, Stomma was at the height of his popularity in 1969. He arrived just as Brandt was elected chancellor at the helm of the social-liberal coalition. Poland had become a hot topic and Stomma was “busy from morning to night.”<sup>24</sup> He stayed as a guest at

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<sup>21</sup> Stomma, *Pościg za nadzieją*, 147-150.

<sup>22</sup> Kisielewski, *Dzienniki*, 243.

<sup>23</sup> “Upadek z wysokości,” *Wprost*, 26/2005.

<sup>24</sup> Stomma, *Pościg za nadzieją*, 194.

Klaus von Bismarck's home in Cologne, he met with CDU-party leader Helmut Kohl, with other ministers and he also had an audience with the West German president, Gustav Heinemann. Stomma remembered in his memoirs the president's mention that they had two friends in common: Lothar Kreyssig in Aktion Sühnezeichen and Ludwig Zimmerer. Stefan Kisielewski commented in his diary that Stomma returned to Warsaw from his trip "very excited."<sup>25</sup> In 1958, Stomma had traveled to the Federal Republic more or less as an official representative of the Polish state, but had been received as a private visitor with no bearings on foreign politics. In 1969, the West German hosts treated his visit as a state occasion but, given Stomma's position during the late Gomułka rule, he was no longer comfortably representing the Polish state. His popularity in West Germany was closely connected to the idea of reconciliation and the high profile of the Polish Catholic Church in West Germany after 1965.

#### POLAND IN THE WEST GERMAN MEDIA 1968-1970

SPD, the West German press, and activists were becoming heavily invested in the establishment of political relations with Eastern Europe. Not only the media activism and the Bensberger Memorandum contributed to this pressure, but SPD had finally chosen to speak independently on foreign policy on its party day in Nuremberg on March 17. At that time, Brandt stated that he believed the recognition of the Oder-Neisse Line to be a political necessity.<sup>26</sup> This speech made headlines in the same newspaper issues as the Polish purge and the Prague Spring. These circumstances contributed to the heavy filtering of information

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<sup>25</sup> Kisielewski, *Dzienniki*, 296.

<sup>26</sup> Bingen, *Polen-Politik der Bonner Republik*, 105.

about East European developments through a German political perspective in West German media.

Since the news about the Polish purge were initially reported within the context of the widespread student protests in Western Europe and the United States, the media emphasized that also in Warsaw students were protesting on the streets. *Die Zeit* wrote on March 22 that “Poland’s students are precipitating the regime in its deepest crisis to date.”<sup>27</sup> Despite the anti-Semitism and signs of a hardening party control, in the context of the Prague Spring and western student protests, the Polish student demonstrations were interpreted by the liberal West German media as a sign of hope. *Süddeutsche Zeitung* and also *Die Welt* took a similar approach. Meanwhile, moderate media or correspondents closely connected to the Polish scene paid more attention to the “witch hunt” on the opposition and Jewish party members and academics.<sup>28</sup> Only the conservative Catholic *Rheinischer Merkur* raised alarm about the anti-Semitic attacks by the Polish party within the context of the protests.<sup>29</sup> In this way, the liberal media tended to interpret the purge in its first stages as optimistically as possible, also given their wish to perpetrate a positive image of Poland at large to encourage a deepening of the contacts.

After the invasion of Czechoslovakia in August, the West German press immediately raised the question about the consequences of the Prague Spring for détente and Ostpolitik.

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<sup>27</sup> “Polens Studenten stürzten das Regime in seine schwerste Krise seit Oktober 1956,” *Die Zeit*, 22 March 1968.

<sup>28</sup> “Warschauer bringen Esspakete. Studenten werben um Sympathie und Unterstützung von Seiten der Arbeiter,” *Süddeutsche Zeitung*, 23/24 March 1968, “Polens Klerus auf Seiten der Studenten,” *Süddeutsche Zeitung*, 25 March 1968, “Warschau erwartet eine Säuberungswelle. Hexenjagd auf Hintermänner der Demonstrationen,” *Frankfurter Allgemeine*, 19 March 1968, “Studenten in Warschau setzen Sitzstreik fort. Polizei hält sich zurück,” *Die Welt*, 23 March 1968, “Bischöfe Polens stellen sich hinter Studenten,. Brutale Gewalt verurteilt,” *Die Welt*, 25 March 1968.

<sup>29</sup> “‘Zionisten’ sind Schuld. Gegensätzliche Entwicklung in Warschau und Prag,” *Rheinischer Merkur*, 22 March 1968.

Kiesinger and Brandt protested the invasion sharply and called it a clear violation of Czechoslovakia's sovereignty, but three days after the invasion they also stated in the media that they would continue the efforts toward détente, the nuclear-control talks with Moscow and the German-German talks with Ulbricht because "there were no other alternatives."<sup>30</sup> The media opinions on how to respond to the invasion of Czechoslovakia varied but the center and center-left newspapers generally promoted a continuation of more and more contacts. In *Frankfurter Allgemeine*, Jürgen Tern wrote in an editorial about the importance of a factual, not emotional, approach to the developments. Although the "painfully prepared roads of our Ostpolitik now seem barricaded" normalization still remained a necessity.<sup>31</sup> This opinion was shared not only by the political leaders of the grand coalition but also by other center and center-left newspapers, including *Die Zeit* and the elite journalists.

For the media activists what was at stake was European stability and, from their perspective, the invasion of Czechoslovakia proved it an absolute necessity to negotiate with the governments in existence rather than to wait for their replacement in an uncertain future. The right-leaning press by contrast was more critical of détente. East European states proved decisively that they would back up their authoritarian system with armed intervention if necessary. The invasion of Czechoslovakia undermined the assurances of West Germany's major communist partners that they were interested in negotiation and European peace.<sup>32</sup>

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<sup>30</sup> "Bonn verurteilt den Einmarsch," *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*, 22 August 1968, "Bonn hält an Entspannung fest," *Die Welt*, 24 August 1968.

<sup>31</sup> Jürgen Tern, "Folgen für die deutsche Politik," *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*, 23 August 1968.

<sup>32</sup> "Die falsche Strategie des Westens," *Rheinischer Merkur*, 30 August 1968, "Was nützt ein Moskauer Gewaltverzicht? Die Bundesregierung muss ihre Aussenpolitik scharf überprüfen," *Die Welt*, 23 August 1968.

Overall, the problem of the Soviet invasion and suppression of the Czechoslovak attempts at reform were clearly evaluated through the lens of West German political debates.

Not surprisingly, Hansjakob Stehle supported the idea of “Ostpolitik at all costs.” He was closely allied with Willy Brandt and his political agenda since his years in Berlin in the early 1960s after he had left Poland. Stehle had not changed his fundamental opinions about communism and German-East European relations since his early years as correspondent in Warsaw; he had only extended his expertise and knowledge. He also had excellent connections with the Polish communists and was used by the East German communists as a contact person with the Berlin SPD in the aftermath of the Berlin crisis and the erection of the wall.<sup>33</sup> His hosting of the Bahr-Raczkowski meeting in Vienna showed that this cooperation continued throughout the 1960s. Later, Egon Bahr credited Hansjakob Stehle with bringing new movement into the stalled Ostpolitik negotiations in the spring of 1969 when Gomulka renewed his initiative.

According to Bahr, the report which Raczkowski wrote about their meeting in Stehle’s apartment in early 1968 had become lost in the papermills of the Polish bureaucracy. In February of 1969, when Stehle met Zenon Kliszko, Gomulka’s closest associate, at the party congress of the Italian communists in Bologna, Kliszko complained about the silence and passivity in Bonn. At that point, Stehle told him about the meeting in Vienna and the

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<sup>33</sup> Hubertus Knabe, *Der diskrete Charme der DDR: Stasi und der Westmedien*. 2nd ed. (Berlin: Ullstein Verlag, 2003). Critics in the early 1990s, including researcher Hubertus Knabe, have questioned Stehle’s objectivity in light of his insider work in official negotiations with the communist parties in Eastern Europe. My research also indicates that Stehle was never an objective journalist or a neutral observer of Ostpolitik but my research also showed that media, neither by format nor mission, is never simply a reporter. The question is only which form their involvement in politics or political developments take. Peter Merseburger, *Willy Brandt. Visionär und Realist* (Munich: Deutsche Verlagsanstalt, 2002), 470. Merseburger confirmed the existence since 1963 of the secret channels through West German journalists to East Germany and Poland, as well as their importance for Brandt’s and Bahr’s political work. He judged them less harshly than Knabe.



document was consequently tracked down and studied more closely in Warsaw. At the 1970 signing of the Warsaw Treaty, Kliszko, coming outside with Bahr after the signing of the treaty, said to Bahr that “if this Stehle had not notified me about your conversation in Vienna – who knows if we would have been sitting together here in Warsaw today.”<sup>34</sup> In this way, Stehle’s activism in the SPD foreign political program extended far beyond that of a sympathetic observer.

Stehle’s career, in both its professional aspects of journalistic activity and unofficial aspects as reconciliation activist and mediator between West German politicians and East German and Polish communists, relied on the growing importance and future success of Ostpolitik. His investment in the German-German and Polish-German relations made it difficult for him to take the position of a critical observer when obstacles arose in the process. Instead, he actively sought to save the common understanding and preserve a platform for continued political relations in his media coverage.

Stehle had long promoted the Polish communist leadership as acceptable partners to West Germany. Earlier, he often introduced the prominent Polish communists, including Władysław Gomułka, as educated, intelligent and reasonable men. While Gomułka was unsuited to lead a democratic nation, Stehle argued that he could be trusted as political conversation partner for the Federal Republic.<sup>35</sup> In 1968, when he reported in *Die Zeit* on the aftermath of the Polish communist party purges and the great anti-Zionist campaign he went to some length to salvage Gomułka’s reputation as a statesman and distance him from

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<sup>34</sup> Bahr, *Zu meiner Zeit*, 234.

<sup>35</sup> Hansjakob Stehle, “Wo stehen Polens freunde?” *FAZ*, 11 December 1956; “Erhards Rede und Gomulkas Antwort,” *Die Zeit*, 24 April 1964; or “Leszek Kołakowski – wer ist das? Porträt eines Philosophen mit der Narrenkappe,” *Die Zeit*, 10 February 1965.

the purges. "Has Gomulka really saved the power balance of his 'little stabilization,' which for ten years relied on tactical compromises with the right- and leftwing of his party?" Stehle asked. In his line of argument, Gomulka knew that the anti-Zionist sentiments could quickly become transformed into anti-Soviet sentiments "and this is the time, where the statesman-like instincts distance the party leader from those partisans, to whom his actual sympathies belong."<sup>36</sup> Stehle portrayed a man involved in a complex domestic political power struggle, but still a statesman who might master the internal unrest and remain a reliable international partner for West Germany.<sup>37</sup>

Both Stehle and Zimmerer also published longer analytical articles in *Die Zeit* about the Polish and Czechoslovakian developments during the summer of 1968. Stehle's article described the internal conflicts and tensions within the party, and their expression in the communist press. He also mentioned the communist politicians who would become prominent in the coming years, including Gierek, Jaruzelski and Moczar and explained their positions and roles in the 1968 events. Stehle wrote optimistically that by the time he was yet again allowed to travel into the country, the situation had stabilized considerably and it seemed that Gomulka would retain his control over the state.

The article explained the historical background to the "absurd" anti-Zionist rhetoric and anti-Semitic attacks as politically founded in internal communist conflicts dating back to the end of the Second World War. Stehle's explanation positioned the anti-Semitic campaigns firmly within certain communist politics. He removed the anti-Semitic campaign

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<sup>36</sup> Hansjakob Stehle, "Gomulkas Gang auf schmalen Grat. Machtkampf mit Jungtürken und Opportunisten." *Die Zeit*. 21 June 1968.

<sup>37</sup> His opinion was also shared by the correspondent for *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung* (probably at this time Angela Nacken), "Studenten mit Gomulkas Antwort nicht zufrieden," *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*, 21 March 1968.

from broader Polish opinions, while at the same time emphasizing that several leading Polish communists had distanced themselves from the extreme measures and opinions which developed in March 1968. Toward the end of the article, Stehle wrote that “many of the opinions on foreign policy now heard in Warsaw sound more matter of fact and flexible.”<sup>38</sup> He argued that the overcoming of the March crisis and the stabilization of Czechoslovakia had made the Polish communists relaxed and secure enough to venture toward a more open Ostpolitik.<sup>39</sup>

Zimmerer took a darker view of the spring of 1968. In his report on the protests in *Die Zeit* on March 22, he wrote that while the protests seemed similar to western student protests, Poland had no “Rudi Dutschkes.” The Polish student leaders had already been arrested and jailed. He also pointed out that despite the reports by the western media, the students had no broader support in Polish society. The intellectuals and authors supporting them were a helpless minority and Wyszyński held back from the protests because ultimately he was uninterested in an overturning of the state or causing large-scale protests.<sup>40</sup>

In August, Zimmerer reported again on the aftermath of the party purge, about a month after Stehle’s article. He began by citing Gomułka’s statements in a recent meeting of the central committee. The party leader had called for the necessity of dialogue and conversation, which would include the nation as well as the party. However, Zimmerer warned that this language was not a sign of a relaxation of Polish communist rule. In their “open conversations,” the party members who were still active had agreed that they had been

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<sup>38</sup> Hansjakob Stehle, “Gomulkas Gang auf schmalen Grat. Machtkampf mit Jungtürken und Opportunisten.” *Die Zeit*. 21 June 1968.

<sup>39</sup> Ibid.

<sup>40</sup> Ludwig Zimmerer, “Gomulka zeigt die starke Faust. Es kam zum Aufruhr weil die Reformer fehlten,” *Die Zeit*, 22 March 1968.

far too tolerant toward their enemies, including “the leftwing liberals, the reformers of Marxism, the promoters of market economy, the western-influenced sociologists.” Excluded from the discussions were also “the professors, who seduced young innocent minds, the publishers, who were categorized as reactionaries, fools or criminals, and the parliamentary members of the Polish Znak-group, who were declared enemies of the people.”<sup>41</sup> Essentially, Gomułka’s conciliatory position was little more than a rhetorical stance according to Zimmerer.

After 1970, Gomułka’s removal from power and the initiation of Ostpolitik, Zimmerer reevaluated Gomułka’s position during the 1968 crisis more favorably. He commented that the 1968 March events had presented a serious challenge to Gomułka since he had to overcome the student protests, handle the witch hunt of the national Bolsheviks on several different groups, and last but not least repel attacks on himself. He summarized Gomułka’s late years by stating that the communist leader was “a significant Polish statesman but a terrible dilettante with respect to the economic policies.”<sup>42</sup> Whereas Zimmerer’s immediate experience of the Polish party purge caused him to be more pessimistic than Stehle in his evaluation in the summer of 1968, after the initiation of Ostpolitik in 1970 and 1971, he rethought the role of Gomułka. Through the successes of Brandt’s policy Zimmerer as well as many other West German politicians and journalists became a supporter of the particular West German attitude which Timothy Garton Ash called “stability before liberty”.<sup>43</sup>

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<sup>41</sup> Ludwig Zimmerer, “In der Schwebe. Weiche Töne – Harter Kurs,” *Die Zeit*, 19 July 1968.

<sup>42</sup> Ludwig Zimmerer, “Das Abenteuer der Öffnung nach Westen,” WDR, Cologne, 19 January 1971. HA-WDR 4715.

<sup>43</sup> Garton Ash, *In Europe’s Name*, 279.

By 1970, Stehle had reached one of the highpoints of his career. He was widely respected as an expert on Eastern Europe and he was working to support the developing Ostpolitik. Meanwhile, he was getting ready to relocate to Rome for his new position as Vatican correspondent. In March 1970, a longer feature which he had authored was broadcast on WDR. The script, titled “Poland behind Oder and Neisse,” treated the now familiar theme of life in the borderlands. In 1963 and 1964, the documentaries describing the positive Polish economic and cultural development in the borderlands had caused political debates and widespread controversy. By 1970, such features were less provocative to the audience. Compared to its 1964 counterparts, the borderlands portrait was similar although the description of Polish economic development and entrepreneurship had been toned down. The 1970 feature stated that eighty-five per cent of the farmland was privately owned and used in Poland. The farms owned more tractors than five years ago but the production was very low compared to Western Europe. Thirty per cent of Poland’s industrial production took place in the Oder-Neisse areas but the production was not high. Stehle stated that these numbers “reflected both the progress and the backwardness of the country.” He still wished to emphasize the capability of the Polish farmers and entrepreneurs, but in light of the economic crisis in late Gomułka Poland he could not be overly enthusiastic. Instead, he wrote that a new Ostpolitik would contribute to stabilizing the Polish economic situation through business cooperation and a new psychological sense of security.<sup>44</sup>

In the script, Stehle also included an interesting discussion on ethnic German minorities in the borderlands. Here, he made the case that the unmixing of the borderlands populations as a consequence of 20<sup>th</sup> century nationalism and populations moves though

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<sup>44</sup> Hansjakob Stehle, “Polen hinter Oder und Nesse,” WDR, Cologne, 7 March 1970, HA-WDR 2565.

tragic was part of an irreversible historical development. He gave the example of a bilingual man born in Silesia, who had fought for the Polish army against the Germans and with the German army, because he was considered ethnically German, against Denmark. However, Stehle stated that whereas this older generation had mixed identities and felt affiliated with Germany through the language, or felt alienated from both states, “their children have unquestioningly become Poles, a long time ago.”<sup>45</sup> In addition, this younger generation was “free from all complexes of the past” and had been able to get a higher education and better jobs than their parents. By moving from the topic of the painful experiences of mixed populations to their children’s involvement in Silesia’s industrial development and with the first computer in Poland, located in Wrocław, Stehle connected the unmixing of the borderlands population with modernization of the area. It was one of several strategies that he used in order to recognize the mixed population’s experiences while rationalizing the national homogenization of the borderlands population. His comments were highly relevant to political discussions in light of the attempts by SPD to close the agreement with Warsaw which included clauses about the border as well as the German minorities remaining in Poland.

#### THE CHURCHES AND THE DEVELOPMENTS 1968-1970

The larger point of contention in the relations between the Polish Catholic Church and West German Catholics concerned the extent to which the Polish state should be involved in the reconciliation effort. The religious contacts developed parallel to, but also in opposition to, the state relations. In April 1970, a delegation from Bensberger Circle traveled

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<sup>45</sup> Ibid.

to Poland as guests of the Znak-group. The delegates drove from Poznań to Warsaw in a snowstorm. When they arrived they were met by a welcome committee, consisting not of the Znak members as planned but of members from Znak's rival, the government-loyal Catholic group Pax. The next day, Piasecki's daily newspaper, *Słowo Powszechne*, published an article about the friendly meeting between Pax and the West German visitors. As a consequence of this article, Cardinal Wyszyński cancelled his audience with the Bensberger Circle.

The intervention by Pax signaled that the Polish communists intended to take an active part also in the religious reconciliation, a measure which was acceptable to the Bensberger Circle, but unacceptable to the Polish Cardinal. The Bensberger Circle considered the state an essential part of the reconciliatory movement between Poles and Germans. In fact, Karlheinz Koppe remembered in a 2005 interview that when he went to the Polish military mission in West Berlin to be granted an entrance visa, he had to agree as a precondition to meet also with these groups. He had to make this decision on a moment's notice and acted in accordance with the circle's concept of normalization. After Wyszyński removed himself from the interaction, Stomma tried to mediate between the cardinal and the visitors. In the end, as a compromise, the group was received by Archbishop Kominek in Wrocław in the name of the Polish episcopate.<sup>46</sup> Wyszyński's compromise showed that he was interested in reconciliation, and both Winfried Lipscher and Stanisław Stomma testified to his sympathy for the Bensberger Circle. However, the cancellation of the audience signaled his hesitance to carry out that reconciliation in close proximity to the communist state.

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<sup>46</sup> Karlheinz Koppe, interview by Annika Frieberg, Bonn, 23 February 2005.

Stomma published an article on the Bensberger visit in *Tygodnik Powszechny* in which he began to insert the circle's work into a larger Christian narrative of improving Polish-German relations and changing the course of history. He described the religious and church developments leading up to the Bensberger Circle representatives' visit in Poland.<sup>47</sup> "History is not only shaped by the official politics of governments," he stated. "Also societal movements shape history." After the war, Polish opinion had been discouraged by the lack of a broader support for improvement in Polish-German relations but the church memoranda contributed to a new beginning. Stomma mentioned "Aktion Sühnezeichen" as the first initiative, but commented that the initiative was too limited to have a real effect on Polish opinion. In his view, the Protestant Memorandum was the real breakthrough, and the Bensberger Memorandum was another highpoint, both because the German bishops' answer had been so disappointing and because the authors were Catholics rather than Protestants.

Disconnecting the work of the Bensberger Circle from state relations, Stomma assured the readers that "the 'Bensberger Circle' does not intend to be transformed into a party or wish to be a political movement. Their goal is to clear away the enmity in the relations between the Polish and German nations."<sup>48</sup> His complete separation between the nations and the states, so different from the Bensberger Circle's top-down concept of the reconciliation, intended to distance the group from the troublesome association with Pax, or communist politics. Stomma himself had conceived of Polish-German affairs along the lines of developing state relations throughout the 1960s. However, the 1970 article showed how the Znak circle's issues with the state in combination with the high profile of the Polish

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<sup>47</sup> Stanisław Stomma, "„Bensberger Kreis' w Polsce," *Tygodnik Powszechny*, 26 April 1970.

<sup>48</sup> Ibid.



Catholic Church in West Germany after 1966 had influenced Stomma's approach to the relations. As a consequence of these developments, he distanced himself from the state relations and began crafting his version of the religious reconciliation with which he had been intimately involved from its earliest beginnings.

The relations between Cardinal Wyszyński and the German episcopate, particularly Cardinal Döpfner, remained tense after 1965 and 1966. In the Federal Republic, the Bensberger Circle promoted Polish-German relations, but was fairly isolated from the Catholic Central Committee as well as from the episcopate. Winfried Lipscher, member of the Bensberger Circle and student of theology, who eventually became the chief interpreter at the West German consulate in Warsaw, mentioned that his activism in the Bensberger Circle damaged his chances of a career within the German Catholic Church. The circle was considered too radical and left-oriented for the mainstream church.<sup>49</sup>

In addition, the question about the dioceses in the Oder-Neisse territories was still unregulated. The Vatican, strongly supported by the German Catholic episcopate, argued that such a regulation could only follow the political settlement of the border question, a peace treaty. In November 1969, Kominek met privately with the prominent SPD-representatives Herbert Wehner and Georg Leber in Rome to discuss how the diocesan question could be connected to the Bonn-Warsaw negotiations about a border treaty.<sup>50</sup> In October 1970, after the Bonn-Moscow treaty, Wyszyński also met with Döpfner in Rome and attempted to convince him to support a regulation of the diocesan question.

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<sup>49</sup> Winfried Lipscher, interview by Annika Frieberg, Berlin, 18 May 2005.

<sup>50</sup> Stehle, "Seit 1960: Der mühsame katholische Dialog über die Grenze," *Ungewöhnliche Normalisierung*, 165.

According to Stehle, who followed the interactions closely, the German Cardinal did not fully comprehend the urgency of Wyszyński's agenda. In November and December 1970 a private letter exchange took place between the two cardinals.<sup>51</sup> Their writings indicated that the reconciliation dialogue had moved forward since the early 1960s, but also that the two churches' priorities and understandings still differed widely from one another. In his letter, Wyszyński expressed his disappointment with the German bishops' message from 1966. He voiced his frustration with the German episcopate's continuing rejection of a diocesan regulation as well as with their hesitance to publicly recognize Polish possession of the border territories. He also emphasized that the border issue was not just a political question as Döpfner had assumed in 1966. It was a central matter for the Polish Church and Catholics given the right to existence of the Polish Catholic populations in the border area and given the difficult position of the Polish Church vis-à-vis the communist state.<sup>52</sup>

In his answer, Döpfner again clearly stated his desire for a dialogue and his full understanding that the border territories were lost to Germany and would remain in Polish possession. However, Döpfner considered the integration of German expellees into West German society and the representation of them the first duty of the German Catholic Church. For their sake, he did not feel that he could publicly recognize the territories as Polish. The Polish Cardinal had pointed out that the German Protestant Church had been much more forthcoming in the cross-border dialogue, but Döpfner responded that this might have been a mistake since the Protestant Memorandum and statements had created divisions in the

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<sup>51</sup> Stefan Wyszyński, "Schreiben des Kardinals Wyszyński an Kardinal Döpfner, Rom, 5. November 1970 und Antwortbrief des Kardinals Döpfner an Kardinal Wyszyński, München, 14. Dezember 1970," *Bonn-Warschau 1945-1991. Die deutsch-polnischen Beziehungen. Analyse und Dokumentation*, eds. Hans-Adolf Jacobsen and Mieczysław Tomala (Cologne: Verlag Wissenschaft und Politik, 1992), 209-213.

<sup>52</sup> Stefan Wyszyński to Julius Döpfner, 5 November 1970, in Hansjakob Stehle, "Seit 1960," *Ungewöhnliche Normalisierung*, 167-168.

Protestant community. He argued that the Catholic Church in West Germany had managed to prevent a nationalist and revisionist movement from emerging among the thousands of expellees, but also that the expellees' suffering was real and must not be forgotten.

Ultimately, he voiced his belief that a "peaceful atmosphere in our people is more important than a concrete treaty."<sup>53</sup> Döpfner also assured Wyszyński that the German Catholic Church would be willing to support the diocesan treaty after a political treaty had been made.

Particularly offensive to Stehle was the fact that Döpfner in a hand-written note on the letter assumed that Wyszyński had written in order to appease the Polish communist leaders, and that he had been used by them to apply political pressure on the West German episcopate.<sup>54</sup>

The interaction between the episcopates showed the Polish Cardinal's support for the diocesan settlement as a precondition for full reconciliation. Döpfner's argument that the Germans were fully prepared to "take the outstretched hand," and to open a dialogue in the *spirit* of reconciliation was insufficient to Wyszyński as well as Stehle. This was the reason for Stehle's continuing coverage of their exchange. In the relations between the churches, which have been considered at the heart of reconciliation, relaxation could only follow the legal settlement of the territorial dispute and political concessions by leading West German church representatives. Wyszyński's attempts to discuss the dioceses with Döpfner indicated the dilemma between his wish to distance himself from the state relations but needing political assurances involving state property from the German side. Meanwhile, he continuously risked that both German and Polish partners would consider him an agent for the Polish communist state, an association he neither wanted nor could afford.

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<sup>53</sup> Julius Döpfner to Stefan Wyszyński, 14 December 1970, in Hansjakob Stehle, "Seit 1960," *Ungewöhnliche Normalisierung*, 169-171.

<sup>54</sup> *Ibid.*, 172.

## WILLY BRANDT IN WARSAW DECEMBER 1970 AND THE MORAL DIMENSIONS OF OSTPOLITIK

During 1970, negotiations about the bilateral treaties continued. On August 12, Brandt traveled to Moscow to sign the treaty with the Soviet Union. Meanwhile the negotiations between Bonn and the Polish leadership took place during several meetings between the leading politicians. Central problems in the negotiations included compensation for the victims of the occupation demanded by the Polish side and the question of family reunions, i.e. allowing ethnic Germans to leave Poland for the Federal Republic, demanded by the West German side.<sup>55</sup>

In December 1970, when Willy Brandt traveled to Warsaw together with a delegation to sign the agreement with Gomulka, he also invited a number of private guests to signify the societal level of the relations. They included Klaus von Bismarck, *Stern*-editor Henri Nannen, Berthold Beitz, SPD-delegate Carlo Schmidt, expellees and authors Siegfried Lenz and Günther Grass.<sup>56</sup> During his Warsaw visit, he not only signaled the importance of societal involvement, through his guests, but also continuously emphasized the moral dimension of Polish-German relations in speeches and public performances.

Brandt signed the agreement between Poland and the Federal Republic, which recognized the border and established the pre-conditions for official relations, on December 7.<sup>57</sup> The real price which he paid for the treaty was of course the official West German acceptance of the border, although the full recognition remained postponed until a peace treaty could be concluded with a reunited Germany. No compensations for the victims of

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<sup>55</sup> Tomala, *Deutschland – von Polen gesehen*, 306.

<sup>56</sup> “Heute Unterzeichnung des deutsch-polnischen Vertrags,” *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*, 7 December 1970.

<sup>57</sup> Tomala, *Deutschland – von Polen gesehen*, 304.

German war crimes would be paid but, on the other hand, the agreement did not include any clauses concerning family reunions either. The West German side made their concessions for the sake of stability, peace, the establishment of official relations and, as Brandt emphasized in a television talk from Warsaw, for moral reasons.<sup>58</sup>

Another sign of the moral dimension of this political treaty and state visit was Brandt's genuflection before the Warsaw Ghetto Monument. During his stay, Brandt visited the Ghetto Monument, erected in memory of the Jewish uprising in 1943. According to protocol, he planned to place a wreath by the monument in a very low-profile ceremony but while he was there, he made media history by suddenly genuflecting. *Süddeutsche Zeitung* published the perhaps most vivid description of the impulsive gesture: "A guide, who wants to explain to him [Brandt] the suffering which Polish Jews had experienced here is unable to finish his lecture. He falls silent as he sees how the chancellor, overcome with troubled emotions, falls to his knees. Brandt needs seconds, which seem endless to his witnesses, until he stands up again."<sup>59</sup>

The genuflection before the Ghetto Monument became a visual symbol of Polish-German reconciliation. The significance of the gesture emerged particularly through the descriptions in West German and international press, but the event was only mentioned briefly in the Polish descriptions.<sup>60</sup> For the Polish communists, the gesture had several troubling dimensions, including its acknowledgement of Jewish instead of Polish suffering. The effects of Brandt's gesture were not immediate in relationship with the Polish media and

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<sup>58</sup> Garton Ash, *In Europe's Name*, 438; Bingen, *Polen-Politik der Bonner Republik*, 140-146.

<sup>59</sup> "Der Kanzler unterschreibt mit schweren Hand," *Süddeutsche Zeitung*, 8 December 1970.

<sup>60</sup> Tomas Wolffsohn and Michael Brechenmacher, *Denkmalssturz? Brandts Kniefall* (Munich: Olzog Verlag GmbH, 2005), 26.

state. It had to be reinterpreted, lifted out of its Jewish-German context and given its significance by the media reports.<sup>61</sup>

Hansjakob Stehle was also present at the signing of the treaty and published an article for *Die Zeit* describing and interpreting the genuflection. He challenged the cynics among his Polish and German contacts who wondered whether the genuflection was pre-planned. Stehle described Brandt as falling to his knees because he was “overcome by the memory of the monstrosities.”<sup>62</sup> Meanwhile, like the communist press, the West German conservative press downplayed or omitted mentioning the genuflection.<sup>63</sup>

Also Bismarck, who was present in Warsaw, contributed to giving the agreement a moral and emotional interpretation. On December 13, Stomma interviewed Klaus von Bismarck in *Tygodnik Powszechny* about the treaty and about his decision to accompany Brandt on his official visit to Warsaw. Bismarck had joined Brandt at the last minute after Marion Countess Dönhoff decided that it would be too difficult to be present at the final signing away of her ancestral home. Asked whether it was similarly difficult for Bismarck to participate, he answered that while he had not hesitated to accompany Brandt, it was none the less painful for him. He believed that signing and confirming the treaty was a way to take responsibility for the war which Germany had started without reason. At in the moment of

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<sup>61</sup> See discussion of Polish-German reconciliation as a hybrid case in Long and Breckle, *War and Reconciliation*, 99. The authors do not doubt that the gesture can be used in their model of publically signaling forgiveness. However, both Christoph Schneider, *Der Warschauer Kniefall* (Konstanz: UKW Verlagsgesellschaft GmbH, 2006) and Wolffsohn and Brechenmacher indicated the complications involved in interpreting the genuflection in this way. Schneider points to the fact that the gesture found more response nationally in the West German and German public realm than anywhere else, and Wolffsohn and Brechenmacher developed the complexity which stemmed from the Jewish element involved in the gesture through the ghetto monument.

<sup>62</sup> Hansjakob Stehle, “Schlusspunkt unter die Vergangenheit. In Warschau wurde ein neues Kapitel aufgeschlagen,” *Die Zeit*, 11 December 1970.

<sup>63</sup> “Noch ein Ersatz-Frieden. Auch der Polenpakt braucht Zweidrittelmehrheit,” *Rheinischer Merkur*, 11 December 1970.

signing, however, he thought of those, many of them his close acquaintances, who could not accept the loss of the border territories.<sup>64</sup>

When asked about the reasoning behind the agreement, Bismarck stated that he thought it was primarily of a moral nature.

In the end, I believe that neither simple rational reasons nor sensible though painful perspectives on German history dictated the solution. The decision by the Chancellor was more than anything a resolve of moral dimensions, taken in consideration of those Poles who are living in those areas today as well as of the Germans who need help in seeing reality as it is. In that sense, it was a humanitarian decision. For me the humanitarian reasons are incomparably more important than legal arguments.<sup>65</sup>

Stomma proposed that the Brandt government also had a political vision connected with the agreement, however. Bismarck responded that the political vision involved a long-term peaceful coexistence with Eastern Europe. In closing, Bismarck made a reference to reconciliation as an inner process when he stated that it could only take place if it was accompanied by pain.

In stark contrast to the moral reasoning and emotional trappings of the West German side, the Polish communist side cited primarily political motivations for closing the treaty with West Germany. Unofficially, they also had practical and financial reasons. Already in the fall of 1969, the Polish delegations began investigating the possibility of receiving loans of around 7 billion D-Mark from West German industry to invest in an industrial renewal as an aspect of the new improved relations.<sup>66</sup> By 1970, Poland was in a deep financial crisis and shortly after the signing of the treaty Gomułka raised prices on food which caused country-wide protests leading to his replacement by Edward Gierek only a week or two after the

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<sup>64</sup> Stanisław Stomma, "Zob. von Bismarck Klaus: O Układzie Polska-NRF (Wywiad dla TP)," *Tygodnik Powszechny*, 13 December 1970.

<sup>65</sup> Ibid.

<sup>66</sup> Tomala, *Deutschland – von Polen gesehen*, 278.

signing of the treaty. In his autobiographical description of Polish-German relations, Bartoszewski described how this financial crisis completely overshadowed Brandt's visit and the genuflection before the Ghetto Monument in the minds of the broader Polish population outside of the communist, Catholic and intellectual elites.<sup>67</sup> The communist partners had to become convinced of West Germany's willingness to rethink the border question. However, they were not onboard with the moral and idealistic reasons presented by the West German side for completing the agreement.

The Znak circle was an exception to the pragmatic stance of the Polish communist leadership. Stomma himself celebrated the signing of the treaty by sending two congratulatory telegrams to the "Germans who had been especially engaged in the agreement," Catholic Manfred Seidler in Bensberger Circle and Protestant Lothar Kreyssig in Aktion Sühnezeichen.<sup>68</sup> He also was invited to the festivities and dinners in connection with the signing of the treaty and sat next to Klaus von Bismarck at those occasions. Both through sending his telegrams and through the interview with Klaus von Bismarck, Stomma continued to fashion his version of the reconciliation process.

Radio and television took part in the anchoring of the new post-1970 relationship between Poles and West Germans as well, particularly given the audio-visual cooperation and exchanges already in place. In January of 1971 a feature named "Through Polish Eyes" was broadcast as a co-production by Sender Freies Berlin, WDR, NDR, SDR and Polish Radio.<sup>69</sup> The program was part of the cross-border cooperation which had been initiated

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<sup>67</sup> Bartoszewski, *Und reiss uns der Hass aus die Seele*, 110.

<sup>68</sup> Stanisław Stomma, *Pościg za nadzieją*, 201.

<sup>69</sup> Witold Zadrowski (Polish manuscript), Peter Leonhard Braun (German manuscript), "Mit polnischen Augen," co-production SFB, NDR, WDR, SDR, Radio Polskie, Hamburg, 3 January 1971, H1572.



between Polish Radio and WDR in 1966 and 1967. Similarly to Stehle's 1965 manuscript "In the Eyes of the Neighbors," it consisted of interviews and statements about the Germans. Many of the statements made by Polish interviewees still mentioned the experiences during the war as their main reference points for evaluating the Germans. Particularly the older generation expressed their lingering fear and distrust of the Germans.

However, there were also voices from a younger generation which considered the war a thing of the past. In addition, a small number of the interviewees had begun to interact with and spoke positively about the younger post-war German generation. One of the interviewees mentioned Brandt's chancellorship as a sign of positive development. The larger point of the feature was to detect whether the recent developments had improved the Polish views of the Germans.

The feature was followed by an expert panel discussion with participants including Angela Nacken, correspondent to *Frankfurter Allgemeine* in Warsaw, Ludwig Zimmerer and Ulrich Gemhardt commenting on the questions of progress and change. They discussed the developments following the treaty and the new Ostpolitik in some detail.<sup>70</sup> The commentators agreed that the Second World War continued to play a central role in the Polish perception of Germany but also that there was a difference between the older and younger generation. They also agreed that acute Polish traditional patriotism was an obstacle to the relations, but optimistically believed that this stance was becoming outdated and hoped that it would disappear entirely.

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<sup>70</sup> Ludwig Zimmerer, Angela Nacken, Ulrich Gemhardt and Hans Zielinski, "Diskussion über die Sendung: Mit polnischen Augen," co-production SFB, NDR, WDR, SDR, Radio Polskie, Hamburg, 3 January 1971, H001572.

A positive development in Polish-German official relations following the 1970 agreement, according to Zimmerer, was the more extensive and fairly accurate coverage of West German topics in the Polish communist media. Angela Nacken agreed but added that the interest in West Germany and Polish-German relations was greater in Poland than vice versa. Zimmerer also mentioned that after 1969, an increasing normalization had taken place and he hoped that the critical distrust from the Polish side could gradually be removed. Given the Second World War, the Germans would always have to count with Polish distrust in light of the mutual history, however.

Overall, the expert panel agreed that positive change had emerged from the new treaties and the developing relations. Zimmerer said that the praise of Brandt seemed to be widespread on all levels of Polish society. The continued improvement, according to these Poland experts, would depend on economic cooperation, cultural exchange and further relaxation. They also felt that a year ago, the interviews in the original show could not have been recorded because people would not have answered the questions honestly. In other words, they acknowledged the lingering problems but were overwhelmingly positive with regard to the post-1970 developments.

In a third separate comment, Ryszard Wojna, who was a long time German expert and correspondent with *Trybuna Ludu*, responded to the West German experts' discussion.<sup>71</sup> Mostly, Wojna made sure the Polish official stance was represented. He emphasized that eventual improvement in the relations were mainly based on West Germany's decision to recognize the border. The evidence of this, he claimed, was that the normalization with the GDR was well under way based on the fact that the treaty with the East Germans was made

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<sup>71</sup> Ryszard Wojna, "Kommentar von Ryszard Wojna, Chefredakteur einer polnischen Tageszeitung," co-production SFB, NDR, WDR, SDR, Radio Polskie, Warsaw, 3 January 1971, H1572.

already in 1950, whereas the normalization with the West Germans was just starting.<sup>72</sup>

Furthermore, he felt that Angela Nacken and Ludwig Zimmerer were too optimistic about predicting the disappearance of Polish distrust of the Germans since the treaty had not yet been ratified.

Following the Polish communist political position on the relations, Wojna also commented that he thought his West German colleagues were confusing psychological and political developments. Whereas the political situation could find an immediate solution, the psychological change might take generations. He clearly separated East and West German relations with Poland in his discussion whereas the Polish interviewees in the feature tended to consider all Germans as one group with a few exceptions. In this way, the significance and the larger interpretation of the agreement differed considerably between the West German journalists and the Polish communist one.

In several of his radio programs from 1971 and 1972, Zimmerer expanded on the changes in the relations after the treaty was signed. He particularly emphasized that the Poles' image had previously been distorted given their limited interaction with post-war Germans. The older generation associated "the Germans" with those Germans they had met during the occupation between 1939 and 1945, while the younger generation knew the German people only from the stories told by the older generation. However, starting in 1969, the communist newspapers were finally publishing accurate and nuanced descriptions of the Federal Republic and of German developments, which had led to a new insight in broader

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<sup>72</sup> The situation between East Germans and Poles was considerably more complicated, both on official and unofficial levels. See Tomala, *Deutschland – von Polen gesehen*, 140-198; *Grenzen der Freundschaft*, eds. Borodziej, Kochanowski, Schäfer.

groups of the Polish people.<sup>73</sup> The propaganda image of the revisionist and aggressive Germans had done much to damage the Polish perspective on the Germans since it was the only information accessible to the Polish society.

Also contributing to the political development toward Ostpolitik, Hansjakob Stehle published a new book in 1971 as well named *Nachbarn im Osten* (Neighbors in the East). The book was a political study covering the years 1968 to 1970 and described the challenges to Moscow's hegemony. His descriptions of the purge in 1968 for the first time went into greater detail about the consequences and attacks. At this point, and with the perspective which three years had brought, as well as the added information gathering, he was able to give a more complete picture of the events. He spoke about "the almost uncontrollable psychosis in the plants and departments" which had contributed to the anti-Zionist outbursts in 1968.<sup>74</sup>

Stehle continued to emphasize Gomułka's positive efforts to control the attacks, calm the situation and save his own position. The change in the Polish position toward cooperation with the Federal Republic he considered a combination of the government shift in 1969 and the Poles' fear of Soviet-West German relations above their heads.<sup>75</sup> Stehle also argued that the disappearance of the unifying outside pressure which the Federal Republic represented before 1970 lead to the displacement of Gomułka only ten days after he signed the agreement with Brandt. "This was how he arrived at a point of extreme domestic and economic-political insecurity at the same moment that he leapt over the shadows of old antagonisms

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<sup>73</sup> Ludwig Zimmerer, Angela Nacken, Ulrich Gemhardt and Hans Zielinski, "Diskussion über die Sendung: Mit polnischen Augen," co-production SFB, NDR, WDR, SDR, Radio Polskie, Hamburg, 3 January 1971, NDR H001572.

<sup>74</sup> Hansjakob Stehle, *Nachbarn im Osten*, 247.

<sup>75</sup> *Ibid.*, 259.

and through political intelligence established the external security which Bonn's Ostpolitik offered."<sup>76</sup> He emphasized that the new Polish government under Gierek indicated a continuity of the Polish foreign policy toward West Germany given the partial continuity in the inner circles of the party. He pointed to the wisdom of continuing the project of entente within these new developments in Eastern Europe. The book was dedicated to Willy Brandt.

In West Germany, the social-liberal coalition struggled to stay in power. Enough members of the SPD and FDP switched party affiliation to CDU after 1970 that the CDU attempted to introduce a motion of no confidence against Brandt in April of 1972. However, the CDU-faction leader Rainer Barzel fell two votes short of replacing Brandt as Chancellor and Brandt remained in power. Since he lacked a majority in the parliament, Brandt asked for a vote of confidence and as a consequence of the result, the parliament was dissolved and new elections held in November 1972. Brandt won the reelection and SPD-FDP gained a majority in the parliament, securing Ostpolitik in a more definite way.<sup>77</sup> In his post-election commentary from Warsaw, Zimmerer stated that November 19, 1972, would surely be considered a key date by historians of Polish-German relations.<sup>78</sup>

The Warsaw treaty was finally ratified, after negotiations with the CDU-faction in May of 1972. In another comment on the Polish-German relations, Zimmerer called the rapid disappearance of traditional distrust of Germans in Polish society "surprising" and

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<sup>76</sup> Ibid., 280.

<sup>77</sup> For discussions of the 1972 elections see Peter Merseburger, *Willy Brandt. Visionär und Realist* and Rainer Barzel, *Ein gewagtes Leben. Erinnerungen* (Stuttgart, Leipzig: Hohenheim Verlag, 2001); Herbert Czaja, *Unterwegs zum kleinsten Deutschland? Mangel an Solidarität mit den Vertriebenen* *Marginalien zu 50 Jahre Ostpolitik* (Frankfurt/Main: Josef Knecht, 1996), 345-354.

<sup>78</sup> Ludwig Zimmerer et.al., "Bundestagswahl 1972; Königin Elizabeth; Silberhochzeit; Paris, London; Rom; Warschau; Ostberlin; Den Haag; Washington; Stockholm; BRD," NDR, Hamburg, 20 November 1972, F804320.

credited the West German recognition of the Oder-Neisse Line and SPD-victory with the improvement. With the recognition of the border, he felt that the general societal atmosphere in Poland was one in which people wished to emphasize the positive potential of Polish-German relations. The new interactions held the promise of a Polish-German symbiosis where both cultures and both peoples contributed something of their unique culture to the cooperation, particularly its economic aspects.<sup>79</sup> This enthusiasm must be understood in the context of the triumphant optimism in the aftermath of the SPD victory and closing of the bilateral treaties.

#### EPILOGUE

By the early 1970s, Polish-German relations had attracted broad public interest in the Federal Republic. Given this wider discussion and the establishment of official relations the unique position of the early Poland-experts was offset. They became icons of the successful developments and, because they were writers and publishers, were often able to write their own role into the early relations into larger history. But they were no longer urgently needed as mediators in the relations. Ludwig Zimmerer continued to function as correspondent and cultural profile in Warsaw. He worked for NDR and WDR until 1981 when he had a stroke. After that, his second wife, Joanna Olczak, nursed him until 1987, when he passed away in Krakow. Hansjakob Stehle worked as correspondent for WDR in Rome until 1989 when he retired. He was closely acquainted with Pope John Paul II, whom he knew from his Polish

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<sup>79</sup> Ludwig Zimmerer, "Alte und neue Heimat. Die Aussiedlung der Deutschen und ihre Probleme aus polnischer Sicht," NDR, Hamburg, 30 December 1972, F803134.

years, and often accompanied him on his travels, particularly to Poland for the first time in 1978.<sup>80</sup>

Anna Morawska died quite early and unexpectedly in 1972. The Anna Morawska-Seminar of Aktion Sühnezeichen which organized seminars on Polish-German topics was named in her honor. Renate Marsch-Potocka, the dpa-correspondent, now lives in Masuria. Stanisław Stomma, Tadeusz Mazowiecki, and Władysław Bartoszewski all became part of Poland's first democratically elected government in 1989. Stefan Kisielewski died in 1991. When his diaries were published posthumously in 1996, they upset his former associates because of their biting and bitter commentary on Polish developments during the 1960s and 1970s. Jerzy Turowicz died in Krakow in 1999. He continued to lead the publishing firm Wydawnictwo ZNAK and *Tygodnik Powszechny* into the 1990s. Bishop Bolesław Kominek died in Wrocław in 1974. He was at that point an archbishop and cardinal. The German-friendly editor of *Polityka* and old ally of the West German correspondents Mieczysław Rakowski became communist Poland's last communist prime minister for a brief time in 1989. Between 1998 and 2005, he published his *Political Diaries* reiterating and interpreting Polish domestic and international relations between 1958 and 1990.<sup>81</sup>

Klaus von Bismarck remained the general director for WDR until 1976. He became president of the Goethe-Institut in 1977 and remained there until 1989. Under his leadership, the institute opened institutes in Warsaw and Krakow. He passed away in 1993. Klaus Skibowski became engaged once more in Polish-German relations after 1990, was involved in youth exchanges with his hometown in Masuria and became an honorary citizen of Lyck.

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<sup>80</sup> Hansjakob Stehle now lives in Vienna.

<sup>81</sup> Mieczysław Rakowski, *Dzienniki Polityczne* (Warsaw: Iskry, 1998)

He now lives in Bad-Godesberg. The question of when the reconciliation took place and whether it took place remains a point of disagreement between him and the Polish activists, such as Stomma. Finally, Stanisław Stomma remained involved with Polish-German relations into the 2000s. He passed away on June 21, 2005, in Warsaw. *Tygodnik*

*Powszechny* wrote in its obituary:

The twentieth century ended last Thursday, 21 of June 2005. On that day, Stanisław Stomma died: one of the founders of *Tygodnik Powszechny* and *Znak*, a pioneer of Polish-German relations, an anti-communist who still between 1956 and 1976 was the leader of the only legal opposition in the Polish People's Republic. His biography reflected, as if in a mirror, the Polish dilemmas of this century.<sup>82</sup>

I met Stanisław Stomma in the fall of 2004, in Warsaw. It had been unclear until the previous day if I would be able to interview him since he was already very sick and much depended on his health for the day. On this dark and windy Warsaw October day, he was alert and seemed almost disappointed when I concluded the interview, as agreed, within just an hour. What I remember most vividly from the interview was that when I explained my intention to trace the informal and unofficial connections between the activists in Polish-German relations, he leaned forward enthusiastically, nodded, and said, "Yes, for me it always began with the friendships!"<sup>83</sup> Perhaps this comment explained both his successes and his stubborn optimism with respect to Polish politics and Polish-German relations throughout the communist era and beyond.

## CONCLUSION

Between 1968 and 1970, the activists in Polish-German relations were increasingly able to combine reconciliation and political relations. The 1968 developments in

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<sup>82</sup> "Stanisław Stomma (1908-2005)," *Tygodnik Powszechny*, 31 July 2005.

<sup>83</sup> Stanisław Stomma, interview by Annika Frieberg.



Czechoslovakia and Poland forced both journalists and politicians to make difficult choices. They chose to prioritize political relations and continued dialogue above an outspoken support for the Polish opposition under attack or the Czech liberalizing forces, believing that their choice was the only possible road to long term European peace and stability. The personal investments of leading journalists in this process also contributed to their media portraits of the Czechoslovak events and the Polish purge.

The relations between Polish and German Christians, the reconciliation, also continued to develop but slowly and painfully. The Polish Catholic Church, the Znak circle and the Bensberger Circle after 1968 maintained close contacts, but were also involved in negotiations concerning who should be part of Polish-German reconciliation. The Bensberger Circle and other West German groups believed that the Polish state must be central to a resolution of Polish-German antagonisms, but Cardinal Wyszyński proved unwilling to accept their position. The West German Catholic Church remained more distant in the Polish-German dialogue, but when Cardinal Wyszyński and Cardinal Döpfner exchanged views in 1970, the same problem of the role of political relations in the reconciliation emerged between them as well. Neither Wyszyński nor Döpfner wished for the communist state to be part of the reconciliation, but Wyszyński felt that the Polish *nation* must have some security and concessions whereas Döpfner preferred to wait with any resolutions until another state which could carry on the resolutions of pressing questions had emerged in Poland. Either way, if the reconciliation was to include the resolution to the territorial question, a state and political statements must be involved.

The West German journalists did not share the episcopates' concerns with a reconciliation involving a communist state. The triumphal atmosphere in 1970, Brandt's

election victory and signing of the agreement together with the new possibilities this political opening brought overrode many complications in the process for the media activists, such as Zimmerer. To add to the media angle of the 1970 highpoints, Brandt made visual media history through his genuflection by the ghetto monument and in 1971 he won the Nobel Peace Prize for his work for European peace and stability. The presentation speech in Oslo stated that “Brandt's East European policy is an attempt to bury hatred and seek reconciliation across the mass graves of the war. How important it was for him personally to carry out this task of reconciliation is demonstrated by his kneeling by the Jewish memorial in the former ghetto of Warsaw.”<sup>84</sup> Brandt, a journalist himself, used the elite journalists’, particularly Stehle’s, Polish and East German contacts and expertise. In addition, he drew on the media debates surrounding the idea of reconciliation during the 1960s in his rhetorical statements about Poland, and in staging the visit to Warsaw by including representatives for West German civil society and media. Finally, the Znak circle after 1968 reacted strategically to the worsening relations with the Polish state by investing more and more into a Catholic reconciliation narrative which also fit well into positive reception of the Polish bishops’ letter in 1965 and the Bensberger initiative in 1968.

Given the tense moments in 1968 and the successes in 1970, the media reconciliation narrative became cemented on a few principles: the necessity of cooperation with the communist state regardless of Polish or East European internal developments, the strong Christian and Catholic aspect particularly from the Polish side as a response to the state-related tensions, and finally the importance of showing the gradual progress in the relations. More importantly, as a consequence of the events between 1968 and 1972, the West German

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<sup>84</sup> Aase Lionaes, “Presentation Speech,” Oslo, 10 December 1971, [http://nobelprize.org/nobel\\_prizes/peace/laureates/1971/press.html](http://nobelprize.org/nobel_prizes/peace/laureates/1971/press.html)

media elite and liberal Catholics, and the Polish Catholic intellectuals were more closely connected in networks and public relations alliances. Both these networks and the narrative would play an important role in the relations into the 1990s.

## CONCLUSION

The early activists often used the concept of “reconciliation” interchangeably with normalization, by which they meant all activities, cultural and political, which contributed to the establishment of political relations between Poland and the Federal Republic of Germany. Between 1956 and 1970, they were particularly concerned with the recognition of the Oder-Neisse Line as a precondition for the resumption of relations. The word reconciliation in Polish-German relations was widely used and rarely defined clearly but the field of peace studies has developed such definitions. In peace research, reconciliation encompasses models and theories of reconciliation as a psychological, emotional, cultural *and* political process intended to create trust between former enemies and prevent renewed outbreaks of violence in the future. By applying models of reconciliation processes within an international context to Polish-German early relations, one can distinguish between ambitions, accomplishments and rhetorical uses of reconciliation in the early relations.

The agenda of the West German media elites, though not the Polish intellectuals, was the restoration of Germany’s status as reliable, civilized political and cultural international partner in Europe and the western world. The media elites had begun this reintegration process through partaking in the project of Franco-German rapprochement in the late 1940s and early 1950s. In connection with a growing awareness of Germany’s moral responsibility for the atrocities during the Second World War, they also continued to campaign for improved relations with Israel. Israel and the Federal Republic established political relations

with each other in 1965.<sup>1</sup> Compared to the Franco-West German and Israeli-West German relations, Polish-West German relations presented unique challenges which also influenced the format and development of the relations. The justifications for improving Franco-German relations, as well as Soviet-West German relations were largely political and economic, whereas the Israeli-West German and Polish-West German relations had important moral and ethical connotations. This may be the reason why political instances drove Franco-German relations whereas societal groups preceded the states in calling for Israeli-West German and Polish-West German relations.<sup>2</sup>

To the West German liberal elites, reconciliation with Poland seemed to be a moral necessity. They evaluated the passive stance of the CDU's eastern policy as a mistake, and believed that Poland as well as Israel was a key to the resurrection of German state and society into the full trust and confidence of its international partners, particularly France and the United States. The new independent position of the Polish Catholic Church, with its uniquely semi-independent Catholic media and moderate opposition in the communist bloc in 1956, greatly encouraged reconciliation work with Poland. In addition, the Znak circle's philosophy of organic work and progressive change from the inside of the system also inspired the West German Poland-experts toward a philosophy of change based on cooperation with moderate communists, which would encourage Polish society to change gradually and organically from the inside. The 1950s became the springboard for the understanding of Polish communism promoted by both Ludwig Zimmerer and Hansjakob

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<sup>1</sup> Hannfried von Hindenburg, *Demonstrating Reconciliation. State and Society in West German Foreign Policy toward Israel, 1952-1965* (New York, Oxford: Berghahn Books, 2007).

<sup>2</sup> Julius W. Friend, *The Linchpin. French-German relations, 1950-1990* (New York, Westport, CT, London: Praeger, 1991).

Stehle and the opportunities for cooperation between Poland and the Federal Republic. The particular images of the Polish October, relative national independence toward the Soviet Union and partial opening of the public space became a lasting legacy in and through Hansjakob Stehle's writings. This image was also transmitted into West German SPD circles through Stehle's role as an informal channel of communication with Polish and East German communists, and informal participation as consultant later in SPD development of Ostpolitik strategies.

From the Polish perspective, the call for reconciliation was not widespread in the 1950s. Yet the Catholic intelligentsia felt strongly connected to Europe, and for this reason wished to establish closer cultural ties with West Germany. Such ties were impossible during high Stalinism, and the number of early activists in Polish-German relations remained more limited than on the West German side throughout the 1960s. Those who were engaged, most prominently the intelligentsia in KIK, Znak and *Tygodnik Powszechny* before 1965, were able to become important public figures in the West German media. Their ambitions were centered on the connections with western Europe and the acceptance of the Polish border on the rivers Oder and Neisse. They lobbied for this and for Poland's recognition both through personal networking efforts with West German politicians, particularly in the case of Stanisław Stomma, and in the West German media, namely Stefan Kisielewski. They shared the ambition to lobby in West Germany for border recognition with the communist state. For Stomma and others, the cultural aspects of Polish-German reconciliation over time became a forceful justification for political engagement in domestic Polish affairs. It also contributed to their prominence internationally.

From the beginning, Stomma's vision of relations, also when he named it reconciliation, was firmly focused on state actors and state relations. But his greater successes took place in a media realm and in networking with West German media actors and intellectuals. Stomma had hoped to engage primarily German Catholics in the CDU, to interest them in postwar Poland and discuss the establishment of Polish-German relations. Instead, he and other Znak visitors found their cooperation partners among liberal and leftwing Catholic circles and West German liberal media. The shift in attention proved fortunate since his position as an unofficial representative of the Polish state eroded over the course of the 1960s. Still, he never lost his faith in the importance of state actors and state relations and this perspective forcefully impacted the process and memory of Polish-German relations as well.

Despite Stomma's political focus, the most significant aspect of early relations and the media activism, was the attempt to renegotiate a destructive national mythology characterized by violence and to replace it with more inclusive versions of civic nationalism, or at least with new unifying religious, cultural, and political narratives in a pan-European setting. The Znak circle and *Tygodnik Powszechny* strove to reformulate the anti-German elements of Polish patriotic narratives and also to challenge Polish romantic nationalism and victim-based self-perceptions. They wanted to replace these national images with an emphasis on organic work, gradual reform from the inside and the importance of active political participation at home and abroad in improving Poland's position. At the same time, other Catholic Church representatives, including Cardinal Wyszyński, used traditional

rhetoric to reassert national unity against a hostile communist state.<sup>3</sup> In addition, the communist state also reinforced traditional nationalist anti-German rhetoric.

Meanwhile, the West German journalist-activists from the 1950s also attempted to undo German nationalist stereotypes and agendas that were damaging to Polish-German relations. They wished to reform their own German population and also, on a foreign political level, restore the confidence in the German state and people among the western allies and larger world. While Poland was primarily still concerned with economic and material recovery, the Federal Republic's elites were becoming concerned with a national moral recovery. During the course of the 1960s, they succeeded at the very least in defusing derogatory stereotypes about Poland, national narratives, revisionism and revanchism, associated with the expellee press.

Despite the activists' good intentions, they nevertheless continued to struggle with the question of reception in the broader societal layers, both in West Germany and communist Poland. My sources show that the early dialogue between Poles and Germans was a project of the elites, for the elites, and by the elites, acting in the modern role of a socially conscientious intelligentsia on behalf of "the people." In addition, the intensity with which liberal media circles debated on the one hand democratization and the role of West German media vis-à-vis the state and on the other hand the closely connected questions of Germany's role during the war and the recognition of the border, distracted German popular attention

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<sup>3</sup> See for example Stefan Wyszyński, "Aus der Predigt Kardinal Wyszyńskis, des Primas von Polen, in Malbork am 18. August 1960," *Bonn-Warschau 1945-1990. Die deutsch-polnische Beziehungen. Analyse und Dokumentation*, eds. Hans-Adolf Jacobsen and Mieczysław Tomala (Cologne: Verlag Wissenschaft und Politik 1992), 103-104.



from Poland and its own specific issues. This development also illustrated the hermeneutical, and potentially nationalizing, quality of *Vergangenheitsbewältigung*.<sup>4</sup>

In Polish society, West German media worked to introduce pro-Polish or self-critical German productions to television audiences in order to reduce Polish fears of West German revisionism. They were partially successful but Polish propaganda efforts undercut or limited their work. In addition, particularly audio-visual cooperation led to an even closer state- and top down focus in the relations than was previously the case. In this way, while their images reached Polish society, the negotiations required to implement TV- and radio cooperation excluded all Polish non-state actors.

As for religious reconciliation, the West German memoranda, though supporting the important idea of forgiveness and ecumenical and national cooperation, were firmly situated within the Ostpolitik notions as developed by the liberal media. The memoranda attempted to use their societal status in order to initiate larger debates about Ostpolitik, the relationship with Poland and the demands and duties of the German state and people. Noticeably, several of the memoranda, including the Tübingen Memorandum, the Polish Bishops' correspondence and the Bensberger Memorandum were developed in close proximity to the media. Several of the activists, for example Klaus von Bismarck, Eugen Kogon and Walter Dirks, were well-known media personalities.

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<sup>4</sup> For other examples of how Eastern Europe and Russia have been used and utilized in West European discourses, see for example Larry Wolff, *Inventing Eastern Europe: The Map of Civilization On the Mind of the Enlightenment* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1994) or, for a postwar example Iver B. Neumann, "Europe's Cold War Remembrance of Russia: *Cui Bono?*" *Memory and Power in Post-War Europe: Studies in the Presence of the Past*, ed. Jan-Werner Müller (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2002). In this case, compared to these studies based on Said's post-colonial theory, West German audio-visual media attempted to construct Poland as an active partner rather than a passive object but was nevertheless hampered by the national concerns of journalistic elites and media audiences with their own image and historical past.

In 1965, the Polish bishops' letter led to the cooperation between Bolesław Kominek and West German pro-Polish journalists, in particular Hansjakob Stehle in publicizing the correspondence. The Polish bishops' letter, unlike the West German memoranda, attempted to distance Polish-German Catholic relations from state relations in light of their complex relationship with the communist state. To the Polish population, this letter unintentionally produced the greatest challenge to traditional Polish self-perceptions and national identity by requesting that Poles should not only forgive the Germans, but also "ask them for forgiveness," a notion which upset the Polish collective memory of their suffering during the Second World War.

These findings point to a few important conclusions. In order to understand the consequences of Polish-German early relations, it is crucial to gain a distance from the politically framed narrative generated through political elites and later through researchers invested in the "reconciliation-building" project. My dissertation considers the accomplishments and successes of early activists, but also reveals the ways in which they were bound by their political and cultural contexts, and, importantly, the way in which they utilized the concept of reconciliation to explain and justify their own political and personal agendas.

In addition, the application of reconciliation models has ramifications for European inter-state and intercultural relations. The example of Polish-German relations indicated the importance of not only deconstructing national myths but also generating new, viable symbols in order to successfully establish cross-border European communities. The long-term question concerning the success narrative of Polish-German relations is whether it is powerful and attractive enough to replace older national narratives. The story of European

integration is the narrative of overcoming a divisive and violent past in Europe. This integration has largely been constructed as a top-down political effort but is as such incomplete. As the West German focus on Polish communist cooperation partners show, it is important to consider the stability, foundations and long-term prospective of a state before focusing exclusively on a close cooperation effort with it.<sup>5</sup> Though they had little freedom to act in 1968, the West German activists in narrating the relations focused unduly on state interests at the cost of Polish societal developments.

What were the strengths and weaknesses of reconciliation as conceived, implemented and publicized by media and religious activists between 1956 and 1970, given their lasting importance to Polish-German relations today? The media work, interactions and exchanges beginning in the 1960s did create cross-border communities particularly between Catholic circles, intellectual elites and elite journalists in West Germany and Poland. The fact that these important networks dominated much of the media dialogue around Polish-German relations until the 1990s gives evidence of their importance. Although in the 2000s, their influence is no longer quite as persuasive, the positive representations of Polish-German postwar relations still remain powerful influences on the national public spaces. By definition of a signaling model of reconciliation, that is absence of violence, a lasting peace and trust that the other side would retain this peace as well, Polish-German efforts also remain successful.

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<sup>5</sup> For examples of the very recent establishment and anchoring of East European nation-states, see Timothy Snyder, *The Reconstruction of Nations*. For a recognition of the fluid nature of German statehood, particularly in relationship to German national identities, see Konrad Jarausch and Michael Geyer, *Shattered Past*; Christoph Klessmann, *Divided Past: Rewriting Post-War German History* (Oxford: Berg, 2001), and finally for the relationship between questions of state, nation and international relations, see Rogers Brubaker, *Nationalism Reframed*.

Nonetheless, the reconciliation dialogue fell short of successfully addressing longstanding Polish narratives of national uniqueness and victimization. While the West Germans were undergoing an internal process of rethinking their national past and reformulating national identities that was crucial to their relationship with the Poles, no such process took place in the Polish society, which during communism lacked a public space as well as motivation for such identity work. The rhetorical positions of recent Polish leaders have indicated that Polish anti-German nationalism remains a potential source of tension, which can be mobilized for political purposes.<sup>6</sup>

Moreover, for structural reasons, Polish-German relations also did not include all German audiences. My research shows the elite concentration in memory work and the establishment of cross-border communities and dialogue. Today, Poland continues to be an alien and unknown entity to broad layers of the German population. Indicating the dangers of marginalization of certain groups and of amnesia, the expellee question has returned to trouble the relations.<sup>7</sup> The expellees' rights and position is a question which, because it was left unresolved, still has the potential to create tension, particularly in connection with revived Polish nationalism. Finally, the early relations showed the intellectual and political focus on relations with the communist regime. This statist focus created tensions in the 1980s as leading West German politicians, such as Willy Brandt and Helmut Schmidt, ignored establishing relations with Solidarity while maintaining close and friendly ties with

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<sup>6</sup> As an example, one might mention the Polish debates surrounding Jan Gross's work, particularly his recent publication *Fear: anti-Semitism in Poland after Auschwitz: an essay in historical interpretation* (New York: Random House, 2006) and the efforts to launch a criminal investigation against him under the Polish law which makes it illegal to accuse the Polish nation of responsibility in Nazi or communist crimes.

<sup>7</sup> See the controversies surrounding the establishment of a European center for expellees in connection with CDU parliamentary member and BdV chair Erika Steinbach. For example Jörg Lau, "Gedenken mit Schmiss," *Die Zeit*, 27 May 2004.

the communist leadership.<sup>8</sup> Some of the ghosts of the past therefore have continued to haunt Polish-German relations.

The 1990s success narrative was a result of the heavy investment in the political program of closer European relations connected to the reconciliation narrative, an optimistic belief in gradual and symmetrical improvement in Poland, East and West Germany of the relations in the post-war era. However, my research and the developments in the early 2000s made clear that reconciliation was asymmetrical between the three states. West Germany was primarily engaged in the early time period, Poland less so and East Germany almost entirely excluded. Furthermore, reconciliation remains an on-going process and an incomplete development which still needs to continue in the post-communist era.

Ultimately, the study of Polish-German reconciliation can also be applied to international relations, and peace research. Political and international studies, similarly to contemporary history, tend to regard currently stable state systems as eternal constructions. Polish-German reconciliation in light of the state changes in 1945, 1950 and 1989 emphasizes decisively the importance of cultural diplomacy and non-state or civil society relations to conflict resolution and conflict management. This, in turn, demonstrates the importance of non-state actors, standing free of state agendas, who are able to negotiate and mediate between national memories and narratives. Top-down constructions of peace in international relations are necessary but insufficient, since they are only as durable or as fragile as the state systems and cultures on which they are built.

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<sup>8</sup> See Władysław Bartoszewski, *Und reiss uns den Hass*, 108.

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